'The psychosocial relationship between national identity and political sentiment in England: 2016-2020'

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Abstract

The United Kingdom has undergone significant political changes in recent decades; UK devolution, increasing globalisation, the political fall-out from the 2008 financial crash, Brexit and the global COVID-19 pandemic. The circumstances of these events have led to rapid social, political and economic changes, and have contributed to a sense of wide-spread uncertainty and anxiety amongst the voting population. The repercussions of these events take a central focus to this thesis, which will see the utilisation of a psychosocial lens to focus on the dynamics of national identity and political sentiment in the politically turbulent period of 2016-2020. Harnessing a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were undertaken with participants of voting age living in rural England to explore the relationship between national identity and political sentiment. Further attention was also applied to the rural dynamic of such relationship, given the geographical differences of voting behaviour and national identification between rural and urban areas. Using a thematic analysis, the findings provide new and nuanced insights into ideas of nation, identity and political sentiment at ground level, whilst highlighting the affective and rural dimension of such sentiments, making way for political-psychological understandings of national identity and political sentiment in post-Brexit pandemic Britain

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I would like to dedicate this PhD thesis to my mum and dad; you are forever my heroes and inspiration, for raising me and my siblings in such difficult circumstances and exhaustively supporting us throughout our journey in adulthood.

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Author's declaration

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Bournemouth University, United Kingdom. I declare that this thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that this thesis has not been previously or concurrently submitted, either in whole or in part, for any other qualification at Bournemouth University or other institutions in any other country.

Tabitha Alice Baker

January 2022

Author Declaration as to Publications

To date, the following journal articles and book chapters that are directly derived from this PhD thesis have been published and/or accepted for publication:

1. Is there hope for the West Country? Political sentiment amongst rural voters, *Renewal*, 29(3), 73-83. 2021

2. 'Not one rule for everyone': the impact of elite rule-breaking on public trust in the UK: Chapter 16 in: *Manufacturing Government Communication on Covid-19* (Philippe Maarek, Ed.) Springer, 2022

To date, the following scholarly website articles that are directly derived from this PhD thesis have been published online:

1. The affective nature of Brexit's geographical polarisation, *NEXTEUK, Centre for European Research, Queen Mary University London*. [online] Available from: https://www.qmul.ac.uk/nexteuk/publications/blog/items/the-affective-nature-of-brexits-geographical-polarisation-.html

2. The othering of migrants has negative consequences for society at large. *London School of Economics Brexit blog.* [online] Available from: https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2020/08/19/the-othering-of-migrants-has-negative-consequences-for-society-at-large/

Definitions

UK: United Kingdom

EU: European Union

Brexit: Britain's vote to leave the European Union

EEC: European Economic Committees

UN: United Nations

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

WTO: World Trade Organisation

NHS: National Health Service

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

Zoom: Zoom Online Video Conference

COVID19: Coronavirus disease 2019

EVEL: English Votes for English Laws

HS2: High speed 2 railway, UK's high speed rail network to enhance connectivity between the South East, Midlands and North of England

BLM: Black Lives Matter

Phantasy: Spelled with 'ph' to highlight the unconscious nature as used by Melanie Klein

Other: Individual or group perceived by a group as not belonging

1. Introduction

The United Kingdom (UK) has undergone significant political changes in recent decades; UK devolution, increasing globalisation, the political fall-out from the 2008 financial crash, Brexit and the global COVID-19 pandemic. The circumstances of these events have led to rapid social, political and economic changes, and have contributed to a sense of wide-spread uncertainty and anxiety amongst the voting population (Anderson et al. 2020; West 2017; Yates 2015; Browning 2018). The repercussions of these aspects will be a focus of this thesis, which will focus on the dynamics of national identity and political sentiment, in the politically turbulent period of 2016-2020.

There is already an established body of literature within this field, and this thesis aims to make an intervention to this body of work from a new psychosocial perspective that accounts for varying underlying dynamics. This necessary approach comes at a turbulent political period following Brexit, the 2008 global financial crash and taking place during the background of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has seen elevated levels of anxiety, uncertainty and sense of powerlessness throughout the UK voting population (ONS 2020; Slee et al 2021; Mental Health Foundation 2019). In turn, increased attention on affect and politics in the UK is becoming increasingly present in the field of political science (Capelos amd Demertzis 2018; Walkerdine 2020; Hobolt et al. 2020), which is subsequently making way for a new affective approach to understanding political thought and its related phenomena in the UK. The scholarship of political psychology and national identity has seen numerous quantitative survey-data based approaches highlighting the emotional and affective nature of nationalism, political distrust, anxiety and discontent (Peitz et al 2018; Henderson et al. 2017; Seyd 2020; Seyd et al. 2018; Capelos and Katsanidou 2018; Maher et al 2018; Capelos and Dermtzis 2018; Manners 2018). In addition to this, more recently there has been growing qualitative studies using focus group and interview data to explore the aforementioned themes from political and social psychologists such as: Andreouli and Nicholson (2018), Sullivan (2021), Moss (et al. 2020) and Andreouli (et al. 2019). Such studies have successfully managed to foreground emotion and affect at the centre of understandings of Brexit, national identity and political sentiment in post-Brexit UK thus allowing a nuanced and interdisciplinary focus. However, little existing research has covered the underlying dynamics that influence political feeling from a psychosocial level. This thesis will build on previous research in a new way that combines psychosocial scholarship with political studies. It will adopt a qualitative methodology that pays attention to the psychological mechanisms that underpin and shape political behaviour, sentiment and experience thereby allowing a more nuanced insight into the interrelationship between macro-level political patterns and trends, and how these are experienced and played out on the ground.

In this thesis, national identity will be the central point of focus, because of its significance in shaping political emotions and identity, especially in the current post-Brexit context (Ashcroft and Bevir 2021; Sobolewska and Ford 2020). National identity doesn't exist in isolation, but intersects with gender, sexual orientation, religious, class, racial or occupational identities, and some argue that it functions as a marker and source of political legitimacy (Parekh 1995; Konovich 2009). The modern world is combined of a community of nations and amongst the individuals of these nations, the nation lies at the foundation of solidarity, representing one of the strongest motives behind a large majority of political mobilisation and action (Greenfeld and Chirot 1994). Firstly, national identity as a concept is not to be confused with the two related concepts of nationalism and patriotism, which, as I discuss later, mainly emphasise the loyalty to and superiority of one's country. By contrast, national identity refers to one's belonging to a specific geopolitical entity (Verdugo and Milne 2016). A nation however, is defined as a population with a common identity within a geo-political unit (Pearson 1992). Connor (1992) argues that the essence of the nation is a psychological bond between communities of people characterized by common elements. These common elements can be a complex construct made up of several interrelated layers consisting of the ethnic, cultural, territorial, the historical and the psychological (Smith 1991; Guibernau 2004). These elements complement each other by signifying the strength of bond and solidarity amongst community members. They work to create a cohesive whole, facilitated by shared group histories (Volkan 2004), cultural or political traditions, myths, and beliefs which psychologically bind them together in what Benedict Anderson famously described as 'an imagined community' (Anderson 1983). It is these elements that allow national identity to become such a persistent and powerful force in modern day politics and life and gives such impetus to other influential movements and ideologies. Through prisms of collective identities and a shared distinct culture, national identity provides powerful means for one to define and locate themselves in the world.

More specifically, British and English national identity have been highly discussed in relation to wider political forces such as UK devolution and Brexit, and through the lens of sociological, political and cultural lenses (Kumar 2003; 2010; Mann 2012; 2011; Sobolewska and Ford 2020; Tilley and Heath 2007; Wellings 2012; Weight 2002). Such studies have helped to foreground cultural, political, and social processes at play within patterns of identification with nationhood in Britain. However, there is a missing dimension that is yet to be explored, which is the underlying dynamics that operate at a deeper psychological level that influence social and political thought and behaviour. This project addresses that gap in research.

The aim of this thesis is therefore to propose and utilise a new psychosocial approach that draws on psychoanalysis, sociology, political studies, history, and cultural studies to explore the complex psychodynamics at play within the contemporary political landscape. This interdisciplinary approach will understand each discipline as models of thought (Klein 2007; Becher 1989), where intersecting fields provide innovative approaches that are brought together across disciplinary frontiers, to provide a new psychosocial intervention in contemporary political psychology. This intervention deploys rich aspects of each field to offer a nuanced exploration of the relationship between political sentiment and national identity, to understand the turbulent nature of that relationship between 2016 and 2020. The interdisciplinary field of political psychology is therefore understood here as one that combines psychology with other disciplines to explain political thought, sentiment, and behaviour (Cottam et al. 2015). This makes it appropriate for exploring the missing dimension in national identity and political studies.

The psychological approach of this thesis will primarily draw upon psychosocial studies, a field that seeks to investigate the ways in which psychic and social processes can be understood as implicated in each other, where there is emphasis on affect and irrational and unconscious processes (Frosh 2014; Richards 2019; Hollway and Jefferson 2012). Psychosocial studies enables an understanding of the process of identification and provides an explanation for the shaping and attribution of identities. It takes account of the interrelationship between inner and outer experience and the unconscious phantasies[1] and defence mechanisms that shape subjectivity and experience. These psychosocial processes may influence political thought and the forces of national identification and can account for the ways in which people think and act in polarised political climates. This approach is valuable due to the way that cultural, societal and historical settings are not abstracted or divorced away from psychological questions; instead, they are harnessed and built upon to provide interdisciplinary areas of knowledge (Stenner 2014). Psychosocial explorations of national identity will add insight and deeper comprehension to historical and political understandings. Previous literature has emphasised themes that also arose in my research. However, understanding the 'why?' and exploring the dynamics that are expressed at a local level provides a step further in comprehending patterns seen at a collective level in quantitative studies. Qualitative research regarding the psychosocial relationship between nation, identity and political thought is missing, and this approach will allow for a deeper understanding of the role affect plays in national attachment and identification and political behaviour and thought.

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[1] Spelled with 'ph' to highlight the unconscious nature as used by psychoanalyst Melanie Klein

The aims of this research are to dissect the politically turbulent post-Brexit period of 2016-2020, and to dissect it in a new way that pays attention to the psychosocial dynamics that were played out collectively at the national level, to investigate their impacts at a deeper individual psychological level. By harnessing a psychosocial political psychology approach, the research objectives are to contribute insight on the following:

1. The relationship between national identity and political sentiment

2. The political manifestation of psychosocial processes

3. The role of geographical rurality on the above dynamics

Geographical rurality will be a focus due to the political patterns and trends that played out spatially and geographically in the 2016 European Union referendum result and subsequent general election results. In this thesis, rurality will be defined using the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification census which defines rural areas using population size and conurbation context, which will be explored in chapter three in the methodology sampling section.

This thesis, in chapter two, will firstly outline scholarly approaches to national identity that accounts for elements such as ethnicity, civic attachments, territory, community, collective memories, group identities, and the forces of patriotism, nationalism and globalisation. It will explore psychological undercurrents that foreground much of these elements, it will focus on a psychosocial approach that accounts for forces of defence mechanisms, the unconscious and emotion before looking at how these interplay with ideas of the nation. Finally, it will approach the subject of national identity and politics in the context of Britain and England, focussing on aspects such as devolution, multiculturalism, supranational identities, Euroscepticism, English nationalism, neoliberalism, right-wing populism, Brexit and the rural-urban divide. From this, it will establish the research gap and justify the need for further in-depth understanding of psychological processes through an interdisciplinary political psychology approach that utilises qualitative empirical data. The methods to undertake this research will be laid out in chapter three.

Chapter three will present the chosen research methodology and introduce the research objectives. From there, it will lay out the method of qualitative research, including the use of a psychosocial approach, issue of subjectivity, importance of reflexivity and methodological intersectionality, the in-depth interview approach, sampling technique, coding and thematic analysis, before understanding the study limitations and ethical considerations. At the time of data collection, England was faced with the unprecedented event of the global COVID-19 pandemic. This meant that whilst the interviews were taking place, both my participants and I were living amongst uncertain and volatile circumstances

of self-isolation as advised by the UK government. This included varying levels of quarantine, social distancing and national lockdown. This will also be taken into account within chapter three, as it will explore the last-minute change of interview platform from in-person to online video conferencing.

Chapter four will outline the research findings, and will present the thematic analysis by demonstrating the subthemes identified as part of the coding process. This will include explorations of each theme which will be substantiated by extracts from participant interviews. Chapter five will explore these themes in depth and provide an academic discussion that approaches the findings with a scholarly psychosocial lens that understands the findings in the wider context of the subject field, drawing upon the literature laid out in chapter two.

Finally, chapter six will provide the conclusions of this study; it will understand the findings of this research and look at how they have met the proposed research objectives laid out in the chapter five. It will conclude the results of the semi-structured in-depth interviews and thematic analysis of the data, to show how the interdisciplinary political psychology approach was utilised to highlight the powerful nature of psychosocial processes that operate at a deeper level, in turn contributing a new method of researching the complex relationship between locality, politics, nation and mental life and illustrating why it's important to look beneath the surface.

2. Literature Review

This chapter explores the multidimensional layers of national identity from a sociological disciplinary focus, before focussing on the civic and ethnic cores. It will pay attention to the foundations that underlie national identity such as the roles of territory, community, collective myths and imaginaries, sameness and difference before delving into the concepts of patriotism and nationalism and how they play out in a modern globalised world. The following section will then outline psychosocial studies, paying particular attention to ideas of defence mechanisms and psychosocial frames for understanding matters of national identity and politics. Finally, the last section in this literature review will address the nature of British and English national identity, drawing upon statistical data to understand how the devolution of the United Kingdom affected nationhood in Britain. By taking a socio-historical look at the changing demographic of Britain through the 20th century into the 21st century it will discuss how this change along with devolution affected attitudes towards national identification and ideas belonging. It will pay particular attention to England and look at how English national consciousness may have formed in response to UK devolution post-devolution. Lastly, it will look at growing Euroscepticism in England and the political fall-out from the 2008 financial crash and its voting population, referring to forces of populism, nationalism, Brexit and a growing rural-urban divide, further drawing upon statistical data to illustrate this. This chapter will conclude by identifying a research rationale to fill an existing gap in the subject knowledge.

2.1.1. Multidimensional approaches

Across the theoretical and critical literature, two crucial concepts commonly foreground most theories on national identities; these are the ideas of a constructivist or essentialist identity. The constructivist approach to national identity refers to the creation of meaningful systems, to facilitate one's understanding of the world around them (Rankin 2002), in what Cahan (2018, p.478) calls a "social construction of reality" which is "contingent and artificial" (Walicki 1998, p.611). The common opponent of constructivism is essentialism, which focusses rather on the attributes of ideas and qualities to an identity that is necessary to utilise its function (Cartwright 1968). In other words, the opposition between the two, concerns matters of whether these identities are constructed consciously or whether they have grown out of pre-existing factors. Scholars generally associate an essentialist approach to national identity as something fixed, primordial, based on ethnicity (Huntington 1997; Smith 1991; Geertz 1973; Connor 1994). By contrast, constructivists view identity as something more malleable, that they can change across time and place and can be for specific international gains (Croucher 2004; Hobsbawm 1992; Kubik 1994; Schwartz 1987; 1991). Smith (1979; 1991; 2000) is critical of both constructionist and essentialist explanations as they fail to understand

the importance and emotional power of cultural identity and finds what he sees as a better alternative in ethno-symbolism. Smith's ethno-symbolist approach refers to the way that most modern nations were formed around ethnic cores - what he calls "ethnies", that preceded modern communities with shared historical memories and culture such as language, religion, symbols, myths, values and traditions. Smith argues that these multi-dimensional layers are underlined by ethno-symbolism.

Smith (1991) divides the dimensions that make up for an ethno-symbolist national identity into 'external' and 'internal' functions. The territorial, the economic and the political dimensions are external due to the way they occupy the collective 'outer' world. When understanding the outer functions, it is first advantageous to understand the significance of the external; these are social spaces where nation members work, live and exist, this is essentially what a nation's territory provides for its citizens. According to Smith, it also provides them with objects of sacred and historical significance, revealing the individuality of their nation's "moral geography" (ibid. p16). In addition to this, the economic and political dimensions that serve the external function do so by underpinning the state and government, underwriting national policies, controlling territorial resources and distributing resources to members of the nation. Smith argues that the most salient political appeal of national identity is the "legitimation of common legal rights and duties of legal institutions" (ibid. p16) which reflect the values, character and traditions of the nation, thus providing foundations for effective social order and solidarity. The internal functions however, binds one within a community by utilising dimensions such a social bonds, cultural ties and ethnicities that socially fulfil individuals within communities on a more intimate level. According to Smith, the nation provides a social bond between citizens, the uses of symbols such as flags, anthems, monuments and coinage provide avenues for shared values and traditions. This reminds citizens of their shared cultural kinship, which Smith suggests strengthens their sense of common identity, distinctive culture and belonging, therefore providing them with the means to navigate the world. Anthony Smith's work also focussed largely on an ethno-symbolist approach to nationalism, which will be discussed at a later point after addressing the main pillars of national identity, as this will allow a sufficient exploration of nationalism, a field in its own right.

Guibernau (2004; 2006; 2013a; 2013b) agrees with Smith's ethnosymbolist approach consisting of pre-modern forms of collective cultural identity and puts strong emphasis on the basis that national identity is primarily about belief, meaning that national identity is fluid and dynamic but dependent on the time and context in history. Guibernau defines national identity as "a collective sentiment based upon the belief of belonging to the same nation and of sharing most of the attributes that make it distinct from other nations" (Guibernau 2007, p. 11). Like Smith, Guibernau's definition of national

identity is based upon essential elements, these being the emotional, political, cultural, historical, and territorial. Guibernau explains how it is the belief of shared kinship, symbols, traditions, history and culture that is invoked at different times and places with "varying intensity" (ibid, p.134) that makes these elements hold such power and salience. The psychological element accounts for the formation of the group based on a perceived or imagined closeness that unites those that belong to the nation. Functions such as values, belief, languages and practises belong to the cultural element, while the political element is mostly defined in its relation with the modern nation-state. Guibernau places emphasis on the historical element, stating that this consists of nation members' pride of its past roots; she states that this proudness can sometimes be interpreted as a sign of strength, resilience and even superiority. Ultimately what these elements offer in their totality is a sense of belonging. The sentiment of belonging is another key element of national identity that most scholars tend to agree on where like Guibernau suggested, is especially influenced by historical factors (Verdugo and Milne 2016).

National identity also offers itself as a social function, the works of Henri Tajfel in the years between 1960 and 1980 adopted Rupert Emerson's definition of national identity to conceptualise this. Emerson's definition was simply that national identity was a collective body of citizens who felt that they were part of a nation (Emerson 1960), by using social identity theory, Tajfel (1974) saw national identity and nationalism as something that is foregrounded by two processes; social categorisation and social comparison. The process of social categorisation refers to the simplification and systemisation of an individual's social environment in order to group and order individuals into categories in a "manner which is meaningful to the subject" (ibid, p.69). Essentially, it is a process whereby social objects and events are taken into account along with the individual's belief system, values, intentions and actions. This, according to Tajfel, is done so that an individual can create and define their own place in society. Berger (1996), on the notion of society creating a psychological reality, states that "once the individual realises themselves in a society they "recognise [their] identity in socially defined terms and these definitions become reality as [they] live in society" (1966, p.107). Social comparison theory (Festinger 1954) however theorises individuals turning towards social means as a way of validation through comparison. Festinger states that an "objective reality [allows] for the evaluation of one's ability" (ibid, p.118), Tajfel (1974) explains that this can be extended to social contexts. After all, he states that the definition of one group will make no sense unless there are other groups that exist:

> "A group becomes a group in the sense of being perceived as having common characteristics or a common fate only because other groups are present in the environment" (ibid, p.72)

These comparisons are ultimately founded upon self-experience; the individual's membership of a specific social group. Self-categorisation also refers to the affective nature of belonging; it refers to the emotional belonging or attachment one feels toward the nation. As Tajfel argues, this awareness evokes positive emotions about the nation/group, as nation members will recognise and involve in inter-group commonalities. Common descent and destiny for example, are associated with love and pride (ibid); however this can also lead to a sense of exceptionalism commonly seen amongst nationalism. At the same time, this means that nation members may demonise people belonging to other nations as 'out-groups'. Social identity theory and social comparison theory therefore offers understanding of the positive relationship with the nation as well as the negative relationship and derogation of other nations or, 'out-groups' (Festinger 1954; Tajfel 1974; Guibernau 2007).

Social communication theory also offers an understanding of national identity functioning in relation to the out-group. Deutsch's (1955) theory relies on the idea of the 'othered' out-group, because for the nation to exist there must be an out-group where their unity is tested. Deutsch argued that the efficacy of national identity was dependent on nation members' ability to communicate effectively with fellow nationals rather than outsiders, meaning that "peoples are held together from within by communicative efficiency" (ibid. p.98). Ultimately, the community is defined by their ease of internal communications. Kelman (1969) also emphasised the role of language or as he called it "linguistic pluralism" (Tajfel 1970, p.129), seeing language as a distinction and an enhancement of national loyalty. These functions of national identity privilege those inside the nation in-group and signifies the bond between nation members, its significance is noted by Anderson (1983); the bond felt across the population throughout fellow nation-members one may never know, meet or hear, will always exist in the minds of each individual and inside lives the image of their solidarity and communion. However, a criticism of Anderson's ideas may be the assumptive view of a nation as a homogenous entity, rather than a population full of unique and individual people.

While understanding these varying approaches, it is advantageous to consider each element that makes up for national identity in order to provide a comprehensive understanding and the concepts that make up for it in its entirety. This will be advantageous to developing a psychosocial approach at a later point that encompasses the psychological, sociological, cultural and historical, as the civic/ethnic dichotomy requires further psychological integration to examine further. However at this point, I will be discussing the ethnic and civic roots of national identity. While there is no agreement on a definite meaning of national identity across schools of thought, in the last few decades there has been an overall consensus from academics concerning the importance of the ethnic and civic role to definitions of national identity (Greenfeld 2006; 2016, Smith 1991; 1992; Cullingford and Din 2006;

Connor 1993). By understanding the multifaceted nature of national identity, one can comprehend the power it holds for the individual and how it works to fulfil the group and the individual, on both small and larger scales.

2.1.2. The Ethnic dimension

The essentialist approach to national identity associates it as being something fixed based on ethnicity, which homogenises a unified group (Phillips 2010). An ethnic identity refers to notions of shared ancestry, which Eriksen calls a "fictive kinship" (Eriksen 2001 p.43), embedded in cultural practises, representations and norms. The ethnic model stresses importance on genealogical descent, presumed or imaginary, boasting common ancestry and shared culture, language and religion, which are inherited, not chosen. Within this ethnic model, the nation is experienced as a 'super family', where its members are brothers and sisters that all share a collective cultural identity through vernacular language and culture. The creation of widespread myths, histories and traditions helps the community to substantiate the idea of an ethnic nation - it is not the nation that defines the individual, but the individual that defines the nation. Ignatieff believes that this makes ethnic national identity strictly exclusive – "if you are not born into it, you cannot acquire it" (Ignatieff 1994, p.4). The attachment of ancestry, traditions, histories and myths helps to characterise and enhance the power of the ethnic identity, as they embody and inform one's values and beliefs.

Barth (1969) describes ethnic identity as something that is maintained and invented through the relational process of inclusion and exclusion. He states that ethnic distinctions entail "social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained, despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life stories" (Barth 1969, p.9-10). Thus, Barth viewed ethnic identity as fluid and persistent, binding the social relations between groups together with ethnic status. Though, he understood how this could be problematic within society due to its characteristics of isolation and segregation, describing that each cultural community becomes its "own island" (Bath 1969, p.11).

Similarly to Anderson (1983), Connor (1993) considers imagined common descent the most significant character, believing that it establishes all nations with a principle of nationality. When trying to understand national sentiment, Connor stressed that the key was not chronological or factual history, but a felt history. He put emphasis on the psychological bond that brings co-nationals together, all based on a common conviction that they are ethnically related, in this case members do not necessarily need to be ancestrally related; they just need to believe they are. The perceived kinship

ties and the idea of the nation as an extended family are based on emotional psychology, Connor therefore believed that the ethnic national identity or the "ethnonational bond" (Walker 1993, p.373) belongs to the realm of the unconscious and non-rational. He explains that the nation is "a psychological bond that joins people and differentiates it, in the subconscious conviction of its members, from all non-members" (ibid. p.377). Here, Connor is referring to the notion of nation members as the 'in-group'. By defining themselves in contrast to the out-group (non-nation members), the in-group will believe that the out-group are of separate origin and thus have evolved differently. This is what makes it such a significant part of national psychology, or "ethno-psychology" (p.377), where there is a necessary belief of shared blood. Weber articulates this effectively, agreeing that an ethnic national identity is "human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or of both" (Weber 1968, p.389). Ultimately, the role of the ethnic dimension of national identity plays a large part in the psychological bond that brings co-nationals together through perceived kinship ties of culture and ancestral history. Now, I will turn to the role of the civic dimension of national identity and understand the part it plays in national identity, in order to comprehend how this foregrounds my psychosocial intervention.

2.1.3. The Civic dimension

A civic national identity is most defined in contrast to ethnic nationalism, and involves a strong attachment to the nation, where there is a voluntary association of people sharing and belonging to major social, legal and political institutions and commitments (Paluski and Tranter 2000), where all belong to the same shared citizenship of the nation state. Ideals of the civic national identity model began in Britain in the mid eighteenth century (Ignatieff 1994; Greenfeld 2016) – the four nations of the U.K were united civically by the shared attachment to institutions including the Crown, Rule of Law and Parliament. These institutions, particularly the Rule of Law and Parliament, act as guarantors for citizens' rights, and help to infuse a sense of common national identity (Heath and Tilley 2005). It has been argued that a shared national identity is fundamental in modern day life in order for citizens to evade alienation from political institutions, and for these institutions to be effective and stable (Mason 2000). Mason wrote extensively with a liberal-nationalist approach, emphasising institutions and national belonging with a strictly civic nature. Mason (2000, p.135) distinguishes three accounts of why citizens will identify with institutions with civic behaviour; firstly, because they identify with the cultural way of life the institution expresses, secondly, they identify with institutions due to the principles they embody and identify with, thirdly they identify with them because of their value of liberty, justice and democracy.

A civic national identity endorses that idea of the nation as being composed of all those who subscribe to the same set of political values and practices, regardless of their gender, language, ethnicity, class or race. It is only important that they have a patriotic attachment to these institutions, rules and law. Ignatieff states that the civic attachment is more rational in nature, arguing that "the same set of democratic procedures and values can reconcile their right to shape their own lives with their need to belong to a community" (Ignatieff 1994, p.7).

Due to the way that a civic national identity is founded upon attributes such as laws, democratic rules, regulations and conduct shared by those who belong to the nation, Guibernau (2007) argues that the political and civic dimension of national identity is founded on the relationship with the modern nation-state. She explains how it pursues the civic, cultural and linguistic homogenization of otherwise diverse populations. It is through this, and a set of well-defined civil, legal and democratic rights that it implements onto its nation members, that manages to advance a sense of national citizenship. Some suggest that individuals need a civic national identity for democratic polities to function effectively, and so citizens can lead autonomous lives (Miller 1995; Kymlika 1995). Take taxation for example, research shows that patriotism and national pride can positively affect taxation morale (Geys and Konrad 2016) thus helping policies to function and flourish. Being in a national community means that interpersonal trust is crucial when it comes to paying taxes; empirical studies show that trust levels are higher in countries with extensive welfare states (Crepaz 2008). Interpersonal trust is an important theme within the nation, due to its emphasis on relying on others to not act in such a way that will harm your interests.

These studies are based on the premise of national pride and patriotism being one of a civic nature (Heath and Tilley 2005). For example, a study into what makes Britons proud to be British showed the tax funded National Health Service ranking in second place (Ipos Mori 2012). A certain sense of solidarity and communal ties exist here for the British, who have pride in paying into a system for the common good that protects and serves the British people and indeed anyone in Britain. On this notion, Mason (2000, p.118) says that a national identity is therefore a crucial condition for "a politics of common good, including widespread support for a redistribution on grounds of social justice". Likewise, Miller (1995) also articulates the importance of identifying with a sense of collective national belonging so that citizens will value participating together politically, as this helps to improve citizen's self-determination and autonomy. Barry (1983) also spoke of this sense of belonging together within a nation as vital foundations for social trust, which he describes as an essential factor for the effective functioning of institutions; this is as social trust relies on belief in the honesty, fairness, or benevolence of another person or party.

All in all, the civic dimension of national identity implies territorial political commitment which is based upon the "spatial and social location" (Smith 1991, p.117) among other nations. He stresses the importance of residence as opposed to genealogy, which the idea of living together in specific terrain becomes the criteria for citizenship and bases for a political community, where those within the community will be bounded by their shared acknowledgment of belonging to the nation (Anderson 1983). In order to understand the significance of national identity, space and location, I will now look more closely at the way that territory places a driving force in one's national identity.

2.1.4. Territory and Identity

Storey (2002) claims that territory is a significance component in the national imagination as national territory holds symbolic meanings for the nation members, specifically within an increasingly globalised world where social, cultural and political processes are transcending national boundaries. When scholars discuss civic and ethnic identities, these are usually written about with territorial foregrounding (Smith 1991; Guibernau 2007; Herb 1999; Ignatieff 1994; Storey 2001; Deacon 2002). Within the foundations of national identity there is usually an inherent notion of territory (Williams and Smith 1983). Territory is significant to a national group identity as it functions as a material base to sustain citizens that is secure and familiar in a psychological 'space' (Skey 2011; Hopkins and Dixon 2006), more widely, it's reflection in society can be seen in national patriotic songs for example 'America the Beautiful' and 'Flower of Scotland'.

From this, one can firstly understand territory as providing a locational context for a group. Smith (1991, p.9) argues that territory is purely a civic element of national identity due to the grounds that it is based on "predominantly spatial or territorial conception", where nations need to retain well-defined territorial borders, so that the land's resources become exclusive to its people, rather than being exploited by 'alien' peoples. Smith also notes the importance of the nation as the "cradle of our people" (p.9), here 'cradle' is an emotionally powerful image, where the homeland becomes a source of protection, historical associations and memories, making it unique in nature. Deacon also argued this point adding that there is usually a historic legacy (Deacon 2001) that adds a significant layer of meaning in addition to the cultural, civic and ethnic layers to national identity (Herb and Kaplan 1999).

Williamson and Smith (1983) explore the elements of territory in the context of national identity and discuss the function of territory as a 'homeland'. They explain how this 'homeland' is usually a unique form of identity that is made up through history, myth and memory where there is the notion that the territory is a rightful possession from forefathers passed on through generations. This implies

nationalist vision where one belongs to a particular territory by natural right. They state that within the homeland,

> "It's mountains are sacred, its rivers are full of memories, its lakes recall distant oaths and battles, all of which have been commemorated in national epics and ballads, and attracted countless legends" (Williams and Smith 1983, p.509)

To this extent, the homeland becomes the ultimate form of group identity and national identification (White 2000; Knight 1982; Herb 1999), particularly as a cultural invention that relates dialectically to nationalism. Although there are counter-arguments; those that have more than one homeland this feeling of belonging becomes inherently transnational. In cases some feel belonging to the planet which trumps individual homelands, which is gaining momentum in the ecological sphere with threat of climate breakdown[2].

National identities are often embedded in particular historical circumstances. Smith (1991 p.65) suggests that within discourses, stories are invested and imagined, he calls these "poetic spaces". He explains that these spaces offer a "historic home with sacred repository of their memories" (ibid.). This can come in the form of two features. Firstly, natural features such as mountains, lakes, forests or valleys which can be turned into popular national symbols or iconography and expressed as authentic national experiences for example the Welsh valleys, Scottish Highlands or Yorkshire Lake District. These spaces also become part of the nation's ethnic character and can be understood as the presumed "zone of origin" and "original heartland" (Deacon 2002, p.110) that give the nation national character and cultural integrity. Secondly, castles, churches, ruins and even dolmens also hold significance as they represent historical memories and the significance of the nation in a particular time and context, for example Stonehenge, Hadrian's Wall or the Tower of London. These cultural inventions in landscapes evidence how significantly they can become a powerful part of the national imagination.

Hewison (1987) critiqued the cultural and heritage industries as he believes that by only understanding a nation through its historical artefacts it makes it harder to see how it grows and changes. One can even go as far to suggest that these historical territories attach themselves to the national imagination and serve as historical facts or myths to bolster nationalist argument. National heroes enshrined in statues may also offer this function, as they commemorate specific national narratives in public spaces (Enslin 2020). On the theme of territory, Gellner's "Potato Principle" (Gellner 1992; Barrington 1997),

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[2] Greta Thurnberg 'School Strike for Climate' campaign and climate change movement Extinction Rebellion incorporate notions of belonging to and being people of the Earth within their campaigns

points to the notion that many nations will claim territory through the principle where groups will look back to historical periods where they were mainly farmers to justify the control of land that members of the nation are not the majority, shows how territory itself is imagined (for example apartheid South Africa).

Storey (2001) refers to the imagery of the White Cliffs of Dover as one of England's symbols that is significant in the nation's imagination due to its symbolic value of historic battleground and national borders. He argues that these images and "place myths" (ibid, p.110) serve to reinforce the idea of the nation, thus rendering it more concrete. These otherwise normal or ordinary landscapes come to symbolise something much broader with extraordinary significance. As a consequence, Kaplan (2000, p.45) suggests that "instead of the group defining territory, the territory comes to define the group". Deacon (2001) adds to this by stating that the construction of an identity is usually embedded and re-affirmed in geographical places enriched with history. This furthers Richmond's (1987 p.4) argument that national identity is dependent on territorial grounds; "an historical association with a certain place is sine qua non".

Deacon (2002, p.109) points out that amongst discourse on national identity, national land or 'soil' provides an 'object' to be protected, where they will fight and even die for the land to ensure that it does not fall into '"foreign hands" (ibid. p.110), this in turn is seen as an absolute act of patriotism. Williams and Smith also discuss this notion, the belief of the land falling into 'foreign hands' represents the idea that only members of the historic community can be true citizens, while all others are minority groups living in a homeland that is not their own (Williams and Smith 1983). History, or its mythical interpretation, is sometimes used here as a tool to hark back to imperial ages where the territory and community were alleged to have been ruled by native nation members. On a similar note, what makes territory so significant in understanding national identity is the fact that it provides identifiable boundaries between those who belong and those who do not belong (Skey 2011). When pieces of land are the key focus of identity, struggles over the land can become protracted (Kriesberg 1993). To understand the power that the role of myth, memory and the imaginary plays in national identity it is important to pay attention now to the ways these forces contribute to citizens' definitions of the nation and national identity.

2.1.5. Myths, Memories and the Collective Imaginary

"No memory, no identity: no identity, no nation" (Smith 1999, p.10).

In his book *Sapiens* (2011), Yuval Noah Harari argues that homo-sapiens came to dominate the world because of the fact they are able to cooperate in large numbers. Harari's theory of the cognitive

revolution explains that the way humans' ability to imagine things collectively meant that humans were able to subscribe to a common narrative about ideas such as money, state, a god, a nation, and lead others to pursue this narrative, which exists in one's mind. Harari explains how most large-scale human cooperation systems ultimately derive from a human beings' unique capability for fiction (Gundar-Goshen 2019). This ability to transmit information enabled the "cooperation between very large numbers of strangers" and the "rapid innovation of social behaviour" (Harari 2011, p.41). According to Harari, the concepts that oversee one's life exists in a shared imagination or shared imagined reality, to comprehend the power of these concepts, such as nation for example, one must take into account the interactions of ideas and fantasies as well (ibid).

On myths and collective imaginaries, Bouchard (2017) argues that within any society or collective group, there is a constant process of ideas and propositions coming to the foreground regarding the nation's definition and governance. These consist of; how the ideals and values it entails should be pursued, how its role should be defined, and how past representations should be sustained (including the heroes that should or should not be celebrated). Bouchard goes on to say that these ideas usually take the form of either fears, anxieties and animosity, or aspirations, beliefs, visions of the world and identities that can have the power to influence governance and rally public debate and policy. A notable example of this was America's 'rally round the flag' effect post 9/11 (Goldstein and Pevehouse 2008). Bouchard explains that these notions of the myth belong to emotion rather than reason stating that they;

> "Permeate the minds of individuals, touch them deep inside, and motivate their choices, either by mobilizing them, by sending them forth in pursuit of bold plans, or on the contrary by inhibiting them" (ibid p.8).

Like Croucher (2004) on the legitimisation of the definition of 'imaginary', Bouchard defines the collective imaginary as belonging to the psyche more so than to reason, that these imaginaries are conceived composing of representations of realities such as identities, traditions, norms, narratives and symbolic structures. By drawing upon the authority of these empirical foundations, this informs the psychologically powerful experiences of community.

On the idea of mythscape, memory and identity, Bell (2003) identifies mythology and memory as core concepts of national identity and nationalism, and addresses the commonly employed notions of collective memory and how memories are used in framing national identity. Bell argues that collective memory is an important political phenomenon and assumes a meta-theoretical role of sentimental yearning, this idea Klein (2000, p.45) points out, contains a sense of "cathartic danger" that embodies

the "therapeutic alternative to historical discourse" which memory might serve with nostalgia and myth, resulting in powerful conviction. Bell stresses the importance of narrative in myth formation and points to Anderson's (1983) theory of how print capitalism and the spread of communication technologies put emphasis onto the powerful role of film, the media and literature. Anderson discussed the ways these helped to form folk rituals, myths and ultimately formulate narratives. Within these modes, narratives can operate to empower communities on a linguistic and symbolic level (Anderson 1983; Bell 2003). Since memory relies on these pre-constructed elements such as images, narratives and so forth, one's sense of experience is not untarnished and is in fact influenced by these external forces. Bell stresses the importance of how the social and cultural construction of stories concerning origins, community and history are bound up in the process of national identity formation,

> "To mould a nation identity – a sense of unity with others belonging to the same nation – is necessary to have an understanding of oneself as located in a temporally extended narrative" (Bell 2003, p.69).

As well as this, Bell's main point on mythscapes and national identity is the role of memory. This signifies an internal aspect to national identity as myths are often bound up with affect and memory. Bell argues that the nation is largely constructed and constituted in the memory, as it contains shared ideas, values and interpretations of either real history or narratives of primordial origins or 'golden ages'. The idea of how these narratives and ideas get passed from generation to generation largely relies on collectivity, as these narratives and histories are shared, taught, reaffirmed and reproduced. This means they are not always factual, they can be largely embellished and as Bell states, "assume a life-force of their own, escaping the clutches of any individual or group" (ibid, p70), and can thus become embedded in the nation's psyche. Poole (1999, p.65) agreed with this notion of the power of memory and identity stating that memory is "a central force through which our identity is constructed", which people are exposed to via practices and institutions. Turning to Smith (1991) and Kelman (1997) with reference to national identity as a collective product, one can understand that systems of beliefs and values are transmitted to group members through socialisation. Memories of national experiences, achievements or defeats are collective elements that are rooted in the nation's history; the power of these elements depends on the extent to which the individual has been exposed to the systems' socialisation. These collective memories are important due to the varying degrees that people incorporate national identity to their personal identity, this becomes part of one's definition of the self, how the view the world, and how they view their place in it (Smith 1991; Kelman 1997). I

will come back to this theme at a later point from a psychosocial perspective to understand how stories a nation's population will tell themselves ultimately define the nations' sense of collective self.

Bell (2003) warns that a major problem when discussing national collective memory is that it often involves a question of perspective, meaning that representations of the past depend on a variety of intersectionalities such as class, gender, ethnicity and age. According to Bell a nations governing myth should be understood in the context of power relations and dominancy, he suggests one should understand the nationalist myth as a narrative that overly simplifies, dramatizes and most importantly selectively polarises and narrates the nation's past, its place on the world stage and its history. Gillis (1994 p.1-2) also explains how memories facilitate one's understand of the world, adding that these are often embedded in "complex class, gender and power relations that determine what is remembered (or forgotten) by whom and for what end". Here power is important, it is clear why Bell warns of the significant implications of remade historical imagination; "this remade historical imagination has significant implications […] and we ignore it at our peril" (ibid. p78).

Cassirer's (1946) understanding of myth is the form of symbolic expression and feeling; he arranges them into their relations with events, people or historical figures and objects, where phantasy can sometimes be heavily relied on to express feelings associated with hope or fear which can be organised in relation to presumed current affairs (Cromby 2019). Cromby (ibid) directs us to the prominent role and function that myth plays in politics and points to Cassirer's survey in 1946 that demonstrated the mythical elements of political settlements: an example may be that one social group that is superior to others, a typical myth of the colonial world. Thus, the role of mythical thinking becomes largely influential within any democracy, and in certain periods of time may become more influential or prominent depending on the socio-political context. Cromby (ibid. p.57) argues this helps to "neutralise feelings of indignation or anger caused by injustice, rather than by invoking demonstrable truths" which implicate a "style of thinking and reasoning that largely functions to express and organise feelings". These sentiments of superiority can only exist with an Other present, therefore I will now turn attention to the dynamics of sameness and difference.

2.1.6. Community and Belonging

> "Where you belong is where you are safe; and where you are safe is where you belong"
> (Ignatieff 1993, p.10)

Aspects of belonging continue to be subject of interest amongst scholars, much of the discussion on community and belonging focuses on collective and large group identities (Risse-Kappen 2016; Volkan 2001; Bond 2006). An example that exemplifies this is the European Union, having seen the most

advanced and large scale regional integration it has created a new sense of collectivism, where its varying levels of memberships has lessened some citizens' belonging and enhanced others, it has also altered perceptions and actions from one to those around them (Smith 1992). As well as this, Snell (2006) argues that in one sense it is the effects of neoliberal capitalism that have in fact eroded a sense of belonging, as the two are essentially incompatible. The topics of belonging to supra-nation and international communities are topics in their own right and will be discussed at a later point in relation to the United Kingdom and the European Union. Firstly, I will explore the foundations of belonging that national identity at its core provides.

