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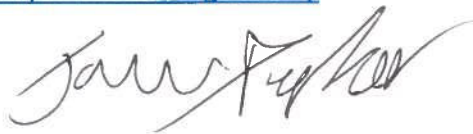
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Agnotology, Agenda-setting and Post-factualism in the Brexit Referendum Campaign

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Abstract

Post-factualism, post-truth and post-rationalism have entered the popular vocabulary to describe, critique and explain recent shock events in western democracies including the Trump presidency, the rise of far-right populism in Europe and Brexit. Nonetheless debate abounds regarding what these concepts actually entail, how they can be identified and what role they played in producing such outcomes in an era of unbridled access to information.

This paper aims to assess the role of post-factualism in western democracy by undertaking an in-depth and qualitative analysis of the media coverage leading to the UK's decision to exit the European Union in June 2016. Utilising key editorials from nationwide UK newspapers and campaign material from the official 'leave' and 'remain' campaigns, Agenda-setting and Agnotology theory are applied to assess the role of post-factualism within the Brexit referendum.

Agnotology is combined with an agenda-setting analysis to delineate the core arguments relating to three key topics within the Brexit campaign, namely immigration, sovereignty and nationalism. These topics are then analysed using agnotology with the objective of determining the presence of misleading, false or ideologically driven information.

The purpose of this paper is to first identify the role of post-factualism in the Brexit campaign, with the ultimate aim of generalising these characteristics to other political contexts. Of particular importance is how post-factualism interacts with democratic policy decisions and how it can both constrain and facilitate actors to engage in certain kinds of discourse. To establish the impact and role of post-factualism in the Brexit campaign, triangulation is also offered in the form of quantitative polling and media coverage data from both before and after the referendum on June 23rd 2016.

Post-factualisms' role is identified as embodying both instances of empirical and statistical manipulation, negation of crucial and available research and ideological blindness in the Brexit debate. Importantly this agenda-setting was more or less uniformly adopted by newspapers across the political spectrum and was recorded to varying degrees across the news topics of immigration, sovereignty and nationalism.

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Problem Statement

Following the perceived decline in the quality of information emanating from the mainstream media and political organisations during the 2016 EU-UK referendum campaign, the terms ‘post-truth’, ‘post-fact’ and even ‘post-rational’ achieved widespread usage.(Gifford 2016) (‘2016’s Word of the Year Has Donald Trump and Brexit to Thank’ 2016)

Despite these terms potential efficacy, dissatisfaction with the dissonance between facts and political sphere (in this instance also including the mainstream media) has been an omnipresent characteristic of contemporary political culture.¹

Nonetheless the perceived emergence of post-factualism represents a significant problem for political communication researchers, journalism and the general electorate because it conveys an apparently stark contradiction: in an era of mass information, what role (if any) could post-factualism play in a modern democratic referendum?

This paradox has also paralleled a distinct articulation of voter frustration; apathy and political instability, meaning the role of agenda-settings institutions demands attention. (Brett 2016)

One speculated cause is the widely decried persistence of misinformation throughout the Brexit campaign. Thus evaluating the veracity of these criticisms, whilst also assessing the prominence of misinformation is necessary to capture the essence of post-factualism in contemporary political discourse.(Blinder and Allen 2017) (Selyukh 2016) (Brett 2016)

Following the unexpected referendum result on June 23rd, commentators emerged from all corners of the media to argue that the discursive shift responsible for Brexit had cultivated widespread ignorance.(Somin 2016; Pillar 2016; Stephens 2015) Despite the long-standing academic study of knowledge (through the discipline of epistemology), there is a notable deficit of literature examining the maintenance, expansion and proliferation of ignorance.

¹ To name a few; The MP expenses and The News of the World Hacking Scandals and the Panama Papers leaks have all taken place in the recent past.

Nonetheless a novel and burgeoning interdisciplinary area of academic literature has developed in the recent past in the form of agnotology.(Proctor 2008)

The exploration of this academic blind spot could provide an important, if nonetheless partial, explanation as to why the British public decided to leave the European Union. Furthermore focusing on this research gap can also elucidate what role post-factualism plays in a modern democratic society.(Hix 2015)

Fundamentally this research area brings into relief how facts, democratic debate and information are conceived of within politico-media complex of modern Britain but also other contemporary democratic systems. Of further relevance to the Brexit debate (but also many other political debates thereafter) the guiding cleavages of immigration, nationalism and sovereignty provide a pathway to assess the form, structure and prominence of post-factualism in the lead-up to this historic event in European political history.(Mann 2016)

Post-factualism's supposedly central role in the Brexit referendum, if proven, represents an identifiable threat to democratic debate. The parallel rise of right-wing populism also signifies an urgency within the academic community to appreciate the historical parallelisms these political movements share with the fascisms of 20th century Europe (Adolf Hitler regularly referred to the 'Lügenpresse' throughout his rise to power for instance).(Ratcliffe 2016).(Zatat 2017)

Most importantly this shift in discourse can have huge implications for the policy-making process, namely forcing the domain of evidence-based policy formation into the sphere of ideological dogmatism.(Ratcliffe 2016)

Despite media commentators predilection with the identification of digital media's role in the proliferation of 'alternative facts', thereby illustrating the contemporaneousness of the Brexit information campaign, it is nonetheless crucial to also assess the continued influence and culpability of established news media and political campaign actors in this phenomenon. (Silverman 2016)

The consequences of this problematic shift inevitably transfer to the electorate, who rely upon the media to supply informative and verifiable commentary to guide political decisions. Furthermore this event also entails potentially huge consequences for the EU as a whole.

More acutely this trend also represents a significant problem for journalism and journalistic practices in general, both through increasingly wayward practices of reportage but also by creating a growing number of disenfranchised audiences. Somewhat paradoxically many audiences may also be inclined to seek information from other more unconventional but also potentially unscrupulous information sources, thereby producing an equally problematic trend.

It is with this consideration in mind that the implications post-factualism holds for the future for modern political media and the functioning of western democracy becomes clearer. In a vacuum of trusted and reliable information, opportunities emerge for alternative national, political or ethnic narratives to take hold. As Europe and the wider world has experienced in the past, such narratives have the potential to facilitate a belligerent disregard for evidence and human rationalism, supplanting it with a potentially more volatile, violent and unpredictable world order.

For these reasons the problem formulation for this thesis is:

What is the role of post-factualism in modern western democratic events?

Discussion and Literature Review

The origins of post-Factualism

Expectations regarding the ethical and moral responsibilities of political power to communicate accurately and honestly to the general public have existed from the earliest remnants of (proto-) democratic society, with the manipulation of information for the so-called 'greater good' arguably existing in equal measure. Plato's noble lie, conceived of to justify falsehoods interpreted as benefiting wider society, serves as a telling reminder of the timelessness of this convention.(Partenie 2014)

Similar sentiments can also be identified in common folklore, which still serve to support ideals of societal stability whilst imparting certain collective values and attitudes within contemporary society. (Wilson, Rudy, and Call 2006) In this sense the utilisation and circulation of myths, stories and narratives have also served to construct shared identities, many of which still support the many complex and interdependent iterations of modern nationalism.(Wilson, Rudy, and Call 2006)

The intersection of information and civic duty, especially following the reduced centrality of the church in social activity, has continued in various iterations of journalism. A trend still symptomatic of modern media practices emerged following the introduction of mass circulation newspapers in 18th century London and 19th century 'yellow journalism' in USA. In particular this information paradigm proliferated a form of reportage formed around sensationalism, disregard for factual accuracy and controversial, attention-seeking narratives to punctuate popular public affairs. (Darnton 2017; Biagi 2014; Samuel 2016)

In the following century information warfare and the emergence of state propaganda blossomed, representing an important shift in the scale, objective and impact information media possessed in creating, maintaining and expanding state influence.(Chandler and Munday 2016a)

One key facet of this development was the weaponisation of disinformation as a key strategic tool throughout the Cold War to intentionally mislead or destabilise foreign states through the circulation of believable, but ultimately false information amongst domestic populations or enemy governments.(Levine 2014)²

This was complemented by the emergence of misinformation, principally defined as false information that is spread intentionally or unintentionally.(Chandler and Munday 2016b)³ In this sense, contrary to deliberate and often state-backed deception techniques, misinformation can be driven by all sections of society. Furthermore the continued prominence of misinformation amongst social media has been widely commented on in the months following Brexit.(Smith 2016)

It is with these two concepts in mind the historical and contemporary context that post-factualism has emerged from is more accurately identified. What is also evident from this historical trend is the centrality of nationalism and statehood as a key rhetorical battleground for the manipulation, construction and proliferation of narrative, often presented as fact. For this reason it is nationalism linked with related themes that dominated the Brexit debate, namely immigration and sovereignty, which will feature as the distinct aspect of the Brexit campaign under examination.

² Prominent examples include the USSR's false publication "who's who in the CIA"² and the USA's disinformation campaign against Muammar Gaddafi by the Reagan government through intentionally leaked memos proposing the impending invasion of Libya.

³ This means disinformation can be a form of misinformation, wherein misinformation is then operationalised intentionally to deceive.

Post-factualism

Preceding current analyses criticising a perceived decline in political discourse, Steve Tesich's description of a 'post-truth world' to describe American society's apathetic responses to numerous political scandals from Watergate onwards in 1992 indicates the longer lineage of post-factualism discussed today.(Kreitner 2016) Ralph Keyes echoed this conceptualisation in his 2004 publication "*The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life*", which described a wider cultural shift towards dishonesty in the context of a complex and digitised social world of increasingly malleable codes of ethics, alongside consistent institutionalised rewards for manipulation.(Keyes 2004)

Closely related to these terms, post-factual politics emerged as a concept in 2010 through David Roberts.(Roberts 2010) In describing this phenomenon, Roberts lamented over what he perceived to be the detachment of political rhetoric and media narratives from US government policy.(Roberts 2010) In this sense the term and common usage of post-factualism today has retained but also incorporated further characteristics owing to the current political and media climate.

Following the unexpected outcome of Brexit, post-factualism can be considered a new phenomenon due in part to its modern context, but more importantly the way ideology, emotion and a unique epistemological mindset has become popularised.

The primary characteristic of post-factualism that makes it distinct from previous forms of mis-or disinformation is its disconnection from establishing facts and in many instances openly projecting this attitude with regard to policy solutions.(Sirota 2007) In this sense it makes no attempts to claim one thing as fact in opposition to another (unlike earlier forms of propaganda). Instead, 'facts' have become far more malleable, open to pejorative interpretation and increasingly purpose-built to satisfy the wishes and desires of voters or media audiences.(Ratcliffe 2016)

Arguably this has emerged in an era of all-time distrust in both politicians and the media, alongside so-called 'expert' opinion.(Grierson 2017) (Kirk and Dunford 2016) This has created the tendency for proven-to-be-false claims or beliefs to persist even after being

debunked and with contrary evidence being readily available.(Krugman 2011) What this also allows for is seemingly contradictory claims to consistently exist alongside each other. These two characteristics can be identified prominently in popular British discourses regarding so-called ‘euro-myths’, immigration and nationalism.(Ratcliffe 2016)

With these points in mind post-factualism will be operationalised in this paper to describe the emergence of a political discourse disconnected from statements of factual accuracy; based upon ideological and emotional rhetoric, whilst also expressing a clear lack of expert analysis.

Theoretical discussion

The first of numerous alternative theoretical approaches utilised to examine the relationship between misinformation, disinformation and democracy is the propaganda model imagined by Noam Chomsky and Edward P. Herman. The Propaganda Model is based upon five filters that limit, restrict and control the mass media thereby creating what they term ‘manufactured consent’ amongst democratic societies.(Chomsky and Herman 1994)⁴

The first of the five filters focuses on the size, ownership and profit orientation of the mass media, highlighting the conglomeration of media as a characteristic of the modern free-market media model.(Chomsky and Herman 1994) Due to the centrality of the profit motive left-leaning publications are continually marginalised, resulting in a narrow, market-oriented news agenda.(Chomsky and Herman 1994)

The second filter identifies the advertising industry’s impact on the news agenda. Due to this reliance, media organisations are conditioned to seek-out ‘high quality’ news audiences that are predisposed towards consumerism to satisfy advertisers and attract share-holder investment. (Chomsky and Herman 1994)

The third filter explains that due to the power of government and corporate allies, news media relies heavily upon ‘official’ government sources to ensure apparent objectivity and

⁴ This model also shares many of the basic premises of the often-cited ‘political-media complex’, also discussed by Chomsky in other literature.

credibility, but also to avoid potential lawsuits and accusations of libel. (Chomsky and Herman 1994) Driven by huge press organisations within the government, a dominant pro-government agenda is transferred to news media. (Chomsky and Herman 1994)

The fourth filter acts as a response to the sourcing of information or reporting critical of government and corporate actions, specifically in the form of 'flak'. For example media organisations could receive flak by being cut-off from information in the future or receiving heavy criticism in the form of third-party organisations such as think-tanks or media watchdogs tasked with ensuring a right-wing bias in media reporting. (Chomsky and Herman 1994)

The fifth and final filter is expressed as anti-Communism within the media as a control mechanism over media reporting critical of pro-market or right-wing policy. In reaction to such coverage, any editorial support of policy tasked with reducing private property or redistribution is branded as Communist, provoking liberals to prove their anti-Communist credentials regularly. (Chomsky and Herman 1994)

Despite this model's critical stance towards both government and corporate media, there are a number of issues that potentially diminish its applicability to the Brexit debate and modern post-factualism. Firstly, it is closely tied to a Cold War era context that is not necessarily appropriate today. It may for this reason fail to explain the heterogeneity of political interpretation in place throughout the Brexit debate, with considerable elite discord surrounding the key issues at play. Equally the primacy of the BBC and the impact of online media in the debate does not correspond to the marketised model described by Chomsky and Herman, indicating how this is primarily descriptive of the US media system. (Levy, Billur, and Bironzo 2016) Equally the considerable divisions with the government on the EU presents a significant cleavage that does not suggest a level of homogeneity amongst the ruling political and media class necessary to satisfy the propaganda model. Nonetheless probably the most ill-fitted issue is the focus on anti-Communism as the fifth and final filter, which, given the vastly contrasting context wherein the Brexit debate took place, does not feature as a credible criticism or issue in media coverage of either pro-remain or -leave positions.

Finally the question as to how the mainstream media ‘manufactured consent’ in the Brexit debate appears questionable, mainly due to the outcome of the referendum concerning a variety of business and political elite’s objectives. Instead it would appear the Brexit referendum evidenced clear fault lines throughout both business and political groups that challenges the kind of uniform consent necessary to satisfy the propaganda model.

Another alternative and more culturally focused perspective that analyses the role of knowledge in societies is Michel Foucault’s regimes of truth. This theory asserts that there is no objective reality and instead truth is constructed and maintained by the prevailing malaise of institutions present at any one time.(Foucault and Rainbow 1984) Recently scholars have sought to reinvigorate Foucault’s theory by examining current information flows as an indication of a shift or change in the dominant regime of truth. Bratich for instance describes this shift as a movement away from one heavily policed flow of information deriving from a single homogenous source or sources to a ‘barrage of little lies’ so constant that a fact-based regime cannot keep pace.(Bratich 2004)

Bratich, similar to Chomsky and Herman, is also primarily concerned with US foreign policy and the role of secrecy, lacking a direct applicability to the domestic debate regarding Brexit. A more relevant reinterpretation of Foucault’s regime of truth is put forward by Harsin who argues that there is a current and on-going shift away from one uniform regime of truth to a multiplicity of competing regimes of post-truth.(Harsin 2004) Harsin argues this is because no one source can establish a dominant regime due to the development of truth-markets (i.e. profit-based and commercialised news media) that prevail today, catering themselves through the increasingly fragmented medium of digital participation.(Harsin 2004) Although this line of argument intuitively shares promise in characterising digital truth-making, it seems to suggest that this is the *raison d’être* of this form of technology (i.e. profit-making), which despite its relevance doesn’t necessarily correspond to the increasing dominance of right-wing nationalist discourses now taking hold across the western world.

Despite accurately attributing the importance of digital media in producing such competing versions of truth, potentially Harsin’s model overstates the role of digital media and given the scope of this paper is on the still largely dominant news media organisations in Britain, is not necessarily accurate in characterising the conventional mainstream media.(Harsin 2004) Furthermore Harsin’s focus on data-driven analytics as the source and lifeblood of this shift,

although of growing importance, is still largely unknown and in fact largely irretrievable within the context of this qualitative study.(Harsin 2004) Another key issue that Harsin theorises which does not necessarily correspond to appropriately covering post-factualism is the claim that debunking and counterclaiming is a key aspect of this marketplace.(Harsin 2004) This contradicts the characterisation of post-factualism as, by design, not being concerned with truth-seeking i.e. debunking, instead pursuing normative objectives not premised on facts themselves.(Harsin 2004)

Another perspective emanating from a similar philosophical analysis of knowledge is Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality to describe the modern state of culture as an artificially constructed or 'hyper' reality. The creation of the mass media is identified as one key source of this shift from what he refers to as the predominance of simulation instead of representation in modern society and economy.(Mattessich 2003)

Primarily through the use of symbolic value, this hyperreality has been perpetuated by the media and the ruling establishment to maintain power and dominance. This in-turn has created a deficit of identity references, created through the shift to a 'symbolic' society wherein 'simulacrum'⁵ can manifest in the form of racism and xenophobia (essentially in constructed symbolism and signs).(Thiry-Cherques 2010)

In terms of comparisons to post-factualism, Baudrillard makes some interesting interpretations of how hyperreality and hyperspace does not exist as an additional layer or terrain within reality, but now has blurred any distinction between the two. In many senses hyperreality precedes reality in society, facilitating a complete abandonment from the spectrums of truth-false; concept-object and real-representation.(Mattessich 2003)

Certainly in this regard hyperreality shares a strong similarity to the notion of post-factualism; nonetheless what most hyperreality study focuses on tends to move towards soft cultural trends (namely consumerism) rather than issues of distinct political importance. Essentially hyperreality, although a fascinating philosophical part of relevant literature, avoids identifying specific sources of fictionalisation and instead analyses these processes in an entirely abstracted way. Principally, as with much philosophical thought, the pursuit of an

⁵ The displacement of reality with signs and symbols, ultimately leading to no relevant reality that exists beyond these artificial signs and symbols.

actionable solution is not of essential importance. Equally it can be argued that Baudrillard, Eco and many others belief in the complete and all-encompassing replacement of reality to hyperreality is premature when applied to other aspects of culture, science and politics not presently dealt with in such academic literature. In the specific case of separating political fact and fiction, there are still certain realities that can and are recognised, similar to debates surrounding climate change or tobacco regulation.

Thus the strength of Agnotology theory primarily resides in its focus on the source and content.. Most other theoretical approaches that could be applied to the issue of Brexit are uniquely focused on the medium, often with a distinct interest in digital media. A preoccupation on the role of digital media may miss an important point regarding the longer-term impact of repeated terms of reference, attitudes and wider frames and agendas present in British society. Despite being an information source with ever-expanding influence and importance, the role of elderly voters, coupled with the critical role of both television and print media in shaping the frames and discourses surrounding Brexit, also entails a greater focus on content.

Equally the theoretical requirement (that may work under most circumstances) of a reasonably homogenous governing elite that maintain their power and influence through dominant media frames, upon inspection, does not seem to fit the events that took place over the course of the referendum campaign. Conversely the referendum ushered in an ugly division amongst party members, top-selling newspapers and disrupted a usually uniform representation of key political issues. Thus the important denominator in why Vote Leave (Leave) succeeded over Stronger In (Remain) cannot be adequately explained through this framework. Instead what is most important is the representation of the issues, and if these were successfully contested or operationalised by either the Remain or Leave campaigns and transferred to the voting public.

This is where the strength of utilising an analytical framework of Agenda-setting and Agnotology theory can offer sufficient flexibility and scope to focus on the impact of non-web-based sources, alongside explaining potential longer term sources of mis- or disinformation in creating a Leave victory. Given that approximately 80% of daily newspaper consumers buy a pro-Brexit publication, this suggests the importance these traditional print-

based news sources had on the referendum campaign's outcome and content cannot be overstated or overlooked.(Levy, Billur, and Bironzo 2016)

Theory

Due to the complex nature of post-factualism and its impact upon both media practices, the policy process and its outcomes, it is necessary to delineate and briefly explain how post-factualism affects actors within the media-political sphere. Principally this can be summed up under the assertion that post-factualism serves as a structure within which political discourse and policy decisions reside. Post-factualism thereby both restricts and enhances the opportunities available to actors in terms of what actions they can take, what discourses they can employ and what solutions they can advocate for in the policy-making process. Important to reiterate is that actors themselves shape structures but are nonetheless constrained by them too. With this consideration in mind Agenda-setting and Agnotology theory will be outlined.

Agenda-setting Theory

Owing inspiration to Walter Lippmann's 1922 publication 'Public Opinion', Agenda-setting theory aims to explain how the media influences the public. Lippmann was a key pioneer in proposing the media's role in the construction of an abstracted reality in the individual and collective psyche.

The mass media's role in creating the 'picture inside our heads' can also be linked to public policy, described initially by John Kingdon as a framework for understanding how agendas influence the identification of key problems and solutions in the policy process.(Kingdon 2003) Furthermore, Kingdon cites the mass media as one of the 'visible participants' in setting the policy agenda. (Kingdon 2003)

The concept of agenda-setting was first introduced by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw following their study of the 1968 presidential election in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Through many different phases and deepening of Agenda-setting theory, modern day agenda-

setting engages with the relationship between media and public opinion in multiple ways. These include the media's influence on the salience of issues upon which public opinion is formed; the aspects of issues the public deem most relevant or important; the combination of issues that serve to construct a worldview; and how media organizations influence one another's news agendas.

First-Level Agenda-setting Theory

McCombs and Shaw posit that the mass media influences the salience of issues in public opinion primarily through the frequency and attention certain issues are given in news coverage.

This agenda occurs over varying degrees of time that could be days, weeks, months or indeed years.(McCombs 2001) In this sense, the mass media facilitates which issues public opinion formed around.(McCombs 2001) Furthermore, this convergence of agendas is consistent across varying demographic groups such as gender and education levels.(McCombs 2001) This first level can thereby explain why prominent news agendas transfer to the popularly known and understood issues amongst the general public.

Second-Level Agenda-setting Theory

This level refers to the relationship between the media and *how* the public think about salient issues. Issues covered in the media or 'objects' are news items that define an agenda. All objects possess 'attributes'; characteristics made relevant when covering a particular issue. It is proposed that the media therefore have a second agenda subsequent to issue salience, termed an 'agenda of attributes'. This means that certain characteristics of objects are emphasised, whilst ignoring or negating others.(McCombs 2001) The effect of this process is to construct how an issue is thought about amongst the general public and indeed which aspects of an issue are dominant in the public psyche. Subsequently this concept can be used to identify particular representations on a news object in text and delineate what can be the expected consequences this has upon audiences in this research paper.

Framing, Central and Aspect Themes within Second-Level Agenda-setting Theory

It is argued by the likes of McCombs and others that framing can, despite existing as a distinct theoretical approach in its own right, be subsumed under second-level agenda-setting. This has been asserted partly because both approaches pay close attention to the status of certain attributes and frames in certain media messages, which also entails scrutiny towards the perspectives of both media communicators and the public. (McCombs 2005)

Following from this line of argument, it is concluded that a frame, defined as dominant perspective on an object, is in fact a special kind of attribute. (McCombs 2005) McCombs distinguishes between two different forms of attributes, central and aspect themes. Central themes are defined as attributes that dominate a certain topic; aspect themes are instead a more general category of attributes. Through this definition, frames are therefore considered the dominant central theme on a news object. (McCombs 2005)

Multiple frames can nonetheless co-exist, compliment or compete with one another, in terms of political discourses it is proposed that the frame that resonates with the prevailing culture (or sub-culture) will often succeed in providing the key definition of an issue. (Ransan-Cooper et al. 2015) In this sense, framing can both refer to so-called short-term frames but also more importantly, longer term cultural trends, myths and narratives. (Ransan-Cooper et al. 2015) Equally a similar relationship exists between frames, central and aspect themes. Often these three forms of attributes exist alongside each other, with frames signifying the dominant attribute, central themes other important but less prominent attributes and aspect themes as more peripheral qualities of a news object. When these various themes are considered in their entirety, this can be representative of a single organisation's news agenda or alternatively, an industry agenda (for instance comprising of various news organisations).

Complimenting Kingdon, framing plays a crucial four-stage role in popular discourse related to political issues, namely defining problems; locating causes; communicating moral analyses and proposing solutions. (Chang 2015) From this position, framing is the processes wherein certain characteristics of an issue are emphasised and given priority, whilst others are

potentially ignored, delegitimised or sidelined, this in-turn has critical implications for the proposed remediation necessary to solve a problem. (Dekavalla 2016)

Framing also aims to illustrate both the active and unconscious means through which an issue is represented.(Ransan-Cooper et al. 2015) For this reason, framing entails an ideological dimension, both through its conscious proliferation but also through unspoken cultural, professional or political norms (this can often be attributed as the more widespread and thereby influential process of the two). (Ransan-Cooper et al. 2015)

Framing effects

It is proposed that once individuals are exposed to a positive or negative representation of an issue they are more likely to refer to this frame in the future, but also disregard alternative representations of the issue.(Lecheler, Schuck, and Hänggli 2015)

This process also has important implications for political communication and journalism professionals, as they are also susceptible to similar effects. Therefore saturation and redundancy of framing representation takes place over a variety of media sources and from varying politicians due to a reliance on an increasingly limited number of key sources (partly exacerbated by the fragmentation of less trustworthy information online).(Lecheler, Schuck, and Hänggli 2015)

These framing effects can be used to explain how editorials surrounding Brexit influence the general public and equally why similar or shared frames exist amongst seemingly diverse news publications (including how post-factualism can serve as a structure).

Applicability and Accessibility

Similar to framing effects, Agenda-setting theory also delineates other aspects of the agenda-setting process that affect how individuals absorb media messages. Accessibility refers more to the time-specific nature of media messages, how recently an object has been exposed to an individual and therefore the increased likelihood an individual will rely upon this information to form judgements.(Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007) This concept therefore allows for an explanation as to how if editorials utilise certain agendas of attributes and emphasise certain

news objects just prior to the Brexit referendum, that these will feature prominently in voters' role in the policy process.

Applicability refers to how media messages resonate with individual's pre-existing knowledge. If a message holds resonance it can promote specific frames on a news object that become prominent in public discourse.(Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007) Research also suggests that repeated exposure to a particular frame will enhance the likelihood an individual will agree with the interpretation implicit within it.(Lecheler, Schuck, and Hänggli 2015) It has nonetheless also been suggested that this repetition (and strength therein) effect is far more likely to take place if a frame has negative representations. (Lecheler, Schuck, and Hänggli 2015) This concept can also be used to explain why the electorate may reflect similar frames and agendas as those present in editorials and campaign material, alongside why negative opinions may drive the policy process. Equally this could also indicate the presence of long-term agendas through their success amongst voting intentions.

A connected concept useful to understand how this process takes place is 'obtrusiveness', which refers to the extent an individual has experience with an issue represented in the media. Following from this concept, it has been found that when an individual lacks experience, the representation of a news story can have a substantial impact on the interpretation and comprehension of the issue at hand.(Wheeldon and McBrien 2014) Overall obtrusiveness as a concept can be used to explain why certain media messages could be highly successful if the general public feel uncertainty but also relevance regarding an issue, for example.

Agnotology Theory

Agnotology aims to understand the development, maintenance and causes of ignorance on both an individual and societal level. Deriving from the Greek word “agnosis”, agnotology specifically offers a counterpoised academic discipline to that of epistemology.(Kenyon 2017) In this sense agnotology is a theory regarding how and why we do not know.(Kenyon 2017)

The origin of this discipline owes itself to Robert Proctor ,who introduced the term to analyse the public relations campaigns of big tobacco in resisting health-related regulation throughout the 20th century.(Proctor 2008) With regards to tobacco regulation, a key tactic utilised and articulated by a PR executive tasked with defending tobacco was thus:

“Doubt is our product since it is the best means of competing with the ‘body of fact’ that exists in the mind of the general public.”(Kenyon 2017)

The important point to take away from this conceptualisation of ignorance is the contribution Proctor made in distinguishing differing forms of ignorance, their deliberate proliferation and the critical role mis- and disinformation played in delaying regulations aimed at the tobacco industry.(Kenyon 2017)

Following on from this case, Proctor also elaborates on a typology of ignorance that provides a more nuanced appreciation of the different forms and manifestations of ignorance.