National identity is most commonly a frame for creating a sense of "we" and "us". A community can be face to face or geographically dispersed, they unite those who do not know each other and involve relationships that invoke feelings of solidarity and belonging, resting upon the idea of a shared identity. Issues of belonging are particularly important today given the pace of globalisation and its effects on the personal, cultural and economic. The need to belong to a community, a nation, is a desire for attachment to a home. Yuval-Davis (2006) argues that belonging reflects "emotional investments and desires for attachments" (p.202) fuelled by yearning and the aspirational wanting to 'become'. Probyn (1996) highlights that 'belonging' has two affective dimensions; being and longing, which accounts for the need to locate oneself philosophically and politically (Bell 1999). This yearning relates to the importance of one's emotional and material need to belong both on an individual and group level, Croucher (2004) understands it as a fundamental component to identity, conveying a sense of security that is derived from membership of a family unit. Vast amounts of songs, literature, poetry and films have been conducted and written on these premises, reaching out to an intrinsic yearning for making sense of one's identity and where one's home is. The politics of belonging is one of passion, one only needs to look at examples from Northern Ireland, former Yugoslavia and the Middle East, to understand that although their complex origins and manifestations, they signify the power and passion that surrounds belonging (Croucher 2004); although interestingly none of these could strictly be considered as historically cohesive nations.

Mason (2000) also argues that national identity requires citizens to have a sense of belonging together. He explains that a sense of belonging together means that there is a belief that there is a special reason why groups should adopt comradeship amongst themselves that appeals to something other than the fact they happen to live in the same polity. Mason goes on to say that co-nationals need to share a sense of culture, history and more specifically language, to sustain a sense of belonging within a national community. Fortier (1999; 2000) also argues this, claiming that common histories, experiences and places are crucial to the act of belonging, and are imagined and sustained. Ignatieff

(1993) notes the importance of being around nation group members that 'speak your language'. Berlin also discusses these notions stating that within groups there is a sense that: "They understand me, as I understand them; and this understanding creates within me a sense of being somebody in the world" (Berlin 1969, p.140). Ignatieff explains how this shows that language provides one of the most essential aspects to belonging, according to Ignatieff, a nation's language is deeply emotional as it provides the most important form of belonging.

On Fortier's (1999; 2000) notion of belonging as something being imagined and sustained, one can look back to Benedict Anderson's (1983) work on 'imagined communities' to further this concept. Firstly, words like 'imagined' do not intend falsity and contrast to a 'true identity', the word 'imagined' in this case does not signify something "ethereal" or "unimportant" (Croucher 2004, p.41). In contrast, it is an abstract form of community present in one's consciousness, where a communion will be bound together in each of the nation members' minds (Anderson 1983). Anderson's work is mostly used when addressing nationalisms, however due to its nature of community, it useful to use it here in conjunction with the concept of belonging. Within this imagined community, aspects to belonging such as shared history, language and culture are endorsed and utilised to enhance a sense of cohesiveness. He explains,

> "It is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (ibid. p.7)

This comradeship conceived in the imaginary resonates with Bell (1990, p.3), who claims that belonging functions amongst levels of abstraction, stating that "one does not simply or ontologically 'belong' to the world or to any group within it". Considering the emphasis put onto the imagined aspect of national community and identity, it is advantageous for one to also consider the myths and memories that develop and manifest in the mind and imagination at both individual and collective level, and how these develop into a sense of patriotism.

2.1.7. Patriotism

Nathanson (1989) understands patriotism as not only a love for one's country and traditions but also a loyalty and preference to one's country's wellbeing. Most standard dictionaries define patriotism as a 'love of one's country', but Nathanson delves deeper into this meaning and defines it as the following four elements; "a special affection for one's own country", "a sense of personal identification with the country", "special concern for the well-being of the country" and "a willingness to sacrifice to promote

the country's good" (1993, p.34-35). Patriotism is usually defined in opposition to concepts such as nationalism, though definitions can vary. There is an agreement amongst scholars that patriotism is defined by "a deeply felt affective attachment to the nation" (Conover and Feldman 1987, p.1), of mostly love and pride (Kosterman and Feshbach 1989). Figueiredo and Elkins (2003) discuss the effects of national pride and question whether it implies prejudice, within groups, they suggest from their findings that patriots and nationalists are similar in their esteem for the nation, but dissimilar in their tolerance towards non-natives (patriots being tolerant and nationalists being intolerant); "exclusive group loyalty does not come at the expense of tolerance" (p.183).

Schatz (et al. 1999; Schatz and Staub 1997) measure the forms of patriotism by distinguishing two types to differentiate it on the left and right of the political spectrum; blind and constructive. Blind patriotism or as Huddy and Katib (2007, p.64) call "uncritical patriotism", refers to an unwillingness to accept or give criticism to the nation, which is endorsed in terms such as; "my country right or wrong" (Schatz and Staub 1997, p.231). This form of patriotism coincides with the characteristics of authoritarianism, for example the tendency to categorically support authoritative figures unconditionally (Adorno et al. 1950), but this is due to the fact that authoritarians mostly produce higher levels of uncritical patriotism, which Huddy and Katib (2007) suggest may not be an effective measure for patriotism due to its alignment with nationalism and ethno-centrism. Constructive patriotism however summarises a form of patriotism that could be argued as more acceptable to those on the left, or liberals. Scatz (et al. 1999, p.153) defines constructive criticism as being driven by a "a desire for positive change", which is characterised by one's attachment to the country and their critical loyalty. Unlike blind or uncritical patriots, constructive patriotism allows one to question and criticise, this is as this enables them to positively improve the country for the better. The latter of these distinguishing types of patriotism is defined as "support of active political change" (Huddy and Katib 2007, p.64), whereas the former can lead to debates over who is most truly and genuinely patriotic (ibid.). Though these aren't the only measurements of patriotism, one can also use symbolic patriotism and national pride as measurements, these are usually associated with uses of the national flag and anthem and has been analysed in the past this way (Kosterman and Feshbach 1989; Sidanius et al. 1997). Huddy and Kathib (2007) point to the fact that this symbolic patriotism is more popular amongst those on the right of the spectrum, as on the left the national flag can have negative connotations.

Bar-Tal (1993) provides a social psychological framework to understand the attachment of individuals to their nation (group). These attachments he writes, are reflected in the beliefs and emotions that individuals hold, and when in the form of patriotism, these have positive implications for the groups

existence as they provide meaning and serve functions of belonging, unity, mobilisation, identification and cohesiveness. As well as forming their social identity through self-categorization, via patriotism individuals develop attachments and bind themselves to the group expressing emotions and beliefs of love, loyalty, pride and care (ibid). This is how the nation, by inculcating nation members through its political, social and cultural mechanisms, can influence members to sacrifice their wishes, needs and even lives to achieve group goals in the name of patriotism. Bar-Tal's work on patriotism is identified by others as 'positive patriotism'. An example of the contrast of this would be Adorno (et al. 1950, p.107-108) in The Authoritarian Personality, where they distinguish two types of patriotism: 'genuine patriotism' and 'pseudo patriotism'. The genuine patriot appreciates the values and culture of other nations and is free of any outgroup rejection, desire for imperial driven power or rigid conformism. Pseudo-patriotism however is defined as "[a] concept that involves blind attachment to certain national cultural values, uncritical conformity with the prevailing group ways and rejection of other nations as outgroups". One could understand this pseudo-patriotism as nationalism, as the definition Adorno (et al. 1950) describes is similar to that of a nationalist. Therefore, I will now turn the attention onto the dynamics of nationalism.

2.1.8. Nationalism

Psarrou (2014) emphasises that nationalism is something *more* than patriotism. As well as a sentiment, Psarrou explains that nationalism is also an ideology and in some cases, a movement, therefore it requires a nuanced analysis. Heath et al. (1999, p.163) also suggest that nationalism should not be likened simplistically with xenophobia, explaining that "the two concepts are not unrelated empirically, but they are by no means coterminous". Kelman (1969) regarded nationalism as a powerful force in the world, but speaks of nationalism in two forms; a danger or threat to social cohesion or a supportive crutch to social cohesion. However it occurs, nationalism will draw upon certain elements;

> "[nationalism] draws on certain universal psychological dispositions, and on a set of norms established in the contemporary international system, in order to promote a particular set of goals shared by an identifiable population or segment of such a population." (Kelman 1969, p.277)

Nationalism can thus act as a binding force in economic and political development and stability, or on the other hand a force for separatism and xenophobia. Ultimately, Kelman concludes that nationalism should be understood as a vehicle for achieving certain goals that mobilise and correspond with a

population at large. The field of Nationalism is understandably large and includes scholars of diverse scholarly backgrounds, therefore it is beneficial to turn to notable scholars of nationalism including those most relevant to this work to help theorise, understand and appreciate the main elements and dimensions of nationalism.

Ignatieff (1993) understands nationalism as the moral justification of action to protect and defend the autonomous rights of the nation and its people against an Other. Ignatieff (1993, p.5) writes of three ideals that make up for nationalism; political, cultural and moral. The political ideal is that of a nation's right to self-determination, the cultural is the claim that the nation provides a primary form of belonging, the moral ideal is that nationalism is the ethnic and justification of heroic sacrifice used in defence of the nation against external or internal enemies. These ideals underwrite each other and define the sovereignty of "the people" (1993, p.6). Self-determination in this definition of nationalism is defined by democratic self-governance or the implementation and act of cultural autonomy; a right that belongs to 'the people'. Similarly, Mellor (1989, p.4-5) defines nationalism as "the political expression of the nation's aspirations" where its people exert control over territory and "perceive it as their homeland by right".

Gellner's theory of nationalism is based on research over several decades between the 1960s and 1990s, and founded itself on the principle that nationalism created nations, rather than nations created nationalisms. Gellner's (1983, p.1) main principle of nationalism was that "the political and national unit should be congruent". However, it must be noted that this understanding does not account for regional and local differences of nationalism. Analysing nationalism from a historical perspective, Gellner theorised nationalism as a functional element of modernity, focussing on the cultural and political dimensions of the transition from agrarian to industrial society. Although Gellner's theory is closely tied with a particular period of in European history (the industrial revolution, where Gellner emphasised the changing qualities of interpersonal relationships as a result of amplified mobility, education and labour markets), the central features Gellner describes are useful in understanding nationalism. These are provided by Erikson (2007, p.14) who identifies them as the following:

> "[a] shared formal educational system; Cultural homogenisation; Central monitoring of polity, with extensive bureaucratic control; Linguistic standardisation; National identification as abstract community; Cultural similarity as a basis for political legitimacy; Anonymity [and] single-stranded social relationships."

This keeps in line with Gellner's viewpoint of nationalism as territorially based identities, along with Storey (2002) who describes nationalism as a territorial ideology linked with a political vision, Skey (2009; 2011) also views it as such, engaging in Billig's (1995) thesis on banal nationalism which understands nationalism as 'every-day nationhood' characterised through everyday contexts such as flags, money, phrases, sporting events, and Billig stresses the point that these are effective due to their subliminal nature. Billig distinguished banal nationalism in this way to set it apart from the more extreme variations of nationalism, though as Erikson (ibid.) points out, the increasing de-territorialisation of politics, economies, power and culture in recent decades has created new challenges for the study of nationalism.

Anthony Smith (1991, p.72) identifies five elements nationalism can signify; the formation and maintenance of a nation, a consciousness of national belonging including sentiments and aspiration for the nation's security and prosperity, the language and symbol of the nation and the role it plays, an ideology that includes a cultural doctrine of the nation and its will and lastly a political and social movement that aims to achieve the nation's goals and will. Smith applies his ethno-symbolist approach to questions of nationalism by focussing on the cultural and ethnic dimensions and looks at the ways in which myths of a 'golden age' and a 'ethnic election' are deployed as tools for the mobilisation of nationalist sentiment. By arguing that nationalism essentially draws upon historically flawed interpretations of the group's history and past events of the nation, Smith states that this means that these mythologised interpretations of the past are frequently used to justify modern political or ethnic positions. By sharing these real or imagined ethnic ties and group myths, Smith states that this means that group members feel an especially intense bond of solidarity to the nation and thus to each member of the nation. Sometimes, he states, this will only be felt by a small segment of the population and will not echo in the population as a whole, this can happen within nations with regional and ethnic divisions. Smith does manage to conjure up a concise definition of what he believes nationalism is – "an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute as an actual of potential 'nation'" (ibid, p.73) – a definition that includes underlying sentiments of territory, history and community. Smith ultimately made the case that nationalism or national identity can only be constructed upon the bases of pre-existing ethnic groups named "ethnies", as I explored previously in section 2.1.1.

Smith's (1991) definition of nationalism leads to the distinction between an ethnic nationalism and a civic nationalism. The differences between the two were discussed earlier on in relation to national identity, however they take on a more extreme or heightened form in relation to nationalism. Most

definitions of an ethnic nationalism involve a concept of nation members having genealogical and ancestral roots that tie them together primarily by relations and cultural markers of ethnicity. An ethnic form of nationalism is mostly exclusive with nation members having the tendency to reject those who do not conform to their own ethnic code of nationality (Smith 1993). Whereas a civic nationalism, some suggest is an oxymoron due to its inability to mobilise to the extent of ethnic nationalist movement, due to the lack of psychological and emotional appeal (Xenos 1996). A civic nationalism rather is defined by those that have common ground in their loyalty and appreciation of the nation's institutions, laws, democracy and common citizenship and culture (Tilley et al. 2004). For example, Kohn believed that Western civic nationalism promoted tolerant and inclusive liberal and cosmopolitan attitudes whilst ethnic nationalism was disruptive and violent (Kohn 1944; Ignatieff 1994). In an increasing globalised world, Greenfeld (2016) argues that rather than nationalism disappearing under globalisation, as many scholars were arguing, there has instead been a "globalisation of nationalism" (ibid, p.128), where nationalism has spread from the West into Asia. Therefore, I will now turn to matters of globalisation, and take into account the forces of modernity that have arisen alongside of it. This is in order to understand the contextual dynamics of identity in the 21st century, in which this study is situated.

2.1.9. Globalisation and Identity

Concepts of modernity are used to characterize inclinations and qualities in observed empirical reality (Kaltoft 2001). In the mid to late 20th century sociologists were responding to the conditions and experiences in an age of liquid modernity (Bauman 2013). It refers to the nature of modern day highly developed global societies marked by global capitalist economies and the information revolution. These approaches emerged as a response to the shifting social condition and contexts; Ulrich Beck (1992) argues that these rapid global changes affect us locally and socially via the changing and declining influence of traditions and customs relating to family, work and social life. Giddens (1991) argues that the lines separating the local from the global and vice versa become blurred as social interactions have become disembodied from such local contexts, as high-speed, face-less electronic communication and globalized economic and cultural systems have made it possible to interact with others with limited constraints. In turn, he argues that this has led to existential anxiety as a result of the dangers and risks of living in a globalised precarious world and the ability to seek security in identity has been eroded; "processes of change […] are intrinsically connected to globalising influences, and the sheer sense of being caught up in massive waves of global transformation is perturbing" (Giddens, 1991 p.183). These conditions he explains, lead to an exacerbated sense of

anxiety as identities struggle to be constructed in the backdrop of the shifting and fragmenting tendencies of modern life.

Many more scholars in addition to Giddens and Bauman hold such views of the threat of globalisation to one's national identity, as Storey (2002, p.108) explains, the threat of globalisation may increase levels of hard nationalism: "territory remains central to nationalist narratives thereby demonstrating the importance attaching a place in the national imagination". Held (et al. 1999 p.16) defines globalisation as "increasing cross-border flows of goods, services, money, people, information, and culture". Scholars tend to think differently when discussing the effect of globalisation on national identity; while some claim it reduces one's identification and attachment with the nation, others find the opposite effect (Ariely 2012; Guibernau 2001; Kymlicka 2003). These studies are mostly conducted using quantitative analysis using statistical survey data from organisations such as World Values Survey and the International Social Survey programme and examining them through the lens of globalisation. Norris and Inglehart (2009) for example found that experiences of globalisation hinder citizens' identification with the nation because of communication and media technologies and the expansion of markets involving an emergence of the 'global consumer'. Guibernau (2001) on a similar notion to Orgad (2015) points out the fact that these factors hinder any kind of cultural homogenisation of a nation. This leads to a more cosmopolitan outlook, one of openness, cross-cultural harmony and liberty, where one is a 'global citizen' (Folk 1993).

On the other hand, scholars of nationalism tend to view globalisation as a force that enhances one's attachment to the nation, as one's national identity comes under threat this can bolster one's support and allegiance to the nation (Jung 2008). Ariely (2012) found that a country's level of globalisation is not related to national identification or nationalism, instead it has negative relations to patriotism; it impacts the willingness to fight for the country and preserve the ethnic conceptions of nation membership. This mirrors Kunovich's (2009) findings, who found that globalisation was associated positively with a civic national identity and negatively with an ethnic national identity. This dichotomy can be seen most in relation to amongst generational differences. For example, in the UK, the young having grown up in a globalised world are more open to ideas of global citizenship and have less attachment to the nation, whereas the older generation are more hostile to these global outlooks and feel strong attachment to the nation (Tilley and Heath 2007). These mixed results on the outlooks and effects on globalisation and national identity are generally due to each discipline being largely multi-dimensional which contain notions of both the ethnic and civic foundations that make up national identity. Additionally, different agreements on the definition of national identity and the cultural and political differences of each country used as focus in these studies also create differing results.

Nevertheless, all these studies are generally unanimous in their agreement of the profound effects of globalisation on the national identity.

Having explored the literature relating to definitions of the interrelating foundations of national identity and its extended branches of nationalism, patriotism and globalisation, I will now introduce the psychosocial approach, in order to provide a new interdisciplinary approach to understanding the dynamics of national identity and political sentiment. So far cultural, social, and political understandings of national identity have been established, and as this research seeks to comprehend the deeper psychological processes at play, it will now introduce the psychosocial perspective to go beneath the surface in order to understand what drives these processes of identification and affect in politics. After introducing this approach and understanding its usefulness for looking at national identity and political sentiment, this chapter will finally look at Britishness and Englishness and its political manifestations in the 21st century, to allow room for focussed attention on the years 2016 to 2020.

2.2. The Psychosocial Perspective

As it has been argued previously, the study of national identity requires a multidimensional perspective. Therefore, this section will use psychoanalytic theory as a complementary tool in approaching affect in the subject of the nation, national identity and political behaviour. This section introduces the basic concepts of psychoanalysis and psychosocial theory, with a particular focus on object relations theory and defence mechanisms. Firstly, it will lay out Freudian ideas (1915; 1920) that contain the foundational elements of psychoanalysis while offering the tools to understand the mechanisms that determine psychological and affective life. Secondly, it will introduce Melanie Klein's (1923; 1952) work on object relations before exploring defence mechanisms and the work of Anna Freud (1937) and Wilfred Bion (1967; 1970). Lastly, these psychosocial ideas will be used to comprehend how national identity, nationalism and political affect can be further understood with attention to psychological mechanisms. There are however tensions when using clinical theory (Frosh and Baraitsa 2008), as will be explored in chapter 3, but it can nevertheless add value, providing a nuanced view of the intersecting drivers of emotion and the unconscious (Hollway and Jeferson 2013; 2000).

Psychosocial theory studies the interrelation of social and psychoanalytical thought while taking into account the political, social and cultural contexts that influence thought, emotion and behaviour

(Frosh 2003; Day et al. 2009; Stenner 2014). Acknowledging the underlying unconscious thought processes that shape behaviour can enhance the understanding of political behaviour and social thought and therefore enrich existing approaches within the field of political studies (Hollway and Jerfferson 2013). Psychoanalysis enables an understanding of the process of identification, and provides an explanation for the attribution of identities whilst taking into account the interrelationship between the inner and outer self and the phantasies[3] and defence mechanisms that shape subjectivity and experience (Richards 2019b). These psychosocial processes may influence political thought and the forces of national identification and can account for the ways in which people think and act in polarised political climates.

2.2.1. The Unconscious and Object Relations Theory

Sigmund Freud's (1915; 1920) most important discovery was the unconscious, being the first to present this as an analytical concept it now acts as the central concept to psychoanalysis. The unconscious leads us to a wider compass of mechanisms and drivers. It is important to clarify the instinctual drive energies within the unconscious as it is how one understands the unconscious and thus it foregrounds psychoanalytic work. Within Freud's later writings influential drives were classified into two large categories; the life drives and the death drives. The life drive refers to the energies produced towards preserving life and maintaining health, behaviours associated with the life instinct include love, social co-operations, pro-creation and survival. However the death drive refers to the strive to destroy and kill and is therefore known as the drive of destruction or aggression. The ultimate aim of the drives is satisfaction and serves the pleasure principle which refers to the driving force that guides the instinctive nature where pain is avoided to satisfy psychological needs (Freud 1920). This is contrasted with the counterpart reality principle which refers to the act of deterring gratification of a desire when one's reality does not allow for its immediate gratification (ibid.). Freud explained that sometimes these instincts can manifest within an affective nature or may attach itself to an idea. Therefore now I will turn to object relations theory, to understand how Freud's ideas have been adapted to account for affective properties.

Object relations theory is a development of Freudian psychoanalytic theory, and relies on the notion that humans are essentially social beings, and aims to explore the human in a "dual world of external and internal relationships" (Mitchell 1998, p.2) where each world affects and influences the other both consciously and unconsciously and impacts one's experiences of external realities. Similarly to Freud, Klein envisioned psychic life as the process of managing the conflict between the drives to love and the drives to destroy. She understood love as the manifestation of the life drive and

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[3] Spelt specifically with a 'ph' rather than an 'f' to emphasise its unconscious nature

destructiveness and envy as manifestations of the death drive. Her ideas on the developmental stages differ from Freud's as she instead focusses on the infant's phase of early life as transition from two significant mental stages: the paranoid schizoid position and the depressive position (Klein 1952). She used these stages to capture the notions of anxiety and defences that emerge in the early stages of infancy and therefore viewed early mental development in terms of how anxiety is experienced and managed through introjective and projective identification. Klein's object relations theory distinguishes between the two, the former refers to the process where external objects are enriched with meaning and affective properties, the latter refers to identification with objects because there has been projected qualities onto them (Psarrou 2003).

Before delving into the paranoid schizoid position it is first advantageous to highlight the concept of phantasy; the term, (spelt specifically with a 'ph' rather than an 'f' to emphasise its unconscious nature), refers to the unconscious mental processes that accompany psychic life and underlie and shape thought, dream, symptoms and patterns of defence (Spillius et al. 2011). Klein emphasised that phantasies interact mutually with experience to shape the logical and emotional characteristics of an individual. Following those such as Holloway (2008) and Frosh (2003) on the benefits of using psychosocial theory, Minsky (1998, p.43) states that Klein's version of the unconscious is "modelled as a container of biological pre-dispositions to feelings, impulses and defences", thus highlighting its usefulness in approaching issues surrounding the current political environment.

2.2.2. Mechanisms of Defence and The Paranoid-Schizoid Position

In Kleinian theory (1923; 1952), there are two major positions that an infant will experience within the first 0-6 months of life; the paranoid schizoid position and the subsequent depressive position. These positions are a set of psychic functions that persist during the first experiences of deprivation, anxiety and loss, and can be reactivated at any time into adulthood. These positions are states of mind and are oscillated between constantly in adulthood. The paranoid schizoid position exists in the infants first three months and accounts for the way in which the infant attempts to manage difficult experiences and emotions relating to the external world. The need to navigate this chaos leads the infant to splitting into what the infant feels is a good or bad experience, Klein uses the example of an infant experiencing hunger, and splitting to create the external objects of a good breast (full) and bad breast (empty), where one can see the life (libidinal) and death (destructive) drives in action, as the infant will consume and see gratification from the full good breast and may teeth the empty bad breast. This means that the ability to distinguish between phantasy and reality is disrupted and split. Within the paranoid schizoid position, the external world is experienced in a black and white polarised manner, where external and internal experiences are organised as an idealised absolutely good or

hated as absolutely bad. Projection, the outward attribution of split bad feelings onto external objects or an Other occurs as means to deal with negative and uncomfortable experiences (Klein 1923). Alternatively, good and positive feelings can be projected onto a good object, which is often idealised. Relationships in the paranoid schizoid position are subjective and projection is used as a way to cope with emotions that arise from splitting. The central fear of the paranoid schizoid position is that one will be destroyed by a "malevolent external force" (Gomez 1997, p.37) which Klein termed persecutory anxiety. Once the splitting lessens as a result of the infant maturing and managing ambivalence, objects can be experienced in both good and bad natures, the polar qualities can be acknowledged as different aspects of the same object (Grotstein 1981).

Considering the nature in which defence mechanisms are conceptualised amongst object relations theory, it is important to explore the avenues and manoeuvres that are devised to avoid feeling overwhelmed by psychological effects of anxiety, loss and uncertainty. The defensive function of the unconscious manifests in many ways when enacted by a threat of uncomfortable or unsettling emotions. Anna Freud (1937) expanded on her father's (Sigmund Freud) work on defence mechanisms, focussing on five; repression, regression, projection, reaction formation and sublimation. However here, I will pay attention to the functions most relevant to that of the subject of nation and politics; displacement, projection and containment. Firstly, it is important to state that the majority of these involve some form of regression, where one will "return to an earlier phase of development" (Freud 1905, p.239) rather than handling the impulses in an adaptive and constructive manner.

According to Anna and Sigmund Freud (1937; 1937b), displacement is a adaptive and maladaptive form of object substitution, a process in which there is a "transference of psychical intensities" (Sharpe and Faulkner 2014, p.74) onto an external object or person. This uses the form of projection to expel either unwanted characteristics or emotions onto a person, object or group. The term sublimation is an adaptive mature form of defence mechanism that manages socially unacceptable impulses and transforms them into socially acceptable behaviours and actions and does this by "diverting the aim of one's "base" drives so they are satisfied in activities conducive to the development of civilization and culture" (Sharpe and Faulkner 2014, p.156). Projection as defined earlier in relation to Klein's paranoid schizoid position, can be defined psychoanalytically by simply denying the existence of unconscious both positive and negative impulses and qualities and instead attributing them to an Other (object, person or group).

Having introduced the concepts of object relations theory, the unconscious and defence mechanisms, I will now approach matters of the nation with a psychosocial lens, and explore the existing literature

surrounding this approach, moving from one-body theory to two-body theory, moving away from Klein to relational theories.

2.2.3. Understanding the Nation Psychosocially

Crociani-Windland and Hoggett (2012) argue that in order to understand political affect, it is important to understand the role of human passions. They make the case for a "vicissitude of human feeling" (ibid, p. 161) which describes the way that differing emotions and feelings connect and disconnect from each other in unique and unexpected ways, they argue that particularly vicissitudes of both grief and grievance contribute to ressentiment (Nietzsche 1900) which is a sentiment of reactionary populism (Capelos and Demertzis 2022). Those such as Klein, Bion and Winnicott help us to understand affective relationships that occur in processes of splitting, projecting and containing, the nature of which can give way to susceptibility to populist or nationalist movements and attitudes. Many have argued that this creates ripe environments for political exploitation (Pssarou 2003; Salmela and Capelos 2021; Crociani-Windland and Hoggett 2012; Richards 2019; Austad 2014). Not only this, but times of anxiety and uncertainty can also lead groups into bound social cohesion and blind followership to national, religious and political groups (Volkan 2004; Sklar 2018). Political dynamics are often affectively charged, which is often displayed through discourse, as Crociani-Windland and Hoggett (2012, p.173) explain:

> "it is possible to make an affective experience more or less intense by the words we choose, when speaking to someone who has undergone that experience. Thus, language may seek to encompass affect in different ways, from the rigid, defensive discourse of the obsessive bureaucrat to the inebriating rhetoric of the populist."

Populist rhetoric often exploits national identity to mobilise people toward particular political ends, therefore it is interesting to consider Crociani-Windland and Hoggett's (2012) affective approach when discussing national identity.

It has been previously mentioned that national identity functions as both a social and political one, due to the nature of its formation through social interaction with individuals and groups, where an identity is attributed through political structures (Pssarou 2003). As previously discussed, national identity also includes a range of historical, mythological and imaginative elements. Pierre Nora writing in La Nation (1986) noted that historians regard the history of a nation as something of a representation. Guerra (1992, p. 122) expands on this on a psychosocial level to argue that these representations lead to dimensions of "mythology, social imagination and shared social subjectivity",

which allows for these functions to be places between the conscious and unconscious. He explains that this suggests one may view the world as being made up of emotionally charged objects that form the foundation and sense of belonging, thus a way of sharing an identity. Furthermore, he explains that national belonging is both a fundamental human need that is conditioned by historical circumstances. Psychosocially speaking, this offers a sense of belonging to a social system where the nation can offer security to a society sharing norms, rules and principles (ibid). Particularly within the age of globalisation, national identities can give way to nationalistic identities, which adopt the political nature of nationalism and puts emphasis on familial nature of co-nationals as well as territory, borders and religion these are laid out by Pssarou (2003, p.97-102). These emotional spaces of a nationalistic identity is particularly evident in North American identity, where North American people will remember old and distant origins and adopt unifying national symbols using familial sentiments of George Washington as "the father of his country" (Grant, 1997 p.93). According to Pssarrou (2003), these representations signify the power of appeal to unconscious memories of infant identification and the lasting salience in somebody's life. Pssarou puts emphasis on nationalistic identity as one of loyalty to the nation, which is expressed in one's willingness and interest to act and defend the interests of the nation. Psychosocially speaking this can enhance in-group out-group notions between those that are obedient to the nation's interests and those that are not, which has the potential for political conflict.

Having laid out understandings of political affect in psychosocial studies, I will now approach the framework of emotional containment and understand its usefulness in exploring matters of national identity and political affect, drawing upon ideas of Bion (1967; 1970) and Richards (2007; 2018; 2019a; 2019b).

2.2.4. Containment and the nation

An adapted Kleinian concept of the psychodynamics between the caregiver and infant is psychological containment (Bion 1967; 1970). This is a process in which Sharpe and Faulkner (2014, p.98) describe as the caregiver receiving and containing the infant's projected anxiety, so it can be returned to the infant and "re-introjected in a modified, more palatable form". Containment can thus be understood as one individual receiving projection in the form of anxieties or terrors from another individual, which they experience as communications and process and transform them, before then re-introjecting them in a modified tolerable form to the individual (Bion 1967). This allows the individual to tolerate their own feelings while developing the capability and capacity to manage these emotions. Although

not a defence mechanism, containment is a place of holding and safety for an individual to tolerate projected anxiety (Yates and MacRury 2021).

Richards (2018) expands on Bion's (1967; 1970) concept of containment. He describes "containing environments" which are necessary to meet individual and collective emotional needs; he describes an "impoverishment of politics" which has weakened capacities to contain and "hold us together" (Richards 2018, p.xi-xiii). Furthermore, he explains how the effects of neoliberalism on the state have meant that the state's ability to perform its role as "the foundation of societal containment" (ibid) has meant that this psychological fulfilment is harder to find within the political and public sphere. Within politics and the nation state, lies the psychological dimension of identity and belonging, which Richards argues are emotionally containing:

> "The nation has been a source of imagery which is visceral and expressive while also representing (albeit typically crudely) the constraining demands of societal membership. The national governmental apparatus is still usually the ultimate provider or guarantor of the containing fabric of everyday life, from high courts and universities to road markings and rubbish collection" (Richards 2018, p.xiii)

Thus, the absence of such containing qualities within the nation state may result in the appeal of "regressive ethno-nationalist parties" (ibid) amongst those that are disenchanted. The nation can be a source of both conscious and unconscious emotions, which can be adopted amongst nationalist discourse, providing a powerful nationalism that enables the expression of passion and provides emotional containment particularly in times of extreme anxiety or uncertainty. Hinshelwood (1989, p.246) also points to the containing nature of society, arguing that "society itself may function as an emotional container of one kind or another", highlighting the defensive nature that this also offers.

Large group identities, particularly those that are bound together by national identity, can also offer emotional containment. Volkan (2001; 2004) constructed key concepts of large group identities, expanding on Erikson's (1959) concepts of identity which as discussed at an earlier point, provides psychic roots in which he calls "core identities". Large-groups also have this core identity, based on the categories one chooses to feel part of which Richards (2018, p.69) states is bound together via categories of "ethnicity, religion and nation". Volkan's (2001; 2004) work applies psychoanalytic thinking to international political conflict, particularly focussing on the emotional dynamics of large-group identities. He lays out seven threads that compose a large group identity: shared images associated with positive emotions, shared 'good' identifications, absorption of Others' 'bad' qualities, adoption of leaders' internal world, chosen glories, chosen traumas and formation of symbols that

develop the groups own autonomy (Volkan 2004, p.37). The latter threads, chosen glories and chosen traumas are of interest due to the emphasis on the historical component of national identity. Volkan describes these as connecting a group with its past – "whether realistically recalled or modified by wishes, fantasies and mental defences" (ibid, p.47). He explains how these influences lead groups to hold on to mental representations that included shared feelings of success and triumph which come to appear sometimes in a mythologised manner in the large-group's identity. Volkan states how particularly in times of stress or uncertainty, national leaders will often reactivate "chosen glories" to bolster the group's identity and exaggerate large-group success. Alternatively, "chosen traumas" constitute for the "collective mental representation" (ibid, p.48) of an event that caused significant common harm, causing cohesiveness amongst the large group. Examples could include events such as the Holocaust or Palestinian displacement, which leads to a "transgenerational transmission" of trauma where these images and psychic process "lives on" in the next generation (ibid). As Volkan points out, these are mental representations of the traumatic events therefore the original traumatic event experienced by an ancestor becomes the marker of a large group identity. At times of stress or threat to large group identity, similarly with chosen glories, a chosen trauma can be "revived through propaganda or hate speech and may be used by leaders to enflame the group's shared feelings about themselves or their enemy" (ibid, p.50). In a sense, national identity can cause a group to regress and become more liable to unconscious characteristics and drives, as explored in section 2.2.2. Regression can happen both on an individual level and a group level, where members of a nation can simultaneously replace their unconscious ideals "with that of the leader because the individual member is repeating an unconscious psychic process already completed during childhood" (Ulman and Abse 1983, p.648-9). Ulman and Abse argue that this regression can be both external and internal, an example of this being political mobilisation of a party or movement, or nationalisms that come to force when confronted with an Other. Similarly, groups may create an Other, such experiences are often shaped by phantasy.

The formation of national identity involves and implies the process of differentiation, where values, ideals and beliefs are shared:

> "Differentiation is based on the common rejection of all that is perceived as alien from the self. Because all these elements are attributed to the Other, the Other becomes the repository of all that does not belong to the collectivity" (Guerra 1992, p.128).

This involves a process of emotional thinking that undertakes a series of generalisations that uses processes of splitting, which within the context of national identification often has the characteristics of hostility. Psarrou (2003) also agrees that national group membership can contribute to the

fulfilment of emotional needs, noting how nations surrounding one's own may involve a process of self-evaluation through comparison and looking down, in order to preserve their own feeling of self-worth. Arguing that this process of externalisation can rid unwanted aspects or characteristics of the nation, Psarrou states how misfortune in one's national history can provoke blame directed toward other nations, a process of projection as justification.

Similarly to Guerra (1992), Joffe (2007) explains how the 'the Other' can largely apply to those outside of, and subordinate to, the dominant group. These Others may be less powerful groups within a society or identified out-groups (such as, 'foreigners'). A traditional example of this Other was described in Said's (1978) work concerning the oriental gaze of Europe and its culture. Joffe (2007) explores how anxiety can be the driver behind such intense forces that occur during times of crisis. Assuming a paranoid quality, othered out-group become associated with undesirable social qualities that are perceived as threatening to the core values of society. Due to the fact they are defined in terms of difference in relation to one's own normative values, powerful divisions occur between what Douglas (1966) calls a righteous "us" and transgressive "them", a prominent example being the Nazi regime's attitudes towards the Jewish population. This also reflects processes of orientalism, where Western civilisation is influenced by imperialist ideas of superiority, whereas countries and regions outside the West are essentialised as undeveloped (Said 1978).

To conclude, I have now established how object relations theory and mechanisms of defence focuses on the ways in which psychological defence mechanisms deployed in infancy may also be used later in adult life, and manifest in one's political and national environment. Therefore, if one understands that changes in political, economic and social environments can make for insecurity and raise levels of anxiety, these defensive and persecutory patterns and oscillation to the depressive position can re-emerge as a way to manage anxiety more widely amongst voting citizens (Richards 2019b; Psarrou 2003; Joffe 2007; Sklar 2019). I will now turn to the nation of focus for this thesis, and delve into ideas of Britishness and Englishness in England.

2.3. Britishness and Englishness

"And so it comes about that we begin to conceptualize matters of identity at the very time in history when they become a problem." (Erikson 1963, p.292)

This section of the literature review seeks to understand British and English national identity in England. It will be organised and presented partially chronologically starting from devolution in 1997, in order to provide the political context of the changing dynamics of national identity in Britain. It will explore and focus on the breakdown of Britain and fragmentation of British identity following periods of decolonisation, entrance to the EEC (European Economic Communities) and devolution. From this, the section will then move to exploring English national identity and it's manifestations in the first two decades of the millennium post-devolution. Making note of the nationalistic tendencies of Englishness, it will then explore the rise of right-wing populism in England and understand scholarly arguments surrounding it's social and cultural themes. Moving forward, the section will then understand arguments from fields of political studies and sociology surrounding England's vote to leave the EU in 2016, before applying psychosocial understandings to issues of the nation and Brexit. Lastly, the section will end with focussing on and exploring the rural-urban divide in England, paying attention to political patterns in rural areas. In doing so, a gap in the current literature on national identity and political sentiment in England will be established which will provide justification for a new psychosocial approach.

2.3.1. The Devolution of Britain

Britain had gone through widespread administrative devolution over the course of the 20th century involving establishing governmental departments (the former Scottish and Welsh offices) and increased regional power, following numerous referenda in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and London. The end of the 20th century saw the rise of New Labour under Tony Blair and consequently a radical British devolution where newly devolved democratic institutions had the opportunity to develop policy and laws independent to the government in Westminster, meaning the British unitary state had begun a substantial watering down (Bradbury 2009). These changes allowed for fairer political representation as the devolved assemblies were able to permit a proportional form of electoral system to avoid misrepresentation, thus allowing each nation to enjoy a stronger voice politically (Keating and Elcock 1998). It also enabled an acknowledgement of distinct national and regional identities by giving credit to the fact that each nation or region of Britain has their own distinct differences allows these identities to be developed, and as Deacon (2012, p.3) suggests, it encouraged those to be "aware that London [or England] is not always the centre of the political world". However, as Deacon suggested, some of the drawbacks of devolution included the notion that it could add fuel to separatist and nationalist flames.

The British Social Attitudes survey showed a distinct change in English and British identification before and after the devolved assemblies in 1998. Prior to devolution in 1992, the British Social Attitudes survey found that 31% of those in England identified as English whereas 63% identified as British. Post-devolution in 2008, the very same survey question found that identification in Englishness had grown to 47%, whereas British identification had dropped to 39% (Deacon 2012; NatCen 2012). Whilst some called it a reactionary "English backlash" (Curtis and Heath 2000, p.3), others questioned whether this was a new surge of English nationalism, rooted in a felt discontent and perceived unfairness of devolution (Bognador 1999). At the time of devolution the UK government implied that the devolved assemblies would not create an asymmetrical constitutional imbalance in favour of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (ibid.). However, Welsh, Northern Irish and Scottish MPs were able to partake in discussion on England's political and legislative affairs whereas English MPs could not partake in discussions Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland's political and legislative affairs. This brought up what was termed "the West Lothian Question"[4] which after many reports and debate (Bowers and Kelly 2014), resulted in the establishing of English Votes for English Laws (EVEL) in 2015 to ensure that England's legislation was debated and voted for by English members of parliament. But as Curtis and Heath (2000, p.1) point out, one should not forget that historically, England has always had an advantage over the rest of the union having "enjoyed the fruits of a great and prosperous empire", being central to the union's capital and parliament (Hassan 2010) and being dominant in the union's constitutional thought (Bognador 1979). Aughey (2001) explains that this was because the English have always known who they are and have never felt any obligation to exert or question their national identity. However, since the devolution of the U.K and the cultural impacts of post-war immigration, the English now live in uncertain times without, as Jeremy Paxman in his book *The English*, a "coherent sense of their own culture" (Paxman 1998, p.23). Mycock (2013) suggests that the prominence of a deepening sense of English identity and emergence of an 'English political community' (Wyn Jones et al. 2012) was primarily in response to devolution settlements, where national identification in England has made gradual shifts from British to English. It is suggested by scholars that the implication of English identity finding its roots in the failure to equally devolve power as part of U.K devolution has left England as "left-over people" (Colls 2002, p.212) within a "stateless nation" (Weight 2002, p.726), with an identity shaped by "victimhood-nationalism" (Mycock 2013, p.16) with George Monbiot (2009) going to the extent of claiming that England has become an "internal-colony" of Britain.

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[4] The West Lothian Question refers to the perceived imbalance between the voting rights in the House of Commons of MPs from Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland and those of MPs from England following devolution.

Having highlighted devolution as a key moment in British history where national identity changed in response to significant government and administrative change, I will now turn to addressing British national identity in the following subsections, accounting for its civic functions and the influences that post-war immigration and entrance to the EEC had on Britishness.

2.3.2. British national identity

Some of the ideals for a civic national identity model first began in mid sixteenth to eighteenth century Britain (Ignatieff 1994; Greenfeld 2016), where the four nations were united by shared civic attachments to institutions such as Parliament, Church of England, Rule of Law and the Crown, which helped to fuse together a sense of common identity, as these acted as guarantors for citizens. Therefore, this section will approach British identity as civic national identity, rather than an ethnic identity. Parekh (2000) argues that Britain's lack of distinct ethnic character has led to an extensive investment into the articulation of its national character in its institutions. As argued similarly by Curtice and Heath (2000), an advantage to the union of the U.K is that those in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as England and multicultural communities can feel an affinity to the existence of a British identity, and thus a national community, through these civic pillars that do not rely on ethnic foundations (Smith 1981).

Between 2010 and 2020, survey data found that the British public define characteristics of British national identity as the following; having a British citizenship, a respect for Britain's institutions and laws, Britain's democracy, liberty, the National Health Service (NHS), the Royal Family and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) (British Social Attitudes 2013; YouGov 2017; Ipsos Mori 2016; Platt 2019). These statistics further suggests a civic attachment to the nation, as mentioned previously; civic national identity endorses the idea of the nation as being composed of those who subscribe to the same set of political values and practices, regardless of their gender, language, ethnicity, class or race, which also allows for difference and is less prescriptive. This could also suggest why ethnic minorities are more likely or willing to adopt a British identity rather than an English identity (Curtice and Heath 2000), Britishness also allows the possibility for dual national identities, where one can share multiple cultures without one being in conflict with the Other. Britain's multinational identity and sympathies toward immigration and European integration (Heath et al. 1999) means that Britishness endorses an open inclusive character rather than exclusive which can be noted amongst sympathies toward immigration and European integration (Heath et al. 1999). This is reflected in the changes in attitude shifts in Britain that have seen increasing dominance of positive and socially liberal outlooks of

globalization which consider diversity and multiculturalism as social strengths rather than weaknesses (Gilroy 2004), this is akin to ideas of cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitanism refers to an "*internal* globalisation" (Beck 2005, p.146: original emphasis) that puts emphasis on the social bonds that link people, communities and societies rather than nation-states, in order to foreground the idea of society ultimately evolving away from conflict and toward harmony. At the core of cosmopolitanism is the idea that all human beings, regardless of race, ethnicity, political affiliation, and nationality can live and belong as citizens in one single community (Waldron 2000). Hannerz (1996, p.103) states that;

> "[a] genuine cosmopolitanism is first of all an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other, […] an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences".

Skillington (2019) writes about how cosmopolitanism is legally, politically and culturally embedded into British society and its institutional frameworks. The post-World War II project of an international community with ideas of stability and enduring peace that legitimised itself through democratic processes of mutual international collaboration and self-determination saw many allied states including Britain committed to these ideas and principles to ensure peacetime. This, Skillington states, marked the beginning of an era of cosmopolitanism founded upon the struggles for freedom in the name of all universal human rights and justice, these consequently being established, agreed and incorporated into domestic law saw Britain's commitment to cosmopolitanism solidify. This cosmopolitan project that sought to extend beyond the parochialism of bordered nation-states, saw the establishment of the United Nations (UN) in 1945 also consequently saw growing international bodies such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the EU and World Trade Organisation (WTO) brought about international and multilateral governance on issues seeking to ensure social progress, human rights, peace, environmental protection and trade (Badger 2014). Since then, the idea of global cosmopolitanism has continued to evolve in social and cultural terms particularly in Britain, those who identify as British particularly within inner-city areas which are typified by multi-culturalism are more inter-culturally engaged and are more likely to hold cosmopolitan values (Heath et al. 1999; Gilroy 2004). Beck (2002, p.36-37) describes multiculturalism as fostering a "collective image of humanity", this resonates with Britain's government promoting social cohesion articulated through traditions and expressed through its institutions. Therefore, I will now explore the force of multiculturalism in the making of modern British identity.

British multiculturalism did not start with the migration of non-white immigrants after the Second World War. Instead, as Colley (1992) suggests, multiculturalism arose from Britain's creation of a multinational state in 1707 which saw a sense of Britishness forged as a result of struggle against France and thereafter during its period of colonialization. But even prior to this, Britain has been a place of migration and invasion going back hundreds of years which saw Roman, Norman and Flemish invasions with new research finding that there were black populations between 1500 and 1650 (Kaufmann 2017). Ultimately, Britain is a cultural sponge and is perhaps more so than other nations for various reasons; it has a long history of absorbing culture from ethnic groups and migrants and the produce, culture and languages that came with them from around the world due to its history of colonialism, decolonisation and post-war immigration (Bloch 2002; Pooley and Turnbull 2005). This has resulted in a degree of demographical diversity constituted by cultures, faiths and communities spanning the globe. Britain has had periods of migration all throughout history; this was not something new to Britain in the twentieth century. Britain's demographic became further diversified as a result of the post-colonial and post-war immigration that followed the Second World War (Goodhart 2013), in turn influencing Britain's ethnic character to one that is multicultural. This, alongside many other factors, bought with it forces of insecurity in British national identity.

Having now explored Britain's civic and cosmopolitan nature, I will now turn to understanding how Britain's changing role in the world influenced a sense of national culture and identity in Britain.

2.3.3. Breakdown of Britain

Coming so soon after the loss of Empire, post-war immigration and subsequent multiculturalism in Britain was perceived by some as a loss of the national culture and the self determination that was supposed to go with it (Colls 2002). Large-scale immigration to address labour shortages and processes of de-colonisation and its perceived symbolic loss prompted the question of national identity into action (Boyce 1999). Britain soon adopted policies of integrational multiculturalism that allows for different cultures and communities to practise their cultural traditions whilst living in the UK without undergoing any cultural assimilation; this was understood as "equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance" (Jenkins 1967, p.267). It was these policies that helped to create modern multiculturalism in Britain, which were a result of the threat that decolonisation posed to Britain's prior imperial role causing uncertainty of Britain's understanding of its place in the world (Ashcroft and Bevir 2018). This uncertainty is also a key context for understanding the UK 'entering' Europe. The real or perceived loss of status due to decolonisation was one of the impetuses for the UK to enter the EEC (now EU) in the first place (Nairn 1977; Hopkins 2017). However,

the EU lends itself as a supranational identity rather than a national identity, and this begs questions surrounding the possibility of national and supranational identities co-existing in Britain. Arguably, following decades of low level support for the EU in Britain along with Britain's subsequent withdrawal in January 2020, it is worth paying attention to the potential weaknesses of an EU supranational identity.

Most criteria for national identity as laid out previously in the section on the multiple dimensions and foundations of national identity struggles to be applied to a supranational identity. One may think of a European Identity as more inclusive, cosmopolitan and wider reaching. However, in practice, there was a lack of cultural construction of a civic identity; which sheds some light into why in Britain; enthusiasm for Europe was much lower before the 2016 referendum had its polarising effect (Fox and Pearce 2018). Scholars have long documented that national identity-related factors undermine citizen's support for the European Union (Aichholzer et al. 2021; Pinterič 2002). Pinterič (2002) argues this case, stating that low levels of European identity and high levels of national identity is an inherent characteristic of Great Britain. This is further backed up by statistics from NatCen a year before the 2016 EU referendum which found Britain to be the least likely to embrace a European Identity, with only 15% of British citizens identifying as European (Ormston 2015). Furthermore the European Union and a European identity was even more so unpopular with those that identify as English over British (ibid, p.10). Matters of English identity will be returned to at a later point, however first I will outline the slow decline and challenges of British identity, in order to make way for understandings of growing expressions of English identity in England.

British identity, Parekh (2000, p.4) explains, has been subject of debate over the past 60 years, which was initially triggered by several factors; "the loss of empire", "the rise of the welfare state", "post-war black and Asian migration", "entry into the European Community" and the devolution of power to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Colls (2002) explains how the end of the British Empire allowed for the Celtic and regional fringes to emerge from the shadow of Britain, enabling them to further develop their own cultural identities. A historic view of British national identity and nationality involved bonding between the individual and the monarch, whether at home or abroad, but this was soon to erode. Heath (2000) explains a number of events and cultural changes that signified the end of Britain, these were the values of Britishness that Colley (1996) describes as those of Empire, war and religion, that have now been undermined by political and cultural developments. These include forces such as; the end of both World Wars, decline in Protestant religion, decline of Britain as a major manufacturing nation (ibid 2005), the end of Britain's uniqueness in its democratic systems as this spread to countries further afield, the rise in nationalism amongst devolved nations in Britain,

European integration, globalisation of media along with Americanisation and the decline of the role of the monarchy and patriotism that is associated with this (Curtice and Heath 2000, p.19). Gilroy (2004) argues that this has led to a fragmented sense of collective national identity in Britain where it has not been able to keep up with the social, cultural and political changes in the late 20th and early 21st century.

Understanding the ways in which Britishness has become fragmented in the late 20th century and early 21st century is essential in understanding contemporary British and English identity in Britain. Thus, the following subsection will now explore the emergence and nature of English identity and it's manifestations as a form of nationalism post-devolution, and draw on statistical data to further illustrate this.

2.3.4. English Identity and Nationalism

England has been analogous with Britain for so long that any attempt to disentangle English identity from British identity and that of its neighbouring nations is challenging. Lay (2012, p.56) explains that this is particularly more of an issue due to the "possibility of Scottish independence, the wider impact of devolution, the ingrained Euroscepticism of the English and a perceived crisis in English national identity". In the last two decades an increasing number of works had been looking at English identity have ranged from a variety of perspectives; the cultural and the sociocultural (Perryman 1998; Weight 2008; Kumar 2003), the ethnic and racial (Alibhai-Brown 2000; Leddy-Owen 2014b; Gilroy 1987), the Anglo-historical (Colley 1999), the behavioural (Fox 2004; Paxman 1998), the philosophical (Scruton 2006), through the lens of class (Leddy-Owen 2014a; Thompson 1968), the post-colonial (MacPhee and Poddar 2010; Gilroy 2004; Gikandi 1996), the attitudinal (Denham 2018a; 2018b; Leddy Owen 2019) and in the context of Brexit (Barnett 2017; O'Toole 2018). The majority of these works were born out of the question of English identity leading up to and post devolution, the rise of far-right English nationalism, in the wake of the end of Empire (Mycock 2013) as well as in the aftermath of the 2016 European Referendum. Lay (2012) states that England is always up for debate. However, in recent years, debates about English national identity have become critical in light of Brexit and the increasing ethnic tensions as a result of the rise of the far-right in Europe (Mudde 2009; Lazaridis et al. 2016).

Lay (2012, p.6) argues that the English are "in need of a reassessment of who they are". This view is echoed by Denham (2018a; 2018b) who makes the argument that the English "cannot overcome [their] national divisions unless Englishness is allowed its proper place as an accepted, legitimate and celebrated identity within the multiple identities of modern England". The subject of English national identity is a relevant one; according to studies from YouGov in 2019, a quarter of voters think that

England's interests are "significantly" or "very" different to those of the rest of the UK. Over half (55%) want English MPs only to vote on English Laws. Only one in ten people in England think you have to be white to be English, half the number of just seven years ago (YouGov 2019a); those who see themselves as "English" rather than "British" were more likely to vote for Boris Johnson's Conservative Party in the December 2019 election (English Labour Network 2020), many of who think that Brexit will make England stronger (YouGov 2019b).

Colls (1998; 2002; 2013) has written extensively on English national identity. His work puts emphasis on the English radical tradition with suggestions of an English nationalism amongst the urban and rural working classes. This combines components of an ethnic identity (such as an Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism) and also civic components (such as the drive for a constitutional democracy). Colls (2002) addresses the melancholy and loss that he believes is characteristic of the English, their art, literature and music which informs what Lay calls the "dysfunctional relationship between the urban environment [in which most of the English live] and the increasing fetishisation of the countryside" (Lay 2012 p.55). The countryside is a focal feature in England's symbolism, whereby rural images often serve as signs of the nation (Mischi 2009). In England, the countryside is traditionally associated with English national identity, this is a national rhetoric that has been captured in the past by evocation of 'England's green and pleasant land' since industrialisation and the interwar period which took on a particular nostalgia for lost England (Colley 1992; Kumar 2003).

The changing nature of English identity into something that is made up of something increasingly demographically diverse is explored in Krishan Kumar's (2001; 2003) work on the making of English identity. He finds England's hegemony over the United Kingdom and British Empire existed in a position of privilege, authority and liberty and these sentiments still echo today. Using a sociological perspective with a long historical reach, Kumar finds British identity as more of a civic identity relating to state and institution and English identity more ethnic, based on the remnants of a post-empire mind-set, which poses a potential threat to increasingly multi-religious and multi-ethnic urban societies. Hall (2001) puts emphasis on the imperial nature of English identity and notes the visibility of Empire that remains in England; the museums in London filled with imperial treasures, the buildings and statues that offer reminders of imperial connections such as the Liverpool Exchange's statues of African slaves, dedicated monuments to the colonels and generals of the Empire and more devoted to historic battle and monarchy. With his top-down approach that tends to use upper class examples, he points to one of England's most well-known delicacies; English breakfast tea, in which the tea leaves are imported from India and the sugar imported from the Caribbean. Hall (ibid) states how this signals the ways in which national identity in England has been shaped around empire and imperial history.

For these reasons, Kumar argues that Englishness in terms of its celebration is out of touch with contemporary British society, particularly the sense of new, outward looking, open and cosmopolitan Britishness propelled by Blair's New Labour in the early millennium and onward into the 21st century (Driver and Martell 2001).

Studies on the ethnic imaginations on Englishness include qualitative studies within sub-populations; amongst women in the political elite (Edmunds and Turner 2001), British army soldiers (Gibson and Abell 2004) and citizens living on the Scotland-England border (Kiely et al. 2000). These studies represent how the multi-dimensional constructions of identity and how they are orientating to visions of the nation. Condor (2000) in particular looks in depth at how these national identities are performed and displayed and finds importance in the rhetorical contexts in which these are expressed. Empirical studies from Mann (2012) on Englishness found that English identities are often structured as classed; his findings found binary ideas that on one hand there were the upper-class and rigid English and on the other, the working-class 'hooligan' English. Quantitative studies from YouGov (2018) show that four in five people in England regard Englishness a strong part of their identity, forty-nine percent believe that England was better in the past, eight in ten believe the being born in England makes you English, seventy-five percent believe that having two English parents makes you English and finally they found that English national identity is stronger at sixty-two percent upwards of people in rural areas as compared to the national average. This echoes the qualitative studies on Englishness from those such as Knowles (2008), Neal and Walters (2006) and Tyler (2008), which find stronger identifications of Englishness in rural areas.

Langlands (1999) points to the importance of territory and commonality amongst Englishness;

> "the shared historical experiences of war and the common mission provided by the British empire, provided by the British empire, which enabled a negotiation of the inherent Englishness of the British state, have also been reinforced by a sense of territorial attachment to an 'island homeland'" (Langland 1999, p.64).

Looking onward to the 21st century, these notions continue to reverberate in the political sphere, particularly amongst discourse around English national identity. Weight (2008) explains how that there is a contemporary view of English national consciousness having grown due to a perceived oppression felt by the English that they are being prevented from expressing their English identity. He explains that similarly to much nationalism, Englishness rests upon victimhood that is tarred with suggestions of envy that the English cannot express or articulate their national identity in the same way the Scottish and the Welsh can, which suggests a sense of perceived oppression and lack of ability

to exercise their political liberty. Weight claims that those who believe English identity is being oppressed and denied usually feel that the state is instead indulging in ethnic minorities at the expense of the English majority.

Burdsey (2008) believes that the dominance of these narratives is ingrained in history due to the interrelations between whiteness, imperialism, nationalism and Englishness. He goes on to say that these notions have been characterised by the British Empire, via the political machines of Winston Churchill, Enoch Powell and Margaret Thatcher, which means that English national identity has always been exclusively racial and ethnic. However this is not the whole picture, only a top-down understanding. Perryman (2008) also believes that the rejection of EU immigrants is linked to the rejection of an English-European identity, and in that the English mourn their all-white non-EU Englishness. On the notion of the non-white non-English Other, Langlands (1999) questions whether Englishness is a set of essential characteristics that strictly belong to the English, or whether it's made up from a set of cultural markers that in turn change and respond to the significant Other. She argues that within the myth of the 'Freeborn Englishman', particularly the fear of foreign invasion indicates notions of otherness where common ancestry and genealogy are most clear in English self-identification. This brings into question the manifestation of English nationalism as a response to the aforementioned.

There are two decades where academic and political interest in English nationalism has surged; the decade of the late 1990s which saw the process of devolution take place and the decade of 2010 where growing Euroscepticism led to the United Kingdom European Union referendum (Wellings and Kenny 2019). To begin with, I will look at the question of English nationalism around the time of devolution in the late 1990s and early millennium. Termed New Englishness (English 2011; Doyle 2013), there was debates around whether England was witnessing a force of English nationalism or rather the overlapping but less powerful force of English national identity. The distinction is important, as defined in the previous section, the phenomena of nationalism is very different in nature compared to national identity; nationalism involves the struggle of power and self-determination and has the capacity for aggression (Greenfeld 1994), therefore it carries threatening weight (English 2011). Hazell (2000) points to the rise of English nationalism as being caused by the perception of an asymmetrical distribution of power that left England underrepresented he called this "the gaping hole in the devolution settlement" (ibid, p.278). Others such as Kenny and Lodge (2010) pointed to New Labour's failure to adopt and assert Englishness, whilst Jackson and Feldman (2011) point to the surge of far-right nationalist parties such as the English Defence League as a clear signifier that there is indeed an

English nationalism. Looking at the nature of English sovereignty Wellings and Baxingdale (2015) describe Englishness as something largely characterised by euro-scepticism.

Moving onward to the second decade of the 21st century, none of these factors have disappeared; Englishness does not have political party representation, far right group the English Defence League (EDL) have adapted and continue to recruit, march and promote their message, and England does not yet have its own devolved government. In addition to this, the growing Euroscepticism finally had its day in 2016 when Britain held a referendum on whether to leave or remain in the European Union, which the Leave vote won in England. The nationalistic nature of English and British identity can be seen amongst the political patterns of United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the EDL. These patterns are mainly their anti-immigration and nativist sentiments, and scholars have folded these nationalistic traits into discussions on populism (Ford and Goodwin 2014; Mudde 2004), which has seen a rise in Europe in the last decade on both the right and left of the political spectrum[5] (Mudde 2009; Woodak et al 2013). The rise of populist nationalism is understood as stemming from fears about intensified immigration that were intensified by economic drivers. These economic drivers such as globalisation, neoliberalism and austerity lead to polarisation and a perception on the part of many about a loss of power, autonomy, cultural identity and national sovereignty. Winlow et al. (2017) draw attention to the white working-class' exploitation by the far right, alienation from left-wing politics and the transformation of working-class politics. Winlow et al. (2017) state that as the parties on the left began to advocate for liberal multiculturalism, this left behind voters who did not endorse this view, which in turn made them susceptible to discourse from the far-right that propelled fear and antagonism toward immigrants, particularly those of Muslim faith, whilst endorsing English nationalism and an exclusionary sense of national identity. Gilroy (2004) suggests that affirming geo-political boundaries enlivens one's imperial fantasies of an 'English' nation. Cullingfod and Din (2006, p.3) argue that there is no coincidence that nationalism, regionalism and tribalism has developed alongside globalisation; they argue that "there are attempts by politicians to exploit the sense of cultural integrity by redefining nationhood by creating a strawman to be attacked". Similarly, Weight (2008) points to perceptions of working-class oppression and betrayal, forced against their will without consultation to live in an alien and dangerous multi-racial environment which its middle class architects can avoid due to their greater autonomy and wealth.

Having understood the varying nature of English identity and its fluctuating nationalistic nature, I will now turn to looking at the economic drivers and class driven forces in 21st century Britain, and look at

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[5] See: Alternative for Germany (Germany); Freedom Party (Austria); Podemos (Spain); Vox (Spain); Freedom Party (The Netherlands); The League (Italy); Fidesz (Hungary); National Rally (France)

the wider context of the rise of populism more widely in Europe, before moving onto debates surrounding Britain's withdrawal from the European Union.

2.3.5. Rise of Right-Wing Populist Politics

Britain's class consciousness, as Umney (2018) describes, had a mild awakening following the financial crash. British citizens facing the consequence of the greed of bankers within the financial sector provided fertile grounds for class conflict. Emerging as part of Thatcher's era in the UK, the ideology of neoliberalism was facilitated to different degrees by the New Labour and Conservative Liberal Democrats coalition, neoliberalism had taken hold of Britain's economy. As an economic system, neoliberalism can be described as financial deregulation whereby the shrinking of the state leads to a focus on maintaining orderly functioning of the market by financially cutting and privatising national welfare, education and health services (Fuchs 2016). Jessop states that this leads to;

> The ever more visible polarization of wealth and income […] generating popular discontent and corresponding measures to monitor the population, insulate government from popular demands for economic and social justice, encourage divide-and-rule tactics to this end, and, where necessary, repress dissent. (Jessop, 2017, p. 135)

Cromby (2019, p.58) states that "neoliberalism is associated with rising social inequality, precarious work (e.g., zero hours contracts), and the increasing concentration of power and resources amongst wealthy elites", he points to the psychological effects where it positions and puts emphasis on people as buyers and sellers of labour, goods and services rather than as citizens.

New Labour's abandonment of class has left issues of class as free terrain for the political right. For example, Theresa May and Nigel Farage built close associations with the idea of the working class and cultivated the idea that 'ordinary people' were fed up with the EU and immigration (Umeny 2018). Jennings and Stoker (2019) note that there has been significant changes, just as there were in the first industrial revolution, in the British social class eco system; the traditional working class are slowly being replaced with the new working class – 'new service workers' employed in precarious service industries. They suggest that the perceived loss of social status among the white working class since de-industrialisation where communities were formed around local industries, are largely associated with support for the nationalist right. Ford and Goodwin (2016) also position white, older, less-educated members of the working class at the forefront for far-right nationalist support. But there is a risk of becoming reductionist in this approach; rather these issues at hand require a more nuanced

understanding of the interplaying layers that account for these attitudes or leniencies to either anti-EU, nationalistic, far-right or conservative attitudes (Telford and Wistow 2020).

Winlow et al. (2017) draw attention to the white working-class' exploitation by right-wing populists, alienation from left-wing politics and the transformation of working-class politics. They state that as the parties on the left began to advocate for liberal multiculturalism, this left behind voters who did not endorse this view, which in turn made them susceptible to populist discourse from the far-right that propelled fear and antagonism toward immigrants, particularly those of Muslim faith, whilst endorsing English nationalism and an exclusionary sense of national identity.

Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) agree that populism has been one of the most prominent political buzzwords of the 21st century. Populism can be defined as a political philosophy that supports the rights and power of the 'ordinary' in their struggle against the establishment (ibid). Populism within politics focusses on the ambitions of the people, whereby it relies on a heavily polarised environment usually adopting a sense of 'us' versus 'them' (Mudde 2004). Mouffe (2005, p.24) states that "to act politically, people need to be able to identify with a collective identity". Schmitt (2008) states how any political identity requires a frontier of separating 'us' from 'them', meaning inclusion requires exclusion, a key factor within populist politics (Ryan and Deci 2003; Kristensen 2015).

Laclau (2005) discusses that the sense of 'us' and 'them' used within populism is a simplification of the complex nature of politics, he argues that this "simplifies the political space, replacing a complex set of differences and determinations by a stark dichotomy" (2005, p.18). Additionally, Laclau states that populism arises from a state of crisis, frustration and anxiety. These grievances then turn into a sequence of demands, which may become unsatisfied or rejected. Laclau states that these demands bring people together as they are connected by the fact that all are discontented. In *Civilisation and Its Discontent*, Freud explains how groups will be bound together by strong emotions:

> "It is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, as long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness" (Freud 1930, p.114)

Mouffe (1992, p.140) argues that within the political landscape, one encounters groups and collective identities rather than "isolated individuals". The dynamics and nature of populism therefore need to be understood through group and collective psychologies rather than individual calculations. Volkan defines large group psychologies as an "intense sense of sameness by belonging to the same ethnic, religious, national or ideological group" (Volkan 2004, p.12). In this case, the shared ideology amongst populism is the opposing of homogeneous people against the establishment or dangerous Other, of

whom Albertazzi and McDonnell (2008, p.3) describe as being "depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity, and voice". Large group identities can produce shared or collective anxieties, which can lead to regressive fantasies among members. Collective identities will always encompass some form of regressive behaviour due to their longing for a sense of fullness. Fundamentally, anxiety is what causes and exacerbates these defence mechanisms; they are utilised to keep negative emotions away. The mind will often expel fear inducing thoughts or ideas that conjure anxiety against Others and project what one does not want in them, onto Others, in order to maintain one's social norms. When speaking on right wing politics, Mouffe (2011) explains how right-wing parties are often effective because of their use of passion, rather than for their agenda. These ideas from Mouffe (1992; 2011) and Laclau (2007) are therefore useful in helping one understand the complex issues surrounding the emergence of support for right-wing populist parties in Europe.

Right-wing populism is known to generate fantasies of an evil Other or out-group, the process of out-grouping has become racialized, with Muslims communities and Muslim migrants having been the main target of most of Europe's radical right parties (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008; Sobolewska and Ford 2020). Muslims are portrayed as a threat to majority liberal values and cultural identities due to their perceived unwillingness to assimilate and their portrayal as a source of Islamist extremism. This is thought to be a characteristic feature of ethnocentrism, Muslims are identified as a distinctive threat and dangerous Other and in response, the in-group demands protection from the alleged threat (Sobolewska and Ford 2020). This became a wide-spread feature in Britain, particularly during the EU referendum Leave campaign, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has also been known to repeat negative stereotypes of Muslims during his journalism career.

Eatwell and Goodwin (2018) understand the rise of right-wing populism as something that foregrounds cultural difference. Goodhart (2018) talks about a clash between cosmopolitan and mobile "anywheres" and the less mobile, local "somewheres", he explains how elites had failed to acknowledge the traditional values put forward by "somewheres". Minsky explains how rapid changes in society can lead us to social fragmentation and disintegration between social groups, she explains;

> "Contemporary culture in the western world confronts us with social, political, technological and economic changes which are often confusing and contradictory and sometimes disturbing and frightening, which seems likely to be related to the sheer scale of change on so many fronts of our existence" (Minsky 1998, p.1)

American political scientists Hetherington and Weiler (2018) discuss a similar notion to the somewheres and anywheres; they discuss two types of worldviews, fluid and fixed. They argue that the term 'Worldview' refers to the range of one's ingrained beliefs about the nature of the world and priorities of a 'good' society. They state that worldview, similarly to ideology, encompasses "cultural considerations, such as ideas about philosophy and morality" and is significantly shaped by "psychological influences such as your emotions and the imprint left by past experiences" (ibid, p.xi). They describe worldview as a spectrum, with opposing side consisting of fixed and fluid. The term fixed refers to people who are wary of social and cultural change, more set in their ways due to suspicion of outsiders; they tend to be more comfortable with familiarity and predictability. Whereas contrastingly those fluid tend to support fluctuating social and cultural dynamics and approach life inclusively, welcoming things that are new and novel and people who may look and sound different. Hetherington and Weiler ultimately argue that the psychological factors that shape worldviews inform people's preferences about issues political, social and cultural. People with what they call a fixed worldview are "more fearful of potential dangers, and are more likely to prefer clear and unwavering rules to help them navigate threats" (ibid, p.17). This in turn leads them to support structures within society that endorse order and hierarchy, to ensure people don't "stray too far from the straight and narrow" (ibid.). Those with fluid worldviews on the other hand are less likely to perceive the world as dangerous and so will endorse a structure that allows individual freedom and are "more inclined to believe that a society's well-being requires giving people greater latitude to question, to explore and discover their authentic selves" (ibid, p.18).In their argument, it is these worldviews that are driving populism on both sides of the Atlantic; the problems each country faces are perceived differently by each opposing sides of the worldview, as are the ideas about the solutions necessary to address them. Klein (2020) also makes reference to a large driver of polarisation being between the interested and the un-interested, the former referring to people who are consumers of political news and the latter referring to those that are not and therefore less engaged in politics.

The economic environment and growing elitism in the UK also led to the discontent felt by citizens. Beginning in 2010 following the coalition of the Conservative Party and Liberal Democrat Party, the UK has been suffering from increases in austerity measures. This is due to the adoption of neoliberal economics in the period following the 2008 financial crash, resulting in the implementation of austerity measures across the UK (Fuchs 2015). This has contributed to and driven a growing wealth gap, as well as the declining state of living standards for the working class and the shrinking of the welfare state (Umney 2018). This produces discontent amongst citizens and creates an Other in which the disenfranchised can project their discontent onto (Livingston 2017). In regards to populism, Palinka (2013) states how the idea of having a culprit responsible for discontent is often typical within

populist rhetoric. She states that this culprit can take the form of an enemy and vary from being the foreigner, a foreign culture or established elite in which they have "succeeded in breaking into the fortress of the nation state" (Palinka 2013, p.7). On a different note, Yuval-Davis (2011) points to identity and argues that citizens have feel they lost their distinct and individual identity due to the rise in neoliberal economics, globalisation or 'super national' identities such as the European Union or NATO. Stravakakis (2002, p.22) explains how there has been a "return of the repressed" within the emergence of right-wing populism in Europe. He argues that the failed construction of an EU identity has led to a displacement of focussed energy that instead gets directed towards anti-EU political and ideological discourse.

The tone of tabloid coverage surrounding EU affairs for the last couple of decades have been critical, they have focussed on potential threats to British sovereignty and identity, splitting the political landscape into "us" the British, and "them" the foreign intruders. Daddow (ibid.) describes this as bordering on jingoism, a sentiment that was largely endorsed by Thatcherite discourse on British nationhood. This can be understood through, as previously stated, the sensationalised tabloid coverage of EU affairs, which prompted the European commission to devote a blogsite to debunking 'Euromyths'[6]. Cromby (2019) explains how Murdoch's print media were pro-Brexit and for years had been publishing stories sensationalising and perpetuating fear surrounding issues such as immigration, refugees, and EU bureaucracy. Daddow (2012) points to the 'Cattle of Britain' headline from the Sun in 1984, which reinforced a narrative of threat that constructs Britain as at war and fighting an external enemy (Brussels). Cromby (2019) argues that the framing of these stories in relation to issues and ideas of national identity and sovereignty meant that emotional feelings predominate as;

> "Such stories seize upon feelings of familiarity, trust and respect within families, friendship networks, and local communities and align these feelings with political myths in ways that seemingly threaten identities." (ibid, p.61)

This is done through the process of othering and creating outgroups, which threaten the homogenous community or society, and provokes fear and hostility. These media narratives that repeatedly stimulated sentiments of sovereignty and national identity worked together with the political forces that also expressed mistrust, anxiety and anger while encouraging the projection of these feelings onto the EU, which Cromby suggests contributed to "mythical thinking" (ibid.) about Brexit. Such sentiments also assume a paranoid quality and reflect ideas of the paranoid schizoid position and it's

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[6] 'Euromyths' https://blogs.ec.europa.eu/ECintheUK/

fantasies discussed earlier in section 2.2.3. Other news articles over the past few decades such as "Obscure EU law halting the sale of English oak seeds" (Mail on Sunday, 1994, p.29) and "environment Secretary Liz Truss wants to stop the European Commission from telling British farmers what they can grow" (Daily Mail 2014) trigger sentiments of sovereignty over British land. On similar notions articles such as "the European Commission is outlawing Britain's traditional mushy peas" (Daily Telegraph 1995, p.3), "Corgis to be banned by EU" (Daily Mail 2002, p.5) and "EU targets traditional Sunday roast" (Sun on Sunday, 2015, p.16) use cultural signifiers to ignite these national sentiments and imply the notion of an imposed attack perpetrated by the EU on traditional British ways of life. The idea of imposition and enforcement is demonstrated in the Daily Star article "UK to be forced to adopt continental two pin plug" (Daily Star, 1994, p.2), which uses the word "forced" to imply some kind of un-consensual assimilation to European practices. Geographical national and reactionary sentiments were also enforced in "New EU map makes Kent part of same 'nation' as France" (Sunday Telegraph, 2006, p.9) igniting phantasies of the historical rivalry of British-French relations of conquest, defeat and invasion (Bell 2014).

Lakoff (2008) explains how this increased opposition and antagonism can happen when political discourse appeals to citizen's values and morals. In essence, citizens experiencing severe austerity measures and economic causalities such as low employment rates and declining regional investment may be more susceptible to a political ideology that expresses outrage and provides promises to fix it. Mudde (2004) highlights the charged nature of populism in which it refers to the "highly emotional and simplistic discourse that is directed at the 'gut feelings' of the people" (p.542). It is important to reflect on this as it is a signifier of the national mood and emotional attitudes of the public. This relates to Hetherington and Weiser's (2018) arguments that consider the emotional factors of people perceiving the external world as dangerous, and the political choices and behaviour that follows this. More recently, there have been populist appropriations of the COVID-19 pandemic relying on "the logic that Britain should muster war like endurance to extricate itself from the clutches of coronavirus and the grip of the EU" (Koeberg et al. 2020, p.586).

Having covered a lot of ground in understanding the rise in populism as a response to widespread economic and social change and rising inequality I will now explore England's vote to leave the EU in 2016, and understand the scholarly debates surrounding Brexit in England, in order to situate my approach to the study of national identity and politics.

2.3.6. England's Brexit

23 June 2016 saw the UK narrowly voting to exit the European Union by 51.9-48.1% (Electoral Commission 2019). With England being the home to 84% of the UK population, the English Leave vote of 53.4% was significantly decisive in the UK's withdrawal from the EU. Furthermore, in rural England the result was at 55-45% in favour of leaving the EU (Country Land and Business Association n.d.). The rural nature to Brexit will be explored at a later point, but first, attention will be paid to the forces behind England's decision to leave the EU.

Anderson and Wilson (2018, p.1) draw on the intersecting dynamic of the Leave vote to argue that Brexit encapsulated "an occasion of dissensus and the complex enactment and reproduction of existing power relations and inequalities" in which these forces intensified, revealed and foregrounded "existing divides of class, age, ethnicity, race, and locality, while also cutting across other commonalities". As explored previously when understanding the rise of populist politics, there were an accumulating number of factors that led England to leave the European Union in June 2016; declining living standards due to the unfinished crisis of late capitalism and economic deprivation, the Euroscepticism in Britain's media landscape over the last four decades, the forces of nationalism, the rise of right-wing populism and the cultural backlash which was characterised by perceived threats to a 'British' way of life. In their recent book on Englishness, Henderson and Wyn Jones (2021) demonstrate that some of the driving forces of England's significant role in Brexit were the sense of grievance concerning England's place in the UK, which has a severe attachment and commitment to a nostalgic vision of Britain's past, present and future. Much of these sentiments had been seized upon by recent Conservative party election campaigns and manifestoes, having capitalised on the threat of a Labour-SNP coalition in 2015 by posing Scottish independence as a threat. This, Henderson and Wyn Jones (ibid, p.25) argue, made the Conservative party's electoral success possible, which consequently made an EU referendum an attractive avenue, which provided a ripe foundation for UKIP and the Leave campaigns to target and mobilise English voters.

It has been argued that the Leave campaigns capitalised on the affective nature of Eurosceptic, economic and social concerns experienced in England and presented a solution (Kagarlitsky 2017). Kagarlitsky (ibid, p. 114) regards the Brexit vote a "watershed event that marked the collapse of the cultural and psychological barriers that guaranteed the immutability of the neoliberal order", despite it doing the opposite in practice. The campaign exploited this sense of anxiety amongst voters and used fear of loss of employment, territory, culture and resources as a way to fuel an agenda of leaving the European Union (Jackson et al. 2016). McKenzie (2018) takes issue with the notion that Leavers

were 'turkeys voting for Christmas' and instead explains that perhaps they saw Brexit, with all the uncertainties it conveyed, as an alternative narrative to the status quo as a result of the heavy toll that de-industrialisation and austerity has taken on working-class communities. Cromby (2019) notes the significance of Brexit and myths, he argues that the Leave campaign relied heavily on myths and misleading promises such as winding back the cultural clock, that leaving the EU will secure jobs, put an end to immigration and raise living standards. Cromby argues that the expression of these myths have profound psychological effect. He explains that due to the vote itself expressing feelings of anger, discontent and hope, this was exacerbated by the decades of growing inequality and injustice. He states that these emotions should not be passed off as irrational, and instead be understood as rational notions of exclusion and anger that reflect the conditions neoliberalism has created.

Swales (2016, p.1) argues that the leave vote was identity driven;

> "The Leave victory was not about demographics alone, though it is clear that age, levels of education, income and newspaper readerships are all related to the likelihood of voting Leave. Matters of identity were equally, if not more strongly associated with the Leave vote – particularly feelings of national identity and sense of change in Britain over time."

Swales' argument on the power of identity resonates with Hearn's (2007) ideas on national identity and power, who argues that national identities are particularly salient for people particularly when "they seem to address personal issues of power over one's life, and that the various social organisational settings through which people realise control over their lives" (Hearn 2007, p.657). However, as Winnicott (et al. 2019, p.19) suggest, years after the referendum more work is needed to make sense of the UK's complex identities, "analysing the politics of England is important in its own right. Indeed, to understand British politics or the future of the UK, we need to make sense of England".

By looking to the Leave campaign's prominent figure, one can understand Nigel Farage's character as described by Yates (2015, p.105) as a "blokey image awash with signifiers of a particular unreconstructed English masculinity". Throughout his campaign Farage indulged in traditional English masculine characteristics such as beer drinking and smoking while holding press conferences in pubs, appealing to a traditional and conventional sense of Englishness (Forsyth 2014). The Leave campaign had targeted what the Remain campaign had left out; England. When looking over at Remain campaign one can see "Scotland stronger in Europe", "Wales stronger in Europe", "Northern Ireland stronger in Europe", however when it came to England, the campaign preached "Britain stronger in Europe" (Stronger In 2016; Denham 2018). Amongst Labour Party campaigning this same sentiment

is propelled, each British nation had a nation specific "Rebuilding [insert nation] for the many not the few" apart from England, which again leaves England with the language of Empire and as free terrain for the right to take hold. It can thus be argued that perhaps English identity found political form in Brexit, in addition to growing discontents in the period leading up to 2016. Furthermore, McGeever and Virdee (2018) understand this awakening of Englishness via Brexit as being characterised by a new politics of resentment that is underscored by structural decline and de-composition. They explain how due to the working-class defeats and de-legitimisation of collective power throughout Thatcher's reign together with austerity post 2008 financial crash led the loss of alternative frames of class resistance for the English working class. They therefore understand Brexit as a response to these class injuries amongst the English working class.

The British Empire has also been discussed in relation to Brexit, drawing on post-colonial studies researchers such as Bhambra (2017), Virdee and McGeever (2018) and Pendlebury and Veldpaus (2018) argue that the Brexit vote highlighted historical and cultural schisms within the UK whereby different imaginaries of the imperial past were rooted and held different usage in the present. Even the use of highly emotive and contentious phrases "take back control"[7] echoed throughout the Leave campaign suggest a nostalgia that relates to sentiments of loss. Researchers have pointed out the significance of the British Empire in Brexit's collective imagination in the public sphere and amongst Leave voters (May 2017; Hart 2016; Ballantyne 2018; Dorling and Tomlinson 2019; Bhambra 2017). Pendlebury and Veldpaus (2018) further argue that this suggests recovering an imagined past that celebrates a de-problematised 'great' British national identity that excludes acknowledgment of the darker side of this history or its inequalities that persist today. Koegler (et al. 2020, p.585) point to Brexit's "long-standing process, rooted in persisting imperial attitudes and, arguably, narcissistic yearnings" that represented a political moment when "anxieties about harnessing and unleashing colonially engineered power structures and cultural hierarchies crystallized". Furthermore, the proven effective nature of populist campaigns when built around tropes of empire, WW2 and victimhood in England, have shown that imperial resilience facilitates a "safe and legitimate sense of national attachment, particularly in times of upheaval" (ibid.). Such affective investment in war-time and imperial victory, that as Koegler (ibid) points out, does not enact any critical examination of the realities of colonialism. Beaumont (2019) has noted that being politically involved with the EU has been a destabilising force to nationalist's sense of self-esteem; therefore, the act of resistance to EU policies has become a mechanism for preserving the remnants of empire's British exceptionalism. Koegler (et al. 2020, p.586) argues that Britain's EU membership aided the "victim like, sacrificial and

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[7] Take back control' was the slogan for the Vote Leave campaign. See http://www.voteleavetakecontrol.org/briefing_control.html

defensive position" of Britain which provided a ripe foundation for Britain to be constructed as "having to fend off unjust, inferiorising "onslaughts" of EU bureaucrats, and abject invasions of European immigrants". Therefore, there was a Eurosceptic and "phantasmatic" transference of the EU into the position of the colonizer, which reflects the paranoid phantasy of merging the EU with the Other.

McLaughlin (2019) warns of using a psychosocial perspective to conduct simplistic arguments concerning Brexit when there are significant political and economic issues at stake. However, this approach is not solely a unified political method; instead it understands the intertwining roles of politics, economics, social dynamics, attitudes, affect, emotions and defence mechanisms at play throughout the Brexit process, experienced on a collective level in the United Kingdom. From his discipline of behavioural psychology, Hughes (2019) argues that Brexit is a psychological phenomenon, stating that "Brexit is all about feelings, assumptions, influences, dispositions, social relations, identities, emotions, pathologies and perspectives" (ibid, p.151). He argues that firstly, Brexit enacts the effort to explain political disruption by triggering deeply rooted cultural concepts that are embedded in the British psyche. Firstly, he points out how attitudes towards Brexit often encapsulate projections of pathological thought, for example 'Remoaners' are cast as implying a disordered mood and 'Brextremists' harbouring a hint of sociopathy. The economic discourse surrounding Brexit also portrays this with commentators implying "self-harm" to Britain's economy, which notably contrasts with the UKs original joining the EEC, which was billed as a cure to the ills of the nation. Notions of Brexit have also been implied as a source of mental distress which was summarised by British actor Danny Dyer in a clip that went viral in 2018 where he stated Brexit was a "mad riddle […] no-one's got a fucking clue" (Waterson 2018; Hughes 2019). Hughes (2019, p.97) calls this "Brexit Anxiety", pointing to the emotionalisation and pathologising of Brexit amongst commentators, a few examples being "Strexit" (Lally 2019), "Branxiety" (Butter 2018) and "Brexistential crisis" (Spicer 2016). Manners (2016) also explains how the remain campaign was framed in terms of rationality focussing on economic reasons for membership of the EU, whereas the Leave campaign focussed on and was framed in terms of affective feelings and emotion for leaving the EU. Hobolt (et al. 2020) examined social identities that formed during the EU referendum to understand Brexit related affective polarisation and found that not only are Brexit identities are prevalent, they also cut across traditional party lines and are generating as intense affective polarisation as that of partisanship. They argue that significant political events can generate affective polarisation by causing people to identify with others based on shared opinions of events. O'Toole (2018) furthers the notion of a pathologic nature of British politics and identifies examples of a "sadopopulist" dynamic amongst Brexit's culture, arguing that it is reminiscent of identification with pain recipient roles and the subsequent drive to destructive

actions and behaviour. One can perhaps see this amongst political discourse surrounding Brexit, including phrases such as 'hard Brexit' and 'a price worth paying for' (Hughes 2019).