The first and probably most widely conventional form of ignorance proposed is ‘native state’. In this most common category ignorance is understood as an absence or lack of knowledge, often this is typically associated with youth or naivety.(Proctor 2008) Equally important is how this form of ignorance can be traced back to enlightenment attitudes that conceive of ignorance as a form of intellectual darkness that simply requires ‘illumination’ to be extinguished.(Proctor 2008) With this form of ignorance in mind, there is an intuitively straightforward ‘solution’ wherein societies or individuals simply need to be exposed to information to overcome such deficiencies. In many respects this echoes a variety of the commonly proposed remedies to current anti-immigrant, populist or nationalistic discourses

in Britain. Similarly, this corresponds to the key objectives of ‘naïve’ journalistic standards in providing facts which will then lead to a more educated and informed public wherein ‘bad’ newspapers will fail if they produce inaccurate reporting. Due this concepts’ focus on absent information and more so on the presence of ignorance amongst individuals and collective groups, this concept is not operationalised in this paper due to the fact that theoretically voters and newspapers cannot en-masse possess a blank or ‘naïve’ ignorance of the topics covered and voted on. For these reasons the following two typologies provided by Proctor are utilised to assess the role of post-factualism in the Brexit campaign.

The second form delineated by Proctor is ‘lost realm’, with the term entailing that certain knowledge is lost or neglected in the process of acquiring or searching for new information.(Proctor 2008) This conceptualisation of knowledge arguably shares some resonance with Foucault’s regimes of truth, specifically the idea that as new frames of reference and new comprehensions of knowledge emerge, other forms of knowledge are necessarily pushed into obscurity.(Proctor 2008) What this form of ignorance highlights is the ‘political geography’ of knowledge, specifically raising questions regarding why certain information is widely known in different places and amongst different peoples.(Proctor 2008) Furthermore this places an equal focus on asking the question why a society or group prioritise one kind of knowledge over another, why some information is actively made unknown (sometimes as a means of necessity or practicality) and how this creates ignorance.(Proctor 2008) Importantly this form of knowledge negation can also be created through shifts or the dominance of certain ideological doctrines, which as a form of conscious and unconscious filtration, encourage collective ignorance regarding information that may conflict or contradict key normative assumptions of a dominant intellectual pathology. Therefore lost realm agnotology is utilised in this paper to analyse instances of ideologically negated information necessary for the policy process, but omitted from the texts under examination.

The final and potentially most important form of ignorance delineated by Proctor is termed ‘Strategic Ploy’.(Proctor 2008) In this conceptualisation ignorance is considered an actively maintained, created and manipulated entity in society.(Proctor 2008) In contrast to the previous two formulations of ignorance, this category focuses more directly upon the intentional construction of ignorance as a means of manufacturing specific information

deficits or misinformation to achieve specific goals. Proctor highlights the behaviour of tobacco regulation as an example of this form of ignorance-making.

Indicative of the utilisation of strategic ploy in public discourse is the example of climate change denial. Despite broad scientific consensus emergent in the 1960s (but hypothesised far earlier) roughly 98% of modern-day scientists ascribe the causes of climate change to human activity.(William et al., 2010) Nonetheless amongst the US population the perceived degree of scientific debate is substantially lower (ranging from approximately 40% in the US to 84% in the UK).(Pelham 2009) (Riffkin 2014) One explanation offered by agnotology is the well-documented impact of fossil fuel-backed ‘information’ campaigns aimed to spread climate conspiracy, construct a perception of a substantial ‘scientific debate’ whilst exploiting contemporary journalistic practices to achieve these goals.(‘ExxonSecrets Factsheet’ 2017) (Proctor 2008)

Other more narrowly political instances of agnotology strategies have also played a larger role in public discourse post-2008. Following the financial crisis, these have included Australian politicians’ claims that the country shared the same credit rating as Greece, but have also included a broader vocabulary of agnotological rhetoric regarding the causes and solutions to the crisis itself.(Kenyon 2017) Michael Betnacourt has coined the term ‘agnotological capitalism’ to explain the framing and political obscurification related to the prioritisation of immaterial wealth and the subsequent policy of austerity as the dominant economic paradigm in most of the western world.(Betnacourt 2010)

Betnacourt characterises the political responses to the financial crisis were and still are deliberate attempts to ignore the true causes of the financial collapse, epitomised by the public bailout of the banking sector as opposed to supporting mortgage repayment for normal citizens.(Betnacourt 2010) Furthermore, this ‘semiotic manipulation’ has not been adequately scrutinised by the media and has instead obscured how politicians can successfully respond to future financial crises.(Betnacourt 2010) Betnacourt argues this is a symptom of the era of digital capitalism, epitomised by the creation of fiat money and ‘designed to fail’ derivatives by the banking industry, proposing that the current economic system relies upon keeping the wider public ignorant of how it actually functions.(Betnacourt 2010)

White Ignorance

Charles Mills builds upon previous iterations of racial agnotology through the theory of 'white ignorance'. Mills' contribution is important not just because of its focus on the roles of colonialism, white privilege and the increasingly opaque nature of racially discriminatory discourse, but because of its contrasting focus on social and veritistic epistemology.(Mills 2008)

From this unique approach, Mills highlights how cognition and in-turn, the vocabulary supplied to an individual, is both individually and collectively ascribed by the ruling groups in society (this can for such reasons be delineated along racial or ethnic lines).(Mills 2008)

Mills utilises the history of European colonialism to highlight the legacy of such processes and perceptions, focusing on the typology of non-Europeans and 'savages' and the current emphasis on cultural difference as a explanation for varying degrees of economic success both domestically and abroad.(Mills 2008) This background contributes to Mill's first key concept, that of ethnocentrism.(Mills 2008)

Ethnocentrism of European and colonial nations of the past owes itself to an 'unassailable' structuring framework that explicitly and implicitly asserts European superiority based upon global dominance.(Mills 2008) Despite the world existing in a so-called 'post-colonial' era today, Mills asserts that ethnocentrism still persists in a subtler and modified version in terms of European or white perceptions towards non-Europeans.(Mills 2008) In this sense much of the world is still conceived of as 'untouched' and 'undiscovered' by the white majority, encouraging similar conceptions of the world as was present in the colonial era.(Mills 2008)

Furthermore Mills proposes that this guides widespread and common themes in modern discourses regarding ethnocentricity and principally European superiority, which can relate closely to on-going discourses surrounding so-called 'Islamic' and Christian cultures.(Mills 2008)

The role of agnotology in these on-going and nuanced structures of racial and ethnic superiority identified by Mills entails the second key concept of collective memory, but also

collective amnesia, with regards to colonialism and the histories of racial oppression committed by Europeans.(Mills 2008) A crucial process that takes place to maintain such ignorance is that of mystification of the past, which in turn facilitates the mystification of the present.(Mills 2008)

Furthermore this is intrinsically linked to the dynamic construction and reconstruction of national identity, wherein the memory and forgetting of certain historical events is derived from complex class, gender and power relations.(Mills 2008) Due to these power dynamics, this explains the relative negation of the oppression and atrocities committed against non-white victims through colonialism, allowing what Mills terms a ‘feel good’ history for whites to be maintained.(Mills 2008) Overall this culminates in an ‘airbrushed history’ of white settlement and domination, facilitating a contemporary understanding of colonial and modern-day racial and ethnic relations that benefits whites at the expense of nonwhites and fundamentally affords a positive but nonetheless historically inaccurate understanding of colonial settlement and domination.(Mills 2008) Thus this reinforces current attitudes towards national identity and engenders a form of national ignorance that influences modern-day attitudes and potential policy decisions.

The final assertion Mills makes with regards to the functions of white ignorance is white group interests. Specifically this refers to the dynamic wherein threats are treated as dangerous towards collective well-being, but not necessarily on an individual level (wherein the immediate threat is often of secondary or negligible importance).(Mills 2008) In-turn this concept asserts that typically non-whites interests are perceived as a de facto threat to the white majority.(Mills 2008) Despite Mill’s focus on as relations between Whites and Blacks in the USA, a similar normative principle can be applied with regards to ethnocentrism more broadly, for instance ethnic Brits in relation to other European ethnic groups. Taking this final point into consideration, Mill’s concepts and theory of white ignorance will be applied within the context of modern western European societies (comprising typically of the UK; France; Germany; USA; Spain; Italy etc.) in relation to non-westerners, including peoples from post-communist central and eastern Europe.

Overall by utilising Proctor’s typology of ignorance, and a focus on Mill’s ‘white ignorance’ theory, these concepts can be used to explain the outcome of agenda-setting and framing analyses of key documents used through the Brexit campaign. Furthermore, these concepts

can be used to identify to what role both post-factualism and agnotology play in said documents.

Methodology

Epistemology and Ontology

This project's ontological and epistemological approach is based on social constructivism, which asserts that all human knowledge is socially constructed. This philosophical paradigm is founded in an ontology that rejects realism, and an epistemology that embraces subjectivity. Unlike positivism and realism, social constructivism distinguishes between phenomena of physical existence and the social importance humans attribute to these, affording a unique status to the study of human behaviour from that of the natural world.⁶ (Bryman 2012) This means that phenomena only exist when humans ascribe them meaning. As a result, no objective truth (external to human interaction) exists, challenging positivism and objectivism.

Due to aim of establishing how a particular social reality comes to be, alongside a specific focus on how interaction amongst social groups produces specific, dynamic and contextually-related realities, SC complements the theoretical framework outlined by agenda-setting and subsequently, post-factualism. Furthermore due this paper's key focus on how the use of language achieves shared meaning, this closely relates to the independent variable of post-factualism and how such shared realities drives social behaviour.(Bryman 2012)

Furthermore the iterative method used in this research is equally complimentary to SC, but is atypical to the likes of positivism which instead treats research primarily from a deductive (i.e. theory testing) approach that would not be capable to adapt theory throughout the analysis phase.(Bryman 2012) This would not allow for an interactive relationship between data and theory necessary to construct appropriate categories for frames for instance.

SC's assertion that there are many competing social realities shares a clear semblance to the nature of both political, media and societal debate key to capturing the Brexit campaign and

⁶ This is also of course a key quality of interpretivism and phenomenology.

highlighting the malleable nature of the discourses relevant to understanding the role of campaigns and the media. Compared to Objectivism this means that cultures or organisational structures are dynamic, constantly in processes of minute but important reimagining and reinterpretations, instead of being static entities that can be understood by studying their formal frameworks, hierarchies or rules.(Bryman 2012) Nonetheless this paper shares the same position as Strauss et al. or Becker, whereby there is an acceptance of the pre-existence of the objects prior to their analysis.(Bryman 2012)

To clarify, the aim of this research paper is not to achieve a definitive ‘truth’, but to understand how the current social reality has been created through interaction of human beings. This also represents an important difference in the ultimate goals of positivistic research with the likes of interpretivism or SC, with the latter seeking to *understand* human behaviour and the former seeking to *explain* it.(Bryman 2012) Epistemologically, the aim of this paper is to understand how the representations of the political, social and economic reality of Britain, presented by the news media and campaigns, led to a pro-Brexit vote. Post-factualism, as meaning a departure from facts, also compliments such an approach as it in itself suggests that reality is entirely constructed and in terms of political discourses reflects the malleable, dynamic and competitive nature of debate that characterised in the Brexit campaign.

This final point also has important implications for appreciating the impact of the researcher in influencing any outcome of research. SC allows and encourages an appreciation of subjectivity in research as an unavoidable characteristic shaped by individual biases, idiosyncrasies and decisions that inevitably guide analysis, definitions and data collection. Contrastingly positivism does not allow for this quality to exist, believing ‘value-free’ research can be achieved.(Bryman 2012) Importantly this does demand specific considerations regarding the validity and generalisability of this research, which are offset by utilising quantitative data that can reduce concerns that the data generated in this paper is unduly influenced by my own individual preferences.

Research Design

To assess the role of post-factualism in western democracy a single case study research design is used. This design is based around a qualitative research approach focused on the Brexit referendum campaign using primary documents from the Remain and Leave campaigns, alongside key editorials from nationwide British newspapers.

Due the already large amount of quantitative data available in the form of polling and media research related to the Brexit referendum campaign, a qualitative analytical design was decided upon to supply a greater in-depth understanding of the quality and content of debate that led to the British public's decision to leave the European Union and the potential role post-factualism played.

This is achieved via an iterative process of moving between the source materials and adapting the theoretical framework and analytical structure accordingly. A well-defined theoretical stance will, throughout the process of research, be consistently applied to gather and analyse the evidence obtained.(Bryman 2012)

Despite the arguably unique outcome of the referendum at the time of writing, the applicability and comparability of this case is evidenced by the fact that Euroscepticism, populism and anti-internationalism are now pervasive themes located throughout a variety of EU states and notably the USA. Recent examples of this trend abound, the 2016 Italian constitutional referendum, the French Presidential election (specifically the popularity of Marine Le Pen) and the election of Donald Trump all serve to evidence this interpretation.

With this in mind, the UK-EU referendum is thus treated as a 'critical case' because of its articulation of the entire spectrum of contemporary issues that arguably drove Brexit and is fuelling similar political sentiments in many other contexts. Issues regarding immigration, national-identity and sovereignty were central (if varying in terms of proportions) to media coverage on both sides of debate, equally these same issues have been comprehensively evidenced as guiding issues within public opinion.(‘Key Issues for Voters in the EU Referendum. – Voting Counts’ 2017) Similarly the same fundamental themes featured throughout the US presidential election, not to mention their consistent presence within political debate across Europe in France, Italy, Hungary and Denmark.(‘4. Top Voting Issues in 2016 Election’ 2016) Arguably Brexit represents the first eruption of this widespread locus of concerns in a democratic event, thereby conveying a symbolic but also contingent example

of a trend now central to modern political discourse, namely the relationship and treatment of information between the mass media and the electorate.

To further illustrate the significance of this debate with regards to post-factualism, one only has to look at the emergence of the entire gambit of terminology related to ‘post-truth’, ‘post-factualism’ and ‘post-rational’ that emerged following the Brexit referendum. Closely aligned to this was the proliferation of fake news, now also a common term in popular vocabulary of media commentators and politicians in Britain, USA but in many instances emanating from the peripheries of Europe (Macedonia for instance has been responsible for the explosion of a cottage industry creating such online news).(Kirby 2016)

Such accusations following the outcome of the Brexit referendum have equally been directed towards key British news organizations. Often these same organisations enjoy a global influence and in many instances reflect a shared media-model found amongst a variety of other states also experiencing a surge in populism.

With these points in mind, the potential insights that can be gleaned from the pioneering example of the Brexit campaign in signifying the arrival of post-factualism on a mass scale makes it an ideal case to analyse and assess this phenomenon.

A further related motivation for studying the Brexit referendum derives from the comparatively scarce media research conducted on referenda in contrast conventional elections.(Dekavalla 2016) Thus, following what appears to be an emergent trend throughout European politics in utilising referenda as a means of democratic expression, understanding how the mass media treats and presents policy decisions to voters and how voters themselves respond to this form of political discourse in itself represents a novel and potentially important niche research area.(Dekavalla 2016)

A typical criticism of this single-case approach is that generalisability (or external validity) can be limited.(Bryman 2012) Nonetheless this is largely predicated upon the appropriateness of the case itself, which due to the Brexit referendum’s significance and the spectrum of trends shared with a variety of other political events throughout the world, suggests this all-too-common ‘limitation’ is in fact overcome.(Flyvberg 2006) Additionally, due to the

appropriateness of this case, according to Flyvberg this means that if the findings are valid in this instance they are also valid many for many (if not all) cases.(Flyvberg 2006: 230) .