Uncertainty has been a widely acknowledged symptom of the years following Brexit. The work of Anderson (et al. 2020, p.259) has located "modes of uncertainty", whereby Brexit has been experienced as "negative hope, national optimisms, apprehensive hopefulness and fantasies of action", which function differentially in a shared sense of uncertainty. Much of this uncertainty, they argue, is rooted in sequences of unpredictable geopolitical events that have transpired in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, connected to crises of neoliberalism and globalisation. They state that this turbulence has found expression in Brexit, and has been exacerbated by threatening and disruptive conditions such as climate change, automation and threats of terrorism. Along with this, Brexit uncertainties are "happening in the midst of a collective, affective, condition of intensified and normalised uncertainty", whereby this affective condition is further perpetuated by the decay of social democratic pillars such as unions and pensions, echoing Richards' (2007) understandings of the nation state's waning ability for emotional governance.

The arguments about Brexit laid out above have been evidenced and explored in Sobolewska and Ford's (2020) extensive book *Brexitland*. They investigate the lead up and aftermath of Brexit, with its long-term social and demographic changes and the subsequent conflict they created, and examine how it contributed to a significant transformation of British politics. They demonstrate the deep roots of polarisation in the UK by reflecting on the decades of educational expansion and rising ethnic diversity in the lead up to Brexit and understand how it contributed to electoral divides over immigration, identity and diversity. They liken Brexit to processes of accumulated pressure and sudden release akin to that of environmental disasters such as avalanches and wild fires, whereby tipping points are reached before considerable strain leads systems to collapse under rising pressure. The EU referendum of 2016 they argue, "triggered the earthquake that released decades of built-up pressure, mobilising the identity divides which had been building for many years" which then forged into "new Leave and Remain political identities" (ibid. p.324). Underlying this, they state, is an "ethnocentric impulse" to view politics in predominantly 'us versus them' binary frames, a common characteristic of identity conflicts. Along with this, what has been dubbed by commentators as 'the Greate Awokening' has occurred, whereby there has been an acceleration in strongly liberal stances, which has created further backlash from those who struggle to adopt socially progressive values on issues of prejudice towards ethnic minorities and LGBTQ communities. Concluding their work, Sobolewska and Ford (ibid) suggest that geography is likely a critical factor in 'us versus them' identity conflicts which will continue to play a role in electoral politics. They argue for further scholarly

attention on geographical dynamics between the rural and urban, something which will be a feature of this thesis, explored in-depth at a later point. However before exploring this, I will first turn to understanding the dynamics of narcissism and melancholia that are at play amongst Brexit and nationalist narratives.

2.3.7. Narcissism and Melancholia

In section 2.1.5, I explored how arguments from those such as Kelman (1969) and Smith's (1991) understand collective memories as a mechanism to help a society to incorporate its national identity into personal identity, so that nation members can understand and be part of how they view the world. In a psychosocial sense, Psarrou (2003) defines the collective unconscious of a nation as the celebration of historical narratives, myths and culture which are inscribed in the mind of its members:

> "this is a past that only members can get hold of, for it includes all the perceptions the nation has for itself and the others, along with its culture and mentality" (Psarrou 2003, p.131)

Memories are kept alive through the creation of national holidays, monuments and commemorations, which can act as mnemonic symbols for individuals. Freud writes in *Five Lectures of Psychoanalysis* that such monuments can cause one to "cling to [the past] emotionally; they cannot get free of the past and for its sake they neglect what is real and immediate" (Freud 1910, p.16). This can be seen amongst nationalistic behaviour, the pathology is experienced by the collective group, and they are bound together with enhanced self-esteem via the nation's history and traumatic or triumphant history. One can perhaps understand this collective unconsciousness amongst British people that engage in Armistice Day commemorations, the poppy offering a symbol and wreath laying a ritual to provide the strengthening of a community that imposes a uniform belief (Schopflin 1997; Psarrou 2003). By contrast, an inability to mourn can occur particularly as part of denying unpleasant realities, due to its disturbing of the pleasure principle. This may lead to the indulgence of myth and manipulation of historical narratives. Hughes (2019) suggests that the deeply rooted cultural concepts embedded in the British psyche are those of the British Empire. Previously, via Younge (2018) Gilroy (2004) and Hall (2001) I have acknowledged that the concept of past glories of the British Empire is engrained in the psyche of much of the population and exacerbated through the right-wing media reporting on Brexit. Dorling and Tomlinson (2019) argue that Brexit characterises the last remnants of empire exerting its way out of the British psyche. Notably, Koegler (et al. 2020, p.586) point out the contrast of Britain's role as the colonizer throughout history and subsequent modern day adoption of the 'colonized' role as victim to the European Union. Hughes' (2019) analysis places Brexit as a result of forces of melancholia, nostalgia, yearning and uncertainty as the drivers of emotions and thoughts that have operated at a national collective level.

Bollas (2018) argues that Brexit in the UK and Donald Trump's victory in the United States has led to generalised anxiety, disorientation and depression both in the UK and across the Atlantic. He points to modern globalized living having gone beyond the mental capability of most people to grasp it, and Brexit, the rise of right-wing populism and the election of Trump were symptoms of this backlash due to the challenges presented to those who have not been able to identify with the globalised world in all its complexities. Paranoia is a key theme, for in times of uncertainty and anxiety one might abandon complexities and elect a simplistic version of reality which offers a safer or pleasurable alternative. In order to avoid repeating binaries which analysis ought to try and deconstruct, for the purposes of Bollas's arguments I will refer here to these populations on a spectrum: from global late modern subjects, those that possess a malleable form of national identity that fit within a globalised world, to anti-globalisation traditional subjects, who hold a powerful fixed national identity who are melancholic for a time before globalisation. It has already been understood how Blair's New Labour in the new millennia signified inclusiveness and adaptation to Britain in a globalised era particularly in regards to multiculturalism, and what has followed in the subsequent years with the rise of right-wing populism, English nationalism and consecutive Conservative electoral success is a backlash of these profound changes, one can see the parallel occurring across the Atlantic following Obama's presidency. He states how the change in political dynamics in the second decade of the millennium was multinational; ultimately Bollas argues that the forces that led to these shifts were processes of alienation. He explains how the drivers of this alienation were raising economic inequalities, anti-government sentiments and anti-immigration attitudes which led to disenfranchisement. This led to significant proportions of the electorate voting against globalisation in favour of nationalism which included a "dangerous oversimplified view of the world" (Bollas 2018, p.76) that held appeal due to its protest against complexity with a simple solution: leave the European Union, or in America's case, build a wall. As Bollas explains:

> "The idea of a move away from complexity towards a new simplicity brought relief, and this was consolidated as they found themselves part of interlocking communities of like-minded people all over the world" (ibid).

Particularly, the qualities in UKIP leader and face of the Leave campaign, Nigel Farage, held characteristics that appealed to these anti-globalisation traditional identities. Farage's sexist and xenophobic comments drew attention from the media (Seymour 2019) and appealed to these anti-globalisation traditional identities as it conveyed that Farage was not like all the politically correct elites, they took enjoyment at the offense he caused to global late-modern populations. Similarly, with the appeal and un-appeal of Trump, Bollas writes that supporters of these political figures help to lift

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the anti-globalisation traditional subjects of their chronic political disenchantment - "there was peace to be found in ridding the mind of unwanted complexity" (Bollas 2018, p.77). Bollas concludes that the anti-globalisation traditional movement has caused populations to retreat into territorial, national, ethnic and political enclaves which correspond with the death drive (Freud 1933), by claiming that:

> "Mourning has turned into melancholia. When we are melancholic we are angry for the losses we have suffered, and we unconsciously blame that which has apparently left us. We now feel abandoned by the humanist predicates of Western culture and the network of belief systems that seemed to offer a progressive vision of humanity, and we have turned our rage against social efficacy itself. This anger has taken many forms, from a passive acceptance to all forms of corruption to right-wing identifications with cynical enterprises and murderous solutions" (Bollas, 2018, p.127)

Bollas discusses the brutality of the industrial revolution where the system could not process its losses due to the raid speed and harshness of its environmental and cultural changes. He explores how the collective British imaginary has not caught up with the losses faced, which informs melancholic structures due to not having processed the loss. This links to earlier points from Colley (1992) and Kumar (2003) in section 2.3.6, where the idea of 'England's green and pleasant land' since industrialisation and the interwar period has taken the form of nostalgia for lost England (Colley 1992; Kumar 2003).

To round off this chapter, I will now focus on the driving political divide between rural and urban England, drawing upon key statistical data and scholarly understandings before identifying and justifying the thesis' research focus.

2.3.8. Rural-Urban divide

Electoral geography analysis has located higher levels of support for Brexit and populist parties more broadly in rural and non-metropolitan areas (Woods 2021; Pose, 2018; Essletzbichler et al. 2019). Although some have critiqued this understanding (Manley et al. 2017), the idea of the rural-urban divide has remained widely accepted for understanding and explaining disruptive politics (Woods 2021). Quantitative election study maps are showing stark divides between liberal cities and conservative countrysides in the United Kingdom (BBC 2016; Guardian 2017; BBC 2019), as well as the 2017 and 2019 general elections, this includes the EU referendum result as one of the most prominent divides between rural and urban. This is not distinct to the UK, in America the rural parts of swing

states swung the outcome of the 2016 United States election to Republican and saw inner urban areas vote Democrat (Hetherington and Wieler 2018; Rodden 2019). These geographical electoral patterns exist here in England between Leave and Remain, the Conservative party and the Labour party, symbolically and ideologically representing the growing division in the United Kingdom.

It is widely acknowledged that one's lived experiences inform attitudes (Fazio and Zanna 1981). When attitudes are informed by such experiences they can take on a political and social nature. Many towns, as Brett (et al. 2017, p.1) argue in a report following the 2017 general election, "serve only as satellites to urban centres where economic activity is concentrated" meanwhile towns are left "high and dry", experiencing disconnect and loss of human and economic capital which go almost ignored in the UK's current economic model. But yet, they argue, these are home-grown places where people feel they belong and call home. They are filled with meaning, intertwined in a broad depth of history and thus serve as pillars of identity. Therefore it is important to take into account the regional nature of political behaviour and sentiments.

Much research on regional identities in England has shown that these identities not only form around the political but also the social, cultural and historical. Deacon (2001; 2004) has done extensive research into regional identity in the South West of England and Cornwall finding that what makes up for identities are components such as popular historical figures, language, accent, maritime traditions, food, rural and farming culture, these findings have also corroborated with further studies (Willett and Giovannini 2014). This is the same for other regions of England too such as Northern England (Ehland 2007) particularly the North East (Tomaney and Ward 2017) and Yorkshire (Everett and Aitchison 2008). This is similar to Liverpuddlian or Scouse identity in Liverpool, distinctly distinguish themselves being "Scouse, not English" (Hadfield 2019; Boland 2010; Platt 2011). According to Paasi (1996), models of regional identity formation can also embody notions of "insiders" and "outsiders", similar to that of national identity. Devine (1992) conducted a study on identity finding that participants expressed identification with the region they came from rather than the place they resided in, which suggests a nostalgic dimension of regional identity.

In the 1970s, Raymond Williams stated that rural England is a powerful image, due to its features of stability, un-changeable nature and harmony (Williams 1973). However, this nature of an apolitical rural England has been argued by Woods (2005, p.4) to be a "mythic construct", constructed by the existing powerful elite to divert attention away from political structures and "discourage challenges to existing power". Woods argues that a Conservative ideology has managed to persist today due to its focus on aspects such as "property rights, maintenance of social order and balancing tradition and progress". Calling this a "glue" (ibid, p.85) that holds rural politics together, Woods (ibid, p.89) argues

that this "Conservative discourse of rurality" has heavily associated "Conservatism, ruralism and British, or at least English national identity", which has been imprinted on the national imagination, framed as symbols of the national character. Much of this has been reflected in "jingoistic wartime anthems" (Brooks 2020, p.795) such as 'Rule Britannia' and 'Land of Hope and Glory", conflating it further with notions of Empire (Daniels 1993).

Brooks (2020, p.798), writing on Brexit and rurality, points towards "a deep unsettling of rural power structures" that occurred in the 1990s as a precursor to Brexit. Making reference to events such as the Twyford Down M3 road protests in 1992 and the EU imposed worldwide ban on exports of British beef in 1996, she writes that the "calm prosperity of rural England" in the 1990s saw disruption and outrage by what rural people saw as "intrusive regulation of a rural way of life by ill-informed urban elites". This, she argued, reanimated the rural-urban divide. Alongside this, issues such as land value appreciation, rising house prices and rents, second home ownership, stagnant wages, underemployment and the mechanisation of jobs impacted the rural working class who gained little from eventual higher farm incomes. Rural representation, Brooks (ibid, p.798) argues "began to reflect "middle-class in-migrants for the rural lifestyle they wished to 'consume', particularly within Southern counties" where "places within commuting distance of urban centres on whose economic activity maintenance of such a lifestyle depends" (Woods 2005, p.186), exacerbating the divide between the rural-working class and urban affluent class. As Brooks (2020) and Woods (2021) argue, it was the exceptional circumstance of the 2016 EU referendum that created a unique opportunity for rural discontent to be mobilised and expressed again, which contributed to a coalition of grievances that delivered the Leave result .

Writing on the unequal geographical distribution of opportunity, Jennings and Stoker (2019) argue that the EU referendum result revealed England as being divided by cities that have flourished in a globalised economy and the rural areas and towns that contrast with this. These trends they say reflect both economic and cultural forces whereby divergent economic and demographic changes have resulted in variations of social outlooks of voters between geographical places. Past electoral results from 2015, 2017 and 2019 indicated preference for Labour in the cities and university towns and Conservative in the towns and rural areas (Prosser 2021). This pattern is also reflected in Europe and the United States (Perrineau 1997; Gordon 2018; Broz et al. 2019), where there is a "clear spatial pattern in electoral support for populist parties and candidates" (Jennings and Stoker 2019, p.155), reflecting Woods (2005) ideas about the countryside and Conservatism. In their previous work, Jennings and Stoker (2016) explain the concept of 'Two Englands' that re-shaped electoral Politics in England and Wales, with Scotland having undergone nationalist re-alignment in the last decade. Their

findings suggested that through social and economic drivers, one England containing cities and university towns were more ethnically diverse, educated, younger and socially liberal whereas the other England consisting of towns and rural areas are less ethnically diverse, ageing, more socially conservative and nostalgic. Using statistical data from the British Election Study (BES) they observed that England's 'backwaters' are prone to embracing nostalgia, they are concerned with the emergence of new 'minority' rights and immigration. By contrast, cosmopolitan England was found to be confident and outward looking. They also found a growing divide between expressions of British and English identity, where there has been a shift towards distinct Englishness in the backwaters as compared to Britishness in the cosmopolitan. This mirrors the research conducted in 2018 by Denham (2018a; 2018b) and YouGov (2017) that found that the national average of pride in English identity was at 57% but this percentage increased in rural areas outside of cities.

Furthermore, Jennings and Stoker (2019) state that immigration has mostly taken place in cities populated by those that are younger and more economically active than average. Areas with low levels of ethnic diversity tend to see attitudes that reflect opposition to immigration and social change. They suggest that the importance of place is integral here in understanding this opposition:

> "Place provides the opportunity for regular engagement with others nearby and a process of social exchange encourages a search for shared ground and a common understanding. Cultural stereotypes come to define the understanding of the place where people live. It defines who they are and what they represent" (Jennings and Stoke 2019, p. 157)

In response to this, Other places and their inhabitants become defined as alien and untrustworthy, politicians will often reinforce this sense of difference to reinforce support by weaponising place-based identity politics which drives polarised politics. One could see this amongst the populist discourse adopted by UKIPs 2015 campaign which focussed on othering the Westminster and Brussels elite (Pareschi and Albertini 2016). Not only this, UKIP's policy issues such as opposition to renewable energy proved to be popular in rural areas. This provided fertile ground for articulating a position that combined "climate change scepticism and contempt for 'political correctness'; while presenting themselves as stalwart defenders of traditional rural landscapes complete with hunting parties and village pubs" (Reed 2016, p. 237 cited in Brooks 2020).

Connections between populism and rural areas have often been rooted in understandings of economic and political marginalisation (Woods 2021; Cramner 2016; Rodden 2019). Ultimately, rural areas are burdened with the uncomfortable truth of rural poverty, declining public infrastructure, lower incomes combined with higher living costs, and the lowest levels of social mobility nationally

(Phibbs 2018). The steady decline of the social and civic assets such as community centres, post offices, leisure centres, independent businesses and small farms that prop up rural economies, along with lacking political mobilisation and frames for resistance, have eroded and caused rural communities to collapse into insecurity, political disillusionment and cynicism. This is reinforced by Rodriguez-Pose (2017) who argues that the collapse into insecurity has led these areas to revolt against the status quo, in the form of the ballot box; the populist wave has strong support territorially and exists in these less dynamic areas whereby there has been a rebellion against the feeling and causes of "being left behind" (ibid, p.4). In terms of rural politics the Countryside Alliance seeks to represent rural interests, but largely focusses on the interests of the affluent, defending and campaigning on rights such as fox hunting, shooting and game meat. As an extension of that, rural constituencies tend to remain Conservative seats with the exception of those with university towns. Hence, the emergence of popularity for UKIP accommodated the experiences and feelings of particular groups, "especially older, white, English men" (ibid), by blending forces of Euroscepticism, conservatism and populism. By doing this, Reed (2016, p.228) explains how UKIP was able to tap into an Englishness frame around nostalgia and empire, rooted in "rural landscapes" as "ethnic homelands of the English".

Barnett (2017) notes; "there are five parts to the UK: Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, London and England-without-London", the voting contrast between England-without-London and the rest of the union is most clear amongst EU referendum results; It was not just London that voted to remain by majority, outside of London cities such as Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, Brighton, Cambridge and Oxford also had Remain majorities, these cities have universities, commuter lines to London, and are embedded with greater diversity and culture, something different to what rural areas were experiencing (Nandy 2017; Brooks 2020; Jenner and Stoker 2016). Barnett points to the combination of wanting to break free from border-less neoliberalism, (lack of) EU democracy and the failure of the left that created a cross-class, cross-party movement that overwhelmed regional differences that had existed before in party politics. Nandy (2017) cites the widening gulf between cities and towns with shifting attitudes on issues such as gender, LGBT rights and immigration, however it was attitudes to the EU that were most apparent;

> "Between 1997 and 2015 support for leaving the EU more than doubled amongst those living outside cities. It took less than 20 years for Britain's towns to transition from seeing the EU as part of the solution to part of the problem" (Nandy 2017)

Barnett states that England-without-London's reception to anti-EU sentiment was something uniquely national, he argues this was something that was concentrated into "the force field of the English spirit" (Barnett, 2017, p. 113), whereby prejudices and longings created a majority for Brexit. However this

is a parallel dynamic that also occurs internationally, what is called the "displaced halo effect" (Geddes 2014, p.292; Perrineau 1997), Geddes points out that support for populist parties that employ a nostalgic exclusive sense of national identity, anti-immigration sentiments and ignite nationalist attitudes have occurred largely in parts of Britain that "have not been directly affected by rapid population shifts and are socially, economically, culturally and spatially distant from those that have been" (ibid.). Similarly, Rodden (et al. 2019) argues that:

> "Urban and rural areas are becoming economically and psychologically distinct, with cities concentrating those open to new experience and working in the technology-driven economy and rural areas retaining those averse to social and economic change" (Rodden et al. 2019)

Therefore, it is high time to turn a scholarly focus to national identity and political sentiment in rural area. This chapter thus far has demonstrated the scholarly underpinnings of national identity, the psychosocial approach to national identity and scholarly understandings of national identity and politics in England. It is now necessary to identify a gap in research and justify the chosen area for study, before outlining the methodology used for the study.

2.4. Summary and research rationale

Brexit marked a significant landmark in contemporary understandings of national identity and political sentiment. As previously stated, rural England played a significant role in Britain's withdrawal from the EU. Numerous narratives have dominated academic debate and analysis on the leave vote. Ones most popular argue that the result was "delivered by the 'left behind' low skilled and less well-educated blue-collar workers and citizens who have been pushed to the margins" (Goodwin and Heath, 2016, p. 13). Along with this, arguments from Virdee and McGeever (2018, p.1803) placed the leave vote's success with a significant "cross class coalition" of voters middle-aged and older. Arguments made have also focussed on cultural factors, with Goodhart's (2017) understandings of the leave voting "somewhere's" and remain voting "anywheres", contrasting the former with those who are less educated, socially conservative, rooted in local places and nostalgic for Britain's past, and the latter with those in urban areas with university educations, who are cosmopolitan and hold socially liberal values. Locations of Brexit's appeal have also, as we've seen, been identified as a suppressed nostalgia for empire, with attachments to myths that correspond with imperial nostalgia rooted in Second World War myths of Britain 'standing alone' (Bhambra 2017; Virdee and McGeever 2018). Additionally, Brexit has been described as an effect of unequal distributions of opportunity (Dorling 2016), in which its nature has been defined in regional terms (Jennings and Stoker 2016; Rodriguez-

Pose 2018). Furthermore, these sentiments have previously thought to have been more popular with those identifying as English rather than British, in rural areas outside of London (Barnett 2017; O'Toole 2019; Brooks 2020; Henderson and Wyn Jones 2021). An underlying aspect of these arguments is the strength and power of national identity, which includes a range of psychological qualities such as belonging, collective memories and othering as well as powerful affective dynamics such as ideas surrounding territory, history and mythology.

Whilst these arguments have their validity, some of the binary natures and isolated scholarly approaches of these understandings have potentially added fuel to the post-Brexit polarisation in popular debate experienced in the years following the referendum. It is also hard not to fall into this trap and to manage the complexity of competing positions in one's writing and research. It is therefore important to reflect and explore on the nuanced rural nature of these forces on the ground. Much previous research has aimed to fill this under-explored angle, focussing on a range of intersectional dynamics such as class, race and locality (see Coleman 2020; Anderson et al. 2020; Telford and Wistow 2019; McKenzie 2017; Leddy-Owen 2018; Brooks 2020). However, none of that research employs an interdisciplinary approach that takes into account psychosocial forces at play, particularly in rural areas. Furthermore, recent work from researchers such as Neal (et al. 2021) calls for "closer attention to the ways in which rural communities are constitutive of and respond to political turbulence". Brexit's aftermath has been described as an "intensifying sense of uncertainty in the midst of a crisis of (neo)liberalism" (Anderson et al. 2019, p.256), and such levels of emotion requires attention. With that in mind, political psychology approaches are thought to be advantageous in furthering understandings of politics and identity (Kaltwasser 2021; Jervis 1989).

By exploring existing understandings with new angles that account for the power of identity and its psychosocial dynamics, reproducing splits can be avoided in binaries of one's understandings and instead create a space for multidimensional understandings of intersecting dynamics that are not limited or restricted by the constraints of traditional methods. Whilst many quantitative methods in political science are helpful in exploring large-scale patterns, understanding and paying close attention to how these psychologically driven political patterns and sentiments play out on the ground with a qualitative interview-based approach will unearth new angles for further study. Exploring the relationship between national identity, localised experiences and political sentiment amongst the rural voting population in the turbulent year of 2020 will therefore add to existing understandings and help expand the current research horizon, bringing with it new opportunities for further research.

By incorporating a psychosocial approach to account for underlying psychological dynamics at play amongst processes of national identification and political sentiment, it will contribute a new approach

to the field that goes beyond social, cultural, and political understandings of national identity as seen throughout this chapter. Figure 1 titled 'Psychosocial Dimensions to the Political Psychology of National Identity and Political Sentiment shows there are four interconnected mutually constituted dimensions of psychosocial processes and experience both conscious and unconscious. The first layer presents the roots and drivers which are responsible for emotions such as fear, loss, and anxiety. The second layer accounts for the defence mechanisms that evolve as a way of managing the emotions present in the first layer. The third layer shows national identity as being a manifestation of enacted defence mechanisms, and the fourth layer presents political sentiment as being the outcome of the dynamics involved in the first, second and third layers, showing the interrelatedness on this process. So far research has tended to look at the socio-political and cultural manifestation of emotion in politics which correspond to the outer two layers. However, my psychosocial approach enables us to look beneath the surface to the core of the other layers 1 and 2 and understand how the affective roots and drivers of loss, fear and anxiety can trigger defence mechanisms to manage them. This model shows how national identity can become a manifestation of such processes, which impact one's political sentiments.

Figure 1: Psychosocial Dimensions to the Political Psychology of National Identity and Political Sentiment
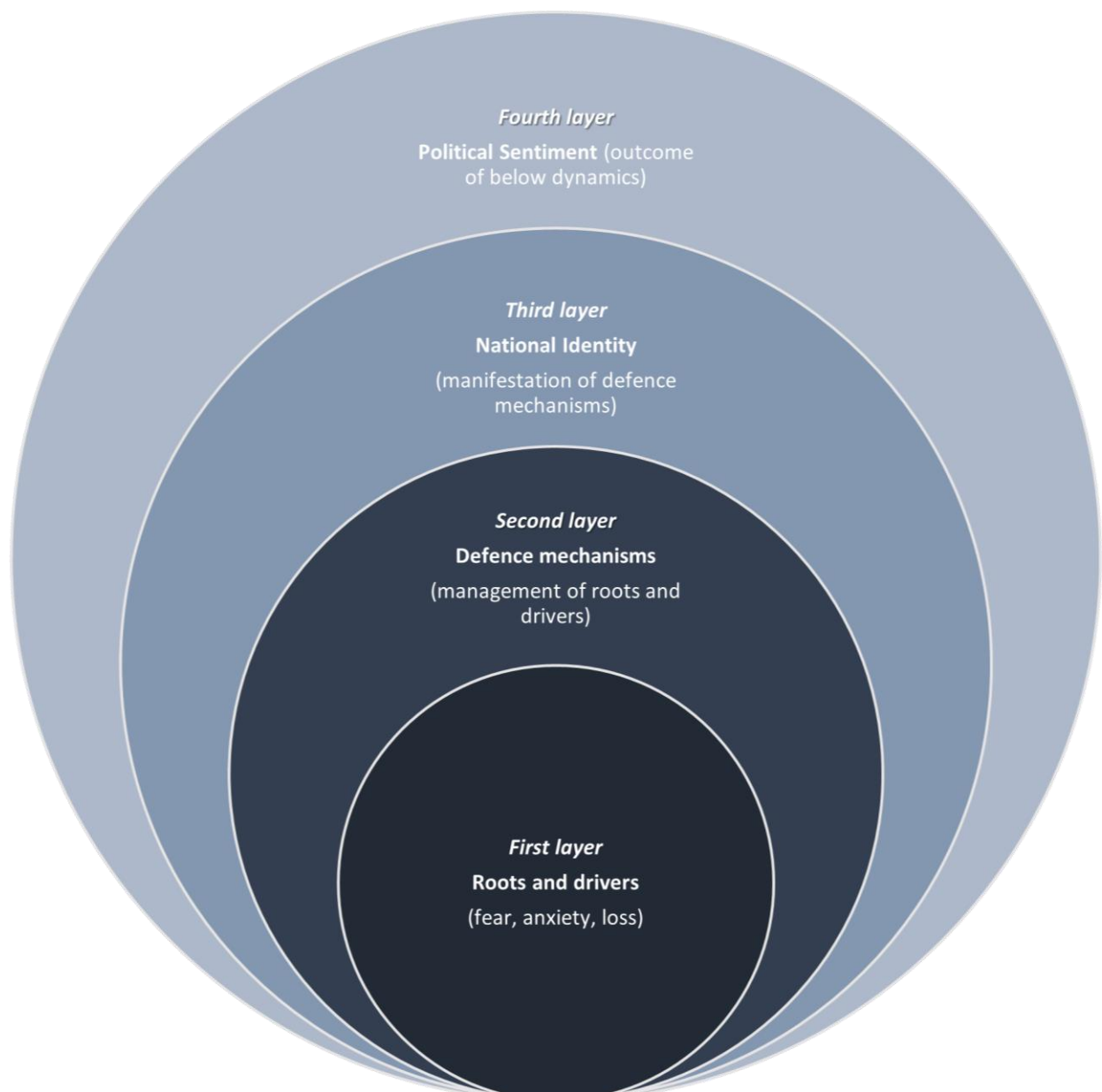
3. Research Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research methodology for this qualitative study regarding the psychosocial relationship between nation, identity and political thought. As mentioned previously, this approach will allow for a deeper understanding of the role psychological defence mechanisms play in national attachment and identification and political behaviour and thought. The efficacy and justification in using qualitative research methods including psychosocial in-depth interviews will be discussed in-depth, along with discussion of the sampling method, the thematic analysis method, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

3.1. Research Objectives

The aim of my study is not to generalise my findings to the larger population in England but rather to explore in-depth a diversity of views, thoughts, attitudes and feelings on national identity and its relation to political sentiments in a post-Brexit context. This is in order to uncover deeper psychological mechanisms and processes that are not observable through surveys and large scale data analysis. In turn, this will aid in contributing a new approach to studying matters of national identity and political sentiment. The methodology for this study is rooted in the themes discussed amongst previous chapters but also remains open to the disruption and challenging of those theoretical assumptions and expectations. This openness is utilised to inform the complex relationship between politics, nation and mental life via an interdisciplinary analysis that incorporates sociology, history and political psychology, the advantages of such an approach will become clearer later in this chapter. This study is therefore approached through three focussed interconnected research questions:

RQ1. What is the relationship between national identity and political sentiment?

RQ2. How does this relationship manifest psychosocially?

RQ3. What role does geographical rurality play in political thought and national identity?

The remainder of this chapter will discuss and explore the methodological approaches and procedure through which I engaged with these research objectives.

3.2. Employing a qualitative research method

A qualitative research design was appropriate for this study because it is rooted in the field of social sciences and anthropology. Newman (et al. 1998) highlights that the research philosophy of qualitative research is phenomenological because the meaning of the phenomena is explored for the people or culture under examination. Qualitative research methods are advantageous when seeking

to discover trends and themes in thought and opinion, allowing the researcher to explore participants' experiences within society (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). Qualitative methods tend to be associated with small scale studies, thus making it the preference for this study as it focusses on a breadth of focus that aims to understand relationships between certain variables (Creswell 2013) with the use of words and language as its unit of analysis. Using qualitative measures allows the probing of the ambiguous complexities of people's experiences which can contain deeper insight. These methods contain a holistic approach which allow for the findings to be understood in their social and political context while highlighting the importance of multiple inter-relationships with a wide range of factors – including subjective factors that cannot be understood in isolation or as fragmented parts for study (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

Qualitative research approaches allow for the adoption of an interpretivist paradigm. An interpretivist paradigm allows qualitative research to be concerned with the development of insight into people's lived experiences, history, beliefs, values, thoughts and identity; interpreting one's social world enables a nuanced understanding of such multi-layered phenomena in all its complexity. Mills and Birks (2017) argue that the primary purpose of qualitative research is to examine a phenomenon that impacts individuals or groups on a level of lived reality in its cultural and social context which therefore produces a higher quality outcome due to its anchor in a textured and nuanced methodological school of thought. The evolution of qualitative research over the recent decade has resulted in an achievement of credibility for what Mills and Birks (ibid, p.11) call "its ability to explore the human condition and its many truths". The quality of research is that of an important notion to consider when undertaking methodological planning. With the potential to make meaningful contribution to the understanding of subjects in the social world and expanding the scholarly knowledge base, the value of qualitative research lies in its ability to probe for underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions that drive political thought and behaviour (Choy 2014; Yauch and Steudel 2003, p.472).

In addition to this, using qualitative methodologies can allow the researcher to efficiently explore important characteristics amongst national identities and political sentiment, which may not be captured meaningfully when reduced to numbers within quantitative data, particularly when not understood in the wider context of the social world (Choy 2014; Dudwick et al. 2006). These methods are particularly appropriate when contrasted with quantitative methods which risk having a reductive effect on the research objectives and data, thus preventing nuanced discovery. In contrast, Ochieng (2009, p.16) describes qualitative methods as serving a common purpose for generating new means of understanding existing data, whereby if the purpose is to learn about phenomena through participant's experiences, the researcher need's "methods that will allow for discovery and do justice

to their perceptions and the complexity of their interpretations". Therefore all things considered, a qualitative approach to this research was most useful and appropriate in addressing the research questions.

3.3. Utilising a Psychosocial Approach

A psychosocial approach to interpreting the data attributed an understanding to politics which as I will show in chapter five, informed how political processes are rooted in psychological processes and vice versa. This approach ensured that mental dynamics such as ignorance, racism, class, social localisation and xenophobia were not overlooked as "explanatory factors" (Manners 2016, p.1216).

In the 21st century, emotion and affect have entered the social science paradigm causing traditional models to be challenged. Psychosocial studies use psychoanalytic concepts together with principles from the social sciences and humanities to address and highlight issues within society and politics. The idea of a psychosocial subject is described by Frosh (2003, p.1564) as "a meeting point of inner and outer forces", which is in constant construction. As an evolving methodology in the social sciences, it considers unconscious processes, dynamics and defences that operate within the research environment by the researcher and the researched (Clarke and Hoggett 2009). As an underused tool for understanding societal phenomena, Clarke and Hoggett (2009) argue psychoanalytic practice in fieldwork particularly salient as it contributes to the understanding of how data is structured and constructed. It is an important tool in understanding how the unconscious plays a part in the structure of people's reality and how people perceive Others. They explain how a psychosocial based methodology allows the researcher to research their participants in their cultural social and historical context which allows insight into "motivations and defences" (Hunt 1989, p.13) where both the psychological, sociological, political and cultural are considered as having an influence on the way we construct social life through "relationships, feelings and action" (Clarke and Hoggett 2009, p.5). Additionally, Clarke and Hoggett (ibid) point out the important work of Innes (1998, p.187) who highlights the usefulness of psychoanalytic concepts in enabling the researcher to consider a range of responses and experiences that not only originate in the political, historical and social reality but also in the "unconscious internal conflicts of the individual".

The uses of affective practices in the humanities are described as "human activity where emotion is a specific and principal focus of the practice" (Smith et al. 2018, p.5), Smith (et al.) goes on to explain that "affect and emotion are flowing, dynamic, recursive and profoundly contextual, challenging static and neat formulations". Archer (2000; 2007) explains how emotions are used both as an evaluative judgement and as part of an on-going commentary on phenomena that are important to us, often bound up in power relations, identity and politics (Smith et al. 2018). Affective practices in qualitative

research can help with understanding various emotive sentiments in participants such as attachment, identification, containment and defence mechanisms. From a psychoanalytic perspective, these practices also have strong unconscious affective dimensions.

Ultimately, using psychosocial concepts in this research allows for the recognition of the role of the unconscious mind, the construction of social realities, the interpretation of the "feelings and emotions [that] shape our perception and motivation, and constructing the way in which we perceive others" (ibid). Furthermore, internal and external worlds are in constant interplay and the integration of historical and social factors at a conscious level allows the yielding of information concerning unconscious defences. However, as with all qualitative methods, one needs to account for issues of subjectivity that may have been present throughout data collection and analysis (Bumbuc 2016).

3.4. The Issue of Subjectivity

Crociani-Windland (2018) approaches the understanding of the role of subjective experience in psychosocial research by understanding its ontological basis, where the psychosocial subject is developed by different frameworks to arrive at an ontological understanding. This is "where the subject can be understood as constituted by "encounters between internal and external milieus over time" that are combined and expressed in social life. Qualitative methodology recognises that the subjectivity of the researcher is intimately involved in the research.

Peshkin's (1988) work was useful for understanding how as a researcher, I encountered subjectivities whilst undergoing this qualitative research. Peshkin describes subjectivity as an "amalgam of the persuasions that stem from the circumstances of one's class, statuses, and values interacting with the particulars of one's object of investigation" (ibid. p 17). He lists what he calls, subjective I's and discusses how they surfaced in his research; "The Ethnic-Maintenance I, The Community-Maintenance I, The E-Pluribus-Unum I, The Justice-Seeking I, The Pedagogical-Meliorist I and the The Non-research Human I" (ibid, p.18). Peshkin's approach was advantageous as a framework for shedding light on how my experiences, choices, positions, education, social and ethnic background affected and influenced my research. By using this framework I was able to produce an "illuminating, empowering personal statement that attunes me to where self and subject are intertwined' (Peshkin, 1988, p. 20). Taking influence from Savage's (2007) intrinsic subjectivities, a summary of my intersectional subjective I's is provided and explored in an adapted table (Table 2) in section 7.8. of the appendix. This allowed for reflexive activity, a process which will be explored in the following section.

3.5.   Reflexivity in Qualitative Research

Constructionist and interpretive paradigms claim one cannot acknowledge objectivity or neutrality in research. These approaches say that "there cannot be ahistorical or apolitical investigation" (Allen 2017, p.1467). This means that there is an affinity between the researcher and their participants. Reflexivity is an important tool in social science research as it offers a technique to turn the issue of subjectivity in research into an "opportunity" (Finlay 1998, p.453). It can enable a richer understanding that enables qualitative research to account for the researcher's own influence on the data collected. Wilkinson (1988) defines reflexivity as "disciplined self-reflection", where one can acknowledge the self as the central position in the construction of knowledge (Banister et al. 1994). Hunt (1989) locates areas where unconscious forces may affect the research which include firstly, the choice of research subject which reflects the researcher's inner dynamics, which may cause transference and counter-transference between the researcher and the participant. Transference in psychoanalytic practice refers to the redirection of emotions to a substitute (usually a therapist or in this case, the interviewee). Counter transference refers to projection of emotion onto the client, or in this case, the participant (Loewald 1986).

As Clarke and Hoggett (2009) point out, there may also be discomfort that arises during the collection of data, which could particularly occur if the participant discusses politically extremist themes. The researcher must therefore be aware of the unconscious dynamics that may take place during the course of data collection and find an outlet to work through the affective nature of research. Clarke and Hoggett (ibid, p.7) state that at the heart of a psychosocial research project is a "reflexive practitioner", this involves a process of critical self-reflection on the methodology which is sustained throughout the research in order to recognise both the conscious and unconscious emotional involvement in the project. There are therefore five questions (as indicated by Clarke and Hoggett) that I reflected on:

1. Why are we interested in our research project?

2. Why choose this area and not some other?

3. What is our investment in it?

4. How will this investment relate to the historical, social and political moment the project is being undertaken in it?

5. How will this affect the way we go about the research?

Explorations of these questions can be found in section 7.8 of the appendix. This enabled me to focus on human agency (Bandura 1989) and understand each angle of affective research. Hollway and

Jefferson (2000) argue that this allows the conceptualisation of both the researcher and researched to be co-producers of meaning. Hollway and Jefferson (ibid, p.12) argue that dealing with affective influences during the course of the research is "crucial to its success". This is because research interviews may conjure up uncomfortable feelings and topics for both the researcher and the participant, producing both a "defended subject and the defended researcher" through defence mechanisms such as repression and denial (Hollway and Jefferson 2000; Clarke and Hoggett 2009, p.12). It was also important to consider Bion's (1962) concept of containment in the research environment and how feelings from the participant may be received by the researcher and vice versa, an important action was to 'survive' it without conveying it back and enacting processes of projection and counter transference (Clarke and Hoggett 2009). Process of reflexivity and reflexive practices was carried out via note taking, which enabled a reflection on forces such as emotion and the aforementioned dynamics and how they may have been at play throughout my data collection (Hollway and Jefferson 2013). All notes from my reflexivity process can be located in section 7.8 of my appendix.

3.6.   The Importance of Intersectionality

Intersectionality can be defined as a notion that subjectivity is established by mutually reinforcing trajectories of race, gender, class, and sexuality. It has emerged as a primary tool for understanding the relations between hierarchy, hegemony and exclusivity and how they impact one's worldview (Nash 2008). From a psychosocial perspective, these positions are also shaped by emotional experiences and affective forces. Firstly, discussions of Brexit and the nation need to account for what Bhambra (2017, p.215) calls a methodological whiteness. This is where social scientific accounts of Brexit have skewed "white majority political action as the action of a more narrowly defined white working class" which serves to legitimatise analyses that "might otherwise have been regarded as racist" (ibid; Kaufmann 2017). Furthermore, research has alternatively stated that the vote to leave the European Union was disproportionately cast by the property-owning, pensioned, affluent, white middle class based in southern England, not the northern working class who have been more commonly held responsible for the outcome (Dorling 2016). Following the 2017 Lord Ashcroft polls (Becker et al. 2017), Swales (2016, p.2) identified three groups that constituted the vote to leave the EU; "affluent Eurosceptics, the older working class, and a smaller group of economically disadvantaged, anti-immigration voters". This highlights the importance of nuance which shifts focus away from a simplified demographic interpretation. Telford and Wistow (2019) argue that interviewing can offer an alternative and less reductionist perspective of Brexit that doesn't adhere to stereotypical tropes regarding the rationale for voting leave (e.g, intellectual deficiency amongst the working class, an incapability to understand economic interest). Such discourses should be treated

with caution as this can feed into devaluations and prejudices (McKenzie 2017). In Walkerdine's recent studies (2016; 2020), she highlights three affective notions in her work that relates to qualitative research in psychology; affective entanglement, affective practices and affective histories. Affective entanglement relates to a simplified pathologisation of the working class that denies the existence of complex conditions of existence that produces subjectivities (Walkerdine 2016). Affective practices (Walkerdine 2010) relates to understandings, interpretations and effects of political and social historical dynamics which she calls affective histories. She ultimately argues that one cannot understand Brexit and affect without understanding the embodied practices of the past and present, else we are at risk of pathologising politically regressive sentiments (Walkerdine 2020), by treating expressions as psychologically abnormal.