In terms of reliability and replicability this research relies upon the clarity of definitions used for my analysis. By doing this the research becomes repeatable as the same news sources can be consulted.(Bryman 2012) Due to this qualitative focus, clear causality and external validity can be established due to the generalisability of the case in question. Furthermore the use of quantitative data also serves to strengthen and validate the conclusions arrived at in this paper.(Bryman 2012)

What this entails is a two-stage analytical process. The first involves the application of agenda-setting and framing to the source material, establishing key frames and themes which are discussed and categorised (please refer to appendix one to see the coding manual used). This will be combined with the application of Agnotology theory to interpret the content of these frames and themes; this analysis is further supported by quantitative data. Finally the outcome of the analysis is summarised to assess the role of post-factualism throughout the Brexit campaign (for a visual representation of the analytical structure refer to appendix two).

Methods

To conduct this research two pieces of campaign literature from both the official Remain and Leave campaigns for the Brexit referendum are employed.⁷ Due to both practical limitations and the comparatively peripheral role of other unofficial campaign groups' campaign material, these have been excluded. This is also partly informed by the more limited impact that can be reasonably assumed these campaign groups enjoyed. Key editorial articles produced by national newspapers just prior to the referendum date are also used. Due to the nature of editorials, these represent the most concise crystallisation of the key arguments, ideological positions and justifications provided over the many weeks and months prior to the referendum.(Chang 2015) Especially in regards to issues surrounded by controversy,

⁷ These are the official "why vote leave" campaign leaflet and the information on the "Get the Facts" webpage from http://www.strongerin.co.uk/get_the_facts

editorials therefore play a key role in the framing processes between politics and the media.(Chang 2015)

To ensure a balanced source range, editorials from The Telegraph, The Guardian, The Mirror, The Sun, The Daily Mail, The Independent and The Daily Express will be used. This range includes both broadsheet and tabloid newspapers encapsulating both ends of the political spectrum (and thereby both sides of the Brexit debate). Equally these publications are at present some of the most widely circulated newspapers in the UK.(Ponsford 2015)

The editorials' publication dates vary from 13th June to 22nd June, representing the official announcements stating the newspapers' position on the Brexit referendum. In terms of campaign material, a precise date of publication is harder to acquire, nonetheless the content used for this research was extracted on 11/04/2017 and can be assumed to have remained relatively unchanged given the fact that the campaign is now over.

Despite the centrality of qualitative content analysis in this paper to assess the role of post-factualism in the Brexit referendum, triangulation is used to improve validity and reliability. Specifically this will entail the incorporation of quantitative data both in regards to media coverage and opinion polling before and after the referendum.

Importantly, the inclusion of more quantitative data could come in the form of media coverage of the topics under research here. This would entail a greater insight into long-term salience of issues and potentially the strength of long-term framing processes within the media. Equally this form of data would also be able to indicate whether any important changes in news media content occurred as the polling day came closer. A further area of inquiry that could aid greater understanding would be that of interviews to elucidate incites from members of the public and journalists themselves in gauging the phenomena of post-factualism from different perspectives and with greater depth.

Operationalisation

The role of post-factualism is assessed through the presence and prominence of frames and themes that employ agnotology.

To assess the role of post-factualism it is therefore necessary to first identify the frames and agendas present within the data material used in this project. Agenda-setting theory allows for the categorisation of texts to be deconstructed into smaller parts, owing to the subject matter they use, the prominence of the subject and the quantity contained within a larger article, for instance. By utilising a specific selection of news topics, namely immigration, sovereignty and nationalism, this provides an access point to assess the role of post-factualism (see figure one for definitions and figure two for a delineation of this structure). These topics have been chosen because they are prominent features of the Brexit debate and are intimately connected to EU politics.

The selection of these topics is particularly well-suited to the study of agnotology because all three entail a departure or complicated relationship to factualism. For instance, alongside similarities with the tobacco industry of the past, all rely upon a particularly selective omission and obscurification of the empirical data to retain credibility. In the case of immigration this can refer to the lack of engagement with economic data regarding EU immigrations' impact upon the UK. Furthermore discussions regarding immigration, as it is a concrete phenomena (i.e. the movement of people into the UK) means there are both opportunities for claims to empirical data (in form of quantity and the economic effect immigrants have upon, for example wages) and because representations of immigration can also entail ideological, normative or implicit assumptions (for example that immigrants are more dangerous than native Brits). This therefore means there is the a priori potential that newspapers and campaign materials can utilise both forms of agnotology to frame immigration.

Sovereignty in the case of the Brexit debate throughout the campaign relied upon numerous competing and contradictory claims from both pro-remain and -leave groups, thereby often utilising partial or misleading information to counteract the others. Sovereignty, in the sense of how it is defined in this research paper (through legal sovereignty i.e. the ability of a state to pass its own laws and the ability of a state to use its money as it independently decides) also entails the opportunity to use empirical statistics and facts. For this reason it is possible to assess whether the statistical and empirical claims regarding legislation and financial contributions in text are subject to agnotology.

Nationalism often relies upon narrative and uniquely constructed conceptions of Britain and the EU, entailing a variety of opportunities for embellishment, factual debate but also strong narrative designed to evoke emotion and potentially diminish empiricism. Principally this often involves references to history, which could include specific narratives that negate or promote certain aspects guided by ideology. Nationalism as a concept also relies upon normative assumptions regarding what it is to be British, in the sense of national identity, and therefore can be guided by ideological assumptions; therefore it can be measured with regards to agnotology.

Often these discursive topics therefore involve the negation, manipulation or construction of fact. For these reasons these topics can adequately illuminate agnotology and identify the role of post-factualism.

The frames and themes located in the texts can be interpreted using Agnotology theory. This is achieved by identifying if the frames and agendas contain specific ideological, incorrect or misleading information. If they do, these can then be interpreted as possessing agnotological content. The presence of ideological frames and agendas in the texts are also analysed using Mill's white ignorance theory.

Agnotology can prove the presence of post-factualism because it focuses upon the proliferation of misleading or incorrect information. Thus if a frame or theme is agnotological it is not factual and instead will contain incorrect information (strategic ploy) or ideological judgements or exclusions of information (lost realm) thus it not only negates factual information but also replaces this with false information or normative (non-evidence based) judgements.

In this sense, agnotology represents post-factualism in action and in-turn creates agnotology (ignorance) within a social group, community or audience.

Furthermore Agenda-setting theory can assess the impact and scale of post-factualism because it proposes that the mainstream media influences the salience and opinions the public form around such issues.

To establish whether this is transferred to audiences and voters, polling data is used to convey the prominence of agnotology. Equally quantitative data on media coverage over a larger period of time is also utilised to assess the validity of the outcomes deriving from the qualitative analysis.

Finally this will record what, if any, frames and themes contain agnotological aspects, what these aspects are and how prominent they are amongst the general public and media coverage. This in-turn allows for a judgement to be made regarding the role of post-factualism.

Analysis

Newspaper and campaign group coverage of immigration

Arguably the key topic regarding UK membership of the European Union in the referendum campaign was that of immigration. Despite minor divergences amongst the news publications and campaign materials researched, a core frame emerged relating to the negative impact of EU migrants. Of notable exception from the materials analysed is The Telegraph editorial and the Remain ‘get the facts’ information page. All of the other texts employed the topic of immigration prominently.

Dominant frame: Causality between EU immigration quantity and wages, public services and unemployment

The most consistently cited attribute of the immigration agenda focused on the quantity of EU immigration and its impact upon public services (namely the NHS and schools), reduced wages and native unemployment. The Express and Vote Leave directly reference quantity as an issue, with the figures of 250000 (the population of Newcastle) and 185,000 both present. (‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017) (*Express.co.uk* 2016)

The Daily Mail make the closest association to what can be interpreted as a ‘Malthusian crisis thesis’ citing population disaster as a potential outcome of current population rates, “our population is spiralling towards an estimated 80 million by 2039”. (*The Daily Mail* 2016)

What is also emphasised by the likes of The Express is the British government’s inability to address the issue of migration scale whilst a member of the EU, “500 million people in Europe, from Paris, to Spain, to the islands of Greece could come and live here tomorrow if they chose to do so, and Parliament would be powerless to stop it”. (*Express.co.uk* 2016). Critical to this framing strategy is an emphasis on the contingent need to address EU immigration. The Daily Mail and Vote Leave evoke a shared urgency by describing the current policy situation as “madness” and “out of control”. (*The Daily Mail* 2016) (‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017) Thus in terms of this frames’ role in the policy process, the specific reference to quantity resulting from EU membership can thus be understood as the ‘cause’ of the current policy problem.

The characterisation of immigration is also framed as a threatening force by *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail*, both referencing the statement ‘way of life’ to emphasise urgency, “Staying in will be worse for immigration, worse for jobs, worse for wages and worse for our way of life.”(*The Sun* 2016) (*The Daily Mail* 2016) In this regard, the concept of white group interests is evidenced, whereby the ‘other’ (in this instance EU migrants) are understood as a threat to not just material interests but also the ‘way of life’ for ethnic Brits.

Crucial to evoking a sense of urgency is the decontextualisation of the quantity of EU immigration. Of note is the complete absence of any reference to the amount UK citizens residing and immigrating to other EU states. This is estimated by the UN to stand at approximately 1.2 million, which although smaller than the 3.3 million residing in the UK, provides an important consideration in judging the scale of EU immigration.(Green 2016) A further criticism is that these figures are never expressed as a percentage or compared to non-EU immigration. Another helpful contextualising feature would be to compare EU immigration to Britain with other key EU member states.

The consequence of the repeated lack of contextualisation offered throughout the texts is arguably evidenced by the gross misperceptions regarding migrant numbers amongst the British population. Across a poll conducted on June 9 2016 the proportion of EU immigrants in the UK was estimated at 15%, despite the fact the actual percentage is closer to 5% (this represents a disparity of seven million people). (‘The Perils of Perception and the EU’ 2016) (Mann 2016)

Of further interest in this regard is the contrasting perceptions shared between pro-leave and -remain voters. Leave voters estimated 20% of the UK population was made up of EU migrants, whereas pro-remain supporters placed this at 10%. (‘The Perils of Perception and the EU’ 2016) Despite indicating a more powerful trend of misperception amongst Brexit voters, this data also confirms a similar pattern amongst pro-remain voters, demonstrating large misperceptions reside on both sides of the debate.

In particular the cross-debate nature of this negative frame related to EU migrants is more pronounced when the causality between immigration and public services is discussed. Pro-Brexit texts make this connection most explicit, with *The Sun* referencing the impact of immigration on the NHS, schools, wages, housing stock, roads and jobs.(*The Daily Mail*

2016, *The Sun* 2016) The Daily Mail also highlights the proposed effect this has upon public school places, “As for the effects of demographic upheaval, a dramatic 8 per cent increase in just a year in the number of primary school pupils in class sizes over the ‘legal limit’ of 30 has recently been revealed”.(*The Daily Mail* 2016) Vote Leave emphasise the impact this has for the NHS, “Immigration will continue out of control putting public services like the NHS under strain”.(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

The Independent reiterates this frame by noting the pace and quantity of EU immigration, “It is fair to say that large-scale immigration can be problematic [...] It makes planning difficult – including for education, healthcare and welfare systems.” (*The Independent* 2016) To a lesser extent The Guardian also repeat this framing process, “There are millions of citizens whose wages have been stuck for many years [...]all at a time when immigration has increased.”(*The Guardian* 2016) The final notable reference to this frame is provided by the Mirror, “We understand concerns over uncontrolled immigration – and we will push for change if we remain in.”(*The Mirror* 2016) Again The Mirror indicates a fundamental acceptance of the immigration frame, whilst offering a more novel intent that EU reform with regards to immigration is possible.

The causation between immigration and public services, wages and employment therefore fulfils the ‘problem’ and the moral analysis phases of the policy framing process. The moral analysis can be identified as the perceived injustice created due to its effect upon ‘deserving’ British citizens. Again this promotes a solution wherein reform or exiting the EU altogether are the two alternatives to achieve a reduction in immigration.

Indicative of the near uniformity regarding negative representations of immigration, the overwhelming majority of newspaper coverage on immigration from April 15 – June 23 was negative, with 222 articles containing only negative statements; 17 positive and just three containing both positive and negative coverage across the national press.(Moore and Ramsay 2017) This suggests that the negative framing of immigration correlates to anti-immigration voting intentions (and policy process) from the referendum, largely created by a uniform agenda of attributes from the mainstream media and Vote Leave campaign. Equally this also strengthens the agenda-setting effect of accessibility amongst the general public, who are as a result far more likely to recruit this frame when considering immigration in the EU referendum.

A similar trend of representation with regards to immigration and public service pressure can also be located on a larger scale beyond the editorials covered in the paper. Pro-leave publications The Sun, Express and Daily Mail were three of the top four publications most likely to make a direct connection between immigration and public services with The Guardian, placed in third, only citing this connection in comment pieces. (Moore and Ramsay 2017)

In an even more emphatic indication of the consistency of this immigration frame, a comprehensive list of the issues cited during the referendum campaign that were linked to EU-immigration included:

“Creating a housing crisis[...];Taking British jobs[...];Depressing British wages; Creating a schools crisis; Depriving Britain’s schools of money and resources; Taking Primary school places from British children; Taking Secondary school places from British children; Gaining council houses ahead of British applicants; Putting unsustainable pressure on local public services; Strains on maternity services due to immigrants[...]; Overwhelming the NHS; Increasing the wait for hospitals and GP surgeries”(Moore and Ramsay 2017: 86)”

Similarly held views have also been consistently recorded amongst the general public both before and after the referendum. In the recent past polling of the British public has established widespread perceptions of EU immigration placing pressure on housing availability (69%), public services including health, transport and education (76%), the NHS (63%) and school places (71%)⁸.(Green 2017) (‘Big Majority Believe Immigration Increases Pressure on Schools and Hospitals’ 2016) Furthermore post-Brexit the desire to see immigration reduced remains highly popular with 70% desiring limitations on EU migrants.(Curtice 2016) What this may tie into is the agenda-setting concept of relevance and applicability, which if this polling data is taken accurately, implies the media successfully mobilised the negative framing of immigration to construct urgency in the electorates’ minds to focus on this topic during the policy process.

⁸ Important to note is that this polling data ranges from as early as 2011 to November 2015.

The most problematic feature of both media- and population-wide discourses regarding EU-immigration is the stark contrast it shares with current studies tasked with analysing the effect of EU immigration in the UK.

Absent information includes the established understanding that EU immigration is widely considered to have a negligible or no downward effect on wages. (Wadsworth et al. 2016) (Nickell and Saleheen 2015) (Portes 2016) Closely tied to this is ‘lump of labour fallacy’ promulgated by Vote Leave and editorials, instead numerous studies have recorded a negative correlation between immigration and unemployment contrary to claims EU immigrants ‘steal’ jobs from native British people. (Wadsworth et al., 2016) (Ruhs and Silva 2017)

In terms of public services, specifically the NHS, similarly negligible effects have been found with other explanatory factors such as ageing populations, increased costs for technology and expanded treatment being considered far more important.(Dayan 2016) For instance immigration has not been found to affect waiting times and in other areas has contributed to a negligible net positive or negative effect (depending upon waiting times for accident and emergency, outpatient service etc.) whilst demanding no greater usage of hospitals or doctors. (Wadsworth et al. 2016) (Guintella, Nicodemo, and Silva 2015)

For this reason this frame can be categorised as a form strategic ploy. Similar to agnotology strategies of the past with regard to tobacco and climate denial, the active suppression of relevant, integral and important information necessary to form a rational judgement regarding the effects of EU immigration has taken place.

Tellingly, this may indicate the importance of the constraint of post-factualism, particularly on the pro-remain press, whereby challenging this frame or employing context through expert opinion was deemed too unpopular to pursue. To support this interpretation, an insightful BES post-referendum survey found that the vast majority of pro-leave voters supported the statement, “I’d rather put my trust in the wisdom of ordinary people than the opinions of experts” (see figure seven for more detailed data).('Brexit Britain: British Election Study Insights from the Post-EU Referendum Wave of the BES Internet Panel' 2016)

Converse to the constraints of post-factualism, the lack of reference to such expert analyses can thereby be interpreted as enhancing the ability of the Leave claims to put forward a dominant frame on EU immigration, free from rebukes deriving from expert opinion.

Owing to this overwhelmingly negative representation of the EU immigration, there is just one solitary reference to immigration's positive impact by *The Independent*, "immigrants have been a boon for many employers and have enriched Britain culturally in many ways." (*The Independent* 2016) Nonetheless both the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* do make fleeting references to the failure of the "Tory government, not Brussels" that "has starved our schools and hospitals of funds, failed to act on zero hours contracts, failed to build enough houses and allowed the gap between rich and poor to grow to unseen levels." (*The Mirror* 2016) A similar sentiment is represented in the *Guardian*'s piece, "There are millions of citizens whose wages have been stuck for many years, whose job security has been hollowed out, and whose hopes of a fair deal are being undermined, all at a time when immigration has increased." (*The Guardian* 2016)

A report by Kings College London also noted that the complexion of the debate was stymied by a largely reactive and defensive response from pro-remain newspapers. Of notable similarity, this also included the analysis that the benefits of immigration were not highlighted. Instead what was consistently found was pro-remain newspapers' tendency to simply criticise the claims made by pro-leave sources, whilst ignoring recently published and relevant research from institutions such as UCL (University College London) of the economic benefits connected to EU- immigration .(Moore and Ramsay 2017) For instance this could have included reference to EU-migrants' positive contributions to government tax income; increased productivity, consumer spending and deficit reduction, (which the Office for Budget Responsibility projects would entail a 40% increase in national debt by 2026 if immigration were reduced to zero). (Wadsworth et al. 2016) With this in mind, a repeated and consistent failure of pro-remain publications to directly challenge the overwhelmingly negative reportage on EU-immigration and employment of relevant research on the issue of immigration can be established.

Therefore the role of post-factualism within the editorials under investigation suggests that the dominant frame throughout these texts was based upon a two-fold agnotology strategy of strategic ploy. Despite a large proportion of polling data indicating voters have a wildly

inaccurate perception of the quantity of EU immigration, there was still an emphatic public feeling in the belief of its deleterious effects. This can be connected to a symptom of post-factualism, namely a lack of empirical knowledge not necessarily correlating to uncertainty but instead a reliance on ‘gut’ feelings and highly subjective assessments. Also of note in terms of determining the role of post-factualism is that despite a vast array of expert studies specifically tasked with assessing the economic impact of EU immigration, this failed to achieve any significance throughout the campaign as that this was equally negated by both pro-remain and -leave editorials, alongside the Remain campaign material.

Of equal interest in appreciating the role of post-factualism, on average the areas receiving the lowest proportion of immigrants were the most likely to vote Brexit.(Travis 2016) When that is taken into account alongside the British publics’ overwhelming desire for immigration controls, this points to a more abstracted fear of immigration driving the policy process related to the white ignorance concept of white group interests. The agenda-setting concept of obtrusiveness can also support such an interpretation as the editorial uniformity on presenting immigration in a negative manner served to construct a powerful, if contemporarily inaccurate, conception of immigration in the British publics’ mind largely devoid of actual experience with immigration themselves. Furthermore the widespread misperception of both quantity and the effect of EU immigration, and the deficit of data to support such common place views, suggest post-factualism played a significant role in both directing media content but also an increasingly evidence-free policy-process with regard to immigration during the Brexit campaign.

Newspaper and campaign group coverage of sovereignty

The second key topic analysed is that of sovereignty. Despite serving as a core concept throughout the campaign, its necessarily general and sometimes vague definition meant it was employed in reference to all manner of policy areas. In comparison to other more narrowly defined and more clearly comprehensible issues such as health or education, sovereignty was linked to a variety of other topics and thus served as a crucial binding topic in the campaign.(Moore and Ramsay 2017) This was particularly prominent in terms of explicit references to immigration and the economy.(Moore and Ramsay 2017) Thus in part

owing to practicality, sovereignty has been limited to what can be termed ‘financial sovereignty’ referring to financial contributes made to the EU and more generally legal or judicial sovereignty. Contrary to the topic of immigration, sovereignty offered more multi-faceted and in many instances contentious areas of debate between pro-leave and -remain texts.

Dominant frame – Britain does not have sovereignty whilst in the EU

Deriving exclusively from pro-Brexit literature, namely The Telegraph, The Daily Mail, Vote Leave and The Express (encompassing all of the pro-Brexit sources in this study) the dominant frame emphasised Britain’s diminished sovereignty whilst a member of the EU. Nonetheless contestation was offered by the likes of the Mirror. Owing to The Telegraph and The Daily Mail, the historical context of the EU transforming from an economic to a political institution is cited as the significant feature that indicates Britain’s loss of sovereignty. (*The Telegraph* 2016) (*The Daily Mail* 2016)

The primary target of the pro-leave texts was the EU’s judicial system and legislative powers, which are now purportedly, “in charge of our borders, immigration, asylum and even our intelligence services” (*The Daily Mail* 2016). Furthermore this politicisation means that, “some 50 or 60 per cent of our [Britain’s] laws and 70 per cent of regulations are dictated to us by Brussels”, this position is similarly shared by Vote Leave who select a less precise claim of “over half” of laws affecting Britain. (*The Daily Mail* 2016) (‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

This specific assertion is nonetheless contested by the Mirror, putting the figure closer to 13 cent, whilst also emphasising the centrality of key policy areas such as defence, health and education still within British parliamentary sovereignty. (*The Mirror* 2016)

What this involves in the framing policy process is the undue influence EU legislation on the UK influencing trade, security and immigration policy. Furthermore this is represented by pro-leave texts as morally unjust because of the UK’s right to govern itself, with the solution being to exit the EU. Contrastingly the Mirror essentially rejects this policy frame by claiming the EU’s legislative impact on the UK is minimal and therefore not a problem or at best, a minor one.

In specific regard to the estimation of EU legislation affecting the UK, such claims can be situated within the typology of strategic ploy. Principally this derives from the fact that no official body tasked with assessing the overall impact of EU-origin directives or legislation can accurately assess the proportion of legislation affecting the UK. This has been aptly summarised by the House of Commons library, “there is no totally accurate, rational or useful way of calculating the percentage of national laws based on or influenced by the EU.”(Ashworth-Hayes 2016)

With this statement in mind, the wildly varying claims made by both pro-leave and -remain editorials brings to light the degree to which both present an extreme and highly contentious claim assessing the impact of EU legislation on UK sovereignty. To contextualise the veracity of these claims, the most accurate contemporary assessments on this issue estimate the percentage of EU legislation affecting the UK range from 15% to 50%. (Miller 2010) In this sense both *The Mirror* and *Vote Leave* treat this estimate without any reference to the lack of verifiability or the context in which experts have cautioned using such data. Tellingly, the House of Commons assertion that there is no ‘rational’ way to calculate the impact of the EU as a percentage serves as an instructive indication of post-factualism. Thus the enhancing impact of post-factualism upon media practices is illustrated whereby actors feel free to manipulate data to support their position, shifting their arguments away from evidence-based policy solutions.

Sovereignty featured as a prominent news object issue across publications, totalling 1924 articles employing the terms sovereignty or sovereign with regards to UK-EU membership, enhancing accessibility of this issue amongst the electorate.(Moore and Ramsay 2017). Explicit reference to laws was far more peripheral, featuring in only 70 articles, however this does necessarily exclude the fact that the thrust of argument was not directed towards sovereignty and in-turn, legislative sovereignty.(Moore and Ramsay 2017).

In terms of public opinion, sovereignty has been recorded in some instances as the main reason for Brexit votes, with 49% citing this as their primary consideration.(Wells 2016). Equally another study recorded sovereignty and the ability of the UK to act independently as twice as prominent in Brexiteers’ voting intentions than Remainers.(Vasilopoulou 2016) Overall what this could suggest is that sovereignty per-say was a key theme motivating Brexit voters and potentially rendered highly salient by pro-leave editorials and the campaign, with the question of EU legislation being a core crux of the debate that exemplified a wider

divergence amongst pro-leave and -remain voters regarding British sovereignty whilst a member of the EU.

Aspect theme – Financial Sovereignty

A key theme running throughout the Vote Leave's campaign material is an emphasis on the financial contributions made to the EU. This was closely associated to a loss on other potential spending 'priorities', "If we Vote Leave, we will take back control and can spend our money on our priorities [...] We stop handing over £350 million to Brussels". ('Why Vote Leave' 2017) This figure is repeatedly raised throughout the campaign material, while it is speculated that the weekly membership fee could be redirected toward NHS resources, "Enough to build a brand new, fully-staffed NHS hospital every week". ('Why Vote Leave' 2017) To further illustrate this point, the current EU contribution budget is also compared with respect to NHS cancer drug investment (£340m) with the yearly contribution for EU membership (expressed as £2000m), furthermore this juxtaposition is also applied to the English and Scottish school budgets. ('Why Vote Leave' 2017)

By utilising this figure the framing policy process can be expressed as the problem being a lack of investment in public services and the cause being financial contributions to the EU. Hitherto, the moral analysis is that this is unjust because it prevents the UK government from addressing its priorities, rendering the only policy solution as an exit from the EU.

Overall this pushes a powerful theme that the EU is a direct cause for the underfunding of public services in Britain, with the EU contributions effectively argued to be valueless. In this sense there is a shared causality with the issue of immigration and financial sovereignty, both emanating from the EU and creating diminished public services.

This prominent claim within the Leave campaign material (repeated five times), was criticised twice by the UK Statistics Authority, first as 'potentially misleading' in an official statement. (Banducci and Stevens 2016) Andrew Dilcott of the UK Statistics Authority also reiterated a similar sentiment, announcing the figure was "misleading and undermines trust in official statistics." (Banducci and Stevens 2016) Despite these criticisms, the continued

pervasiveness of this claim also indicates the role of post-factualism in enhancing Leave's ability to proliferate and utilise this figure throughout their campaign.

Primarily the inaccuracy of £350m owes to the subsequent rebate the UK receives, which if included reduces the figure to £250m per week. ('The UK's EU Membership Fee' 2017) Equally important is the contribution of EU grants that are additionally repatriated to UK which has been forecast at £4.5 billion per year. ('The UK's EU Membership Fee' 2017) In general this seems to indicate a quite blatant disregard for communicating an accurate figure, which despite heavy criticism, was present throughout the official 10-week campaign. For this reason, this aspect theme can also be interpreted as an instance of strategic ploy.

Of the greatest interest for establishing the impact of this specific claims' agenda-setting effect and in-turn the role of post-factualism, ICM conducted a pre-referendum poll asking how many respondents had heard the claim, of which 75% confirmed they had and roughly 50% stated they had also heard it was false. (Banducci and Stevens 2016) Of importance is that despite hearing this rebuttal, 50% of Brexit supporters still rated the claim as strongly or mostly believable, which may be indicative of both accessibility and applicability due to this claim's prominence throughout the campaign. (Banducci and Stevens 2016) Clearly this indicates that post-factualism was potentially highly pervasive, namely in connection with the tendency for proven-to-be false claims to retain credibility, indicating another shift away from evidence-based policy-making.

Aspect theme - Break up of United Kingdom

The implications Brexit could hold for the unity of the United Kingdom is given just one sentence within The Guardian editorial, "It may push Scottish nationalists to proceed with a break-up of Britain [and] it will put the settlement in Northern Ireland [...] at risk". (*The Guardian* 2016)

Given the potential political significance of this eventuality, the near complete omission of this hugely significant policy outcome from the texts under examination is telling of the ideological blindness of both pro-remain and -leave literature.

This was typical of the wider trend in media coverage throughout the campaign, with just 0.8% of all coverage (broadcast and newspaper) relating to devolution issues connected to Brexit. ('Media Coverage of the EU Referendum (Report 5)' 2016) (Jen Birks 2016)

Arguably this indicates an example of lost realm agnotology. Owing to the prioritisation of a small range of monolithic issues during the Brexit campaign, a near total blindness to other issues relevant to the UK's membership in the EU took place. The negation of the constitutional outcomes of Brexit evidences a unique political geography amongst both the media and electorate, wherein the centrality of economic well-being and the larger European geopolitical issues were considered of far greater urgency.

Arguably this is symptomatic of the English or Westminster-centric nature of the discourses surrounding the referendum and ethnocentrism within them, whereby the interests and concerns of primarily English voters and London-based media were prioritised. This also conveys a specific political geography in both the abstract and very literal sense, the common trend of English domination also seems indicative of a well-entrenched and systemic subordination of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales for many years prior. Seemingly the dissonance between these respective national groups was also reflected in their divergent voting outcomes, with both Scotland and Northern Ireland opting to remain across their national populations. (Kirk, Coles, and Krol 2017) In this regard the negation of the interests of other members of the United Kingdom could indicate a legacy of colonial dominance, hereby focusing on the continued centrality of English interests without regard for the subordinate member states and the implications Brexit could have upon the peace agreement in Ireland and indeed Scottish independence.