Therefore, when conducting the data collection and analysing the data I paid attention to avoiding reproducing class, gender and racial biases in my research. This aspect will also be addressed in my sampling method, which is discussed at a later point.

3.7. The Pilot Study

In order to ensure that I was employing the most appropriate methodological procedure, I conducted a pilot study on what was deemed "Brexit Day", January 31st 2020. Within this pilot study I conducted interviews and undertook participant observation at a Brexit celebration party in a traditional, British local pub in Dorchester, Dorset. Local community members were invited to celebrate Britain's exit from the EU, whilst enjoying British music and an array of "traditional" British food and drink, available at lowered prices to mark the occasion. In order to extract meaningful data without disrupting the event I engaged in the social context, socialising with the attendees. This, according to Ross and Ross (1974, p.64) enables participants to "co-operate with the researcher who in some way becomes part of their community". With the knowledge amongst the participants that I was also a Dorset local from a town near the area, I was trusted and accepted within the social context. The customers themselves were all white, mostly male, and looked to be age 40 and over. After making light conversation with various people I found that customers came in three forms; some had popped in on their way in-between work and home, some attended mainly for Brexit celebrations, some attended as it was part of their daily routine. After building rapport, I invited one participant to sit down at a table with me to chat with me about what today meant for him, before explaining my study and what I was trying to find out. He obliged and agreed to be audio recorded. Throughout our conversation a couple of his friends joined us and agreed to chat with me, unintentionally forming a roundtable style discussion. Within our discussion four main themes arose; pride in the British Empire, military pride, perceived lack of autonomy and national identity. The findings from this will be explored in my discussion

chapter; however it is important to evaluate this methodology within this chapter in order for me to design an effective methodological approach.

The positives included aspects of the environment in which the data collection took place. This involved speaking to participants in a place where they were familiar and comfortable which, compared to a more formal or artificial environment, may have facilitated more open and honest discussion about contentious topics. I found that self-identifying to participants as a local person from a working-class town mean that I had something in common with them and this allowed for familiarity between the participants and me, thus allowing trust and openness, which is an important component when dealing with participants' sensitive data when discussing emotive political topics. Open ended questions that led the participant to divulge in their own personal experiences and narratives enabled greater context to the participants' attitudes and allowed me to explore the affective nature. Asking the participants to speak about British history and their most proud moments introduced interesting attitudes and interpretations of Britishness and Englishness that can be explored further in future one-to-one interviews.

Although the format of the discussion was useful in provoking dialogue and stimulating discussion, there were a fair amount of negatives. Firstly, it made the analysis more complicated as this format did not allow for consistent analysis of themes for each individual. It was also difficult to control the discussion, and there was potential for the results to be skewed due to one individual dominating the group discussion. These dynamics prevented me delving deeper into the issues that came up, and hindered my ability to press on certain points and follow up ideas. Within this group there was also a lack of anonymity for the participants and there was a potential for biased results due to group influence. Taking all these factors into account, I concluded that it was beneficial for my research to conduct solely in-depth individual interviews as part of my data collection. The lessons learned from this pilot study were taken into account whilst constructing my research design, all notes from the pilot study can be found in section 7.9 of the appendix.

3.8.   The In-depth Interview

In-depth interviewing, or a "conversation with purpose" (Bingham and Moore 1959), can be applied to psychosocial research projects to extract meaningful data from the participants (Hallberg and Carlsson 1998). Potter and Hepburn (2005, p.284) suggest that interviewing is efficient as it can be used as a "pathway to participants' experiences". Pointing to Foucauldian arguments, they argue that everyday talk consists of a range of 'theoretical' notions (ibid). The method of the in-depth interview

enables the researcher to question and probe responses that allow a platform to evaluate non-verbal communications, which can also enrich the data (Jupp 2006). McCracken (1988, p.9) describes the long interview as "one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armoury", pointing out that interviewing has a revealing nature where the method can allow us into the "mental world of the individual, to glimpse the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world […] to see the content and pattern of daily experience […] and experience the world as they do themselves" (ibid). Although 'we cannot give voice' (Reissman 1993, p.8) to another's experience since "we do not have direct access", we can use the ambiguous representations of them via "talk, text, interaction and interpretation" within the interview. By using these methods in the past, Hollway and Jefferson (2000) and Clarke and Hoggett (2009) claim that the in-depth interview method allows them to uncover experiences of identifications, which can include affective attachment to notions of nation and belonging, thus making it an appropriate methodological approach for this study. Interviewing also allows for the enactment of 'deep stories', which are "a feels-as-if story—it's the story feelings tell, in the language of symbols" (Hochschild 2016, p.135), Coleman (2020, p.105) reinforces Hochschild's ideas, finding in his research on Brexit that interviewees "incorporated deep stories about their personal positions in the world", giving nuanced insight into political feelings and mood. Furthermore, Parker (2005) describes the interview method as an opportunity to understand and ground individuals' experiences in social relations and contexts.

The interviews in this research were semi-structured, and this was the sole data source that was organised around predetermined open-ended questions, with additional dialogue emerging from the probing of answers, allowing me to delve deeply into social, political and personal matters (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006). The questions within the semi-structured interview served a purpose in contributing to the body of knowledge surrounding national identity, politics and Brexit that is theoretical and based on the meanings that participant's life experiences hold. The interview guide (see section 7.3 of the appendix) consisted of three sections of questions that focus on each research question; national identity, rurality, and political sentiment. The questions remained open ended to allow for probing and follow up questions depending on the participants answers. Once the interviews were completed, I underwent the process of transcription. It was important for me, as the researcher, to carry out the transcription; this is because the process of listening to an interview from a retrospective position that is separate to the initial demand to engage in the moment allows distance and reflection (Parker 2005). The process of this reflection is presented in section 7.8 of the appendix.

The data itself was drawn from a series of interviews within an eleven-week period between 19th May 2020 and 5th August 2020, and during this time 28 interviews were conducted over Zoom. The use of

Zoom as an interviewing platform is explored in the section below. The interview questions were semi structured and followed an interview guide. The icebreaker – which asked interviewees about their experience of lockdown, was crucial in setting participants at ease, whilst aiming for depth of perspective in their answers (Fielding and Thomas 2008). Topics included a range of questions that were relatively open, encouraged biographical discussion and had the potential to become more personalised, particularly in contrast to quantitative survey questions. The topics were as follows: their conception of national identity and patriotism; pride; associated positivity/negativity with national identity; historical pride; what makes somebody British/English; UK devolution; decentralisation; regional devolution; rurality; community; local politics; national politics; political concerns; Brexit; European politics and identity; conflict with the opposition voters; hopes and visions of the future. Follow-up questions were asked to prompt detailed answers to the initial questions, and as with most semi-structured interviews, adaptation, flexibility and improvisation were essential on my part as the researcher. Careful consideration was made when wording the questions to ensure they were delivered in a non-leading manner. The interviews in nature were conversational, one of the principle aims was to contextualise the nation, identity, and political attitudes in the participants' lived experiences relating to their sense of the external world, whilst understanding the internal forces of the psyche such as how and if defence mechanisms are employed. I will now turn to outlining the use of online video conference amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.9. Online video conferencing tools

Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic that was declared in March 2020 (World Health Organisation 2020), lockdown, social distancing and quarantine guidelines were put into place to lessen the spread of COVID-19 across the United Kingdom. As a result of this, my data collection was not able to take place in person and instead occurred over online video conferencing tool Zoom Video Communications (Zoom), and over the telephone. While using an online video conferencing tool had its limitations (explored in my limitations section), it did offer a convenient and cost-effective channel for data collection. It also offered a communication channel that abided with the government restrictions at that time, thus enabling the research to comply with UK Coronavirus legislation (Lupton 2021).

Zoom ultimately allows two or more people in different locations to communicate using audio and video imaging in real time (Gough and Rosenfeld, 2006). Gray (et al. 2020) explored how Zoom contributes to high-quality in-depth interviewing when face-to-face is not possible, this includes practical issues such as electronic meeting invitations and the fact that only the researcher needs to download the software, meaning the participant is free to join in the internet browser or download

the app on mobile or PC if they wish. The administrative side is straightforward and simple, personal ID meeting codes and passwords allows the participant to feel a sense of security and confidentiality, something which is often ambiguous in an age of online cyber insecurity (O'Neill 2016). Notably, qualitative researchers who compared face-to-face interviews in contrast with online video conferencing interviews found that the general quality of the interviews did not differ from face-to-face interviews (Cabaroglu et al. 2010; Deakin and Wakefield 2013).

Gray (et al. 2020) notes that research participants may find it more comfortable to be open and expressive on Zoom. Therefore the researcher will need to be aware that the creation and maintenance of rapport with participants may be different with video conferencing interviews than with face-to-face. Additionally, it is possible that may be influenced by each of their comfort level with technology and digital literacy. Although Deakin and Wakefield (2013) found that amongst their video conferencing interviews rapport was created quicker, they also remarked that some participants were more reserved, and this affected rapport building. Hence, they suggest that exchanging emails prior to the video conferencing interview is advantageous in building rapport. This kind of preparation can be linked to dynamic administration (Follett 2013) as an emotional intelligent process, whereby my role as the interviewer and researcher is to setup containing conditions and facilitate a explorational space (Winnicott 1953) for the interview to take place. An additional dynamic of using online video conferencing offered was an allowance for boundaries, where one could easily separate themselves from the participant they were researching. This made it easier for dealing with issues surrounding personal discomfort at participant's responses, particularly when responses took on a hostile nature or expressed sentiments of xenophobia and hate. The fact the participants were unable to see or interpret my body language due to the webcam only presenting me shoulders upward, meant that the participants were unaware of any discomfort I may have been feeling in response to their sentiments.

Zoom allowed flexibility and convenience on both sides of the researcher and the participant to schedule and take part in interviews from their own home when convenient to them. As travel was not a barrier, it allowed me to schedule multiple interviews within one day, lessening the period of time it took to carry out my data collection period. Via Zoom's recording function, the interviews were able to be downloaded straight to the password protected storage facility on my university personal user network, enhancing participant confidentiality. Gray's (et al. 2020 p.1296-1297) outlines ten recommended steps to online qualitative interview success: 1. Test Zoom ahead of interview, 2. Provide technical information, 3. Have a back-up plan, 4. Plan for distraction, 5. Provide a direct link to meeting, 6. Consider storage needs, 7. Hardwire computer to internet, 8. Ensure uninterrupted internet connection, 9. Create a visual reminder of the scheduled time, 10. Manage consent processes

in the interview as well as on paper. Having undertaken these steps, I was able to conduct 28 in-depth interviews that ranged from 40 minutes to 90 minutes.

3.10. Sampling

The interviewees for this research were chosen using convenience and purposive sampling, a technique used in qualitative research involving the selection and identification of "information-rich" (Palinkas et al. 2015, p.533) cases that are related to the phenomena of interest. Lavrakas (2010 p.2) explains that the "main objective of a purposive sample is to produce a sample that can be logically assumed to be representative of the population". It is also particularly useful when researching with limited resources (Patton 2002). Purposive sampling involves judgement from the researcher when deciding on appropriate samples, this means it uses a non-probability method and occurs when elements are selected and identified when choosing the sample due to the selective judgement of the researcher (Black 2010). Ritchie (et al. 2003, p.77) describe the purposive sampling approach as "members of a sample are chosen with a purpose to represent a location or type in relation to the criterion". Using an intuitive approach allows for the discovery of meaning (Dudovskiy 2016), the advantages of choosing participants based on their experiences and circumstances include allowing an exploration of anthropological and emotional notions that underpin one's political and social thoughts.

The South West of England is a region consisting of six counties; Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. As a region largely made up of small to large towns and villages, the region is predominantly rural, with the exception of eight cities, Salisbury, Bath, Wells, Bristol, Gloucester, Exeter, Plymouth and Truro with Dorset remaining the only county in the South West region without a city. However, larger towns exist in which some are home to universities such as Cirencester, Bournemouth, Cheltenham and Falmouth. Economically, Bristol accounts for the majority of economic activity in the South West, and the region's main industries consist of manufacturing, agriculture and tourism and rely heavily on these since the decline of mining, quarrying and active dockyards (European Commission 2019). As a region overall, the South West as a majority voted for the UK to Leave the EU in 2016, particularly in towns and villages outside urban city centres, and constituencies in the region have consistently voted for the Conservative party in the last decade, also in area outside of cities (Uberoi et al. 2020). As explored in the literature review, it has been shown amongst statistical data that rural areas also tend to identify with Englishness more strongly than Britishness.

I reached out on Facebook local community groups and noticeboards in towns and villages across South-West counties Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. The opening

message posted onto Facebook groups and a list of Facebook groups can be found in section 7.4 of the appendix. The decision to focus on these counties is because they include a range of geographical and economic characteristics that signified how people firstly, voted in the EU referendum and secondly, nationally identify themselves. Quantitative survey data collection conducted in 2018 (BBC and YouGov 2018) found that English identity and the Leave vote was strongest amongst white men and women, aged 50+ and amongst C2DE social grade with low educational attainment. Not only this, but it also highlighted that English identity was strongest within what Barnett (2017) calls 'England-without-London' that include Conservative voting areas, small to medium towns, fringe towns, rural, coastal and ex-industrial areas. These rural towns and villages were be defined using the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification census which defines rural areas using population size and conurbation context. At the start of each interview the participant was asked demographic questions that included: Age; Education level; Occupation; National Identity; Local area; 2016 EU Referendum vote; 2019 General Election vote; Ethnicity. The demographics of each participant can be found in section 7.5 of the appendix.

 As demonstrated in the data below, the sample represented a suitably wide and varied cross-section of demographics and backgrounds in terms of gender, education, location, generation and political leniency. Social class is not displayed within this sample data, as social class is a highly contestable term to define that which is not purely down to something as simple as occupation, the complexities regarding class categorisation are further complicated by the division of fragmented class structures in Britain (Leddy-Owen 2019). Class identification, economic precariousness and affluence expressed by participants will be explored in my findings chapter due to its nuanced nature which I don't believe can be reduced to numbers within my data set. Ethnicity is included within the dataset to adopt critical angles on national identification in relation to its sometimes exclusionary and racialized dimensions, to avoid succumbing to "methodological whiteness" and essentialising "the white working class" politics criticised by Bhambra (2017) in relation to Britain's contemporary political divisions (Leddy-Owen 2019).

Table 1: Participant demographics n=29

Age	Number of Participants
18-24	3
25-34	2

35-44	3
45-54	5
55-64	11
65+	5
Gender	
Men	16
Women	13
Ethnicity	
White	25
White other	2
BAME	2
County	
Cornwall	2
Devon	4
Dorset	11
Somerset	5
Wiltshire	5
Gloucestershire	2
Area	
Isolated dwelling	3
Village	10
Small town	12
Large town	4
Highest level of Education	
Tertiary	5

Post-16 vocational	4
Post-16 A-levels	4
University	15
General Election 2019 vote	
Labour Party	11
Conservative Party	11
Liberal Democrats	5
Green Party	1
Abstained	1
EU Referendum vote	
Remain	10
Leave	17
Ineligible (under age 18 in 2016)	2
National identity	
British	13
English	12
British and English	4

It was important to recruit a diverse range of participants in order to reflect the themes brought up in the literature review. However, there was some imbalance in terms of demographics, as the charts above show, participants 45 years old and above made up for 21 out of 29 of participants. 13 out of 29 were women, sixteen participants were university educated and all but four were Caucasian/White. These examples of over and under-recruitment may have been a result of several factors. In terms of the under recruitment of ethnic minorities, this was due to both the lack of ethnic diversity in rural South West areas (ONS 2012) and unsuccessful attempts to recruit through groups and institutions associated with ethnic minority groups (e.g. Gurkha communities). Ideally, I would have liked to interview more participants from minority ethnic backgrounds to fully grasp the wide-reaching and

dynamic nature of national identity and its relationship with politics. However, the substance of my interviews did reveal these dynamics to some extent. Over recruitment of adults aged forty-five and over was due to varying influencing factors. Due to the recruitment taking place on Facebook community groups, this did attract users who had spare time due to retirement, lack of young infant caring duties and more generally, the larger older population that demographically make up rural areas (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs 2014). The larger numbers of Leave voters reflects the larger Leave voter outcome in the South West of England (Electoral Commission 2019). It is therefore important to be aware of potential gaps in political, social and cultural perspectives that will be explored in my analysis.

3.11. Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a "method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning ('themes') within qualitative data" (Braun and Clarke 2017, p.297). Drawing on Braun and Clarke (2017), the research incorporates a thematic analysis to capture the complexities of meaning within my interview data set with the aim of understanding what participants' think, feel, and do (ibid). Guest (et al. 2014) shows how an applied thematic analysis can benefit the extraction of meaning from data, arguing that the greatest strength of thematic analysis is its pragmatic focus on using the appropriate tools to ensure transparent, efficient and ethical analyses. Braun and Clarke (2017) argue that the defining feature of thematic analysis is its flexibility in terms of research question, method of data collection, sample size and approach to meaning generation. Furthermore, Guest (ibid.) explains how a thematic form of analyses shares characteristics with grounded theory and phenomenology. With greater breadth of scope, thematic analysis aids grounded theory in its construction of theory. Moreover, interpretivist phenomenology focuses on subjective human experience, and thematic analyses has the ability to include social and cultural phenomena in addition to this. Underlying assumptions throughout the data was examined using this approach, and allowed assertions to be supported by text based evidence (interview transcriptions).

Using a mode of analysis that incorporates grounded theory allowed me to develop arguments that helped explain the empirical phenomena presented amongst the dataset. Grounded theory can be further defined as an inductive social science method that was first developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), who emphasised two essential pillars of both the grounded and theoretical components of qualitative research. Firstly, the theoretical pillar should be focussed on generating theory and secondly the grounding should emphasize the significance of empirical fieldwork where the data is grounded in real world contexts. Starting with the qualitative empirical research, the researcher allows

the process of the theory to emerge from the data. Further characteristics of this approach are based within the style of analyses of the data where concepts and theoretical ideas and frameworks are in a consistent process of comparison with existing data. This allows a "trail of discovery" (Denscombe 2017, p.111), whereby the researcher adopts an open mind to allow the investigation of participants' point of view through their sense-making of situations and events. This process is used until the researcher arrives at "theoretical saturation" where the sample size is considered enough from continued confirmation from data collection of the analysis. Incorporating grounded theory in my thematic analysis was particularly useful for exploratory reasons, as it permitted flexibility in the analysis and data sample, so that it was well suited to the exploration of new topics and ideas.

As an "attractive" analytical option for researchers in psychology (Braun and Clarke 2017, p.298), thematic analysis offers the opportunity to incorporate psychosocial frameworks. Integrating psychosocial frameworks into my analysis allowed the comprehending of defence mechanisms used by individuals, "description of defence mechanisms as conceived of by psychoanalysis is a first step to describing the social conditions that gave rise to them" (Parker 2005, p.107). Parker suggests focusing on the way that certain individuals and relationships between one and politics are pathologised within a psychoanalytic frame of reference. He recommends to firstly ask: "what do you recognise from psychoanalysis in the research material?", "what could be said about the way the psychoanalysis characterises individuals and relationships?" and "what is marked out as different from the norm in this material?" (ibid, p.109).

Once I had completed my familiarisation with the data, which consisted of reading interview transcripts, an inductive coding approach was used. Inductive coding is an approach that allows research findings "to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies" (Thomas 2003, p.2). Once themes emerged from the coded data, a shaped understanding to the subject field was developed and then checked, compared and contrasted against existing works and ideas in the scholarly field (Chapman et al. 2015). Thematic analysis foregrounds the importance of the coding process, Braun and Clarke (2006; 2017) emphasise an "organic" approach to coding and theme development that encompasses the dynamic role of the researcher in this procedure. Codes are a unit of analysis that capture stimulating features of the data that are potentially relevant to the research question. These codes become the building blocks for larger patterns of meaning (themes) underpinned by central concepts relating to my research questions. This consists of "abstracting from the immense detail and complexity of our data those features which are most salient for our purpose" (Dey, 1993: 94). Taking influence from Marks and Yardley (2011), my coding process was recorded using Microsoft Excel using

a Code name; Description; Examples structure. The codes, presented fully in appendix 7.7, were then condensed into three broad themes and further elaborated on in focussed subthemes. Following this, a psychosocial lens was applied to highlight and encapsulate the new psycho-political contributions of this research. Further elaboration of these themes are presented in the discussion section in chapter five.

3.12. Limitations

The main shortcoming of qualitative approaches to analyses is that findings cannot be extended or deem to be reflective of the wider population with the same degree of reliability that quantitative analyses can. This is because the findings of the research are not tested to discover whether they are statistically significant or due to chance (Atieno 2009). As with any research method, in-depth interviewing has weaknesses and limitations. However, these were only minor and with the correct precautions taken, it did not hinder answering the research questions. A limitation for example, was that interviewees may have been uncomfortable or unwilling to share their feelings on topical political issues such as nationhood out of fear of judgement. When discussing contentious topics, particularly when the participant may feel uncomfortable there are many inter-relational dynamics. Projective identification, as defined earlier may arise between the researcher and participant which could include regressive tendencies such as projection and othering, however Clarke and Hogget (2009) point out this can be used as a strength, by understanding the research dynamics between a defended participant and researcher may illuminate "subtle but powerful ways" (ibid, p.13) a participant can be "nudged" to take a specific position in relation to the Other.

Furthermore, I had to be aware of practical problems that may arise from using an online video conferencing platform such as issues of connectivity, call quality and digital literacy. However, these were dealt with on a case-by-case basis and when technical issues did persist, the interview was moved to telephone. As discussed earlier, meeting virtually rather than in person may have affected rapport and trust building between the researcher and participant and thus effect the quality of data extracted within the interview, therefore I made sure to undergo additional measures laid out previously by Gray (et al. 2020) to ensure trust and comfort are present during the interview (e.g. exchanging emails before-hand, speaking on the phone). This worked towards guaranteeing that the participant felt comfortable enough to share experiences, thoughts and feelings with me. Following on from the difficulties surrounding virtual interviewing, the content and direction of the interview were bound to change and focus on the current COVID-19 pandemic rather than what the I as the interviewer had planned out. In this case, I allowed participants to explore and reflect on the current

circumstances, their current feelings and thoughts towards politics in that moment as it was reflective of the wider dynamics and mood of the country. When necessary, I steered the discussion back to the planned topic to ensure the time with the participant is utilised to its full potential.

An additional concern that arises from using online measures for data collection (emailing participant consent forms back and forth for downloading and scanning, video conferencing platforms and online sampling tools such as Facebook Community groups), is that this had the potential to impact my sample quality. Using such platforms requires users to have access to good internet connection quality, a smartphone, PC or laptop, and have a basic level of technological literacy. This potentially impacted the diversity of my sample by excluding groups that do not have access to the above. Although purposive sampling has its advantages, it also presents limitations due to the sample variations taken at the beginning of the study being loosely unknown, unpredictable and in flux due to external changing circumstances. This means that whilst one sets the goal of sampling information-rich participants that covers a range of variation; it assumes one will manage to choose and secure accurate data from that range of variation, which isn't always likely (Schmidt et al. 2015). Measures were taken to ensure that the sample was taken from a diverse range of social demographics, although there has to be a level of acceptance of the uncontrollable circumstances that may have affected this, out of the hands of the researcher.

3.13. Ethical Considerations

All research contains an ethical dimension, as Parker (2005, p.13) argues: "the choices we make about what to study, the way we go about the business of striking up relationships with participants, what we do with what we have found – has a moral and political dimension". Bhaskar (1986) says that researchers are constantly contributing and participating in the motion of either reproducing the way the world is or transforming it. Therefore, one cannot deliberately ignore or be ignorant to what might happen in research and taking responsibility for the effects it may have. At an earlier point in this chapter I explained how for example, one might not want to give platform or endorse an extremist's attitudes, as this could be a moral-political danger. Taking this into account, I needed to consider an assessment of each of my research stages to ensure myself and the participant are not exploited. Anonymity of the participants was therefore an integral feature of this study. To protect participants, pseudonyms were given and any information exchanged in the interview that was identifiable of the participant was removed or censored. As the researcher, I only engaged in communication with the participant if relevant to the study and did not disclose personal information concerning life outside of my researcher role at the university. If a participant became aggressively adversarial, communication would cease and they were not considered to take part in the research. This happened

on one occasion, when a participant used the communication with myself as a channel for expressing their distrust in university institutions and began to discharge negative feelings towards me as a person who seemed to represent the 'liberal elite'. In order to protect both the person in question and myself, I ceased communication. In effort to tackle issues surrounding 'distasteful' or aggressive expressions from participants or individuals where "the researcher shares neither political orientation nor way of life and whose politics and/or way of life are found objectionable" (Esseveld and Eyerman 1992, p.217), Pilkington (2016) advises that one must distance themselves psychologically from those researched.

Before undergoing research, I underwent Bournemouth University's research ethics checklist, which was approved on 04/02/2020, with further amendments to account for data protection surrounding online data collection as a result of COVID-19 approved on 05/06/2020, this can be found in section 7.2 of the appendix. To ensure ethical research practices, a participant information form detailing the research project, it's purpose, the requirements of the participant and a copy of Bournemouth University's Research Participant Privacy Notice was supplied to all potential participants to set out information on how post-graduate researchers at Bournemouth University fulfil responsibilities as a data controller concerning the participant's rights as individuals under the data protection legislation. It was required that a consent form was signed, dated and sent back to me before undergoing the scheduling of interviews. In addition to this, the obligations, statements and responsibilities concerning consent and data protection were reinforced verbally at the beginning of every interview by which participants were asked to agree verbally. Out of 29 participants no-one withdrew consent or requested withdrawal from the study.

This methodology chapter has outlined the approach for this research, which includes a qualitative in-depth interview method combined with a thematic analysis. The thematic analysis coding tables can be found in section 7.7 of the appendix, which demonstrates the vast amount of themes that arose from the interviews. The following chapter will explore these patterns of themes, focussing on the ones that occurred at a repeated level.

4. Research findings

This chapter will present the research findings from my thematic analysis of 29 in-depth interviews, including the pilot study. This chapter is structured in three over-reaching themes that cover the three areas of focus for this thesis; the dynamics of English identity, Identifications with Britishness, and Brexit and Political sentiment in rural areas. These three areas will be further divided in sections, which will explore the subthemes that were located in the coding process as part of the thematic analysis. This will help to explore the nuanced aspects of each theme and explore how participants expressed the thematic sentiments. The content of this research findings chapter will focus solely on participant's interview extracts and their themes. Following this chapter, I will move onto the discussion chapter which will explore these findings from a new psychosocial angle and look at how these research findings have added, contradicted and been explored with a new angle with regards to existing literature. This chapter will now start by looking at the dynamics of English identity amongst interviewee responses.

4.1. Dynamics of English Identity

This section will explore the overreaching theme and presence of Englishness and its dynamics amongst participant interview data. Understandings and expressions of Englishness varied in nature across participants; however, the thematic analysis found recurring sub-themes. These were: difficulty in locating Englishness; Otherness and devolution; cultural Englishness; tensions with English identity; rural Englishness; perceived suppression of Englishness and English self-governance. Each section that follows will explore participant's expressions of each subtheme, before exploring these sentiments in relation to existing scholarly thought. Key demographic information will be noted alongside each participant's extract, these will be age, location, EU referendum vote and 2019 general election vote.

4.1.1. Difficulty in locating Englishness

Participants responded to questions surrounding English identity in varied ways, but I will begin by discussing those that found difficulty in locating their Englishness in 21st century Britain. The following section will discuss those participants who distinctly identified as English rather than British. These sentiments manifested in interviews, when participants were asked what they felt their national identity was. When participants had told me they identified as English, I asked them to define their Englishness to me. Participant #6, a 62 year old from Dorset verbalised expressions of Englishness as

an empty idea that hasn't ever been given substantial meaning, when I asked her what she felt Englishness was to her she told me:

> I don't know whether… out of all the people I know and have met throughout all my life I don't think I've ever had a conversation about Englishness. It's not something that has ever been a topic of conversation.

Participant #6, 62, Dorset, Remain, Liberal Democrat voter

Participant #6 wasn't the only participant who found difficulty defining their Englishness, participant #7, a 29 year old Remain and Labour voting woman from Devon also expressed this to me, telling me she wasn't sure "what Englishness is". Similarly, when I asked her why she felt English rather than British, again, I found that she could not express her reasoning: "I always put English rather than British down on forms; I guess there is a difference but I don't know how to verbalize it". Similarly, 56 year old participant #20 from Gloucestershire echoed sentiments of the difficulty in attaching clear meaning or definition to Englishness:

> I feel the English do need to discover their identity from... [pause] I mean not to create conflict, but, to recognize probably being English. It's… you know. It doesn't really mean anything… Being English is quite hard thing to pin down anyway.

Participant #20, 56, Gloucestershire, Leave, Liberal Democrats

Participant #20 expresses a need for discovering English, but he showed awareness to the threat of this being construed as creating conflict, which reflects the topical and contentious nature of Englishness, by noting "not to create conflict" participant #20 is showing an understanding of what he takes to be the social customs and etiquette of talk surrounding national identity. This was also true for participant #11 who before expressing his English national identity told me "please don't judge me on this". Further, participant #20 told me that he didn't think Englishness meant anything and that being English is something that is hard to locate, essentially existing as an empty concept lacking meaning. This had led participant #20 to expressing anxiety about identifying with English. Despite the ability to define English identity with substantive meaning did not however inhibit participants' self-identification with English identity, similarly 60 year old Leave and Conservative voting participant #2 from Dorset told me, "I still like to be known as English", despite his struggle with describing and defining it.

Forty year old participant #1 from Dorset too held reservations, not on whether to put a flag out but rather, *what* flag to put out on VE day, telling me that when putting a St George's flag out of the

window he was worried about "what it might say in terms of my form of national identity and how it might reflect on me to some people". In terms of the Union Jack flag, he felt it was too tied up with the "Legacy of Empire". This upset participant #1, he told me:

> It does make me angry that I do feel robbed of a national flag and the national identity because of it being appropriated by racists and Hooligans. […] Everyone wants a flag to get behind. Yeah, you know, but we haven't really got one that we can all get behind.

<div align="right">Participant #1, 40, Dorset, Remain, Labour</div>

Participant #1 went on to tell me that there was "this immense level of shame that comes with Englishness", telling me he feels that English identity has been "hijacked" for something "toxic", citing instances of racism from the far-right. The notion of English identity as something that has been hijacked hints at ideas of being outnumbered by Others who wish to use Englishness for a different purpose. This was a sentiment echoed by other participants, who too felt that English national identity had been appropriated by members of far-right organisations; therefore they felt hesitant and uncomfortable with the idea of Englishness. For participant #1 this created feelings of loss particularly associated with group identity, belonging and pride. The question of how this void of Englishness has been filled by participants in interviews will be explored in the following sections.

4.1.2. Cultural Englishness

Asking participants to describe what their Englishness was to them helped me to understand their interpretation of English national identity, and the meaning they attach to it. As well as this it helped me understand how they position themselves within the national system. When asking sixty five year old Leave and Conservative voting participant #2 from Dorset to elaborate on what he thought Englishness was, he presented a depiction to me that consisted of religion, values, characteristics and rural culture. participant #2 emphasised a difference in England, he had already told me that he decided to start to call himself English in response to the devolved nations of Scotland and Wales, and so I was curious to see how he would define England's values when it didn't exist as part of any legitimate political entity, other than English Votes for English Laws (EVEL). Instead, participant #2 had built an idea of Englishness on religion, character and rural culture, suggesting Englishness as something tied up with geography and tradition.

> I'm not religious, but I believe in Christian values and I think in general Christian values are an English trait. I think we're inventive. I think we've got wicked sense of humour. So that's

English values. You know like Morris men and country dancing you know, it's just standard Englishness, we do things slightly different in England.

Participant #2, 65, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

Participant #1 also touched on character and values, when I asked him whether anyone could be English.

It's about if there are enough of your cultural and moral values that are the same [What are those values?] A younger Michael Caine looks like a quintessential Englishman to me because he crosses those boundaries, he crosses a class boundaries but he's a working class lad. It seems to cross a class boundary in terms of his Englishness. Class is a really important factor in national identity and in how you identify. I think yeah.

Participant #1, 45, Dorset, Remain, Labour

Michael Caine arguably represents working-class masculinity, as throughout his films he plays the role of working-class English men as "brash and brute" (Cooke 2020 p.14), participant #1 discusses boundaries and the significance of crossing class boundaries suggesting that Caine moves away from the upper-class dominated, rigid, stiff upper lip form of Englishness, and towards something he feels he can identify with, one with more potential for developing his English identity. Furthermore, when prompted, participant #1 goes on to explain what he means by being "quintessentially English". He told me how in his younger years he associated Britishness with wartime ideas in which the Germans and Japanese were "baddies" and the British and American's were "goodies". It was when he entered his adult years he began identifying with an English identity.

Englishness was at that point probably a starting point of understanding national identity and later on it just became as I grew into my teens and early 20s. It was much more around football. I was 18 or 19 when '96 took place, you know, and that was big it took place on English soil and we did very well and you know the song Three Lions and all this kind of thing. All of that kind of stuff came into view and changed probably my feelings of national identity from being British into much more of an English Focus.

Participant #1, 45, Dorset, Remain, Labour

It is evident that the European Football Championship of 1996 (Euro '96) taking place during participant #1's early adulthood had a significant impact on both his ideas and personal attachment to Englishness. Providing participant #1 with a vehicle to exercise and define his newly found English identity, foregrounded by associations of class, masculinity and popular culture. Participant #1's

expressions reflect a gendered dimension to Englishness that is bound by working-class masculinity. However, female participants did not reflect such gendered dynamics.

Ultimately, definitions of Englishness so far in this chapter do not amount to a proclamation of English nationalism, and instead expresses a search for English identity that does not already fully exist under a political roof. Looking elsewhere for its bearings, it seeks its meaning in wider culture, tradition and in contrast to an Other. Much of which, I found was located in relation to a sense of place, as I will explore in the following section.

4.1.3. Otherness and Devolution

When defining Englishness, participants were partaking in a process where they were imagining themselves as part of an entity that was constructed and foregrounded by their relationship with an Other. Markedly, amongst my participants this was done in relation to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, which points to England's relationship with its devolved neighbouring nations. All participants in the study were asked to define and explain their national identity. On the occasions that participants disclosed that they identified as English, I asked why, to prompt further explanation. In some cases, I found that participants would jump straight to defining their English national identity in opposition to the UK's devolved nations, particularly Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. When they did this, I asked them why they found it difficult to define their Englishness. For example, 62 year old participant #4 attempted to define Englishness to me:

> I think because Englishness is so badly defined, you just know that you're not Welsh or Scottish, and you like fish and chips and football. It's also because the other nations, perhaps it's easier to rush to a stereotype, but you're sort of left with the class stereotypes in England.

> Participant #4, 62, Somerset, Remain, Liberal Democrat

Participant #4 claimed that for her, the only way of feeling English was the fact that she just knew she wasn't Welsh or Scottish, and so she defined her national identity in relation to what she wasn't. She makes reference to the fact that other nations have a cultural stereotype that makes them easily identifiable and provides them with a coherent framework to build their identity around. However, she felt England has been left with stereotypes of social class, I asked her to elaborate, and she told me it was between the "upper class stiff upper lip" and the "chirpy northern working class", two places she didn't feel she fit.

When speaking to participant #18, a 75 year old leave voter, he told me he identified as English, and I asked him why, to see where he would locate his identification with Englishness.

I'm not Scottish Irish or Welsh. We have four separate countries in the United Kingdom and I think Welsh Scottish and Irish people are all proud of their heritage and as far as I know I have no other identity or roots than English to be quite honest.

<p align="right">Participant #18, 75, Wiltshire, Leave, Conservative</p>

Participant #18 clearly located his Englishness in that fact that he was not Scottish, Irish or Welsh. He was distinct in making it clear to me that the United Kingdom was in fact made up of four separate countries, reinstating boundaries between English and Other. He pointed to Welsh, Scottish and Irish pride, using the words 'heritage' and 'roots' which signified and pointed to history and ancestry as a feature of what he believes makes up for national identity.   Participant #2 also echoed these sentiments, pointing straight away to the rising prominence of Scottish and Welsh national identity post UK devolution, where English identity became ignited when Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales developed their devolved assemblies. Participant #2 identified as both English and British and clearly articulated this idea and made reference to Scotland and Wales' nationalist expressions:

I used to call myself British since the rise of Scottish and Welsh national identity. I think it's important that we start calling ourselves English. And that's why I call myself English. Yeah, and so, I've always identified as that.

<p align="right">Participant #2, 65, Dorset, Leave, Conservative</p>

Participant #2's asserts how his English identity developed distinctly in relation to the "rise" of Scottish and Welsh national identity, to which he put more importance on calling himself English to assert perhaps his autonomy and difference. For participant #2, his English national identity is functioning as an 'othered' out-group, where the homogeneity and unity of his identity is tested. His assertion of "always" in comparison to his earlier "used to" was worth exploring; when prompted, he also told me that when given the option on forms, he will deliberately select Other and state English. I asked him why he started to change the way he identified:

Just the publicity of like the Scottish, when they got their vote for Independence. Yeah, and I thought yeah, that's when I'm going to start called myself English, but it's that box, it doesn't always appear does it? So you have to put other and then it might say what is the other, and then I try and put English rather than British. I am very British. Yeah, and I agree with the British Isles. I am British, but I want other countries to call themselves British as well. Not just the English which I feel that is the way things are going.

<p align="right">Participant #2, 65, Dorset, Leave, Conservative</p>

The fact that participant #2 sees these matters as a question of boxes reflects ideas of national identity as a question of tick boxes, boundaries and limited options. The latter of this excerpt clearly show's participant #2's confliction, having asserted the notion of autonomy to declare himself English, and expressed his felt importance attached to other countries calling themselves British. Interestingly the factor that led him to begin calling himself English was ignited by Scotland's self-expression and campaign for autonomy, which has elements of competitiveness. participant #14, another leave voter aged 60 who identified as both British and English, also explained how her English identity was something that firstly, developed from the devolved nations of Scotland and Wales and secondly, suggesting that this was something that was her right, something she didn't feel she had permission to do since England had not been given their own assembly.

> I'm coming at it from the point of view that the Scottish, the Irish and the Welsh are claiming that they are different from being English, so, it comes back to well, okay if that's how you feel then we should be allowed to be just English.

> Participant #14, 60, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

There was a sense of offense felt by Participant #14 at the devolved nations in the UK identifying with their nation rather than a unifying Britishness, I wondered whether participant #14's proclamation that "if that's how you feel then we should be allowed to be just English" was her expressing a form of retaliation that was foregrounded by protesting her right to identify with England. This begs the question of what participant #14 thinks she is protesting against and who or which authority *allows* her to be English. At a later point in the interview, participant #14 became defensive in her expression of identity. We had talked about positive aspects to her British and English identity and I asked her whether she felt negative towards her national identity:

> No, apart from the fact there seems to be some silly nonsense where if you say you're English, it's frowned upon. I think we ought to have the freedom to say we are English just like the Scottish are able to say they are Scottish, without criticism.

> Participant #14, 60, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

Participant #14 went on to tell me that if given the choice, she would have English on her passport, I asked whether she thought there was any difference between English and British. She told me:

> I would say that English is being dominated by the other countries like Scotland and Wales who all wish to be independent. I'd rather be independent English, but otherwise, we should all just be British.

On further elaboration it seemed that participant #14 felt most uncomfortable with what she took to be the fact that the other nations did not want to be British, or that they were given permission to be something other than British. She reinstates again the notion of England as being less than compared to Scotland and Wales. The idea of domination from Wales and Scotland was confusing, it seemed that she thought Scotland and Wales wanted to be independent self-governing nations and interpreted this as a wish for domination over England. Her use of present tense in "being" told me that she felt this was something that was something that was already happening. This discourse of engulfment also has undertones of mild paranoia. At the time of speaking, Wales and Scotland were asserting their own rules and guidelines surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak, so these notions of autonomy were enacted in wider discourse in news commentary. Perhaps this is another example of defensiveness as explored previously with participant #2. Interestingly, both participant #2 and participant #14 identified as British and English which once they elaborated on, showed to me that they used their Britishness as an umbrella term to encapsulate the British union, however using English when they felt that other nations did not want to subscribe to Britain.

Furthermore, when I asked why participants identified as English, they were quick to root this in their place of birth. Participants expressed this to me in a simple matter-of-fact way, as with 46 year old Leave and Green Party voting participant #24, who said: "Well I believe if you're born in that country, that's where you're from. So I was born in England. So that that makes me English". Other participants such as 20 year old Leave supporting[8] and Conservative voting participant #23, told me he thought it was important to link yourself back to where you come from. Interestingly the only mention of familial influence on national identity was mentioned by another participant, 29 year old Remain and Liberal Democrat voting participant #6, however it was based on 'passed down' or intergenerational attitudes rather than an acquisition by birth. Instead, she noted that her English identity evolved via her dad's outspoken and expressive English patriotism throughout her childhood, through presentations and celebrations of the St George's flag and verbal assertions of English identity. It has been noted that political party identification and support can be transmitted across generations (Jennings et al. 2009), perhaps this is true of national identity too. I asked her why she identified as English:

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[8] Participant #23 was not old enough to vote in the EU referendum but expressed to me his support for the Leave vote

I guess I see myself as English… I think that comes through from my dad, like, if somebody asks me to write down my identity it's always English. I think he's just always been very "I'm English I'm proud of it" it's probably just come through from there.

Participant #6, 29, Devon, Remain, Liberal Democrat

Although participants did not make direct reference to race, they did make reference to assimilation, boundaries and Englishness as a birth right. I asked all participants "can anyone be English?" and the majority of those that identified as English said yes, making reference to their pride in England being a multicultural nation. However, Participant #5, Participant #18 and participant #29 took a different view. For example, when asked whether "anyone" could be English, sixty nine year old participant #5 told me:

Only if they're born here. I think you are what you are by your blood. A lot of people say to me, you live like a Romani, you're married to a Romani so you are a Romani, I say no I'm not, and it's not in my blood. I'm Jewish by blood. I'm English by birth.