Newspaper and campaign group coverage of nationalism

Somewhat unsurprisingly the idea of British and UK identity featured as an important, if less tangible, characteristic of both pro-remain and -leave texts under examination. Owing to Britain's history, common reference to British values and the oft-cited concerns of immigration from abroad, national identity and history were consistently referenced. This was not the case across all texts under examination; however a sizeable portion employed either reference to colonial history, desires to reinvigorate commonwealth and Anglosphereic

relations in their framing of the referendum. Contrary to the majority of the previous analysis topics, lost realm and Mill's conceptual framework of 'white ignorance' features prominently as the analytical framework to understand the frames, themes and agnotology contained within said texts.

Central Frame – Colonial identity

Located amongst the highest number of texts was framing the significance of the EU in reinforcing or diminishing Britain's historically derived power, influence and freedom. Predominating in pro-leave texts, this was intrinsically linked to a policy solution which would enable the UK to, "regain our influence in the wider world and become a truly global nation once again". ('Why Vote Leave' 2017) This was equally supported by The Telegraph, "do we want to be an independent nation once more, free to make our own decisions", and The Sun, "we will reassert our sovereignty". (*The Sun* 2016) Thus a significant desire to be able to act unilaterally in international affairs, as was the case historically, is evoked.

The significance of these statements is doubly relevant when considered in connection to references to British history, "Our country has a glorious history"; "[Britain is] a great seafaring country, with enterprise in our DNA, unafraid to reach out to Europe and beyond" (*The Daily Mail* 2016) (*The Sun* 2016). Furthermore an insistence that Britain cannot revive this history is criticised as defeatist, "and flies in the face of this country's great mercantile traditions." (*The Telegraph* 2016)

In terms of policy framing, these statements define the problem as one of a loss of British identity or potentially values, partly due to diminished global influence in comparison to the past. With this sentiment in mind, the cause is once again the EU which morally is conveyed as producing an 'unbritish' role which can only be recaptured by leaving the EU.

A similar reference to past colonial history is however also utilised by the Mirror to support an anti-Brexit position. Specifically this frame is slightly adapted to incorporate the role of 'working people' who, "made Britain Great [...] who laboured in the mills and mines that powered the engines of Empire." (*The Mirror* 2016) Alternatively, similar references to "influence, power or economic might" are used to support Britain's position within the EU as the necessary action to safeguard against, "this great nation [...] skulk[ing] off into a

shadowy corner of the globe, shaking with timidity. For proud and patriotic Brits want their country to stand strong alongside other nations on the world stage as we have done throughout history.”(*The Mirror* 2016) Alternatively therefore, a contrasting policy frame is put forward, also supported by the remainder of the pro-remain texts (comprising of *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and *Remain*). Instead it is proposed that Britain can more successfully maintain its role as a powerful global actor by remaining in the EU.

Subsequently this does suggest that with regards to the issue of constraints, post-factualism was far less uniform in limiting or enhancing specific positions within campaign and editorial texts. This is illustrated even further by direct criticisms of such colonial references by *The Guardian* and *The Independent*; “Thursday’s vote is in some ways a choice between an imaginary past of which too many in this country cannot let go and a future about which all of us are inescapably uncertain.”(*The Guardian* 2016); “In the Brexiteers’ vision, the world is a frightening place and one from which anxious Britain should retreat, returning somehow to a version of the UK circa 1952 that actually never existed in the first place(...)This timid, insular vision is not one we can share.”(*The Independent* 2016)

Nonetheless in terms of repeated references to British history, alongside a proposed reinvigoration of Britain’s role as a global power, implies a necessarily positive reading of Britain’s colonial history and ethnocentrism. Just as relevant is the lack of reference by pro-leave and -remain publications critical of this frame’s engagement with the atrocities committed in the name of the British Empire, suggesting a fairly uniform ‘white-washing’ of Britain’s imperial tendencies and leaving this narrative unchallenged.

Instead the texts encourage or chose to avoid criticising an essentialist reading of the British national identity, with references to “DNA” and the path of Britain to “to fulfil our destiny as one of the world’s greatest trading nations” forming strong associations to both a historically derived but also predetermined, powerful future role. (*The Daily Mail* 2016) Excluding the impracticality of this goal, an emphasis is nonetheless placed upon essentialist readings of the British national identity and destination of the British people, embodying a colonial mindset of ethnic superiority. Furthermore repeated references to the historical legacy of Britain in the world also seemingly refers to the ideals of white memory or white amnesia, wherein a similarly benign understanding of Britain’s previously global trade’s reliance on colonialism is based upon a highly selective reading of its imperial history. Also relevant is the way this is

connected to British national identity, which as is stated can be linked to references in the text with ‘economic might’ and ‘the working (British) people’s role in empire’ across the world.

In terms of maintaining a positive and largely benign view of the role of empire, as much as 59% of the British public have believed in the recent past that it is something to be proud of. (Dahlgreen 2014) This suggests the general ‘ignorance’ surrounding the content and nature of colonial rule may very well still be in place. To support the general perspective that colonialism is interpreted specifically in the way conveyed in the texts in question, 49% of the public believe that the net benefits of infrastructure, trade and institutions have left ex-colonies better off, contrasted with just 15% believing the opposite. (Dahlgreen 2014) Even more revealing is that 34% also expressed a desire for the British Empire to exist today. (Dahlgreen 2014) This suggests that mobilising the frame of colonial identity resonates strongly with long-held views of the British public, enhancing the applicability of this frame when considering the Brexit question. Furthermore this suggests that a prevailing ‘white ignorance’ not dissimilar from the concept of white amnesia and indeed lost real agnotology appears evident.

The Vote Leave campaign reiterates Britain’s current positions as, “the 5th biggest economy in the world [...]the 4th largest military power in the world [...]one of 5 permanent members of the UN Security Council and a leading member of NATO.”(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017) Echoing such statements, The Telegraph also emphasise Britain’s current capacity (and implied capability) of regaining global stature, “This country is a leading economic power, its language is global, its laws are trusted and its reputation for fair dealing is second to none.” (The Telegraph 2016) The Mirror also aims to evoke a similar sense of national pride, “Great Britain remains one of the finest nations on earth.”(The Mirror 2016) Finally The Telegraph partially contest an interpretation that such claims aim to reinvigorate a colonialism mindset suggesting a vision of Britain, “not harking back to a Britannic golden age lost in the mists of time but looking forward to a new beginning for our country”. (The Telegraph 2016)

These final statements, although more vague in terms of reference to national identity through the lenses of colonialism per say, nonetheless seems intent to evoke an insistence that a similarly powerful and influential Britain is possible if the decision to leave the European Union is taken. Overall these statements can therefore be interpreted as relying upon an agnotological reading of British history, requiring a collective forgetting of the reality of colonial rule and the reasons why Britain was a global power. Furthermore, despite vast

quantities of historical literature and considerable debate regarding empire, this is not mentioned once in any literature under examination. Despite lacking explicit reference in many instances, the predominance of pro-empire sentiment amongst the British public, and similar references in key editorials, this suggests that such ideologically blind sentiments were prevalent and possibly important in the policy-making process. In this regard, similar to the topics of immigration or sovereignty, the ideal of nationalism can be interpreted as influencing the policy process. Furthermore this can also be interpreted as a largely enhancing feature for texts that choose to evoke romanticised notions of British history, in this instance with particular success for Leave. Nonetheless it is important to note that a far more contentious treatment of British identity, with specific reference to colonialism is brought forward by the pro-remain press, suggesting a far less uniform frame was evident.

Central theme – Britain should leave EU to reinvigorate global (colonial) world role

In similar reference to the reinvigoration of past global relations based upon British colonialism, pro-Brexit literature also makes a variety of arguments formed around links to commonwealth member states and other anglospheric nations. The Daily Mail, Vote Leave, The Telegraph, The Express and The Sun all make references to either past colonial foreign relations or conversely more ambiguously to ‘the rest of the world’.

The latter references to international affairs derive from The Express, “There is a free trade zone from Iceland to Turkey and the Russian border and we will be part of it” simply suggesting a larger area of free trade is available outside the borders of the EU. (*Express.co.uk* 2016) In reference to a potential ‘hard Brexit’ The Sun also evokes a similar theme, “Even if Europe did attempt to make trade difficult, with that door closed another is opened; that to the rest of the world”. (*The Sun* 2016) The Telegraph echoes a similar position, nonetheless making direct reference to past global trading practices, making implicit a link to colonial trading, “A world of opportunity is waiting for a fully independent Britain. [...] To say we cannot thrive free of the EU’s constraints is defeatist and flies in the face of this country’s great mercantile traditions.” (*The Telegraph* 2016) The Express also represent this opportunity in similar terms, “If so, let’s leave it [the EU] and, using our enormous clout as the world’s fifth biggest economy, strike great trade deals with the other 85 per cent of the world.” (*The Sun* 2016)

The impact of this ties into popular narratives relating to the ‘global’ opportunities of Brexit, tellingly citing the likes of India (which is mentioned as an important future trade partner in Leave editorials) as a new opportunity for British trade. This in-turn clearly indicates an important conception of the ‘rest of the world’ relative to Britain, namely as an undiscovered entity waiting again for British engagement, as is proposed by Mills’ collective amnesia.

The two most direct references to colonial power are provided by *The Sun* and *The Express*. *The Express* cites the importance of the Commonwealth as a source of trade, “we still have the Commonwealth. Canada – one of the world’s richest countries – awaits”. (*Express.co.uk* 2016) In addition *The Sun* suggests that by modelling Britain’s foreign relations upon that of, “America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and many other great democracies”, Britain “can become richer, safer and free at long last to forge our own destiny [...] And as we were the first to do centuries ago.” (*The Sun* 2016) *The Express* also utilise the projected potential of commonwealth and colonial-era relations to rebuke claims of xenophobia and racism, “Britain would be no less tolerant or multicultural if it left the comparatively un-diverse EU – it may even be more so[...] How could it be racist to endorse a system which would allow more, not less, people in from our old Commonwealth allies of Australia, Canada, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the West Indies?”(*Express.co.uk* 2016) Clearly this implies a belief that Britain free from the EU can reconstruct its relations in the mould of a colonial structure as was the case in the past but also shared with the previous Anglospheric nations today.

Connected to the criticisms of powerlessness owing to the EU’s founding principles and the EU court itself, alongside an added indication of ethnocentrism, a policy solution is offered by *The Express* in the form of a points based immigration system. *The Express* refers directly to (in reference to control over immigration), “The points system [as the] sensible way of doing this”, despite it not being directly linked, it was be reasonably assumed this is in reference to the immigration system found in a variety of other Anglocentric states such as Australia which has featured prominently in numerous Brexit campaign groups’ policy aims.(*Express.co.uk* 2016; Donald 2016)

What this framing process by the pro-leave editorials and campaign puts forward is a problem defined by the lack of ability for the UK to priorities colonial and Anglocentric international relationships as a result of EU membership. In this sense this is wrong because it overlooks

the shared interests of the Anglosphere, but also Britain's seemingly rightful role in the world.

References to Brexit as an opportunity for reinvigorated ties to the commonwealth and colonial ties was also made by prominent Brexiteer Daniel Hannan.(Hannan 2015) Of further significance was Liam Fox's (Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade since 2016) statement, "The United Kingdom, is one of the few countries in the European Union that does not need to bury its 20th century history"(Fox 2016) Despite featuring peripherally, this nonetheless may indicate the ideological and therefore implicit nature of this trend in discourse, subsequently crystallising in the editorial texts under investigation.

In terms of an ethnocentric desire to reinvigorate commonwealth ties, whilst also closely connected to the issue of immigration and specifically EU freedom of movement, amongst the British public freedom of movement within the commonwealth has proven more popular by 58% to 46% (Dahlgreen 2015). Again this is indicative of a strong applicability amongst the voting public with a similar conception of Britain's relationships around the world.

Thus the shared history, conventions and even governance are seemingly evoked, with what appears to be a romantic ideal of British ethnocentricity (similar to that of white ignorance) that still exists within the Anglosphere. Furthermore the repositioning of Britain within these relations also again seems to imply an important feature of collective amnesia, ignoring both the gradual independence of these states due to their rejection of colonial rule. This may also relate to the concept of white group interests in that it is implied such commonwealth states and namely the Anglosphere have necessarily convergent interests, counterpoised with other European states.

Overall this suggests a theme indicative of the entire spectrum of white ignorance in one form or another, ranging from ethnocentrism is the conception of an untouched world waiting for British engagement, collective amnesia regarding why these colonial ties do not exist today and an implication of group interests with the anglosphere contrary to other European peoples.

Concluding Analysis Statements

Despite a diverse set of frames and themes being employed by both pro-remain and -leave texts under analysis, a key number of indicators present themselves to suggest these can be interpreted as part of a wide and well-entrenched agnotology campaign regarding the referendum.

The most marked omission is near complete absence of any qualitative data from the 'Stronger In' campaign. This is because their campaign material barely cites any of the topics under analysis and furthermore, does not directly address any of the arguments put forward by Leave. Clearly this is the biggest indication of the constraining effects of post-factualism and is arguably hugely indicative of why the campaign failed. Contrary to other pro-remain texts researched, which contested whilst largely adopting the dominant frames on for instance immigration, Stronger In simply negated these issues entirely by focusing upon a one-dimensional expert-led economic framing strategy.

This constraining factor appears evidenced if polling data by the BES conveying that Brexit voters were overwhelmingly opposed to expert opinion, rendering many topics incontestable on the basis of factual merit. A similar constraint could be used to explain the lack of action by the pro-remain press to factor in similar arguments themselves, thereby rendering immigration, but also all manner of related topics such as sovereignty and nationalism, absent from current expert consensus.

Nonetheless as cited previously, this effect of post-factualism and the tendency for pejorative and misleading claims also acts as a facilitating factor for misleading and ideologically driven claims. For instance, 19 complaints were brought to the IPSO (Independent Press Standards Organisation) against misleading pro-Brexit news stories during the campaign with the majority not being ruled on prior to June 23rd.(Ponsford 2016) In this regard post-factualism seemingly enhanced the ability of news organisations to proliferate misleading and inaccurate frames and themes to support their positions.

Finally this trend can be summarised in the often consistently shared views amongst the public from both pro-leave and -remain voters. Tellingly the campaign of agnotology seems to have been successful, crafting a widespread misperception of the topics researched here whilst also leaving large swathes of the population uncertain on a variety of topics (for instance one survey found 30% of the voting public would change their voting decision in the final week of the campaign, alongside the fact that less than one third of voters felt informed

or well-informed just days before the referendum).(Crouch 2016) (Cushion and Lewis 2016) Arguably this suggests that the Brexit vote was a largely evidence-free policy-making process on June 23rd.