Participant #5, 69, Somerset, Leave, Labour

Participant #5 is an interesting case as she has discusses multiple layers of her identity. She refers to her ethnicity as 'a blood right', and her Englishness as a 'birth right'. Although she is married to a Romani and lives in a Romani community, she does not think that it gives her the right to identify as a Romani. Like the participants above, participant #5 claims English identity is something you can only claim if you were born in England.

The next two participant extracts rely on the idea of assimilation. Seventy five year old participant #18 told me that people should only call themselves English if they show loyalty and obedience to the monarchy and laws of the country. He used the idiom "when in Rome, do as the Roman's do", which suggests social assimilation. I therefore wondered whether participant #18 had immigrants in mind when I asked this question, particularly when he referred to one having English "roots". It was clear participant #18 held respect for and placed importance on traditional British civic standards and conduct such as respect and loyalty to the monarch. When I asked him whether "anyone" could be English, he told me:

No, I think they can call themselves English, it's one of those difficult ones, when in Rome, do as the Romans do, I think is a good mantra for being English. You've gotta be loyal to the queen, obey the laws of the country, and then you can call yourself English. You may not have

English roots but if you reside in the UK and comply with the laws and respect the people then yes I think so, you can be called English.

Participant #18, 75,Wiltshire, Leave, Conservative

Although participant #18 moves from "no" to "yes", in this context, loyalty is seen as adhering to England's cultural customs such as respecting the monarch and legal institutions. Ultimately to participant #18, sharing a national identity purely by citizenship and residency is not enough to substantiate an English Identity. Although he speaks of loyalty and obedience to England's rules and monarch which points to civic distinctions, I wonder whether the latter part of participant #18's statement of sticking up for English people, held internalised felt oppression and conflict, where he has felt it particularly necessary to protect and defend his fellow nation members. We can interpret participant #18's assertion of sticking up for English people wherever you can and possible feelings of victimhood as performing a group-identity role. Participant #18's statement suggests that loyalty, protection and phantasies about defending fellow English people lay at the source of his idea of Englishness. This suggests that national cohesiveness as something based upon looking out for associated group members. Participant #22, a Leave and Conservative voting 68 year old from Cornwall expressed a contrasting idea to me when I asked if she thought "anyone" could be English, she told me "Yeah, if they are born here yeah, it doesn't matter what your parents are I think if you're born here and brought up in English culture then you're English, of course you are", which implies both birthplace and culture as integral aspects to English identification.

However not all expressions of Englishness were bound with ideas of culture, assimilation and otherness, some referred to a specific rural nature of Englishness. The following section will focus on the expressions of Englishness that were localised in rural nature, and understand the significance rurality in identifications with English.

4.1.4. Rural Englishness

Focussing on the rural nature of participant's national identity helped to add nuance to the existing statistics on the prominence of increased English identity in rural areas outside of large urban towns and cities, as explored in chapter two. Ultimately this focus and the data it yields will help foreground and understand how national identity is linked to a sense of place, and understand how it plays a role in foregrounding rural political sentiment as I'll explore at a later chapter. Firstly, Remain and Conservative voting 61 year old participant #11, living in rural Devon pointed out agricultural traditions celebrated in rural England. He made reference to Harvest Festival, an annual celebration of the food

grown on the land, celebrated in villages, schools and churches at the beginning of autumn. He then went on to talk about the values he holds with Englishness and its relation to rurality:

> A festival that really I think resonates with me because my family, we're farmers, is the Harvest Festival. So our Harvest Festival, I love… I feel my Englishness is around my family strengths, every one of my relatives I love and contact regularly. We're a network and that's the way I was brought up and I feel that is part of my Englishness I feel that... and I grew up in a very tight community and I think we drifted away from that and now drifting back towards tighter communities certainly in, in Devon, in rural areas and I feel that's part of my national sort of identity and how it makes me tick.
>
> Participant #11, 61, Devon, Remain, Conservative

As well as traditional rural celebratory festivals, participant #11 notes his Englishness as being something built around a close-knit family and communal network, whereby his upbringing and experiences in a tight community has influenced feelings of Englishness and national identity. Similarly, participant #4, a 62 year old woman from a rural coast side town in Somerset suggested that her English national identity is also rooted in the South West:

> I think it's perhaps more a regional basis. Most of my ancestors come from a very, you know, some small part of south Dorset. They were agricultural workers. And since they were agricultural workers I've got a love and fellow feeling for that part of the world.
>
> Participant #4, 62, Somerset, Remain, Liberal Democrat

Making reference to her ancestry as being rooted in rural South Dorset and her family history of agriculture workers, participant #4 explains how this has embedded her affinity to rural spaces. Furthermore, participant #4 goes on to explore her attachment to rural spaces and the people around her.

> It is different because… I don't know, you do feel an affinity with people who come from the same area as you and it's mostly familiarity so you're comfortable with people. Not to say you don't like people from other areas but the people around you, you always have a connection with them.
>
> Participant #4, 62, Somerset, Remain, Liberal Democrat

Another participant who spoke of English identity as made up of regional and rural aspects was Remain and Labour voting participant #1. He told me, "my Englishness is specifically a Dorset Englishness and

I probably associate more with Rural Dorset than I do with you know, an urban Englishness", which highlights the differing urban and rural nature to Englishness. He told me he felt this mainly because he "can't stand the idea" of London, due to its affiliation with the upper class elite, which further emphasises the classed nature of his Englishness.

With participants having defined English identity using ideas such as birth right, loyalty to traditional English systems, in contrast to neighbouring Others and as having a rural aspect, the following subtheme will present the expressions of participants who found tensions with English identity and felt conflicting feelings towards Englishness.

4.1.5. Perceived Suppression of English Identity

When participants were expressing their pride in their English identity, a few began telling me how they felt they were censored and unable to express their English identity due to fear of backlash. I have previously stated how there is a sense of self-awareness amongst participants when discussing national identity where there is a reflexive aspect to it on the participant's behalf. Participant #24, a 46 year old from a rural coastal town in Dorset expressed this to me:

> I'm very proud to be English and it almost feels like in recent years we're kind of not allowed to be English? I feel like you know people can say they're Welsh and they can say they're Scottish or Irish, but if your English, it's almost like an air of 'ohhhhh you're not allowed to say that' so I'm really proud to say that I'm English. And I'm also proud to be British.

> Participant #24, 46, Dorset, Leave, Green Party

This also goes back to a previous point on bitterness and jealousy surrounding expressions of how the Scottish and Welsh express their national pride. Participant #24 was quick to refer to England's neighbouring nations and compare the ways in which he can express his pride. This not only points to ideas surrounding a felt lack of control and autonomy amongst the English, when expressing their felt restrictions surrounding their ability to voice their English identity, but also a sense of victimhood. On a similar note, participant #29[9], a Leave and Conservative voter residing in Dorset in his 50s, proposed a similar idea to me but instead placed Otherness on British Muslims:

> My brother-in-law was in the army and he was based in Hounslow, army barracks. But to get to his army camp you had to go through a massive, very large, Muslim area. And this was when

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[9] Participant #29 was a pilot study participant, whose data has been included in this thematic analysis due to the reoccurrence of themes across both pilot and main study findings

England was in the world cup. So he put an England flag up in the window. And the police knocked on his door and asked him to take it down. [Is that true?] That is true. I've got two children, one is 12 one is 13. And I'll swear on both their lives. They asked him to take it down because the residents in the area found it offensive. Really? You want to live in this country? You want to have our benefits and our health service and all the rest of it, but you don't want to accept our flag? That was a key moment for me, because that to me is offensive. That's discriminatory. And that's where we need to be able to stand up and kick back against that and say no that's wrong. It's the flag of our country and we can proudly wave it.

Participant #29, 50s, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

The symbols in this story, a Muslim area, an England flag and the state authorities, represent a complex relationship participant #29 has with multiculturalism, authority and autonomy which relates to how he feels he can express his national identity. The oath of swearing on his children's lives is also worth noting, it seemed that this participant felt that he needed to convince me that he was telling the truth, perhaps assuming already that I may not believe him. In honesty, I did question participant #29 on whether what he was telling me was true story, as this kind of narrative is something that is regularly employed around football world cups (Rahman 2018). Although it is not illegal to fly the flag of St George, this does not stop tabloid media reports of councils forbidding the flag being flown. However it was important that participant #29 trusted me and felt comfortable in disclosing his sentiments to me. It was not my position or role to intercept or object, I was there to listen.

However, part of me did not want to be complicit or be deemed agreeable in this moment, hence me asking him if it was true. He responded sincerely, and perhaps in reaction to my momentary doubt, he became emotionally heightened in what he said following, using direct speech and enacting role play as if I were one of the people he was angry at for not accepting the St George's flag, which shows transference between the researched and researcher. Participant #29 placed himself into a role of victimhood as he describes England being discriminated against due to an inability to wave the flag of his country. He makes physical combative references to standing up and kicking back against multiculturalism along with its perceived force of erasing his pride in England. His reference to Muslims here as an Other who are inhibiting English people's ability to exercise their pride is interesting as it places othered Muslim's as imperialistic, whereby rules were imposed on territory and flags. Whether participant #29's story was real or imagined for narrative effect, it tells a story of a symbolic failed reclamation of space (Pilkington 2016) and is illustrative of the dynamics of developing a racialized Other and claims of victimhood. There is also a sense of felt disrespect on participant #29's behalf committed by the Other and by the state authority, which was experienced by participant #29

as collective infringement of Englishness that appeases the Other at the expense of the victim. Issues with authority from the state and elsewhere was a theme that came up a few times in my interview with participant #29. He had previously told me that he had had a disagreement with his thirteen year old son's teachers regarding the history syllabus and its lack of British historical education. He has also told me that he felt the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) had dictated too much of Britain's laws surrounding human rights and that it hindered his ability to protect himself against violent prisoners in his role as a prison officer. The incident relating to a disagreement between the participant and his son's history teacher will be explored at a later point in relation to Britishness. Before moving onto British identity, I will end this section on Englishness by turning to understanding participant's sentiments towards further devolution in the UK.

4.1.6. English self-governance

It is important to note that some participants expressed sentiments in favour of further devolution of the UK, to allow England to self-govern and restore a sense of Englishness. There was recognition from participant #24, a Leave and Green Party voting 56 year old from Wiltshire, that the Scottish and the Welsh had held onto their national identity "a lot better than we have", whereas the English have "lost some kind of Englishness". Participant #1, a Remain and Labour voting 40 year old, expressed the idea that devolution was "incomplete". This was highlighted by the effects of differing COVID-19 approaches in each nation of the UK, where there was "different approaches to the lockdown", therefore participant #1 did not think devolution "went far enough". Ultimately, he told me "you know it's a strange thing, we all just want a flag". This represents a notion of belonging tied with English identity that participant #1 feels isn't currently possible within the UK at the moment. Participant #1 expressed to me that he saw "the union breaking down" in the future, where it will "intensify feelings of Englishness". He felt that it was the Conservative party that were holding onto the idea of the UK; "these Tories, these Empire bastards are clinging onto this idea of Britishness, it's their flag and all that, but the union will break down". This represents not only a sense of Britishness that is tied up with the Conservative party and its conflation with Empire, but also a sense of resentment towards Britishness because of the aforementioned. Other participants reflected on devolution in the late nineties and told me that during that time, they started to fly the St Georges flag more. When questioned by neighbours, Leave and Conservative voting participant #28 said "well, now we've had political devolution, we should fly this", to which he realised in our interview that "compared to other people, I probably do recognise it a bit more than some". Furthermore, there was verbal expressions from participant #16 who felt mild unfairness at devolution due to the way that "Scotland and Wales are devolved but England still finances them" and "Scottish MPs can interfere with English law" but

not the other way around. This shows that the debates surrounding devolution that were present in the first decade of the twenty first century are persisting today and manifesting in misinformation.

So far, this section has understood the difficulties some of the participants had with locating Englishness, and how in some cases they defined English national identity in cultural terms, specifically in terms of social class, religion and sport. However, it has been acknowledged that these explorations of Englishness have not amounted to definitions of English nationalism. Instead, it has found that there are dynamics of othering at play when participants spoke of their Englishness in contrast to the devolved nations in the UK. This section has also explored the rural nature of Englishness that some participants expressed, where their English national identity was rooted in rural cultural ideas. Following this, the section has looked at how English identity has been perceived by some participants as something contentious, and in some cases under suppression from wider political forces. Lastly, the final subtheme noted attitudes towards devolution, where some participants felt it was unfinished and felt further devolution so that England has its own assembly was necessary. Moving forward, this chapter will now focus on Britishness and participant's identifications with it in the following section, and will touch on some of the themes already mentioned in more detail.

4.2. Identifications with Britishness

This section explores the participants' identifications, understandings and expressions of Britishness. When discussing Britishness, its definitions and meaning with my participants, I found clear divisions of ideas. On the one hand, participants were expressing sentiments of exceptionalism and pride associated with traditional aspects such as the military, monarchy and the empire. On the other, participants defined their Britishness in terms of cosmopolitan values such as openness, inclusivity and pride based in Britain's multicultural society. Some participants, similarly to the previous section on Englishness, felt tension with Britishness, finding their relationship to British identity complicated, and expressed feelings of shame and embarrassment tied in relation to it. The subthemes below, explore the varying nature of these sentiments.

4.2.1. Contested Nature of Britishness

In chapter two, I presented statistics which found the most popular characteristics of British Identity and British citizenship, were respect for Britain's institutions and laws, democracy, liberty, monarchy and the NHS, and the participants in my study also noted their significance alongside values of their own. These sentiments were emphasised by the COVID-19 pandemic. Acts such as clapping for NHS carers and the large turn-out of volunteers signing up to help in the pandemic was a source of pride for participant #6, where she felt as though this was a large component of British culture. This emphasises ideas of shared values making up a national community where acts of selflessness contribute to the national character. Similarly, other participants noted that the pandemic had heightened their pride in the NHS, and when asked about national heroes many participants referenced Captain Tom Moore, ex-army officer and fundraiser who raised money for the NHS in 2020 by walking round his garden for his 100th birthday. Participants citing the collective efforts of volunteers and public rallying during the pandemic are therefore reminiscent of cosmopolitan Britishness that functions off shared collective values. At a time were participants held contempt for the government's handling of the crisis and the way these were thought to have a negative reflection on Britain, aspects of the pandemic such as the power of the NHS and Moore's fundraising helped participants through the challenging time for British identity.

On the other hand, some participants expressed discomfort with ideas of national identity, patriotism and aligning themselves to a country. Instead, they said that they felt identity was something fluid, rather than fixed. The participants that expressed these sentiments largely came from younger participants aged mainly between nineteen and mid-thirties. Participant #27 was a Remain and Labour voting twenty three year old living in Wiltshire; he had also grown up there but lived in London during

the term time to attend university. He described himself ethnically as mixed race, black Caribbean and white British, but when asked his national identity he told me he was "British, I suppose". I asked him why, and he told me he didn't feel like he had an "allegiance" to a country, more specifically Britain. He told me "I live in Britain and sure I'll support them in sports" however "in terms of national identity, I don't feel like I have one". Participant #27 was not the only participant to tell me he didn't feel he had a national identity, Remain supporting and Labour voting 19 year old participant #21[10] from Dorset also felt this way. When discussing national identity, he told me, "I wouldn't put a big part of my identity in relation to my country", when asked why, he told me that he prefers to be sceptical due to some of the more harmful and negative forces of patriotism and the association with the government in power. Furthermore, participant #21 told me that he felt "where you're born doesn't really affect who you are as a person very much". Similarly, forty three year old Participant #3 told me he felt that people "scribe too much of their own identity to that which is circumstance, prevalent and luck". Twenty nine year old Remain voting and Liberal Democrat voting Participant #6 noted that she saw national identity as a "social construct". These understandings of national identity from participants contradict traditional notions of both civic and ethnic national identity and instead see it as something akin to cosmopolitanism. These understandings instead signify national identity as that does not function off of race, ethnicity, political affiliation or nationality (Waldron 2000). Instead, citizens subscribe to an ideology of themselves as citizens of the world rather than a single nation-state. This opens up an understanding of national identity as being based on something other than the collective history, national characteristics and shared institutions that we have seen in previous chapters. Instead, some participants were expressing tensions with British national identity.

Fifty six year old Leave and Green Party voting participant #24 from Wiltshire felt that Britishness has "slightly right-wing connotations to it", where she doesn't like to self-identify as British as it "pushes you that way in people's views". The tension and contentiousness of British and English national identity along with patriotism and its conflation with nationalism was something that was expressed widely by participants. For example, Leave and Liberal Democrat voting fifty seven year old participant #13 from Somerset told me that he was resistant to engage in British patriotism as "it is based on not always great education", signifying patriotism as something based on false or lack of education. Twenty three year old Remain and Labour voting participant #27 from Wiltshire also held negative sentiments about patriotism, because of its similarity to nationalism: "they coincide with each other because it's about us and them and othering the rest of the world". Similarly, thirty three year old Remain and Labour voting participant #9 associated patriotism with nationalism and the monarchy.

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[10] Participant 19 was not old enough to vote in the EU referendum but expressed his support for the Remain vote

She told me that she was not a monarchist and felt that patriotism was far too insular and all about putting Britain first, seeing it as the "most important" and doing "what's best for Britain" rather than considering the rest of the world. Instead, she told me she associates her identity as something more supranational such as European, or global as she has Nigerian heritage. Instead, they opted for supranational identities, global identities or they ascribed to a vision of Britishness that was cosmopolitan in nature, based off collective morals and values.

This subtheme goes to show an understanding of Britishness that is contested and dynamic. The dynamics of Britishness amongst participants have adapted in relation to wider contexts of the pandemic, to emphasise collectivism and 'we-ness', akin to themes of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitan themes of multiculturalism and ideas of national identity as something fluid and awareness of it as a social construction point to forces of globalisation. Tensions of patriotism and its conflation with nationalism are therefore unsurprising amongst participants that do not put emotional investment or emphasis on their national identity. Moving forward, I will now present the data from participants that *did* feel a strong sense of Britishness and British patriotism. These will be explored in the subthemes below.

4.2.2. Perceived threats to Britishness

At times, some participants were expressing ideas of perceived threats to Britishness, these threats often manifested as the EU. Participant #14, a Leave and Conservative voting 60 year old woman made brief mention to ideas of fairness and objectivity on similar terms to that of participant #28, but began making comparisons with Europe, making a clear distinction between Britain and European countries. Her discussion then steered into matters of both the EU and Britain's approach to refugees:

> We have a sense of right and wrong, a sense of fair play, I think the European approach is far too lenient in terms of accepting large numbers of people coming into Europe. I have a lot of sympathy for refugees but I think that every country in Europe, it needs to be spread amicably… I know that as a country we support people who are struggling financially, we are seen as having a soft touch, so people wanting to escape from their situations are desperate to come to the UK because we have a softer touch in comparison to other parts of Europe.

> Participant #14, 60, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

Participant #14's extract suggests that she feels that British people as a collective have an innate sense of fairness, whereas the European Union is too favourable to refugees. This is where the 'EU' starts to become associated mentally with 'migrants' more generally. Her sentiments are perhaps driven by, as she describes, Britain's 'soft touch' in providing welfare to those in need of support. This 'soft touch'

and 'leniency' from both the EU and Britain is something that participant #14 takes issue with, more specifically it provides a stark contrast to ideas of hard-nosed stoicism emphasised previously by participant #24. Her words suggest that there has been an uneven divide of refugees during the 2015 European refugee crisis, and that Britain has been targeted as a country with a "soft touch" in terms of welfare. Participant #14's immediate reference to contrast Britain to the European Union perhaps shows how her current understandings of Britishness, were shaped and moulded directly in opposition to the EU. Again, this represents the Othered nature of identifying with a nation, where in this case, Britain is explored via its international neighbours which happens to be the European Union. The idea of having a "soft" approach (which in itself is reflective of the hard versus soft articulations of Brexit negotiations more widely) towards matters of migration and welfare was also articulated by participant #10, 60 year old man who voted Leave in the EU referendum and abstained in the 2019 General ELection. The extract from participant #10 explores the reasoning behind these sentiments, utilising language typically designed to get me on his side.

> I think we sometimes are very soft targets for, shall we say, non-British people? We don't stand up for ourselves in an appropriate manner sometimes. [Okay. Could you elaborate on what you mean by that?] Well, yeah, I mean the classic is I know you have to be inclusive and welcoming people because they do and have contributed greatly to the wealth and community in the country. However, if I want to go abroad and drink alcohol and certain countries, there's no debate about whether it's allowed or not. It's not. If you go to certain countries and deface their religion, it's fact, you're not allowed to do it. But if they come here and do it, we're told we're intolerant if we don't let them do it. So there's an imbalance at the moment that we have been perhaps a soft touch in the past, trying to be, dare I say it, too left wing and therefore now we're exposed to everybody and anybody and we're not standing up for ourselves as a country.

> Participant #10. 60, Devon, Leave, Abstained

Participant #10's extract brings up a number of questions and ideas surrounding definitions of firstly what it is to be British, secondly, ideas surrounding victimhood and persecution, and thirdly tolerance and injustice. One point that participant #10 clarifies is that he does believe that immigrants or "non-British people" as he calls them, perhaps in order to make me agree, do considerably contribute to both the economic and social wellbeing of the country. His issues lay with the perceived imbalance of tolerance within Britain and immigrants' native countries. In this imbalance participant #10, similarly to participant #14, feels Britain has too much lenience when dealing with its immigrant population and the conflict of religious ideas that come with it. Participant #10 conflates this with the left-wing of the political spectrum, known for its more empathetic approach to immigration and asylum (Fella

2008) and feels that this has left Britain and its ethnically defined citizens as silenced victims of multiculturalism. The idea of Britain having a "soft touch" approach is reflective of the Eurosceptic content of right-wing UK tabloid press' reporting on immigration, asylum seeking and welfare. This is reminiscent of ideas of the British state as overly virtuous, reflecting the desired nature of a stricter, stiff upper-lip Britain. His assertion that we are now exposed to "everybody and anybody" represents his perceptions of a lax immigration system in Britain. The nature of tolerance expressed by participant #10 is one where he has projected perceived intolerance onto the Other, he uses an imagined scenario where he reverses the roles to express that the Other has perhaps come to Britain and defaced Britain's religion. The word used by participant #10, "deface" is akin to vandalism, and vividly paints a scenario of destruction and violation, which hints to immigration acting as a threat to his identity. Ultimately, he suggests, there is an imbalance, which would not be acceptable if the roles were reversed. Therefore, participant #10 expresses victimhood and feelings of persecution as he does not feel that Britain is "standing up" for itself, and that it needs to be more valiant. In participant #10's case, the characteristics of the Othered group are defined in its cultural traits such as religious practices, a view that reflects the "new racism" (Barker 1981). Religion acts as a cultural practice to which participant #10 Others and forms a racialized distinction of the Other. Further in his interview he told me he identified the Other as Asian, and told me he felt that Britain is getting "pushed around all the time" and that "we're not standing up for ourselves". It is important to note that as a white Caucasian woman interviewing him, his ability to declare these sentiments were therefore perhaps made easier on his behalf. He believes that "we" – the white majority – have been "pushed", silenced, perhaps even oppressed, and are now victims of multiculturalism, having been persecuted and forced to live (in their perception) a new society shaped by politically biased forces more widely in politics. As he explains, when I asked him who was doing the pushing, he responded referencing his perception of a left-wing bias within the press, mainly the BBC, and more widely by politicians within both the Conservative party and Labour party. He substantiated this by pointing to the way that Brexit has been contested and challenged by Remain supporting politicians as a contributing factor to his feelings of having these notions imposed on him. The lines of thought that participant #10 expressed here is reflective of the processes discussed in chapter two, associated with splitting and fantasies of the Other and how this manifests in ideas of persecution and victimhood. This will be explored further at a later point in chapter five.

Islamophobia and its relationship to participants' perceived ideas of threats to Britishness, with participant #19, a Leave and Conservative voting 42 year old woman living in Hampshire. It must be noted that participant #19 had disclosed her experience of a traumatic event in her interview with me, in which she told me how she had been a bystander in the 7/7 London bombings. The following excerpt

reveals participant #14's definitions of British identity that were about conforming, following laws and not threatening Britishness.

> If you live in the country and follow the laws and you conform to society and you don't try and change the British way of life, anybody can become British. But when you want to move in and try and make us live a different way of life, then you threaten Britishness.
>
> Participant #19, 42, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

Threats to Britishness are outlined by participant #19 as immigrants who live in Britain, do not conform to society and force change on British ways of life. More widely in the media landscape, immigrants, particularly of Muslim faith, have been commonly framed not only as a threat to the economy and security, but also as threatening to British tradition and culture (Stansfield and Stone 2018), in 2018 a report found that 35% of British people think that Islam is generally "a threat to the British way of life" (Hope Not Hate 2019). Participant #19's statement is reflective of this; she had made specific reference to Muslims and Islam elsewhere in her interview with me and made clear that she held hostility to immigrants of Muslim faith due to her experience and trauma experienced as a bystander and witness to the 7/7 bombings in London orchestrated by Islamic terrorists. Experiences of terrorism seemed to lay at the foreground of her islamophobia, however this has turned into blanket hostility of all immigrants whom she feels are trying to change Britain. "I don't understand why Sharia law is being allowed to happen in the UK" she told me, and following this she made reference to Britain's changing demographic and its impact on her perception of Britishness:

> Parts of the UK have changed so much demographically that I think it's giving a signal that, that's not British you know? And I think we've had too much immigration in too short a space of time to actually sit back and put into perspective what's actually happening on a socio-economic level. On a social level, it's out of hand right now [...] I feel that the UK has opened its borders too wide and we are starting to lose our identity. I don't want to live in a Muslim country I want to live in a Christian country and I believe our religious aspect of the country is falling apart. I think we are taking too much of an open borders approach and I'm concerned that it's becoming too woke and too left wing because of bringing in too many different nations that nobody even knows who they are or what they are anymore.
>
> Participant #19, 42, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

Participant #19 makes it clear that she believes her experiences of immigration and growing multiculturalism in the UK are making it difficult for her to ground her British identity. There is a lack of coherence presented here by the participant, for example, she is under the false belief Sharia law

is being implemented in Britain. Participant #19's exclamations such as "it's getting out of hand", "falling apart", "we're starting to lose our identity" and "nobody even knows who they are or what they are anymore" further illustrate feelings of loss and control, particularly surrounding Britishness and national identity. She acknowledges that the UK's changing demographic has had a direct influence on what is and isn't Britishness, and that these boundaries of Britishness are therefore drawn by cultural markers of race, religion and birthplace, signifying her desire for 'sameness' amongst fellow nation members. These cultural markers cement ideas of both "us" and "them", which are common amongst group identities. In participant #19's case, there is a belief that there is a disproportionate nature to the balance of attention to disadvantaged groups, i.e. immigrants, at the expense of who participant #19 believes to be truly "British".

Religion in participant #19's case was a significant marker of Otherness and difference and acted particularly as interference to Britishness. Discussions of Islam revealed that participants positioned Islam as non-progressive, whereby there was a perceived threat that adoption of Islamic beliefs would take Britain backward in time, for example participant #19 expressed her thoughts on Shamima Begum, a denaturalised British born woman who was radicalised and groomed by ISIS, and had recently entered public debate due to her intentions to return to the UK from Syria; "[Begum] and all of her mates, think it's funny to behead people". Participant #19's ideas of Islam have been heavily impacted by recent events of terrorism and fundamentalist extremism and have thus acted as a threatening perpetrator-like force to Britishness. Emotional responses often lay at the foreground of discrimination (Bleich 2011), therefore making it important to consider emotions when discussing perceived threats. Participant #19's arguably traumatic experience as a witness to the terrorist attack in 2007, has left her with complex discriminatory feelings rooted in fear, anxiety and trauma. Ideas of threat were also emphasised by participant #2, a Leave and Conservative voter:

> I'm thinking of how people who emigrated to this country and then try to change things and I'm thinking about a particular attempt to introduce Sharia law. We have a legal system. We shouldn't accept anybody coming into this country who then tries to change our legal system. I wouldn't dream! But that's me. I wouldn't dream of going to Spain and demonstrate against bullfighting or I wouldn't dream of living in France and trying to be a town mayor with the idea of changing things, you know. I'd never try change someone's religion, I think we've got to be careful that we maintain our Britishness if you like.

> Participant #2, 65, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

Similarly to participant #10, participant #2 adopts co-opting language at the end of his statement, perhaps as a way of softening his ideas to me. The idea of "change" and "changing" was heavily emphasised by participant #2, where the perpetrators of this change were those of Muslim faith, whom he falsely perceived are trying to change the UK legal system to that of Sharia law, which forms Islamic tradition. By not assimilating to Britain's institutions, participant #2 feels that there is an imbalance whereby if the situations were reversed; participant #2 could not behave similarly in countries abroad. The expression of needing to maintain Britishness shows participant #2 understands that Britishness is something that is under threat and at risk of becoming colonised by the Other, a significant role reversal of Britain's colonial history. Participant #2 wasn't the only participant to draw comparisons between what was acceptable in Britain and elsewhere, participant #29, a Leave and Conservative voter in his 50s also expressed this, telling me "you name me one single Muslim country that has a church in it. It wouldn't be allowed to be built. Yet we, as a Christian country, allow mosques to be built everywhere". Notably, participant #2 and #29 are mainly comparing migration from mainly Islamic societies to situations in European countries, they associate immigration with Europe however the examples of immigration are not European. There is a contradiction here that seems to be based on emotion rather than factual knowledge which requires attention.

Again, there is emphasis on Britain as a Christian country, solidifying the idea from these participants that religion is in fact an important factor of their British identity. However, it seems that this emphasis is only made when the threat of an Other is present. The Other, again is symbolised via religion and the presence of religious buildings. Stating that "we" "allow" Mosques in the UK maintains notions of perceived lack of strong rules, regulations or legalities surrounding integration and multiculturalism similarly to participant #19's discontent with open borders. Between the lines there is a disappointment and discontent in the way that the government is not handling these issues in the desired way, which promotes the idea in their eyes that minority cultures are being favoured at the expense of, in their eyes, the 'true' British majority.

Having outlined perceptions of threat to Britishness amongst some participants, I will now move forward to presenting the following subtheme on the political and military figures that some participants perceived to encapsulate Britishness.

4.2.3. National Heroes and Political Leaders

When asked if there was anyone they particularly admired or who encapsulated their idea of Britishness, participants regularly answered with examples of both deceased and living political

leaders such as Winston Churchill, Margaret Thatcher, Nigel Farage and various military figures and members of the royal family. One has to note the politically right-leaning position of some of these figures, as well as the traditional nature of the military and royal figures, which is reflective of the participant's commonalities across them such as their right-leaning political sentiments and perhaps their support for the Leave vote in 2016. Another common feature was age, with the majority of participants expressing these sentiments being over the age of 50, however there were younger participants too, such as Leave supportive and Conservative voting 20 year old participant #23. Participant #23 expressed Britain as a plucky underdog:

> I look up to people like, well, the classic answers going to be Churchill and there's quite a few […] there was a captain of a ship in World War II, and it was just his very British tone of knowing that everything was lost but we might as well give it one good last try and what we can do now, like his famous words are "we're going down so we might as well make a good run of it" and that sense of Britishness on that ship to just be like, well it's over but we might as well make the impact we can have now. I'm sure every country has its people like that but that to me, there's a famous saying that the British military and the British officers don't duck because they just accept what's coming like it just happens. What's going to happen, happens. I think that's a very British mentality is if it happens it happens, and if it doesn't it doesn't, if you survive, then good. I think with the Duke of Wellington and he is kind of a symbol of Britain whether you see for the Empire or the Commonwealth to pull very, very different groups of people together whether in a good way or a bad way, it was that Britishness to pull everything together and go this is what we've got. And this is what we've got to do, it is the resourcefulness I think. I think it's that ability to overcome and adapt.

Participant #23, 20, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

In another part of his interview, participant #23 had told me he had a strong interest in the British Armed Forces and had tried to apply to enter the army but was turned down due to a medical condition, this clearly underlies his interest in the military, however what is significant is his attachment of this interest and the figures he associates with it to his ideas of Britishness. Participant #23 associates ideas of stoicism, strength, durability and fighting spirit with Britishness, which to him are perfectly encapsulated in historical events of conflict, victory and conquering. His reference to Wellington is based only on impression, to which he is invested in. This was a common theme across participants who too expressed these sentiments, for example participant #22, a Leave and Conservative 60 year old woman living in a rural fishing town in Cornwall participant #22 told me "I just happen to think that he [Winston Churchill] was, through all his flaws and everything I think he

was a patriot and he saved us from the Nazi's and fascism, in my opinion". Participant #22 points out Churchill's patriotic and heroic nature whereby he was responsible for saving "us", using a collective pronoun to perhaps describe the nation and its people, from Fascism and invasion in the Second World War. These sentiments were too shared by participant #24, a Leave and Green Party voting 56 year old woman living in rural Wilshire:

> This is very predictable, but Winston Churchill. Because again he was undervalued and he really stepped up at a time that the country needed someone to step up, he wasn't somebody who anybody thought would be any good and he pulled it out the bag for us. I just like the fact that Churchill was a really hard worker […] I think that's something the national character has fed off. Certainly in war time, we needed people that were going to keep going and keep trying and be resolute.

> Participant #24, 56, Wiltshire, Leave, Green Party

Participant #24 emphasises Churchill's work ethic and determination, which she believes has influenced the national character. She notes the importance of stoicism in times of struggle such as war, and idolises the way she believes Churchill was able to bolster morale. Her reference to 'wartime' also suggest a default position of admiration of all those involved. Participant #16, a Leave and Conservative voting 77 year old man from rural Somerset, made note of Churchill's leadership abilities:

> Winston Churchill had to make some very, very difficult decisions, some of which were unpopular, but he still went ahead with it. So he was a very consistent and confident in his mind of what he wanted to do.

> Participant #16, 77, Somerset, Leave, Conservative

Participant #16 highlights Churchill's ability for consistence, strong-mindedness and confidence in seeing through plans and action during his time in leadership. Participant #5, a Leave and Labour voting 69 year old woman living in rural Somerset too echoed this and drew upon other prolific historical military figures, including one that was assassinated by the Irish Republican Army (IRA):

> I absolutely loved Mountbatten. I really thought a lot about him. And Churchill, and Montgomery […] Because of the way they lead the country during the war years. I have great respect for them. Their leadership, very much their leadership and their leadership capabilities.

> Participant #5, 69, Somerset, Leave, Labour

Leadership came to be a significant feature of participants' idolisation of Churchill and other military heroes, along with sentiments such as confidence, strong-mindedness, stoicism, heroism and determination. These participants, who look to historical leaders who 'saved' the UK from foreign invasion, reflect an enduring pride which has been integrated into their ideas of Britishness. Aside from Winston Churchill, participants drew upon other political leaders that they felt encapsulated their Britishness. Margaret Thatcher was praised for her economic efforts during her leadership in the 1970s by Leave and Conservative voting participant #28, a 53 year old white man living in rural Gloucestershire:

> You know, obviously Churchill leading the war effort, Margaret Thatcher's, if you look at the changing culture from where we were in the 70s with the unions and the lack of getting stuff done and then changing it to being really quite productive and the economy taking off, with all sorts of problems.

<div align="right">Participant #28, 53, Gloucestershire, Leave, Conservative</div>

75 year old Leave and Conservative Participant #18, noted his admiration for ex UKIP and Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage, making reference to perceptions that were key to Farage's image:

> I admire Nigel Farage for speaking the truth and standing up for British people really in the face of a lot of opposition. He's always as far as I'm concerned spoken a lot of sense and that's why he's been castigated in the past and had bad press because he speaks the truth and people don't like it.

<div align="right">Participant #18, 75, Wiltshire, Leave, Conservative</div>

Similarly to participant #28, participant #19 also noted Margaret Thatcher, she expressed her idolisation of Boris Johnson and Jacob Rees-Mogg using the word "fan" to indicate her enthusiasm.

> I was a fan of Margaret Thatcher, I am a fan of Boris Johnson, and I am a fan of Jacob Rees-Mogg, on a political front I like those three. [What is it you like about them?] I like that they stood their ground and they delivered and... You know I kind of like the way that Jacob puts people back in their boxes in the most eloquent of British fashion... I like Boris Johnson because he's delivering on democracy and that's his only goal and I'm impressed with how he handles the media especially the left-wing media isn't doing him any favours.

<div align="right">Participant #19, 42, Dorset, Leave, Conservative</div>

A common aspect to participant #28, participant #18 and participant #19's choices, were the reasons pinned to why figures such as Thatcher, Farage, Johnson and Rees-Mogg were chosen. All three participants when discussing these politicians pointed to the ways in which the politicians were able to be strong-handed, deliver results, how they were out-spoken, truth tellers who stand up for people and do so in a commendable manner. Firstly, reference to Thatcher and her political leadership following the Winter of Discontent in the 1970s, characterised by struggles between labour unions and government, Thatcher's leadership as expressed by participant #28 was one that took risk and delivered results and resolved conflict. Participant #19 too makes reference to politicians that deliver and stand their ground such as Thatcher, Johnson, Farage and Rees-Mogg, especially when doing so in spite of those who do not agree with their actions, further indicating the desire and esteem held for British leaders that demonstrate these traits, especially when perceived to be the underdog. It is also notable that in expressing these views, they are more or less just repeating the slogans of these people. Participant #5 too appreciated politicians such as Boris Johnson and members of the monarchy Prince Phillip, a Greek incomer to Britain, who she believed spoke the truth and were genuine and frank:

> Well I'm not a Conservative but I like Boris because he shows leadership, he's strong and says what he means. Same with Prince Phillip, he may make stupid remarks like the one about the Chinese, but I think he's wonderful because he says what he thinks. He doesn't try and put icing on it or dress it up or hide who he really is. You see himself.

> Participant #5, 69, Somerset, Leave, Labour

There was emphasis on Johnson as being "strong" and forthright, again suggesting Britishness is interpreted through a lens of strength and stoicism. Participant #5 particularly appreciated Prince Phillip's lack of self-censoring or filtering in how he expresses what he thinks. This also implies she somehow, emotionally speaking, knows what kind of person he is which shows her emotional investment in Phillip.

Overall, this shows the significance of mythologised heroism rooted in political leadership, which has been a vital influence in national identity formation and construction. Other than mentions of the Queen and Margaret Thatcher, it is important to note that there is an inherently gendered component to these discussions with the majority of participants drawing upon male figures, which conflates Britishness with masculinity. As well as this, all figures were white and upper-class, which also associates Britishness with whiteness and the upper-class. A smaller number of participants did choose a more diverse range of figures that represent their ideas of Britishness, however those that

were conservative, right-leaning and voters of Brexit did solely base Britishness overwhelmingly on white upper-class men. This suggests a more traditional and nostalgic national identity, where the extensions of these figures across popular and political culture possibly consolidates their continued uses in definitions of Britishness and popularity amongst the collective British imaginary. Following this section, I will now turn to exploring the sentiments of war time and military pride as a subtheme that emerged in the data.

4.2.4. War time and Military Pride

Participants were asked questions relating to British pride and patriotism, what it consisted of and whether they could think of anything that encapsulated Britishness. Follow up questions entailed prompts where they were told that they could think back to any point in history or modern day. They were also asked if they felt that there was anything more personally they believed was important to their ideas of Britishness that perhaps wasn't widely recognised or given much attention to. Prompt questions included whether they could think of a specific time where they felt most proud of their Britishness. Many of the participants in this section were Leave voters and referenced Britain's military achievements in the 20th century such as the World Wars, the Falklands War and general war-time efforts from both the military and civilians in Britain. Three participants had previously held positions in the British army and recalled their time in the army as points where they felt most pride, something which had continued on in their life, others referenced that they had family that had served in the army and held pride in them. There was therefore a stronger military presence throughout these participants, perhaps due to their older age and direct experience of family members in the war, and also their location in South West England, which alongside Yorkshire and the North West, have higher levels of military recruitment than elsewhere in Britain (Dempsey 2021).

I found that participants were fixated on lingering wartime myths and narratives when questioned on Britishness, these ideas seem to be lingering in the collective memory where British identity and pride for the nation have been explicitly extracted from war-time accomplishments. Participants such as Leave and Conservative voting participant #28 and Leave and Conservative voting participant #16 told me they were "patriotic in terms of military" and "I think our military is one of the best in the world". Participant #14, a Leave and Conservative voting 60 year old woman, marked the importance military achievements had on her sense of British identity:

> I think we are getting better at marking things like the Battle of Britain and World War Two
> and times where we protected our island. I think there should be a Battle of Britain day. I think

there is one but I don't think many people know of it. [Why does that hold importance to you?] Because without the sacrifices that these people made, we wouldn't have our own identity.

Participant #14, 60, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

Despite verbalising a contradiction surrounding a memorial day for Battle of Britain, participant #14 puts emphasis on protecting "our island". She states that without the war-time sacrifices made to protect it from attack and invasion British identity would simply not exist. The expression of these elements as the underpinnings of British identity are powerful and tone can argue that these historical narratives of power and threat signify a nostalgic element to British identity that is bound up with glory and triumph. These forms of nostalgia along with stoicism were also echoed by a 56 year old Leave and Green Party voting woman participant #24:

I think that on the whole, people pulled together and looked after each other. Most of them tried to do the right thing and I think that's very much part of the way people see us, it's that keep calm and carry on type thing and I don't think that's a bad thing.

Participant #24, 56, Wiltshire, Leave, Green Party

Ideas of strength and fortitude have been explored previously in relation to definitions of Britishness. However, participant #24 foregrounds these sentiments with explicit ideas of war time, even referencing the 1939 government motivational poster "keep calm and carry on". More distinct references to military interventions and achievements came from three white male Leave voting participants; 56 year old participant #20, 60 year old participant #26 and 53 year old participant #28.

I'm proud of all of the historical interventions that we made whether it's the first world war the second world war, not too proud about Boer war, but all of the things that on the surface Britain's tried to do and achieve it in the world.

Participant #20, 56, Gloucestershire, Leave, Liberal Democrats

Participant #20 had a general feeling of pride in what Britain has attempted and achieved on a global scale, suggesting his pride was in Britain's ambition and determination. Although he did not feel proud of the Boer War, he did feel that the first World Wars were key points of accomplishment. As well as the First World War and Second World War, The Falklands war in 1982 and intervention in Afghanistan between 2003 and 2014 was also explicitly pointed to as a reference for pride. However, participant #26 did begin to draw the line with the 2003 Iraq war and the non-intervention in Libya in 2011

elsewhere in his interview. It is also notable what participants *don't* say; although Cameron called the referendum, no participants seem to say he is someone they admire:

> I think when Britain has done things that have been successful; I suppose going back a bit in history. I was proud of the outcome of the Falklands War in 1982. I think I was fairly proud of what we achieved in Afghanistan in the 2000s but less proud of the 2003 invasion of Iraq because I didn't think that was warranted.

> Participant #26, 60, Somerset, Leave, Conservative

Participant #28 also affirmed his pride in the achievements of the armed forces in "recovering" the Falklands. However, like participant #26, he did feel some conflicting feelings towards this:

> I'm old enough to remember the Falklands War. So I was you know, quite proud of the Armed Forces having achieved recovering the Falklands, sorry that it happened but pleased that we weren't sort of pushed around to that extent in that the people there that wanted to be rescued were rescued.

> Participant #28, 54, Gloucestershire, Leave, Conservative

Participant #29, a man in his 50s who was a pilot study participant explicitly made reference to these ideas when he was interviewed on 'Brexit Day' on the 31st January 2020:

> The biggest one for me, because I was young enough to remember it, was the Falkland's war. We were a nation that was shrinking, we had a large country that took over one of our territories, but we still managed to muster an armada, we sent the best troops we had and took back what was ours. And Margaret Thatcher to me was one of the best leaders this country will ever have, ever. Wonderful woman, amazing woman. I think she personified my opinion of what this country is. An amazing woman. A great woman, a great example to so many women out there that you can achieve and become the top of what they are. I think that's brilliant, in this day and age, bloody brilliant.

> Participant #29, 50s, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

By echoing discourse of the 1558 Spanish Armada, participant #29 has evidently indulged in such phantasy and mythology as he recalls his experience of the Falklands war, to participant #29 it was simply a matter of foreign invasion which threatened Britain's imperial oversea territory, mustering large quantities of skilled armed forces and retrieving this territory back. Thatcher, a leader known for exercising power in a ruthless way, who was Prime Minister during the Falklands war, is hailed by

participant #29 as encapsulating Britishness due to her actions during this war, thus contributing to previously stated ideas of myth.

The additional dimension these to themes surrounding the military is the connection participants had with the armed forces. Participant #25, a Leave and Labour voting 46 year old man had served in the armed forces from the age of 16. When asked if he could think of any particular time where he felt most proud of his national identity, he said it was when he was in the armed forces. I asked him if there was anything specific about that experience and he told me "Just the fact that we were very professional well known throughout the world that British forces were some of the best in the world".

Participant #25's patriotism is clearly rooted in his experiences in the British armed forces, whereby he felt the British army was exceptional in their global standing. This is unsurprising as previous research does show that enlisting and serving in the national army heightens feelings of patriotism, particularly as they play a significant role in the state's security system are consequently providers of national safety. Participant #2, a Leave and Conservative voter aged 65 from Dorset, another ex-member of the armed forces emphasised his pride in the monarchy as a component of his patriotism, which stemmed from signing his allegiance to the queen, telling me "I'm very much a royalist, when I joined forces in 1971, I signed allegiance to the queen. I believe that still that doesn't go away", which shows how sentiments towards the monarchy in some cases are heavily rooted in the British armed forces.

Furthermore, with regards to the direct experiences and relations to the armed forces, participant #19, when prompted on what patriotism meant to her, referred to her family members that had fought in the Second World War and particularly those that sacrificed their lives for the nation.

> My grandfather was a pilot in WW2 as well as my uncle and my grandmother was a nurse, both of my grans were nurses. And I just feel that patriotism is about protecting the history, remembering why people died for and why they died for the UK. Patriotism is about conquering democracy and... I just feel proud to be British. It's the history that makes us proud to be British.

Participant #19, 42, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

She defines patriotism as protecting Britain's history in order to remember those that had made sacrifices. Her strong emphasis on patriotism as "conquering democracy", by which I assume she means protecting democracy, and celebrating Britain's history perhaps gives some indication as to why (as we have seen previously) she has been so adverse to immigration to Britain and perceived ideas of "woke" culture more widely in the UK. It is possible that participant #19 views these forces as

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an attack on her sense of Britishness, where she is fearful that they will re-write and eradicate the narratives of Britishness she is so heavily invested in. This will be explored as a focus at a later point in this chapter. Before moving onto those ideas, it is important to continue exploring ideas of British exceptionalism, which potentially foreground the aforementioned sentiments of hostility. Participants' pride in Britain in terms of its overseas powers and influence may be driven more specifically by its island geography.

4.2.5. British Exceptionalism and Island Mentality

The concept of Britain as an island was heavily referenced by participants particularly when discussing Britain in the context of the EU. As stated previously, all participants discussed in this section did vote Leave in the 2016 EU referendum; as a result, participants did make reference to Brexit during their discussions on Britain's role and place within the EU and the world. However, ideas of British history, foreign threat and the nation's independence did dominate discussions. The island trope used amongst participants conveyed a variety of ideas relating to boundedness, isolation, independence, vulnerability, and images relating to physicality where being "small" related to conveying ideas of power. 60 year old participant #26 felt that being an island had significantly shaped Britain:

> I think probably being an island has shaped both our history and where we are now, you know, we may have been a less strongly independent nation over the centuries if we'd been on mainland. It would be a lot easier for people to have invaded us.

> Participant #26, 60, Somerset, Leave, Conservative

Participant #26 notes that he feels Britain being an island has shaped Britain's independent nature, in which it's been harder for foreign invaders to attack. Participant #24, 56 year old Leave and Green Party voter encapsulates these notions when acknowledging Britain's geography as an island and its associated mentality, she told me "I think the whole impact of Britain being an island was under-estimated by Europe and by Britain, it gives us a whole different mentality about physical neighbours". She emphasised ideas of difference, boundaries and borders, both physical and imaginary. However, notably, her use of selective history did not include events such as Anglo-Saxon invasion and instead referenced Europe, Participant #24 believes that Britons have a different mentality to those in mainland Europe who are physically connected territorially with opportunities to freely move, travel and exchange cultural experiences. The lack of such experiences to participant #24, affects Britain's collective mentality. The emphasis on the lack of "physical neighbours" highlights ideas of boundaries

and difference. These perceptions of borders and territory are important in understanding the held importance for boundaries, both territorially and of the mind. The defences against them and fixation with them are indicative of the defensive attitudes that participants expressed. 75 year old participant #18 too expressed similar sentiments to participant #24:

> I think we are more independent, because we are an island I think that makes a difference […] Whereas we've got this piece of water around us which isolates us from the rest of Europe and always has, so I think that's what makes us think differently. We don't want a European army or non-British people in high places telling us what to do, we want to make our own laws and control our own borders, whether that will work I don't know.

> Participant #18, 75, Wiltshire, Leave, Conservative

There is a sense of wanting Britain to have control over it's own borders even if it turns out to make things worse, which reflects a recklessness and punt into the unknown. Drifting from one point to another in this excerpt, key themes from participant #18 about Britain is the idea of it as uniquely independent, and again, this view characterised by the sense of its territorial geography and sea-based borders. As participant #18 explains, this has isolated Britain and thus affected the way many of its citizens think, as opposed to mainland Europeans who are more accustomed to the movement of people and cultures. As a result of this view, participant #18 is hostile to political elites and EU wide policy enforced by the European Union, and believes British laws and more specifically immigration policy should be down to British policy makers and enforced by the British government; however he is uncertain about whether this will function effectively post-Brexit. Furthermore, other participants such as participant #23 and participant #19's emphases on Britain as an island nation took on an exceptionalist nature:

> For such a tiny island in the North Sea we still have a major impact there's countries that are 10, 15, 16 times the size of us that have nowhere near the influence on the world stage and it's the fact that we have adapted and overcome to so many challenges to remain relevant, which I think makes me see us as strivers [sic] of innovation […] So it's the British ability to overcome and adapt rather than try and be the best at everything […] I understand history is not perfect. But I am also like I'm part of the nation that is pretty much dominated possibly the last 400 years of world history.

> Participant #23, 20, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

20 year old participant #23, emphasised Britain's influence in terms of global soft power, whilst highlighting Britain's ability to adapt and face challenges, again reinforcing ideas of stoicism. Britain as

a country that strives for innovation and domination globally and throughout participant #23's education of history reflects exceptionalist ideas that place Britain as a global hegemonic power which leaves out the more undesirable instances of British history such as violent colonialism. Although participant #23 does accept that "history is not perfect", he makes an extreme over-reaching, heavily one-sided and exaggerated statements regarding Britain, its power and its place in the world which is reflective of the narcissistic grandiose nature of British nationalism. This was also echoed by participant #19, who also placed emphasis on similar ideas of Britain's influence and global standing:

> I think we are one of the largest economies in the world and I also think that we are a leading country. In every aspect for schools, products, technology, you name it. The law, and the judiciary I think we lead on a global scale, yeah. We live in the most wonderful country on the planet in my view that leads in every way.

> Participant #19, 42, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

A key theme amongst national exceptionalism is not just that the nation is exceptional but that it is superior to others. Statements from participant #23, participant #19 and others echo imperial sentiments. Amongst participants' discussions, I found that for some, this pride which was rooted in Britain's imperial history appeared to come under threat during the events of summer 2020 which saw the Black Lives Matter movement gain momentum in the United Kingdom.

The British Empire, having once dominated larger units of land and population at its height across the globe, become a point of discussion for participants, thus making it an "imperial braggadocio" (Law 2005, p.268) of British nationalism. Amongst participants, discussions of the British Empire materialised when participants were discussing their pride in Britain, and how they defined their patriotism. Ideas of the British Empire were tied up with sentiments of grandiosity, pride, narcissistic yearnings and loss. Participant #5, a Leave and Labour voting 69 year old woman living in rural Somerset for example, felt a sense of loss in the dissolution of the Empire and the power and influence that came with it:

> I was very sad to see the British Empire go. [Why was that?] I think the strength. When we were an empire, I mean we're only a little island and the fact the empire gave us strength and you know a standing in the world which meant we couldn't be stood all over and walked on. [How would you prefer it be?] Well we would still be as one, and I wish we could get some of our countries back like Australia and Canada and all the rest of it. I wish we were still an Empire because the world is in such a state at the moment and I think we could be easily walked over,

which is why I'm actually pleased we left the EU. I'd like to see the Commonwealth stay strong but I wouldn't want to be part of the EU I'm glad we aren't in that.

Participant #5, 69, Somerset, Leave, Labour

Participant #5 highlights ideas of strength and power in her ideas concerning the Empire, to her; the Empire was something that gave Britain such high-esteemed global standing that it didn't allow others to trounce Britain as a world power. Emphasising Britain as a "little island", she envisions Britain as a country that requires imperial power in order to avoid becoming victims at the hands of global superpowers. She expresses her desire for Britain to regain some of that power, particularly in terms of maintaining the Commonwealth countries, using words that suggest ownership over countries despite of whether this was ever the case. These ideas of power and influence were also expressed by participant #19:

> I like the way we stand up for that island in Spain, I take lots of pride in Britain. I've travelled to India loads of time and I take pride in what we did there, without us having been in India they wouldn't have had the infrastructure, the railway systems, the bridges, the buildings that they have because they are a mess and were a mess after we left. I've travelled through the whole of Africa and when you see what Britain did in those countries they would be no where without having the British infrastructure put in place by us.

Participant #19, 42, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

The former part of participant #19's response is in reference to the debate and conflict with Spain surrounding Gibraltar in light of Brexit, and despite forgetting the island's name, it highlights a territorial nature to participant #19's sentiments surrounding her pride in Britain. She then makes reference to Britain's imperial influence in India and Africa, providing a glorified vision of Britain as a positive, supportive and innovative force in the global south, rather than presenting some of the harsher realities of colonialism. The cherry picking of the past and viewing British history through rose-tinted glasses is serving here to feed participant #19's positive associations with Britain, whereby she is projecting positive grandiose sentiments onto Britain and its past, resulting in a narcissistic patriotism that is favourable towards history and ignores the oppressive nature of Britain's imperialism. Participant #29, a man in his 50s who was part of the pilot study similarly spoke of overseas territory and associated it with power, emphasising the role of the monarchy:

> Well I firmly believe that we are a strong nation and a very, very proud nation. Very proud nation. I'm a very strong monarchist. You go anywhere you want to go in the world, you get them to name a king or a queen. They will always say the queen of England. They all say that.

They won't say the king of Norway. Because that's the power this country still has. And I want to hold onto that. We have many overseas territories that you know; they still see the Queen as their head of state and still recognise the flag, that's sovereignty. That's not racism.

Participant #29, 50s, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

Participant #29's expressions here take on a melancholic nature, whereby he tells me he wants to "hold onto" Britain's power and role on the global stage. He then becomes defensive towards the end, exclaiming that his sentiments are that of sovereignty rather than racism, which hints at his awareness that his thoughts and feelings on the matter may be interpreted as racist. Despite mistaking oversea colonies as being sovereign, the monarchy here symbolises power and prestige to participant #29, which encapsulates his idea of Britishness, providing a positive grandiose attachment and image of Britain.

On the other hand, although other participants such as participant #23 and participant #28 acknowledged the more harmful nature of Britain's imperial history, they persisted in regarding it as something more positive and admirable. Participant #23, similarly to participant #19, speaks of his experiences whilst travelling and recognises harm caused in these places, however, suggests that Britain also provided an industrialising force and that this should be kept in mind when discussing British history.

With the Empire we caused atrocities around the world, but you know, I've been to Malaysia. I've been to Malaysia and we were speaking to so many people and like the capital city and stuff and it was very much like oh like obviously, you know awful things happened here and you know, the war came here because of the British were here. But we also have you know sewage and we have like, we have basic rail lines and like so I would say maybe some aspects of the Empire need to be spoke about more as like, I wouldn't call it a civilising force, but like an industrialising force, but also you always have to you to counteract it with the bad.

Participant #23, 20, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

Participant #23's expression of the 'need' to counteract negative narratives of the British Empire with more positive narratives represents participant #23's desire for positive representations of history, perhaps one's that fit his worldview and provides him with positive self-esteem in regard to his national identity. He also uses his own experiences of having been to Malaysia to attempt to give evidence of his credibility to speak on the matter. Participant #23 wasn't the only participant to conflate the Empire with positive attributes. 52 year old participant #28 also acknowledged the

contentious nature of British history but noted that there are particular aspects to this that hold positive significance:

> It's very conflicting but I think all the stately homes and the big estates and things that largely came out of the Industrial Revolution and Empire all of which had significant, you know negative connotations of people being you know abused or whatever, you know, whether it be the people or the factory workers or whoever. But they created these big Estates and stuff and we've got these National Assets now a lot of them are in National Trust, and we go around and look at them and they are fabulous and there's a lot of positive things about some of those circumstances.

<div align="right">Participant #28, 53, Gloucestershire, Leave, Conservative</div>

It can be understood that participant's expressions of Britishness and Empire as a recovery of imagined pasts celebrates a de-problematised British national identity which excludes both its darker sides and the persistence of its inequalities that exist today (Pendlebury and Veldpaus 2018). At the time of data collection, events of the BLM movement caused participants to be faced with some of the harsh realities of the British Empire; the following section will explore some of these responses in addition to backlash against perceived left-wing agendas in politics and society.

4.2.6. Responses to social change: Political Correctness and 'Culture Wars'

The term "political correctness" is often used in a pejorative sense to critique those who support broad social, political, and educational change in order to avoid expressions or actions that can be perceived to marginalise or exclude socially disadvantaged people. Ultimately, it aims to redress historical injustices and minimise discrimination (Marques 2009). According to Fairclough (2003), controversy surrounding political correctness and those who label others politically correct are engaged in a politics that is fixated upon representations, identities and values, or defensive form of 'cultural politics' which defends against social change. Some of the instances of hostility towards more liberal, so-called "politically correct" ideas surrounding Britain and its history were articulated by participants in this study who recalled social interactions with people who they felt were left-wing, and also those who supported the BLM movement in the summer of 2020. These negative feelings about political correctness often related to disagreements about British history.

Participant #2 was a 65 year old man living in rural Dorset who left school age 16; he voted Conservative in the 2019 General Election and Leave in the 2016 EU referendum. He recalled an argument he had with his son, a 32 year old university educated lawyer living in London:

He disagrees with everything, you know, he did bring up stuff about colonialism and I said well yes, I agree. We did do things wrong as a country in India. We've got things massively wrong in India, but we've left them with 2,000 Railway stations and 5,000 miles of Railway line. And if they didn't have that, they wouldn't have the economy which they have today. So don't look at on it all as negative.

Participant #2, 65, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

There is a clear divide between the ideas of participant #2 and his son; their contrasting positions were not only in terms of political ideology but also in terms of geography, education and generation. It is clear that participant #2 feels confronted at the challenging of his beliefs on Britain's actions in historical conflict, particularly in Northern Ireland during The Troubles, The Falklands war and Britain's colonial past in India. He feels there is a general misconception about British history, and believes that Britain were predominantly a peacekeeping force that largely played a mediating role. He expressed difficulty with expressing himself and with acknowledging the darker sides of Britain's actions, he told me he had sought out additional reading material to educate himself and did agree that colonialism in India was harmful, however insinuates that without it India would not be where they are today due to the infrastructure put in place, emphasising Britain's perceived role as an aid to those less unfortunate. He feels that his son "doesn't know the history" and later said that he felt that younger generations are "trying to sweep it under the carpet" and thinks "we have to remember it".

Participant #29 also recalled an interaction with his son's secondary school teacher at a parents evening, concerning the school curriculum and his son's teacher not allowing the film Zulu to be shown to his class.

So I said: I'm not on about celebrating it, but its history. You're happy to talk about Hitler, the Nazis, killing six million Jews. But you don't want to celebrate our own history as a country? They said 'oh well you know, they slaughtered an awful lot of blacks'. But, it's history! I'm not saying that's who we are today, we recognise what was done wasn't right but we can't hide history or lie about history we can't deny it. We aren't allowed to celebrate it and I think that is really wrong. You know, my son, is he gonna learn about what my great grandad did in the war? They are gonna learn about the Nazi's and what they did but not my grandad as a royal marine? I'm sorry but this is all wrong, the imbalance is ridiculous. Totally ridiculous. So wrong. So biased.

Participant #29, 50s, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

Participant #29's issue seemed to lie in the fact that he felt British history wasn't being taught in the curriculum, and he felt this personally because his grandad was a royal marine and so he may have interpreted it as a personal attack. This brings into question how people's perceptions are so strongly shaped by the intersections of their personal experiences. The teacher's decision to not show the film was interpreted by participant #29 as undermining and censoring British history, to resist any kind of celebration. He draws comparisons with the Holocaust and feels there is an asymmetrical division of attention given that leaves British history unaccounted for, despite the fact that Britain is very much part of that history. Participant #29 was not the only interviewee to express this, participant #19 also expressed a belief that the UK education system was politically biased, telling me she believed there was a "very left wing perspective in schools" which was "training our children to become completely la-la", which signifies an inability to express in words what she really thinks. Participant #20, Leave and Liberal Democrat voting 56, from Gloucestershire expressed themes of education being tarnished by politics, he asked me in our interview: "Do you, hand on heart, in all honesty, think that your tutors are non-biased?" when I told him I didn't feel there was a political bias in universities, he persisted to ask me: "when they read your work or what they want to see in it? Or is it purely judged on the science of the dissertation. Do you think they have a politics bias?" Participant #20's insistence on questioning the ways in which the thesis will be examined with a politically biased angle is reflective of the sceptical and distrustful nature that some participants had with the education systems in the UK.

Participant #29 told me he believed Britain was becoming a "soft society" that indulges in the needs of minorities, and became heated in his responses to me as he went on to talk about identity politics more widely in society:

> I believe in equality. I believe in diversity. However, it has to be, we call it equality, but is it equal? No. we can have gay pride walk down the road. But I want to have a heterosexual pride. But apparently I'm not being understanding, I'm being sexist, I'm being derogatory, no, I want to celebrate who I am, you get to celebrate who you are, and I'm accepting so please accept who I am. And it's much the same with race, religion the lot […] At what point on a job application form, and I know of many people who have done this, if you're a white heterosexual male, you are discriminated against. At what point is it allowed for someone to go, I want to have a job here and this job is going to be perfect for a white male. You can't put that! You can't put that! It's so wrong, so discriminatory. Yet, they put we would prefer ethnic minorities from the female gender or from LGBT gender, how is that fair? You're discriminating against me for being who I am. And that's why I'd say the whole human rights act and whole equality is not fair. It's wrong. I'm sick to death of equality, diversity, it's never

ever equal. How many massive pride events are there around the country every year to celebrate? And I've got no problem with anyone's sexuality. Anyone's beliefs. Anything at all. But you can't be proud to be white and you can't be proud to be British.

<div align="right">Participant #29, 50s, Dorset, Leave, Conservative</div>

The overreaching theme here is participant #29's belief that the acknowledgement, attention and time spent on providing space and celebration for oppressed minority identities is consequently demonising and silencing White, British, heterosexual men. In this passage, participant #29 feels persecuted and discriminated against, referring vaguely to others' experiences of job applications and pride events that celebrate minority identities. He delves into victimhood, deflecting criticism surrounding forces of oppressive structures, believing that minority and disadvantaged identities are being favoured over white, heterosexual men like him, therefore he does not feel like he can hold pride in his identity. Fundamentally, he believes this isn't equality but inequality. By citing instances such as affirmative action within job applications, participant #29 is taking part in a process of "competitive victimhood" where people "respond to accusations of being privileged by listing various disadvantages or hardships to disprove the accusation", and may even counter accusations by condemning their accusers as the 'real' privileged ones (Campbell and Manning 2018, p.161-162). Critics of so-called political correctness often say that left-wing people are the ideological majority and thus enjoy the privileges that come from being members of an overwhelmingly dominant group; therefore policies such as affirmative action, or space and time given to minorities are believed to be unfair and detrimental to non-minorities. This perception is linked to a resentment from those who are in categories that do not receive much concern. For example, participant #29 exclaiming he's "sick to death", that it's "not fair", "wrong" and "never ever equal" reflects the conflict, bitterness and general resentment, which provides an obstacle to accepting several under-defined Othered targets, which is a common dynamic of the 'culture wars' (Gordon 2018).

46 year old participant #25, a white man living in a small coastal town echoed this inability to feel pride in who he is and felt resentful about what he saw as politically correct rules around behaviour and expression as well as his perception of the media's negative bias in this context:

It does make me feel angry that we're sometimes told we've got to act in a certain way or we're not allowed to say certain things where you know, it's not in my mind's not offensive just to be you know, proud of where you're from, but sometimes when you, for instance watch the mainstream media, it's their kind of a negative light on it sometimes and it makes me not very proud. If that makes sense. [What kinds of things are you talking about? Do you mean

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like expressing yourself?] Yeah, you know, sometimes you're scared to say certain things because of political correctness and then I just think it's all gone a little bit too far to be quite honest.

<div align="right">Participant #25, 46, Dorset, Leave, Labour</div>

Participant #25's issues lay in the perceived policing of language, and he echoes some of the accusations amongst British right-wing tabloids of 'political correctness gone mad' which aim to rail against 'the metropolitan elite'. He feels that his own voice is being censored and does not see anything offensive in having national pride, but feels that the mainstream media spins this into a negative light and therefore having been confronted with unpleasant realities, he feels ashamed instead. I asked him to elaborate on where he felt this had occurred mostly. He told me, "the black lives matter thing", so I asked him what it was about that.

> Well I found that really offensive because I did a little bit of research on it and I believe certainly black lives do matter but it was kind of forced on us that black lives only matter, and I've got a lot of black friends and a lot of black relatives, etc. etc. And it made me feel not proud to be white. You know, it I felt a little bit vilified be a white person at that time and you know, I'm even a little bit nervous to say it now. You know, I mean, I wrote a letter of complaint to the Premier League saying are you sure that you want to be you know, if you research this, because firm from what I researched it was a Marxist movement and I understand, you know certain people didn't see it as that but I researched it and it was a left-wing Marxist movement and I didn't want nothing to do with that.

<div align="right">Participant #25, 46, Dorset,</div>

Participant #25, making clear to me that he had undertaken "research" held strong feelings towards the BLM movement in the summer of 2020. These events became enflamed after the public killing of unarmed black civilian George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis Police Department in the United States. He said that after completing his own research, he felt ashamed and vilified to be white, and expressed his nervousness in even speaking about it in our interview. Shame is significant here as it suggests the opposite of pride, its affective nature also points to feeling unseen. He went to the extent of complaining to the Premier League following football players taking the knee, as he believed there was a Marxist agenda behind the movement. Participant #25 sees Marxism as the enemy here as he believes it to be responsible for being a driving force behind vilifying the white majority. His interpretation of the BLM movement as "only black lives matter" is further representative of the binary thinking involved in feelings of persecution and victimhood amongst those that interpret events

such as this as favouring one group over another. 20 year old participant #23 was too affected by the events of the summer of 2020 and held similar feelings to participant #24 and participant #29 on statues, in this excerpt he speaks of the statue of Baden-Powell in Poole:

> I've been a Scout for almost 15 years now and when Poole council said they were going to remove it for its own protection. I thought we can't just bow down to a request from the minority to remove something that the majority want and also especially what was said about the Baden-Powell statue that was spread about was so untrue.

<div align="right">Participant #23, 20, Dorset, Leave, Conservative</div>

Regarding the participant #23 had a personal connection to the statue of Baden-Powell, having been a Scout for over a decade and living local to the statue. He too feels the minority are being treated with preference at the expense of the majority, and denied accusations of Baden-Powell's problematic past from the BLM movement. Participant #5 too felt angry at the attack on historical statues:

> In England they are pulling down statues of our history. And that' makes me so cross because the people we've got statues up for did some bad things but they also did good things. If you look at every single person in the country they have good and bad in them. Nobody is perfect, everyone is good and bad. I don't like them pulling down our history. The latest is they want to take the pictures of Jesus out the church because he looks like a white man. Everyone knows he would be olive skinned because he was Jewish, he wouldn't be black. It's just child playground rubbish to me.

<div align="right">Participant #5, 69, Somerset, Leave, Labour</div>

Public monuments act as "circuits of memory" whereby history is embedded in the nation's popular consciousness (Johnson 1995, p.63). However, statues such as Baden-Powell and Edward Colston serve also as reminders about historical injustice, whereby the actions of Baden-Powell and Colston are in today's world seen as immoral and thought to be bound up with atrocities of British colonialism and the slave trade. Statues such as these, serve to glorify such historical figures and to the BLM movement, they validate the violent and racist actions undertaken by these figures. Expressions from participant #24, participant #23 and participant #5, who were interviewed during and following the BLM protests in the UK, are reflective of the internal emotional conflict surrounding being faced with Britain's history. Rather than recognising the systemic racism and the residual effects of slavery bound within these monuments, it is instead interpreted as an erasure and silencing of British history, thus a personal attack on participant's identity.

So far, this section has presented subthemes that have demonstrated the recurring themes and patterns relating to sentiments of Britishness. The following section will present the final area of findings, this will relate to political sentiment in rural areas, touching on Brexit, Euroscepticism, the localised effects of neoliberalism and political disillusionment.

4.3. Brexit and Political Sentiment in Rural areas

Many of the participants spoke of rural life, as something consisting primarily of community cohesion. In some cases, participants spoke of a West Country identity, which was defined on geographical boundaries and cultural lifestyle, as explored previously in my chapter on Englishness. Rural life was defined by Leave and Conservative voting forty six year old participant #17 from Cornwall as having "community spirit", "where people know each other and look out for each other". Forty year old Remain and Labour voting participant #1 from Dorset told me that in rural areas, "community means community", like many other participants, participant #1 drew comparisons with those living in cities where one may live there for a long period of time but not know the people around you, however in rural areas, "you reach out to people just because of geographical closeness" and that "builds community". For example, Leave and Conservative voting sixty five year old participant #2 from Dorset told me about an instance of the power of his community where there was a man living in a tent in the village, participant #2 said "the community rallied round and made sure that he was fed and watered […] he was being looked after and I think in cities you lose that identity". He drew comparisons with a city he visited recently where he saw homeless people not being cared for in the same way his community had, calling himself a "country bumpkin" he said that cities made him feel "uncomfortable". Participant #1 too noted differences between the rural and urban, telling me that in the countryside "there's probably more rural culture, it's both laid-back and more wary". Sixty year old Leave voting participant #10 from Devon who abstained in the 2019 General Election noted "cultural" and "mental" differences between rural and urban areas, due to the environment rural people grow up in. As we will see in this chapter, some participants expressed vivid ideas surrounding the rural-urban divide and towards those outside of the West Country. As 60 year old Leave and Conservative voting participant #14 noted, in rural spaces, "you feel protected from the trials and tribulations from the country and the world", "it's definitely more protected here and in its own period of time", an extract that draws attention to the temporal and spatial dynamics of rural areas and their relationship with politics and Brexit.

This section will explore participant expressions and sentiments that relate to locality, politics and Brexit. Firstly, it will explore localised experiences of deprivation in rural areas, before understanding

how this has informed experiences of political discontent and disillusionment. From this, it will look at attitudes towards the EU and levels of Euroscepticism expressed by participants. Following this, it will understand the relationship between discontent with immigration and Brexit, before understanding Brexit as an opportunity for protest, along with its articulations of pain and its expression as a national victory. Finally, it will look at the divisive nature of Brexit and understand the polarised and contentious nature of Brexit amongst participant's expressions of conflict within their personal lives.

4.3.1. Localised effects of neoliberalism

It became clear when speaking to participants that much discontent and resentment lay at the foreground of their political feelings. Much of this related to economic concerns, for example poor infrastructure, lack of funding for basic necessities and limited investment. Issues of remoteness and inaccessibility were bound with issues of travel and transport which came to be a dominating issue across all participants, which was unsurprising. As might be expected, statistics show that people living in rural settlements have lower-lowest overall levels of accessibility to key services such as hospitals, GP surgeries, schools, shops and employments centres and areas with more than 5000 jobs (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs 2021). Understanding issues of accessibility is important as it helps identify those who may not have access to services and might be disadvantaged. The scarcity of public transport, lack of access to services and the effects on participant's day to day lives do not go un-noticed.

Participant #5, a sixty nine year old woman who resided on a Romani traveller site in rural Somerset told me how if it wasn't for her car, that she would be in serious trouble as they live over two miles from their local village. She told me that it had been left up to local volunteers to run a taxi service for those that live on the outskirts to take them into the nearest village and town to access services.

> We live in a field a mile and a half away from the village, then there's the sea. If we didn't have a car we'd be stuffed. But our village has a stagecoach which is actually a taxi service but we can use our bus passes with it and they pick us up door to door and bring you home or out to town. You can ring up 24 hours a day. They are volunteers that run it and if we didn't have that we'd be absolutely stuffed.

> Participant #5, 69, Somerset, Leave, Labour

 Evidently, without these volunteer services, old age pensioners (OAP) and young populations in rural areas are particularly at risk of severe isolation, where local community volunteer services have to step in and take place of local council services. Participant #9, a Remain and Labour voting thirty three year old woman living in a small town in Devon told me how it takes one hour and a half to get to her

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workplace on the bus, which comes round hourly to her town. She told me how the costliness of the train makes it too expensive to get out of her area for more work opportunities. She felt that in terms of investment in her area, things "seem to be taken away, rather than being added". She drew comparisons with the South East and the development of HS2 (high speed 2) with the slow decaying of infrastructure in the South West, and felt that the attention from politicians and the media is primarily given to big cities such as London. Participant #15, a Leave and Labour voting sixty year old living in a village in rural Dorset also spoke of the slow removal of local transport, where route closures have gotten exceedingly worse over the last decade, leaving "outskirt villages like here horrendous if you don't drive". Participant #24, a fifty six year old woman living in rural Wiltshire had direct experience of this, on the matter of local buses into town she told me:

> There were reasonable bus links and then by the following year they had started cutting them back to towns nearby, they went from every 2 hours down to three a day. That makes life difficult, I don't drive, there's no train station here, there's coaches but they go once a day and come back once a day. So it's an issue.

> Participant #24, 56, Wiltshire, Leave, Green Party

Facing these issues brings worry and anxiety about the future, particularly for Leave and Labour voting participant #15 in Dorset, he told me he worries for his children about the lack of accessibility to areas with employment, services, activities and wider experiences. An additional underlying theme throughout was the level of healthcare available to rural people, particularly in terms of mental health services and social care for the elderly. Younger participants particularly noted concerns over mental health services in their community, predominantly in terms of funding and accessibility. More widely, participants also had concerns that social care services are over-stretched in the South West due to the countryside having some of the highest proportions of the population aged 85 years and over. Participant #6, a Remain and Liberal Demcocrat voting sixty two year old living in a small town who used to work for her local council told me that she believed elderly people are "being abandoned" by lack of funding and social care provision. Seventy five year old Leave and Conservative voting participant #18 from Wiltshire told me he felt that the government "doesn't particularly care about people like me" and that "they don't take much notice of the needs of older people these days" due to the lacking funding for social care and ability to keep care homes up and running in the area. Accessing healthcare was considered an issue for participants due to the cut backs of hospital facilities locally and the length of travel to get to a larger hospital. Travelling long distances brings with it issues of time, money and missed appointments particularly if money is tight and travel is sparse.

Along with issues of isolation and inaccessibility, participants also emphasised issues of lacking industry and infrastructure in the South West. Researchers in the past have pointed to the forces of global economic development that has created uneven growth and job prospects between those who have access to high-skilled jobs and those do not, this dividing feature is grounded in geography (Jennings and Stoker 2016). There was a unanimous understanding amongst all participants that the South West lacked industry and secure employment. Even with opportunities in the services, agriculture, hospitality and social care industries, these often came in the form of insecure zero-hour contracts and seasonal work. Much of this had been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving some participants unemployed. At points, frustration was taken out on European migrants as they were perceived as being responsible for the lack of work. Participant #13, a Leave and Liberal Democrats voting fifty seven year old man living in a rural village in Somerset had worked in his industry for two decades. His boss was trying to enforce wage cuts and participant #13 was threatened with unemployment, he told me:

> Can you imagine how upsetting that is? Even my own boss threw in the 'if you don't take this pay cut we're going to move the business to Poland' you know.

> Participant #13, 57, Somerset, Leave, Liberal Democrats

Participant #13 then went on to tell me how he lived near a chicken processing plant where "85% of the workforce is casual, rotating migrant Eastern European labour, people get angry" he said. Along with lack of employment protection and hostility towards EU migrants – which will be discussed at a later point - there were concerns over the level of deprivation that low wages and seasonal work brings. Participant #4, a sixty two year old woman living in a small coastal town in Somerset told me that what she once knew as a prosperous place was now becoming deprived due to the lack of employment opportunities. She told me:

> We have had to start our own foodbanks; the level of deprivation I've seen here is devastating. On the surface it looks nice, comfortable, very middle class and prosperous but underneath it all is people with very hard lives.

> Participant #4, 62, Somerset, Remain, Liberal Democrats

Furthermore, there were concerns over the agriculture industry, it was acknowledged by numerous participants that farms in rural communities are deprived, however as participant #2, a sixty five year old Leave and Conservative voter from Dorset local told me, "they keep the deprivation hidden". Amongst this, there are concerns over how farming communities are being looked after and fears of the forces of privatisation. County Farms owned by local authorities – which offer many opportunities

for young and first-time farmers - have suffered cuts whereby the number of County Farms has halved in 40 years (Who Owns England 2018). Sixty year old participant #15 from Dorset told me:

> I wish they would look after our farming communities better", "what is more essential than the food that you eat and gas and power and all those things?

<p style="text-align:right">Participant #15, 60, Dorset, Leave, Labour</p>

Some participants such as fifty seven year old Leave and Liberal Democrat voting participant #13 from Somerset identified affluent city dwellers as making matters worse, whereby they "rent out a shed in London to buy a whole farm in Somerset", making it difficult for young people to acquire property. Forty year old Remain and Labour voting participant #1 told me that he felt this is causing the gentrification of villages where working class people are being "pushed out". Participants' sentiments relating to those outside of rural areas highlighted the antagonism towards urban areas, particularly the city-based politicians that they felt favoured urban populations.

Furthermore, it was widely accepted that for one to prosper in life requires moving away into an urban area, as fifty seven year old Leave and Liberal Democrat voting participant #13 from Somerset told me, "you have to spend some time in the city then move back to the country later in life otherwise you can't manage". This was a prominent theme amongst younger participants, who told me they felt as if they had no choice but to try and "make it" in a larger urban area, despite having the desire to stay local where their family and friends are. Interestingly, a quarter of all participants interviewed had served or aspired to serve in the British Army at some point in their lives which is perhaps an indicator of the lack of economic opportunities available; South West England, alongside Yorkshire and the North West, has higher levels of military recruitment than elsewhere in Britain. The lack of prosperity in rural areas experienced by younger participants was evident, participant #23, a Leave supporting and Conservative voting twenty year old living in a rural village in Dorset working in hospitality and aspiring to join the British Army told me, "Unless I really get my act together, I'm never going to be able to afford a house in the village or the town I grew up in". Similarly, twenty three year old Remain and Labour voting participant #27 living in a small town in Wiltshire told me he felt "trapped", he felt annoyed at how "nothing ever gets done here". Participant #4, a Remain and Liberal Democrat voting sixty two year old living in a small coastal village in Somerset similarly stated that in the smaller villages "there is nothing" and everything has "gone", from post offices, to pubs, to buses, to shops, these much needed community pillars and social infrastructure required for social cohesion and support have disappeared. These sentiments reflect feelings of isolation and alienation, which

perhaps came to serve as root drivers of hostile attitudes towards those in urban areas, as we will see in the following section.

4.3.2. Rural-Urban Divide

The importance of maintaining rural spaces to preserve community was emphasised by participants. Participant #5 expressed the importance of the sense of security surrounding ideas of small rural spaces, she was a Leave and Labour voting 69 year old woman who resided on a Romani traveller site in rural Somerset, expressed anxiety surrounding the prospects of her county council's plans to build an additional 750 homes in her village. She told me "we want to stay a small village; we don't want to grow big. We want to stay surrounded by our farms, we get on with the farmers and they help us out and we help them out." Her anxiety reflected both a rooted sense of security in 'the way things are' with her tight-knit community alongside farmers in the area, and an aversion for change and expansion. Similarly, other participants such as Leave and Liberal Democrat voting participant #17, forty six from Cornwall, highlighted the smallness of her social reality in their rural area, she told me "my little world is so small, we don't go on holiday, we don't travel abroad […] I'm just proud to be Cornish". This notion of not travelling abroad points to explanations why the free movement of people promised by the EU was not seen as a benefit by some of those that voted Leave. Furthermore, this sense of rurality expressed by participant #17 indicates an important component in participants' identity, which impacts the way they see those in urban area. It also suggests aversion to change and to people who are different and 'not from here'.

There was a strong sense of local divide between rural areas and urban city areas in England across all participants. Concerns lay across varied issues relating to centralisation, policy, decision making and lack of rural voices in politics. Firstly, there was an understanding and identification of "toffs" that come to the West Country, as seventy seven year old Conservative and Leave voting participant #16 from Somerset told me how West country people will "walk around locally in their dirty wellies, dirty coat, et cetera" whereas those that arrive to the West Country have "nice brand new wellies, the nice brand, new barber, that have never seen the light of dirt, and a big old 4x4 that's never been on grass", which points to class dynamics. Similarly it was felt by other participants such as sixty year old Leave and Conservative voting participant #26, who felt that visitors to the West Country see it as a "playground" rather than a "working place". The idea of others lacking an authentic understanding of the countryside was also articulated. Participant #28, a fifty three year old Leave and Conservative voting farmer living in Gloucestershire, who felt that political decisions from policy makers sway more towards London despite of the fact that "all those people are spending quite a bit of the time in the

Cotswolds" in second homes. The perception that politicians are London and South-East centric and appear to have no genuine understanding of life in the West Country was common across participants. Participant #17, a Leave and Liberal Democrat voting forty six year old living in rural Cornwall told me:

> London is a thousand miles away from me and it's totally different, they haven't got any idea of what a lot of the country needs or what they're going through. It might as well be on a different continent or country.
>
> Participant #17, 46, Cornwall, Leave, Liberal Democrat

There were also understandings that regardless of whether an MP was from a rural area, their party would still prioritise urban areas due to party allegiances, participant #28 told me he felt that "money and time and expertise in the UK is disproportionately focused on London", when asked how so, he told me:

> I don't think that rural areas are a priority in politics. Even when we have an MP from an area that is predominantly rural, they are a member of a political party that's a city and urban based party and that's what their policies are driven by [...] It feels to me like the politicians particularly, you know London people perhaps in general and other big city folk have sort of lost sight of the extent of their own imaginations and their perhaps a bit over-confident about stuff.
>
> Participant #28, 53, Gloucestershire, Leave, Liberal Democrat

However, the participant was unable to express what he felt politicians were being "over confident" about. The idea that political parties are mainly urban based and therefore only prioritise these areas was present amongst numerous participants. Twenty year old participant #6 living in rural Devon noted the different policy requirements that are needed for the South West due to differing industry, with a "focus on tourism" being a large factor. In addition to being widely noted amongst participants that "rural areas take second place to urban areas", thirty three year old participant #9 from Devon also felt that "the Southwest is pretty much forgotten about" and that "everything is very London or Southeast big city centric". Participant #26, a sixty year old living in Somerset too felt that the Southwest loses out at the expense of urban areas, he told me he felt unrepresented and therefore resentful:

> I don't feel particularly represented. It's the rural thing, but I've always kind of felt that the Southwest always loses out probably because it is more rural than other areas of the country,

you know, and rural areas take second place to urban areas […] If I think about it I feel resentful. But it's something that I've just got used to.