Conclusion

The role of post-factualism in Brexit, and arguably in various other contemporary western democratic elections in general, is symptomatic of political and media shift away from references and consultation of expert and academic-led empiricism, including a widespread distrust of such sources. In place of this, an often highly misleading and deceptive and agenda-setting process ensues on specific news objects within the media that can constrain and enhance actors on both sides of the political spectrum. In-turn this can lead to an increasingly evidence-free policy-making process amongst the electorate. Important to note however is that this process can be more effective or pervasive with regard to different news topics, for instance the success of such processes appeared more influential on immigration than on the topic of nationalism or sovereignty in this study.

Nonetheless when summarising the trend of post-factualism with regard to immigration, sovereignty and nationalism the relative absence of expert, academic or ‘objective’ data in any cases to support the empirical claims made is widespread and pervasive. Instead the prevalence of normative and ideologically driven or misleading factual claims seemingly took place. Equally amongst pro-remain texts there was a notable failure to directly challenge many of the dominant frames and themes on the basis of expert opinion, despite its availability.

For instance, despite the uniform frame of EU migration creating havoc across Britain, none of this is substantiated by contemporary expert opinion; with the resounding majority of available research directly contradicting the interpretations proliferated by pro-leave and – remain literature. As a result the overwhelming thrust of both editorials and campaign literature focuses on both the scale and quantity of immigration, citing this as an indication of the unsustainable current policy situation. To support this premise, both pro-remain and - leave texts make an explicit causation between EU migrants and reductions in public service provision, wages and unemployment rates. Furthermore similar perceptions regarding the

impact of EU immigration is reflected in opinion polling of the British public and data on long-term newspaper coverage of the EU referendum with regard to immigration.

On sovereignty, specifically the issues of EU legislation and financial sovereignty, a similarly blatant disregard for factual or evidenced-based claims is evidenced through either the misrepresentation of the percentage of EU law affecting the UK or the financial contributions made to the EU. In terms of legal sovereignty, both pro-remain and -leave publications utilised erroneous estimations of EU legislation affecting the UK to justify their claims, evidencing a seemingly laxer and strategic manipulation of fact within the media. Despite being unable to establish an explicit causation between this news agenda and the public, the issue of sovereignty and unilateral independence was established as a key reason for the policy decision to leave the European Union.

To a lesser extent a similar absence, although owing more so to an ideological blindness, can be identified with regards to national identity, principally through a highly revisionist interpretation of Britain's colonial past in advocating for a revitalised global role for the UK post-Brexit. Arguably the diminished importance and negation of expert research on these topics, highly influenced by the ideological tendencies of collective amnesia, ethnocentrism and white group interests, an optimistic recounting of British colonialism is utilised with the intention of supporting similar practices in the future. Furthermore an explicit desire to reattach British national identity to the commonwealth and fellow Anglosphere countries is articulated, similarly reflecting an explicit linking of British identity with the British empire in national campaigns and press.

With these analytical conclusions in mind, the role of post-factualism in western democratic elections can be established. The two more general conclusions regarding post-factualism is that this phenomena has a sizeable effect upon constraining and enhancing the frames and agendas used by the media and, due to agenda-setting and framing effects, subsequently reflected within the electorate. In the case of Brexit this entailed the rejection of expert opinion and the embrace of normative and often ideologically-driven statements, indicative of both strategic ploy and lost realm as is delineated through agnotology. This suggests that news media and campaign groups feel more empowered through post-factualism to incorporate misleading or deceptive claims into their news coverage; confident these will not be successfully rebuked or disbelieved by the public or other actors.

Just as important is how such frames and agendas impact the policy-making process, namely through the transference of a similar agenda of attributes to the electorate. As is evidenced through polling both prior to and after the referendum result, the frames and agendas proliferated by key news organisations and campaign groups both reflected and enhanced the decision-making process linked to the UK's decision to leave the European Union. In this regard a shift away from evidenced-based policy took place, supplanted with a far more dogmatic and ideologically derived decision-making process.

With these important trends in mind, further research establishing the presence and role of post-factualism in other western democratic elections can serve to build a new but valuable analytical model to understand media and policy-making processes in modern democratic events.

Appendix

Coding Manual: Appendix One

Main news object – Brexit

Three key agendas rendered salient in the texts:

- Immigration
- Sovereignty
- Nationalism

Frames, central themes and aspect themes

Then central themes, frames, and aspect themes are constructed via the agenda of attributes to accurately characterise these issues to support either remain or leave positions.

Dominant frame i.e. top in the agenda of attributes of the news object

- The most prevalent theme across numerous publications
- A shared vocabulary that is present throughout the whole text, not limited to one section i.e. a side argument

Central theme i.e. a key topic throughout a news object

- Similar to frame but not as prominent
- Represents a significant amount of a text and can be found across numerous publications

Aspect theme i.e. secondary in the agenda of attributes of the news object.

- Typically a caveat to a wider argument within the texts, not present or repeated throughout.
- Secondly these themes are not present throughout all the publications, instead they may only feature in a few or in only pro or anti-Brexit texts

Frame, central theme and aspect theme definitions:

Immigration:

Dominant frame: Causality between EU immigration quantity and wages, public services and unemployment

- Mention of quantity of immigration
- Relation to immigration and negative consequences to public services and wages

Sovereignty:

Dominant frame – Britain does not have sovereignty whilst in the EU

- References to the judicial power and legal power of the EU
- EU is now ‘political’ rather than economic in form and structure thereby taking power away from domestic government
- Reference to legislation emanating from the EU

Aspect theme – financial sovereignty

- Reference to financial contributions made the UK government to the EU
- Reference to alternative uses of financial contributions if the UK were not a member of the EU

Aspect theme – break-up of the United Kingdom

- Reference to the potential for devolution of the United Kingdom if Brexit takes place.

Nationalism

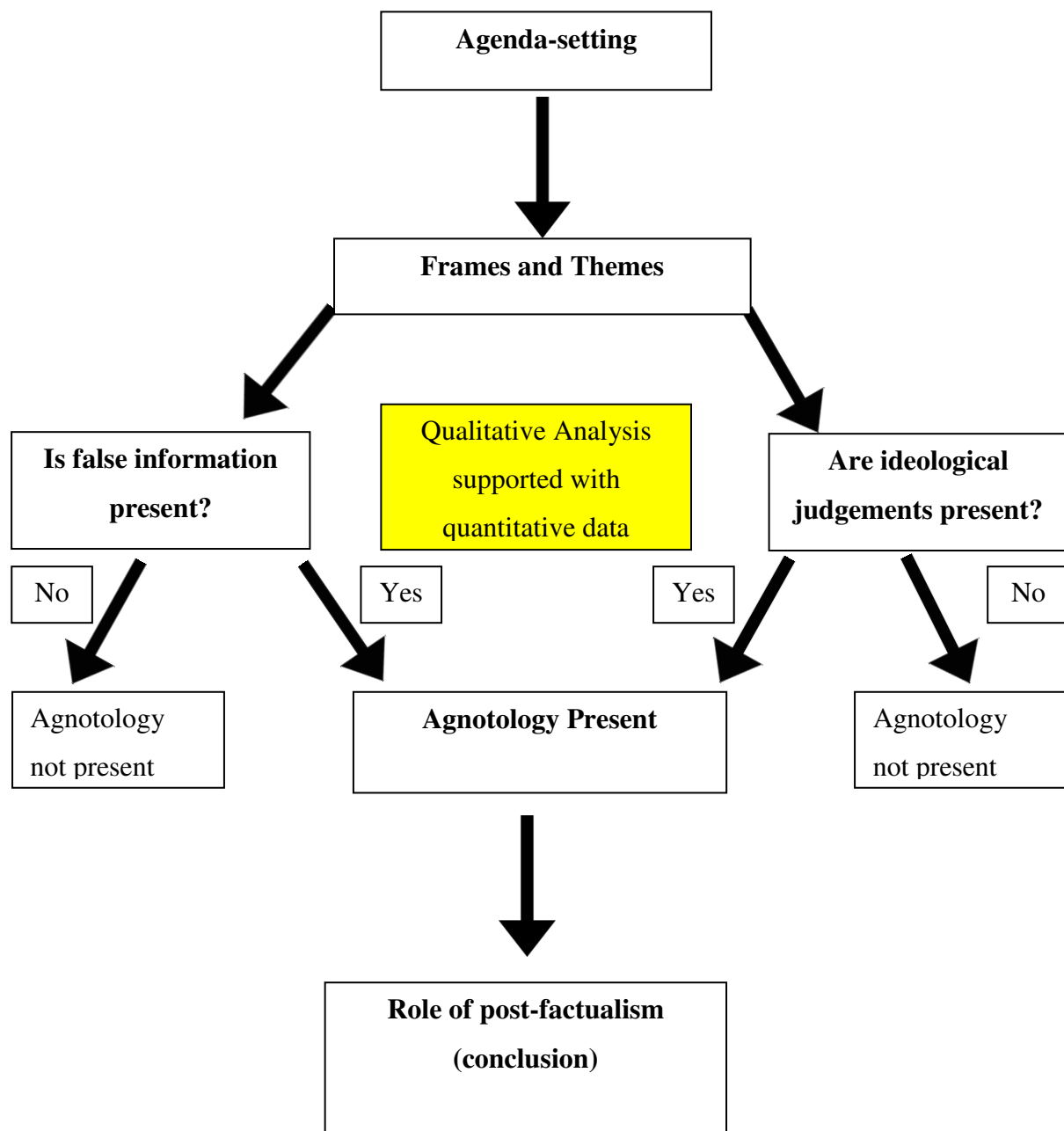
Central theme – Colonial Identity

- References to British history as a powerful, global, influential nation
- References to trade, sea, empire

Central theme – Britain should leave EU to reinvigorate global (colonial) world role

- Reference to commonwealth and the Anglospheric nations (USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand)
- References to the world, globe, global

Appendix Two: Theoretical Operationalisation



Appendix Three: Frame, central theme and aspect theme chart

Immigration	Dominant frame – EU Immigration is too high and has led to strains on public services and wages	Counter Aspect theme – immigration has been positive.
The Mirror	X	
The Daily Mail	X	
The Telegraph		
The Guardian	X	
The Independent	X	X
The Express	X	
The Sun	X	
Leave	X	
Remain		

Sovereignty	Dominant frame – Dominant frame – Britain does not have sovereignty whilst in the EU	Aspect theme- Break-up of the United Kingdom	Aspect theme – Financial Sovereignty
The Mirror	X		
The Daily Mail	X		
The Telegraph	X		
The Guardian		X	
The Independent			
The Express	X		
The Sun			
Leave	X		X
Remain			

Nationalism	Frame – Colonial Identity	Central theme – Britain should leave EU to reinvigorate global (colonial) world role
The Mirror	X	
The Daily Mail	X	
The Telegraph	X	X
The Guardian	X	
The Independent	X	
The Express		X
The Sun	X	X
Leave	X	X
Remain	X	

Appendix Four – Immigration quotations

Immigration

Dominant frame: Causality between EU immigration quantity and wages, public services and unemployment

Quotes:

The Mirror -

“We understand concerns over uncontrolled immigration – and we will push for change if we remain in.”(Mirror 2016)

“But although the EU is flawed, it cannot carry the can for many of frustrations felt by many people up and down the country.”(Mirror 2016)

“It is the hard working people of this country who have had to battle to survive the recent recession caused by reckless bankers whose wrongdoing went largely ignored by the establishment.”(Mirror 2016)

The Daily Mail -

“[...]the madness that is the free movement of peoples has brought waves of migrants sweeping across Europe, depressing wages, putting **immense strain** on housing and public services, (Comment 2016)

“[...]our population is spiralling towards an estimated 80 million by 2039? As for the effects of demographic upheaval, a dramatic 8 per cent increase in just a year in the number of primary school pupils in class sizes over the ‘legal limit’ of 30 has recently been revealed.”(Comment 2016)

“[...]making communities fear for their traditional ways of life.” (Comment 2016)

The Guardian -

“There are millions of citizens whose wages have been stuck for many years, whose job security has been hollowed out, and whose hopes of a fair deal are being undermined, all at a time when immigration has increased.”(*The Guardian* 2016)

“If the EU has become a whipping boy, that is in large part because of the frustration that many inevitably have with day-to-day life in Britain. There are millions of citizens whose wages have been stuck for many years, whose job security has been hollowed out, and whose hopes of a fair deal are being undermined, all at a time when immigration has increased. People are bruised and angry, and many are ready to take it out on those they feel have let them down. Even if the UK government itself actually bears far more of the responsibility, it must be admitted that the EU is part of an international economic order that has been unkind to many. The wish to kick against it can thus be understood, even though it is mistaken.”(*The Guardian* 2016)

The Independent -

“[...]it is clear that immigration is at the top of the agenda for many voters. And not without some justification.”(‘The Right Choice Is to Remain’ 2016)

“It is fair to say that large-scale immigration can be problematic. Membership of the EU and the principle of free movement have not allowed for a planned and controllable system of immigration.”(‘The Right Choice Is to Remain’ 2016)

“It (immigration) makes planning difficult – including for education, healthcare and welfare systems.”(‘The Right Choice Is to Remain’ 2016)

“But immigrants have been a boon for many employers and have enriched Britain culturally in many ways.”(‘The Right Choice Is to Remain’ 2016)

The Express -

“In the past year net migration has risen to 330,000 – the second highest figure on record.”(‘Today’s Britain Is Strong, Dynamic and Influential. Let’s Keep It That Way VOTE LEAVE’ 2016)

“The Government can do nothing to stop the 185,000 people from within the EU who decided to make Britain their home last year.”(‘Today’s Britain Is Strong, Dynamic and Influential. Let’s Keep It That Way VOTE LEAVE’ 2016)

“There is no legislation it can pass that will supercede the EU rules on free movement. It means 500 million people in Europe, from Paris, to Spain, to the islands of Greece, could come and live here tomorrow if they chose to do so, and Parliament would be powerless to stop it.”(‘Today’s Britain Is Strong, Dynamic and Influential. Let’s Keep It That Way VOTE LEAVE’ 2016)

The Sun -

To remain means being powerless to cut mass immigration which keeps wages low and puts catastrophic pressure on our schools, hospitals, roads and housing stock.(‘We Urge Our Readers to beLEAVE in Britain and Vote to Quit the EU on June 23’ 2016)

In every way, it is a bigger risk.(‘We Urge Our Readers to beLEAVE in Britain and Vote to Quit the EU on June 23’ 2016)

Staying in will be worse for immigration, worse for jobs, worse for wages and worse for our way of life.(‘We Urge Our Readers to beLEAVE in Britain and Vote to Quit the EU on June 23’ 2016)

Vote Leave -

A quarter of a million EU migrants come here every year – a city the size of Newcastle [...]This puts a big strain on public services like the NHS and schools(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

The EU’s migrant crisis is **out of control**(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

Immigration will continue **out of control** putting public services like the NHS under strain('Why Vote Leave' 2017)

Appendix Five – Sovereignty quotations

Dominant frame – Britain does not have sovereignty whilst in the EU

Quotes:

The Mirror –

“As for ‘regaining our sovereignty’? About 13 per cent of our laws are created in the EU. The big stuff; laws on defence, health and education will continue to be made where they always have been – at Westminster.”(Mirror 2016)

The Daily Mail –

“[...]the EU is an edifice built on lies — starting with the blatant untruth, peddled when we signed up to the Common Market in 1973, that we were joining nothing more threatening than a tariff-free trading zone, which would involve no sacrifice of sovereignty.”(‘Why Britain Could Have a Great Future Outside a Broken EU | Daily Mail Online’ 2017)

“More than 40 years on, some 50 or 60 per cent of our laws and 70 per cent of regulations are dictated to us by Brussels, whose power is only matched by its incompetence, corruption and hunger to impose ever more statist regulations on 28 utterly diverse member nations.”(‘Why Britain Could Have a Great Future Outside a Broken EU | Daily Mail Online’ 2017)

“The European Court will be in charge of our borders, immigration, asylum and even our intelligence services”(‘Why Britain Could Have a Great Future Outside a Broken EU | Daily Mail Online’ 2017)

The Telegraph -

“Few people, however, fully appreciated the extent to which the EEC was less the benign economic arrangement they imagined and much more a political project.”(View 21:30)

“Everything changed in 1992, however, with the Maastricht Treaty. Now, the political nature of the project took over. The Common Market became the European Union and its people

citizens of the EU; timetables were set for economic and monetary union and the introduction of a single currency; areas of policy-making that had previously been agreed among member states were brought within the competence of the European Commission, which became a supercharged administration-cum-government.”(View 21:30)

“Is it seriously being suggested that had we continued to function as an independent nation for the past 43 years like, say, Australia or Japan, we would today be the impoverished off-shore neighbour of a continental powerhouse? We cannot be sure; but there is no reason to believe so.”(View 21:30)

“The question that arises, therefore, is whether we wish to stay in a club whose rules and membership have changed so markedly since we joined 43 years ago and which no longer delivers the benefits we were promised at the outset.”(View 21:30)

The Express -

“[...]set Britain free and unshackle her from her EU chains.(‘Today’s Britain Is Strong, Dynamic and Influential. Let’s Keep It That Way VOTE LEAVE’ 2016)

Vote Leave -

“We don’t need to accept the control of the EU Court to trade with Europe [...]Countries around the world trade with the EU without accepting the ultimate control of the EU court”(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

Aspect theme – Break-up of United Kingdom

The Guardian -

It may push Scottish nationalists to proceed with a break-up of Britain that was rejected less than two years ago. Is that responsible? It will put the settlement in Northern Ireland – the fragile prize won so recently from decades of hatred – at risk.(*The Guardian* 2016)

Aspect theme - Financial sovereignty

Vote Leave

“These laws have cost *British taxpayers £2.4 billion*”(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

“If we Vote Leave, we will take back control and can spend our money on our priorities”(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

We stop handing over £350 million a week to Brussels(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

We decide what we spend our own money on(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

Permanent handing over of £350 million a week to Brussels(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

This will transfer a huge amount more power to Brussels - including over our taxes[...] Britain 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*(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

It doesn’t save us any money – we are still sending £350 million a week to the EU[...] This will increase to *£400m a week by 2020*(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

Since 1973, we have sent over half a trillion pounds to the EU(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

The EU costs us over £350 million a week Enough to build a brand new, fully-staffed NHS hospital *every week*(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

This is almost £20 billion a year Half the entire English schools budget, or four times the annual Scottish schools budget and four times the science budget(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

This is dangerous. We will keep sending at least £350 million a week abroad(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

EU rules delay building schools and hospitals - and add millions to the cost(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

We should spend our money on our priorities like the NHS not the EU ('Why Vote Leave' 2017)



Appendix Six – Nationalism quotations

Central theme – Colonial Identity

The Mirror -

“For it is the working people of this nation who made Britain Great. It is the working people who laboured in the mills and mines that powered the engines of Empire.”(Mirror 2016)

“For proud and patriotic Brits want their country to stand strong alongside other nations on the world stage as we have done throughout history.”(Mirror 2016)

“Great Britain remains one of the finest nations on earth.”(Mirror 2016)

“And working people should not allow Farage and co to trade the Great Britain they built for a diminished “Little England”. We should not permit this great nation to skulk off into a shadowy corner of the globe, shaking with timidity and bereft of influence, power or economic might. For proud and patriotic Brits want their country to stand strong alongside other nations on the world stage as we have done throughout history.” (Mirror 2016)

The Daily Mail -

“A vote to leave would enable us to fulfil our destiny as one of the world’s greatest trading nations, free to strike deals with any country we like. It would also give us back our seats on international bodies, instead of being one voice in 28, represented by a bureaucrat without our interests at heart.”(Comment 2016)

“Remainers are fond of branding Leavers as ‘little Englanders’. But there is nothing petty-minded about being proud of our traditions and history as a great seafaring country, with enterprise in our DNA, unafraid to reach out to Europe and beyond — especially as that is now where the wealth increasingly lies.”(Comment 2016)

The Telegraph -

“do we want to be an independent nation **once more**, free to make our own decisions, forge our own trading relationships and maintain our own strategic and diplomatic partnerships?”(View 21:30)

“To say we cannot thrive free of the EU’s constraints is defeatist and flies in the face of this country’s great mercantile traditions.”(View 21:30)

“This country is a leading economic power, its language is global, its laws are trusted and its reputation for fair dealing is second to none.” (View 21:30)

“Why, then, would a country with our history and economic strength want to continue its membership of such a dysfunctional outfit?”(View 21:30)

“Britain, by contrast, has always been a global player, with its connections to the Commonwealth, the UN and Nato, and will be again.”(View 21:30)

The Guardian -

“Thursday’s vote is in some ways a choice between an imaginary past of which too many in this country cannot let go and a future about which all of us are inescapably uncertain.”(*The Guardian* 2016)

“Imagine a world without the EU – without the clout to face down Russia over Ukraine, without the ability to put together coherent answers to carbon emissions, to protect standards at work from a race to the bottom. (*The Guardian* 2016)

The Independent -

“In the Brexiteers’ vision, the world is a frightening place and one from which anxious Britain should retreat, returning somehow to a version of the UK circa 1952 that actually never existed in the first place(...)This timid, insular vision is not one we can share. “(‘The Right Choice Is to Remain’ 2016)

“But membership of the EU benefits our economy, boosts global security and aids our connectivity with the rest of Europe.”(‘The Right Choice Is to Remain’ 2016)

“By being part of a European trading bloc, the UK can meet the likes of India and China – and the USA for that matter – on a reasonably equal footing. For all the romance attached to good old Blighty going it alone, the notion that we would be able to hold the whip hand against the world’s major economies on our own is hard to take seriously.”(‘The Right Choice Is to Remain’ 2016)

The Sun -

“Vote Leave, and we will reassert our sovereignty — embracing a future as a self-governing, powerful nation envied by all.”(‘We Urge Our Readers to beLEAVE in Britain and Vote to Quit the EU on June 23’ 2016)

“Our country has a glorious history.”(‘We Urge Our Readers to beLEAVE in Britain and Vote to Quit the EU on June 23’ 2016)

Remain-

“Being in the EU gives Britain a more powerful role in the world and a say in major global decisions affecting you and your family.”(‘Get the Facts’ 2017)

“We would lose our say on climate change regulations, trade regulations, the economy and security, meaning less influence on the world you and your family live in.”(‘Get the Facts’ 2017)

Vote Leave -

“We regain our influence in the wider world and become a truly global nation once again”(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

“Great Britain is a great country[...] *We are the 5th biggest economy in the world* [...] *We are the 4th largest military power in the world* [...] *We are one of 5 permanent members of the*

UN Security Council and a leading member of NATO[...]Our security and intelligence services are recognised as the best in the world”(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

Central theme – Britain should leave EU to reinvigorate global (colonial) world role

The Telegraph -

“A world of opportunity is waiting for a fully independent Britain. [...] To say we cannot thrive free of the EU’s constraints is defeatist and flies in the face of this country’s great mercantile traditions.”(View 21:30)

“We are told membership is essential because it provides access to a market of 500 million people; yet there is a market of six billion people beyond its borders and nothing would stop us continuing to trade with Europe anyway.”(View 21:30)

“[...]not harking back to a Britannic golden age lost in the mists of time but looking forward to a new beginning for our country”. (‘Vote Leave to Benefit from a World of Opportunity’ 21:30)

The Express -

“But even without America, we still have the Commonwealth. Canada – one of the world’s richest countries – awaits, not to mention the fast growing might of India and China.”(‘Today’s Britain Is Strong, Dynamic and Influential. Let’s Keep It That Way VOTE LEAVE’ 2016)

“Even if Europe did attempt to make trade difficult, with that door closed another is opened; that to the rest of the world.”(‘Today’s Britain Is Strong, Dynamic and Influential. Let’s Keep It That Way VOTE LEAVE’ 2016)

“The points system [as the] sensible way of doing this” (‘Today’s Britain Is Strong, Dynamic and Influential. Let’s Keep It That Way VOTE LEAVE’ 2016)

“Britain would be no less tolerant or multicultural if it left the comparatively un-diverse EU – it may even be more so[...]“How could it be racist to endorse a system which would allow more, not less, people in from our old Commonwealth allies of Australia, Canada, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the West Indies?”(‘Today’s Britain Is Strong, Dynamic and Influential. Let’s Keep It That Way VOTE LEAVE’ 2016)

The Sun -

“Outside the EU we can become richer, safer and free at long last to forge our own destiny — as America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and many other great democracies already do. And as we were the first to do centuries ago.”(‘We Urge Our Readers to beLEAVE in Britain and Vote to Quit the EU on June 23’ 2016)

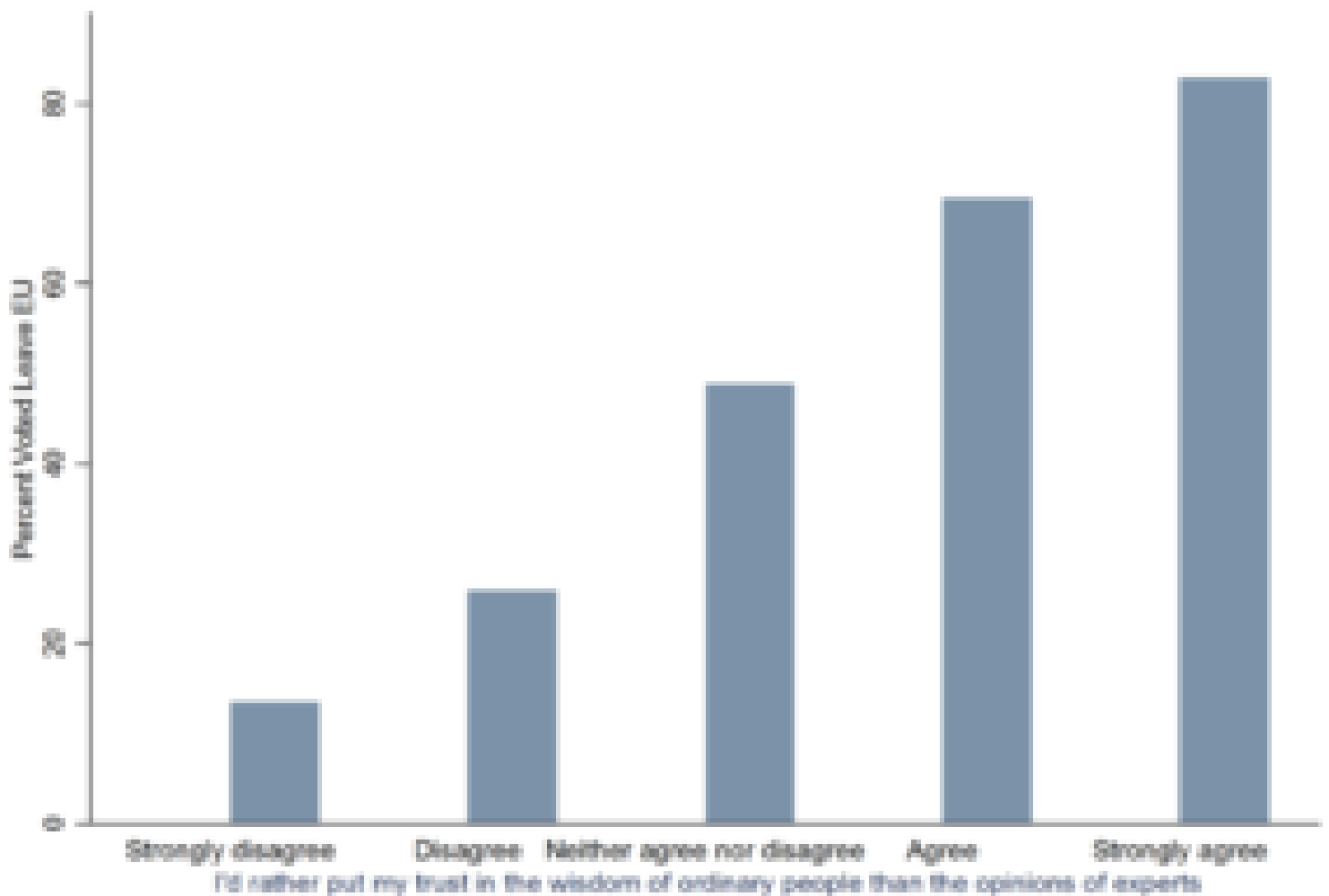
“If so, let’s leave it and, using our enormous clout as the world’s fifth biggest economy, strike great trade deals with the other 85 per cent of the world.”(‘We Urge Our Readers to beLEAVE in Britain and Vote to Quit the EU on June 23’ 2016)

Vote Leave -

“There is a free trade zone from Iceland to Turkey and the Russian border and we will be part of it”(‘Why Vote Leave’ 2017)

Appendix Seven :Graph of respondents regarding attitudes to experts and EU voting behaviour

(‘Brexit Britain: British Election Study Insights from the Post-EU Referendum Wave of the BES Internet Panel - The British Election Study’ 2016)



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