Participant #26, 60, Somerset, Leave, Conservative

Participant #13, a 57 year old living in Somerset articulated a vivid image whereby the South East of England "has been allowed to dominate" and "benefit" from Britain's economy whilst at the "expense of almost every other region", he feels that "everywhere else is being left behind". He went on to tell me that in fact, this sentiment was a large factor in his decision to vote Leave in the 2016 European Union referendum, which will explored at a later point.

The idea that politicians are South East and city centric and therefore don't have genuine understandings of the needs and wants of constituents were prominent across interviews. Remain and Labour voting 33 year old participant #8 from Wiltshire felt that her MP doesn't care about constituents; "he just goes in and does what he wants and goes against what we want". The lack of representation and lack of ability to change things was particularly apparent across all interviews; this was articulated by ex-British Army soldier participant #25, a Leave and Labour voting 46 year old living in small town in Dorset. He identified differences between himself and the serving MP in his constituency; these were predominantly class-based;

He's a multi-millionaire […] he can't identify with myself who's from a council estate and working class. I don't see how he has any idea how he can help me going forward when he's got no idea […] he's not going to do nothing for me because I can't identify with the bloke.

Participant #25, 46, Dorset, Leave, Labour

Similarly, participant #22, a Leave and Conservative voting woman living in a coastal town in Cornwall asked me "you know, how can a public school boy or girl know what it's like to live in a Cornish fishing village?" The emphasis on class and experience from participants shows the perceived lack of politicians being in touch with working class experiences, rural realities and lacking the ability to communicate with authenticity. Most participants felt they were not represented, reasons ranged from being having a unitary authority as their council, being ignored by their MP and being a younger voter. Participant #11, a Remain supporting and Labour voting nineteen year old living in a small Dorset village felt that his MP was only representing the older populations in his area; "he's not gonna try to represent someone like me". For participants who were not Conservative party voters in the 2019 General Election, there was a feeling amongst them that their vote was meaningless and had "gone to waste" and their vote was "completely lost". This caused one participant, forty nine year old Remain and Labour voting participant #12 who resided in a coastal village in West Dorset to use a vote

swapping website where she could swap her vote with someone in an area where her vote could have "made more difference". Other participants such as Leave voting sixty year old participant #10 from Devon abstained from the election, telling me he wasn't politically motivated; "I don't belong to a political party. I'll be honest. I've voted Conservatives for probably eighty percent of my life but recently I have questioned whether they've lost the plot". He then articulated a vivid image of geographical boundaries telling me he wished to isolate himself from the rest of the country altogether; "I want to make a wall from Weston-Super-Mare to Poole and just be the West Country and then I'll be happy." Shutting off the political elite and the discontentment that comes with it from the West Country is reflective of the polarised nature of rural and urban politics and the dissatisfaction with Westminster politicians. The language of making a "wall" is also reflective of the language of the populist rhetoric of former US president Donald Trump. There is also something to be said about the way that participants seem to be express their rejection of all political parties, particularly participant #10, telling me "I don't belong to a political party". This perhaps suggests a lack of shared identity and values between participants and British political parties. This dissatisfaction with politics and politicians was widespread amongst participants and manifested as largely as disillusionment and discontent, as will be explored in the following section.

4.3.3. Political Disillusionment and Affective Discontent

Participants expressed a range of disillusionment and discontent with the subject of politics; this included the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, the behaviour of politicians, the political system, lack of being heard and the localised effects of neoliberalism. Emotions in response to these notions ranged from anger and sadness, which contributed to feelings of alienation and pessimism. Sixty year old participant #15 from Dorset told me that he wished the UK had a proportional representation voting system that assures geographical representation, which suggests the perception that the current system does not. Looking at the current state of UK politics, he told me:

> Politics just makes me feel sad and it makes me feel disappointed. It makes me feel betrayed and negative and as though I really do not matter in their eyes at all as a normal person. They couldn't give a shit. I'm not even on their agenda. […] And the sad thing is I can't see it changing. I feel like I'm caught in some sort of like, you know, like a really bad recurring dream, I'm trying to think of that film where the guy wakes up and it's like the start of a new day every day the alarm clock goes off and he's back in the same day every day... That's how politics generally makes me feel. To see so many of them up there, they're spending so much time twisting the facts sometimes blatantly lying about facts and figures and just carrying it on and on and on. […] Where's the change? When is the change going to happen? It feels like there's

going to be some kind of French Revolution to kick out the whole class system that politics revolves around.

<div align="right">Participant #15, 60, Dorset, Leave, Labour</div>

Participant #15 noted a range of strong emotions such as disappointment and betrayal towards the lack of care shown by the government, telling me he feels forgotten and abandoned both from and by the political system due to his ordinariness and politicians' positions in an elite political bubble cut off from the outside world. Participant #15's reference to feeling as though he is going through the repetitive notions of 'Groundhog day', a phenomenon that has been widely acknowledged by many during the COVID-19 lock down periods in 2020 (Hunt 2021). The sameness of each day experienced in lockdown was magnified for participant #15 by the feeling that politicians were carrying on with their usual behaviour despite a global crisis. His questioning of "where is the change? When is the change going to happen?" is reflective of his pessimism and distrust in the political system, asking me if a global pandemic won't instigate large scale change, what will? Participant #15 locates these problems in the British class system, similarly to numerous participants laid out in the prior section. Twenty nine year old participant #6 held similar feelings and expressed sentiments of apathy, telling me that she feels that when politicians are in the House of Commons "it's a load of shouting and screaming at each other" she told me she "can't stand it" as "they're meant to be the people running the country and instead they are acting like children about issues that are really, really important".

This was similarly felt by participant #27, Remain and Labour voting twenty three from Wiltshire, who felt "angry", telling me he just wants politicians "to be real with us". He told me that he actively avoids watching political news as it alienates him, when he does he feels he is listening to "robots". Describing them as "robots" indicates an emotionless nature whereby politicians are not capable of expressing feelings or handling issues with care and nuanced thought. Participant #6 instead, defines them as "children", indicating her view of politicians and their behaviour as immature, suggesting a lack of ability to perform their duties with competence. Noting the "shouting and screaming" of politicians during Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) also highlights emotional immaturity and lack of ability to successfully resolve conflict and make rational decisions. Furthermore, participant #27's expression of wanting politicians to be "real with us" indicates the lack of transparency between politicians and the electorate, hindering foundations of trust and faith in the political system. The effects of this have left Participant #6 and Participant #27 with feelings of frustration and anger, participant #7's exclamation "fuck politics really, what's the point? No one listens" suggests her resignation in caring, and shows the pessimism and apathy that is often tied with political discontent.

Sixty year old Leave voter Participant #10 from Devon held similar sentiments relating to politicians, but focussed on their lack of experience in the 'real' world, however this 'real' world is never defined.

This idea that politicians are incapable of running the system is similar to previous expressions of how the dominant social class in Parliament is upper middle and upper class and therefore they lack the ability to resonate and understand experiences and needs of the ordinary working-class. Sixty eight year old participant #22 from a small fishing village in Cornwall noted the experiences and understandings of authentic ordinary working-class lives that politicians severely lack; "if they came and lived a month in my shoes I think a lot of their ideas would change" she told me. Similarly, forty-six year old participant #17 from rural Cornwall told me:

> It is all very old boys school and the people that are there are meant to be representing us and they don't seem to have anything in common with any of us […] we should have people that have more knowledge of what the common people need.
>
> Participant #17, 46, Cornwall, Leave, Liberal Democrats

Perceptions of Parliament as an "old boys school" is well documented as an understanding of politicians as predominantly male and public school educated and are therefore ignorant to realities outside the upper class (Stockemer et al. 2021), where they are unable to relate to realities of working lives. She went on to express apathy telling me that she thinks they are "liars" who only care about "lining their own pockets":

> It just makes me feel cross but also I'm just resigned from it all you know? It's just all the same. There's always been that kind of divide hasn't there, between the have gots and us peasants, working away. But yeah you can't trust any of them they're all out for themselves. [How so?] They're telling us how to behave and what we should do and what not, but they seem to be the complete opposite, there's always scandals coming out. Like in lockdown, they seem to be breaking the rules while telling us what to do for the best? I don't know if that came out right but do you know what I mean? It's also like, all the nurses and teachers and that can't have pay rises but they get huge pay raises and quite a lot of money for doing their job but the people who actually keep the country going can't even afford to feed their kids sometimes because they aren't paid enough.
>
> Participant #17, 46, Cornwall, Leave, Liberal Democrats

The participant, at the beginning of this extract, indicates to me that what they are referring to is known and understood by me, the listener. This shows that the participant perceived me to be

aware of the context and therefore their reasoning doesn't need explaining. The effects of significant double standards, distrust and domination of the affluent upper class in parliament has caused participant #17 to disengage and "resign" herself from the political process, noting that nothing has really progressed since medieval times of aristocracy and peasants. Sixty eight year old Leave and Conservative voter participant #22 from Cornwall also felt that there should be more ordinary people in these positions to ensure that there is true representation of the electorate and their needs are met. Expressions of this sentiment were arguably exaggerated by the recent political scandals at the time of interviewing, such as the senior aide to the Prime Minister Dominic Cummings, had broken lockdown rules11. Known as the "Cummings effect" (Fancourt et al. 2020, p.464), the event resulted in significant undermined confidence in the government and substantial lack of trust in the government to handle the pandemic. Sixty two year old Remain and Liberal Democrat voter participant #6 from Dorset told me:

> I personally find it hard to say which of our politicians could be trusted. I have often pontificated and I think a lot of people in politics are very well off and have had quite a lot of privilege in their lives and not a lot of them know what it's like to live on benefits or be a single parent and so we are being governed by folk who are out of touch. [How does that make you feel, having people out of touch in power?] I get really cross. I know Dominic Cummings isn't a politician but I shout at the television quite a lot because it's quite... yes I feel they're out of touch.

Participant #6, 62, Dorset, Remain, Liberal Democrat

Distrust, ignorance and anger are dominant themes here and represent the wide-spread feelings towards the government that were prevalent at the time. The contrasting of privilege against the lives of ordinary citizens and those on welfare paints a conflicting picture of differing experiences, awareness and needs. There was further acknowledgement from participants such as sixty year old participant #10 from Devon who highlighted to me that in despite of it being the rule for ordinary people, "politicians don't stand account for the consequences". Participant #24, fifty six from rural Wiltshire noted the effect of Brexit and COVID-19 on trust, telling me that the handling of both issues has caused the public to lack confidence in what they are being told. Participant #24 also cited instances of expense scandals which caused undoable damage to politician's ability to gain trust from the public. Forty six year old Leave and Green Party voter participant #24 from Dorset told me

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[11] On May 20th 2020 Dominic Cummings broke lockdown rules by travelling 420 km to a family estate with his wife (who had suspected COVID-19) and child, the lack of resignation and immediate apology resulted in public and media condemnation.

he felt that "this is probably the worst bunch of politicians we've ever had in the history of our country", noting the selfishness on both sides of the political spectrum; "This countries crying out for a strong leader real strong leader, and we've not got one" participant #24 told me.

In other participants, there were feelings of disillusionment and discontent related to the geographical nature of parliament being primarily urban based in London. Fifty six year old participant #24 from Wiltshire told me that one of the biggest problems in politics nowadays is that you feel "totally cut off from the political process", feeling that MPs don't know what's going on in their own area. She told me she felt that "a political presence, a bit of showing how things work outside of London would be good". Other participants mentioned their discontent in politicians handling of employment crises and showing a lack of care towards constituents. Fifty seven year old Leave and Liberal Democrat voter participant #13 from Somerset, who in the previous section told me he voted for Brexit for this reason, told me:

> I must have written 20 letters to him [local MP] and not had one reply. Not one. When I was out of work and made redundant I asked him, you know if what he does to try and bring employment to the area, I explained at that time the only way to get a new job was in what they would call in the gig economy, you know on zero-hours contracts. These people are treating their workers awfully you know, terribly, Five successive weeks, I was told yeah come in on Monday on the previous Thursday, and then you get in on the Monday and you get a text saying 'no there's no work this week' and that happened five weeks running. You can't treat your workforce like that. And if that's the only work around then, you know, people should hang their heads in shame.

> Participant #13, 57, Somerset, Leave, Liberal Democrat

The effects of neo-liberal labour markets that cease to offer secure full-time and long-term employment has resulted in precarity, instability and insecurity for people such as participant #13. His local MP failing to acknowledge or help resolve these issues signals to participant #13 that he is not cared about by the political class. This resulted in his severe disillusionment and cynicism about the future, at the end of the interview he told me he felt that things were going to go downhill, "I can't believe that there's anything good, I can't see how anything really better can come out of this now". Sixty year old participant #15 from Dorset who also voted for Brexit too expressed anger and discontent towards the government in their endorsement of austerity and neo-liberal economics:

> All our major industries have been sold off our utilities have been sold off, the manufacturing capacity in our country is now so low, it is unbelievable, it's like everything just seems to get

sold on. Everything seems to get privatised and as soon as it gets privatised the main priority it seems in those companies is we are here to make money. We are here for our so-called shareholders. Christ...I suppose you'd say that it's a miracle they've managed to keep the NHS going. That's incredible, that through everything that they've tried to do to screw it up. The money being cut and everything else and it's still going.

<p align="right">Participant #15, 60, Dorset, Leave, Labour</p>

Suggesting it to be a miracle that the government have managed to keep the NHS running despite large-scale privatisation is reflective of participant #15's cynicism and distrust in the government and their ability to look after important public assets. The consequences of shifts to neoliberal economics and adoption of austerity measures post 2008 financial crisis as discussed in chapter two has acted as a driving root of many participants disillusionment with politics and the government. The social and political consequences of the financial crisis have fed into expressions of apathy and discontent, therefore being felt most socially and politically. The politicisation of these issues has exacerbated society's polarisation and made them vulnerable to the blaming and Othering nature of populism. This was notable across participant's interviews, where they located a source of blame not only with British politicians but also with the EU and Brussels elite. In contrast, Leave and Conservative voting sixty year old participant #14 from rural Dorset voted for the Conservative party in the 2019 election, as she wanted to "try and give Boris some support", as she felt he was "the only person" she could see getting the Brexit deal done, referring to him as "someone strong" to get it done. This reveals unexpected patterns of thinking related to their vote choices. As Brexit played such a significant influencing role here, the following sections will explore sentiment towards the EU and Brexit in further detail.

4.3.4. Euroscepticism and the 'Brussels elite'

The disillusionment, criticism and discontent that participants expressed towards the UK government and politicians were also experienced in regards to the EU parliament and the EU as a whole. This Euroscepticism foregrounded much of participant's decision to vote Leave in the 2016 referendum. Participants noted issues relating to control, enforcement of rules and lack of freedom whilst the UK was in the EU. Issues also related to perceived lack of democracy within the EU, cost of membership and threats to British identity. Sixty year old Leave and Conservative voting participant #26 from Somerset, when asked why he voted to Leave the EU told me that he felt he wanted the UK to have "control" over its laws and regulation without being "driven by an alternative government that's sat above it". Similarly on the notion of control, seventy seven year old participant #16 from a coastal

village in Somerset told me that he had become "anti-EU" ten years ago. When I asked him why, he told me:

> The rule-making, they just seemed to walk all over us. Un-elected people trying to tell us what they wanted done. The one thing that really annoyed me about the European Union was that it was mostly an un-elected assembly. I wasn't happy at all with the fishing system and the immigration. Those are the main things.
>
> Participant #16, 77, Somerset, Leave, Conservative

Likewise, fifty six year old Leave and Green Party voting participant #24 from Wiltshire too spoke of the EU "telling us we can't do this we can't do that", she told me that she didn't see the benefits of being tied to Europe, that she didn't "fall for the economic argument that we need Europe" as "there's a whole world out there". The idea of Britain being dictated to by the EU was felt fairly widely amongst participants that voted Leave. Sixty year old Leave and Conservative voting participant #14 from Dorset told me that although some of her anti-European opinions came from her Father, the reason she voted Leave was due to the issues relating to over-ruling and perceived lack of democracy. She also felt that Britain needed to take "control" of its own rules and regulations, citing issues such as border control, immigration and the economy. She echoed some of the rhetoric from the Leave campaign, telling me her Leave vote meant that she was "taking control of our own way of life", which she felt was "trying to be turned European rather than keeping our own Britishness", this led to expressions of difference between European identity and British identity:

> I voted to vote leave because I was fed up of our country making a decision, then it being over-turned or over ruled by un-elected members of parliament in Europe. Brussels parliament were largely un-elected and self-serving, I have never been part of the EU election process so they just basically governing themselves where I didn't feel in any shape or form I was involved in the way they ran things or the way they made decisions. I just felt totally disenfranchised. I've always disliked having a European passport. I think if you're French you should have a French one, if you're Italian you should have an Italian one, if you're British you should have a British one. We are different from the whole conglomerated mass of Europe. So I voted to keep our British characteristics.
>
> Participant #14, 60, Dorset, Leave, Green Party

Participant #14's statements do not draw upon concrete examples and instead relate to ideas of disenfranchisement, lack of control and threats of a decaying British identity at the hands of the EU. Fifty six year old participant #24 from Wiltshire also expressed feelings of disenfranchisement in

regards to the EU and the parliamentary business in Brussels, she said that she felt that Members of European Parliament (MEPs) seemed "cut off from everybody's day to day life", and that she never seemed to know what was going on and lacked "influence on things". Citing a lack of democracy, she expressed that she felt things were being decided and implemented "behind closed doors". On a more extreme note, forty two year old participant #19 Leave and Conservative voter called the EU a "German led dictatorship" due to the lack of "fair vote for your own leaders there". She cited issues of receiving and handling money from the UK, which she felt should be spent internally in the UK rather than given to the EU:

> What rubbish is it that there are starving people on our streets in the UK, I mean I'm dreading them kicking the homeless out of the hostels soon, but yet we are giving 15 million a week or however much it is to Brussels a week, 1.3 billion a month, but yet we've got homeless sleeping on our own streets and we can't even look after our own, what is all of that about?

> Participant #19, 42, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

Participant #19, after repeating Leave campaign rhetoric as if they were facts, went on to express "we don't need them, we've never needed them", highlighting the UKs ability to stand alone and be independent without the EU. Notions of lacking the ability to look after the needs of the UK due to the EU was also expressed by forty six year old participant #24 from Dorset who felt that there was a lack of understanding of Britain needs and a disrespect for Britain's national laws. Along with other participants, participant #24 cited instances of fisheries and the uneven distribution of access to British fishing waters amongst EU countries. When asked why he voted Leave in the referendum, participant #24 told me his main reason was that he was "fed up" of being "dictated by people from Brussels that have no idea how we do things in this country". He told me:

> I just think in the end people were fed up. They're fed up of being, well it seeming like we were being told all the time what we have to do from somebody that's sat in Brussels that had no idea what was really going on in our country, and the rules here. […] The main issue for me was the fact that all our rules was all European and we've changed because of this. Well hang on a minute they're telling us what we've got to do all the time, and I don't like that. It should be British. It should be British people being led by British people

> Participant #24, 46, Dorset, Leave, Green Party

Participant #24 indicates a lack of sovereignty in the UK whilst in the European Union whereby the UKs power and agency was diminished by the EU's enforcement of law, rules and regulation. Feeling

that Brussels is disconnected from the UK and therefore lacks understanding of its needs, he expresses his wish for the UK to gain sovereignty and restore the UKs agency and voice. Sixty year old participant #26 living in Somerset also felt that the EU was giving the UK "less control over its own destiny". A lot of the time, participants referred to fishing waters as a point of reference when questioned on what it was in particular they felt the UK was losing control over. There was also mention of losing Britishness, or British national identity:

> I think we were losing national identity. I think that I mean obviously we I'm speaking with better knowledge now, but I think we're losing national identity. […] If they carried on as a trading partnership as was voted for originally. I think that would be absolutely brilliant. But for this 'one Europe one political agenda', I just think it's doomed.

> Participant #2, 65, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

The idea of the EU having a hindering effect on national identity in Britain due to a "political agenda" was also expressed by participant #29, a Leave and Conservative voting Dorset resident in his fifties, who told me that the EU has "completely destroyed who we are" and that British people "are too proud a nation and too proud a people", indicating that British people are somewhat unique in their pride and patriotism. The impression that Britain was no longer "sovereign" was articulated by seventy five year old Leave and Conservative voting participant #18 who spoke of Britain being "controlled" by the EU, he told me that "talks of the EU having a European army" put him off the EU even more, making him determined to vote Leave, despite this idea being established as a myth (European Parliament 2019).

Sixty eight year old participant #22 from a fishing village in Cornwall has originally voted "no" in the UK's 1975 European Committees (EC) membership referendum. I asked her what she felt life was like before the UK joined the EC, she told me she felt the UK was "more self-contained":

> We didn't have to have permission from un-elected people who don't do anything and who were just there telling us what to do, I think that's what it was. I felt like our leadership had been taken away from us when we joined the union and I didn't vote for it and never wanted to be in the EU at all. It will never be the same again. No matter how long we are out of it. That's all I can really say about it, I just think it was better.

> Participant #22, 68, Cornwall, Leave, Conseservative

Similarly, seventy five year old participant #18 from Wiltshire had also told me he voted "no" in the 1975 EEC referendum, he told me he was sceptical when, from his impressions, it began to look like a

"bureaucratic organisation", he described the EU as an "unaccountable monolith" who have "taken more and more powers from individual countries" turning it away from a "proper trading area" to "more of a political organisation". The lack of support for the EU due to "political agendas" was expressed by other participants such as fifty six year old participant #20 from Gloucestershire who told me he didn't understand why "economics, politics and social agendas" have to be combined; he then asked me "what does European even mean?" On the issue of finance and money, as we have seen, participants expressed concern and hostility towards the EU and the costliness of membership. Sixty eight year old participant #22 from Cornwall told me that she felt "millions of pounds" was being "wasted and frittered", she referenced the instance of Objective One money that went towards regenerating Cornwall and told me she saw it as the UKs membership money "coming back to us", making it meaningless to her.

> I'm not a hater of Europe I just don't want to be part of the European Union. The fact that all that money was going, and when we got a bit thrown back to us everybody went oh look at this, this is funded by the European Union, and I would just think, no you fool, it's funded by our taxes. It's our money we've given away and they've given some back to us.
>
> Participant #22, 68, Cornwall, Leave, Conservative

Another angle of attitudes towards the EU and finances was one that saw the UK as being the "money pot" of Europe, whereby the UK was "propping up" poorer countries. When asked when she first began to question the EU, sixty nine year old participant #5 told me:

> The first thing was when I found out how much money we was giving them. Here we are propping up poor countries and then I thought well Germany is in the EU… we are still paying Germany for reparations from the war when they are the ones that started the war! And now we are giving them more money! And I thought no. I can't go along with that, and then the fact that we couldn't have a crooked banana or a crooked cucumber. It was so pathetic it really was.
>
> Participant #5, 69, Somerset, Leave, Labour

Participant #5 also makes references to some of the 'Euromyths' explored in previous chapters, which function to frame the EU potential threats to British sovereignty and identity, splitting the political landscape into "us" the British, and "them" (Daddow 2012). Participant #5's repetition of these Eurommyth's surrounding crooked banana's and Germany shows how these severely manipulated voter's attitudes towards the European Union through inaccuracies and misinformation.

Due to the participant sample being rural based, participants included those from farming and agricultural backgrounds and therefore some of the sentiments of Euroscepticism were based around agricultural policy. Sixty year old Leave and Conservative voting participant #26 from Somerset for example told me that disadvantages that British farmers suffer over control of agriculture was one of the driving forces of his Leave vote. Similarly, fifty three year old Leave and Conservative voting participant #28, a farmer living in Gloucestershire expressed his discontent at the way that the EU handled the Bovine (BSE) crisis, placing blame on EU regulation and their handling of the crisis, rather than the UK government. He told me that it caused "some significant cynicism about the EU", also noting that a lot of the agricultural community would "probably be on a similar path to me". He also spoke of his discontent with the blanket approach to all farms across Europe that he felt didn't take individual variations across European countries. Forty six year old participant #17 from Cornwall held similar sentiments, she felt that farmers like her husband were not being given the agency or ability to manage their own land, citing instances of the BSE and tuberculosis (TB) crises amongst animals. Whilst expressing some mild contradictions, she told me:

> From a farming side of it I voted to leave. I think some of the EU stuff is good, like animals and export and welfare, that is good but it's all the subsidies and all of that I don't know if that was a good idea. You've got great lengths of fields going to waste really, but they are getting subsidised for getting put toward this that and the other but you can't actually grow crops and that on it, I think farmers should be able to be self-efficient without all the subsidies.

> Participant #17, 46, Cornwall, Leave, Liberal Democrats

Sixty nine year old Leave and Labour voting participant #5 from Somerset also held concerns over the treatment of farmers and their produce, telling me she felt that the UK was "giving an awful lot of money away and getting very little in return", she referenced EU laws that hinder farmers and their quality of produce, telling me that although she initially voted "yes" in the 1975 EEC referendum to enter a common market, she felt it has all become about "stupid laws". Participant #22, a Leave and Conservative voter aged sixty eight living in Cornwall told me how she felt borders and immigration customs keeps her feeling safe, particularly when travelling. She noted how when the pandemic began "all of a sudden Belgium put a border up, France put a border up, and I thought oh how strange […] there obviously is a need for them".

Moving forward, the final subtheme in this chapter will present the patterns across interviews from participants that voted leave, that manifested in three emotive expressions: protest, pain and victory.

4.3.5. Protest, Pain and Victory

Expressions of Brexit often encapsulated sentiments of protest, pain and victory. Participant #29, a Leave and Conservative voter in his fifties from Dorset and participant of the pilot study, when reflecting on the result of the 2019 general election expressed his discontent with Liberal Democrat leader Jo Swinson planning to revoke Article 50 if her party won. When seeing the result of Boris Johnson's victory and subsequent loss of Jo Swinson's parliamentary seat, he told me:

> I have to admit I woke up, I looked at the results, and I thought yeah. I'm proud. Finally ordinary working class said bollocks to this, we had a referendum, respect the result, thank god for that. This is what it's about. Yeah I'm proud.
>
> Participant #29, 50s, Dorset, Leave, Conservative

Participants that noted feelings of resentment and indicated they wanted change, made reference to Brexit, and how they used it as an opportunity to have their voice heard and change the status quo. Participant #28 voiced this to me:

> The city folk just assumed that everyone was happy with the way it was because they were making lots of money. So therefore it must all be great, the country folk, were much more saying well, you know, this really isn't working as well as it could and maybe it is time for a change and that view really wasn't taken into account. I think that's one of the things that the city folk just chose to ignore […] They just didn't want the status quo to change it felt to me.
>
> Participant #28, 53, Gloucestershire, Leave, Conservative

There was also a sense of disenfranchisement from participant #13, a 56 year old participant from rural Dorset who felt that she wasn't well represented in the political system, and viewed Brexit as the only opportunity to instigate change:

> No matter how I vote, because I'm in rural Dorset, the Conservatives will always get in […] the only time I felt my vote really made a difference was in Brexit.
>
> Participant #13, 56, Somerset, Leave, Liberal Democrats

He expressed sentiments of his Leave vote being a protest vote to be heard and acknowledged. He told me his natural position was Remain, however in the days leading up to the referendum day he was still undecided on how to vote. He told me:

A big part of me wanted to protest vote, a big part of me wanted this chaos. Part of me wanted to show that in actual fact, our political leaders aren't worth hero status, they're actually just awful people with bad guesses, bad gamblers, just chancers. David Cameron, George Osborne, 10 years of austerity […] Thinking of the punk rock era, French revolutions, I was very much in that frame of mind at that time and even as my pencil hit the paper, I was still no come on, you know what the right thing to do is that's Remain. This one is for chaos. And at the end of the day I thought well you're a 50 year old, you just got this one protest, they don't even answer your emails anymore, protest. So I did.

Participant #13, 57, Somerset, Leave, Liberal Democrats

Participant #13 references to instances of austerity and emphasises the carelessness of previous cabinet ministers and Prime Minister's in leading the country and handling the welfare and economy of Britain. He adopted a mind-set akin to the anarchist culture of the punk rock era and uses the Leave vote as a mechanism for resistance and dissent. This echoes ideas of 'casino politics' where there is a tendency to indulge in politics as a 'reckless gamble' (Funk-Kirkegaarde, 2016; Yates 2019). Making reference to the fact that his local MP had repeatedly ignored his emails in the past when trying to communicate his concerns suggests the feelings of not being heard or listened to, this propelled disillusionment and these forces came to be significant motivators for participant #13 in his Leave vote in order to punish the UK government, despite this in fact strengthening the Conservative party. In previous chapters we have seen arguments from those such as O'Toole (2018, p.124) that Brexit had the "nihilistic energy" of punk, where Britain subsequently took pleasure in a "pain recipient" role in driving itself towards self-destructive behaviour (ibid; Hughes 2019). This sentiment was indeed expressed from participants in interviews, for example notions of pain and Brexit were expressed as punishment, forty three year old Remain and Labour voter participant #3 from Wiltshire told me he wanted Brexit to happen as "we need a reality check, it is going to hurt, it is going to really hurt", 'it' referring to Brexit. Likewise, sixty year old Leave and Conservative voting participant #26 told me that he felt that as the British public don't take much interest in politics, "we get the government we deserve". Alternatively, fifty six year old Leave and Green Party voting participant #24 from Wiltshire told me that the political and economic adjustment of Brexit "will be tough, but it will be good in the long run". Likewise, sixty five year old Leave and Conservative voting participant #2 from Dorset told me how it was going to be "difficult" and that "it's going to be painful financially, but I think it'd be worth it in the long run". Ideas of Brexit as something worthy of pain was also articulated by Leave voting sixty year old participant #10 from Devon, who told me since the referendum in 2016 he wished Britain had gone for a "harder Brexit", to get it "done and dusted".

Although expressed in sentiments relating to pain, toughness and durability, Brexit - perhaps because of this – was interpreted and voiced as a national victory for participants that voted Leave. This also relates back to ideas of the nation, as Brexit and the successful Leave result of the referendum were highlighted when participants were asked of a time they felt most proud of their national identity. It was described by seventy five year old Leave and Conservative voting participant #18 for example, who told me he felt it was a "milestone in British history". Alongside others, Brexit was a source of pride for forty two year old Leave and Conservative voting participant #19 as "everyone came together to realise how patriotic they are". For Leave and Conservative votong participant #19, Brexit was a moment of coming together, rather than being a moment of division. She expressed disappointment that there was not greater celebration on January 31st 2020, and noted her annoyance of Sadiq Khan paying to light the London eye up in blue and yellow lights. Despite this, she attended the celebrations in London on the night of the 31st, she told me, "it was amazing, I felt liberated […] it was history wasn't it, history in the making." The importance of Brexit for participants is therefore one that represents the 'ordinary people' as unexpected victors in a battle against the British and European elite. It shows how Brexit was a vehicle for discontent and a mechanism for protest and change, which once successful became a point of national pride.

4.4. Research findings summary

This chapter has focussed on presenting my research findings from the thematic analysis of twenty-nine in-depth interviews, including the pilot study. As shown in section 7.7 of the appendix, there were a large number of themes and patterns identified through the coding process. However, to remain in focus with the research aims and objectives of this study, this findings chapter has focussed on the main areas of investigation; the dynamics of national identity in England, political sentiment and its rural nature. The sub-themes presented in this chapter represent the most re-occurring patterns across all the interviews. However, this is not to say that these sub-themes were expressed by every single participant. As I mention in the opening of each section, other participants did differ in their answers, however these were a minority. As I mention previously in chapter three, the aim of this study was not to generalise this data to the large population, but rather to give meaning at ground level, to some of the wider patterns present at a collective level. This has allowed the data to provide more nuanced and multifaceted themes relating to political and national identity related sentimentalities.

At the beginning of this chapter I presented the dynamics of English identity, which I found to be most commonly expressed in six areas. Firstly, there was a difficulty in expressing English identity, where

participants struggled to locate its meaning and expressed the feeling that English identity had been hijacked by the far-right, causing them to avoid association with it due to feeling uncomfortable with these associations. Following this, the section looked at how participants gave meaning to their Englishness, where they generally made reference to smaller cultural aspects such as sport, religion, rurality, regionalism and collective values. However, participants also became hostile in their responses towards the UKs devolved nations, feeling a sense of unfairness and injustice at a perceived asymmetrical devolution in the UK. English identity in this respect therefore manifested as Otherness, whereby the devolved nations function as an out-group for them to define their national identity against. Following on from this, there was a perception amongst participants that more widely in social and political life there were forces of censorship at play surrounding one expressing their English identity. Much of this was rooted in ideas of political correctness, as I laid out and expanded on later in the chapter. This section ended with outlining participant's desire for further devolution in the UK, so that England could be on par with its neighbouring nations and have their own political assembly, perhaps giving them a political roof to form their identity around.

In the second section I presented the thematic data relating to participant's identifications with Britishness. Similarly to Englishness, some participants felt uncomfortable with the idea of Britishness and patriotism and did not put as much emphasis on their British identity as others. Instead, they found it to be complicated, rooted in imperial sentiments, which brought feelings of shame for them. Instead, they preferred to think of Britishness in its civic nature, emphasising its cosmopolitan nature. However this was not unanimous, the majority of participants did feel a sense of British patriotism and when prompted, they highlighted a nostalgic sense of Britishness rooted in imperial ideas of power, war-time, strength and exceptionalism. At points, participants expressed sentiments of cultural racism, whereby British citizens of Muslim faith were perceived to be a threat to a British way of life. Participants also expressed hostility and stubbornness in their attitudes towards social change, this manifested in their responses to the BLM movement in the summer of 2020 which instigated matters of Britain's history and relationship with colonialism in taking a central focus in public life.

Lastly, the final section of this chapter presented the thematic data on participant's political sentiment, and focussed on the rural and localised nature of this. The themes amongst the data showed that there were significant effects of neoliberalism that have been experienced at a local rural level. Participant's emphasised the rural and regional nature of this, recalling their experiences with stripped back public services in their area. There were expressions of alienation felt by participants, which foreground their sentiments of resentment. This resentment was directed at politicians and political parties, who they felt prioritised urban city areas and left rural areas behind, which reflected

a hostile divide between the rural and urban. Political disillusionment and discontent was widely felt amongst participants, where participants not only spoke of UK politicians but also the EU. At points, Brexit was expressed by participants as something they felt was necessary to get politicians in Westminster to listen to them. In this sense, Brexit can be interpreted as a protest vote, as well as a moment of national victory, where some participants felt Brexit marked a significant win for 'ordinary people' as unexpected victors in a battle against the British and European elite. This showed that Brexit was a vehicle for discontent and a vehicle for protest and transformation, which once successful on January 31st 2020 became a point of national pride.

The following chapter will consist of the discussion of the data, where I will explore the themes of the data in relation to scholarly ideas from the literature review. It will provide a nuanced understanding of how psychosocial processes have influenced political thought and national identity and account for the ways in which participants felt and thought in the political climate of 2020. This will provide an interdisciplinary area of knowledge that accounts for the psychological nature of political sentiment and how it is intertwined with wider cultural, societal and historical forces.

5. Discussion

This chapter will explore the themes laid out in the previous chapter from my research findings and situate them more widely to research in the scholarly fields of psychosocial studies and political psychology. It will apply some of the analysis laid out in the literature review and understand how my research has added, contradicted and provided new angles on the subject of national identity and political sentiment. Firstly, this chapter will explore sentiments of alienation and resentment in rural areas, and the nature of political discontent. Following this, it will look at the fragile nature of English identity, before exploring Englishness after devolution. Thirdly, it will look at how hostility to Others and a form of cultural racism was expressed amongst a section of British identifying participants. Subsequent to this, this chapter will focus on post-colonial melancholia and its manifestation in participant's expressions of British patriotism. Lastly, the chapter will focus on the indulgence in myth and nostalgia and understand it as reflective of processes of defence mechanisms.

5.1. Alienation and resentment in rural areas

Much of the political sentiment amongst participants was characterised by discontent and disillusionment, largely fuelled by localised precarious experiences of neoliberalism, the isolating nature of rural deprivation and Westminster politicians' 'inability' to address rural voters concerns. It was clear that a rural-urban divide was dominant in rural imaginaries, and became a driving force that helped foreground the vote to leave the EU. Brexit offered a vehicle for protest, with some participants recognising its potential for political disruption, it was hoped by participants that their voices could be heard and national pride could be restored after a perceived period of suppression at the hands of the EU and politicians in general.

Feelings of discontent amongst participants in rural areas were foregrounded by experiences of "nested deprivation" (Boswell et al. 2018). Much of the studies on UK deprivation, particularly recently, focus on juxtaposing cosmopolitan areas with places "left behind" by economic globalisation. As argued in a 2018 Southern Policy Centre (SPC) report, these geographically centred explanations of economic decline only draw attention to areas that have suffered large-scale and rapid economic decline such as the North of England, Wales and East coast of England, and the political expression that has been activated in response to experiences of economic stagnation. Meanwhile, experiences of deprivation and inequality in the South have become politically neglected and hidden amongst narratives of affluence and economic prosperity to which Southern citizens are assumed to benefit. The nature of rural deprivation in the South has been dubbed by researchers as 'nested deprivation'

(ibid). Expressions from participants showed recognition that their small towns and villages "serve only as satellites to urban centres where economic activity is concentrated" (Brett et al. 2017, p.1). Participants expressed dissatisfaction and discontent at the levels of declining public infrastructure, and lower incomes combined with higher living costs and the low levels of social mobility that rural areas suffer. They expressed concerns over lack of access to stable employment, opportunities for mobility, investment in the community, and diversity in the economy and other social services. They also expressed sentiments of isolation due to the steady decline of the social and civic assets such as community centres, post offices, leisure centres, independent businesses and small farms that prop up rural economies. Acknowledging these experiences has been crucial in understanding how this erosion of these important assets has caused communities to collapse into insecurity, political disillusionment and cynicism. From previous studies, it has been shown how this has led areas to revolt against the status quo in the form of the ballot box, as support for Brexit and populist parties has had strongest support in less dynamic areas where there has been a sense of being forgotten and left-behind (Rodriguez-Pose 2017; Jennings and Stoker 2017; Brooks 2020). As increasingly socially and spatially isolated places, they have become vulnerable to binary ways of thinking, perhaps as a way of defence. This manifested in a rural-urban divide, to which participants located urban Others, particularly an urban ruling elite, who were responsible for the decline of their areas, due to prioritising urban metropolitan areas. They were perceived as lacking the knowledge and experience to authentically understand rural life and the issues that come with it, which represents a desire for authentic politicians that communicate genuine understandings of localised issues. The lack of this, arguably led participants to feeling disillusioned and resentful, which subsequently played a significant role in building Euroscepticism and the Leave vote.

Disillusionment is a negative affective state that functions off of held beliefs and expectations that are shattered and falsified (Clore et al 1987; Janoff-Bulman and Berg 1998). It has been called an "expectancy violation" (Maher et al. 2018, p.205) whereby it counters expectations, beliefs and treasured assumptions. Discontent too has an affective dimension, whereby trust – which is influenced and tied with emotion - is broken. This break of social contract and consequential dissatisfaction can hinder overall the ability of governments to provide emotional containment to citizens. One can also understand how discontent has a collective nature, whereby citizens can be bound together by strong emotions of discontent (Freud 1930). Disillusionment and discontent, when applied more broadly to political contexts, can represent a reaction to a threat to one's meaningful frameworks used to understand and connect with the world around them (Heine et al. 2006) and can therefore trigger defensive processes (Maher et al. 2018; Festinger 1957). It is widely acknowledged how referendums may function as a vehicle for protesting against economic, systemic and elite

discontent (Fanoulis and Guerra 2017; Goodwin and Heath 2016; Bergman and Passarelli 2021). Brexit as a protest vote against the political consequences a decade of austerity, deprivation, lack of representation and overall discontent in British politics is very well documented across the political field (Sobolewska and Ford 2020), which, from my data, I too believe has played a significant role in underpinning the Leave vote.

Amongst scholarly literature, 'the left behind' have been characterised by a sense of insecurity and marginalisation, who view the EU as a threat rather than an opportunity (Goodwin and Heath 2016; Goodwin and Milazzo 2015). A sense of powerlessness manifested amongst participants due to the ways in which they felt their life is constantly in a state of being determined by external forces. Participants' discussion of discontents such as the lack of affordable housing and decaying community life reflects the wider context of social inequality related to increasing second home ownership, online holiday rental marketplaces such as Airbnb and the favourable government subsidies and tax breaks on second homes (Monbiot 2021). The South West of England is being hit hard by this; according to recent research, rural house prices have increased by 14.2% across England and Wales in the past year, rising twice as fast as cities (Booth 2021). Participants' sentiments of insecurity, that has followed since the erasure of community assets, reflect the ways in which neoliberalism has generated popular discontent amongst populations who have suffered these losses (Jessop 2017; Umney 2018; Cromby 2019). The divide in wealth and opportunity has provided fertile ground for binary ways of thinking that rely on "us" and "them", which is a common element of populism (Laclau 2005; Mouffe 2011; Eatwell and Goodwin 2018).

Participants' sentiments relating to those outside of rural areas highlighted the antagonism towards urban areas, particularly the city-based politicians that they felt favoured urban populations. Much of the research on regions and identity in England show that these identities form around localised experiences such as rural culture (Deacon 2001; 2004; Willett and Giovannini 2014). Such models of identity formation can embody notions of "insiders" and "outsiders" (Paasi 1996), where Other places and their inhabitants become defined as alien and untrustworthy, which drives polarised politics. As seen with the Leave campaign, these place-based sentiments can be weaponised; this was particularly present amongst populist discourse adopted by UKIPs 2015 campaign which focussed on Othering the Westminster and Brussels elite (Pareschi and Albertini 2016). The racial nature of this Othering will be discussed at a later point in section 5.4.

Ideas from participants that largely functioned off these binary ideas have simplified complex politics and replaced it with a basic dichotomy to create an ideal object to project frustration and anxiety. In the case of my participants, this came in the form of Westminster and Brussels elites and affluent

decision makers and citizens in England's urban capital. This corresponds with ideas from Umney (2018) and Palinka (2013), whereby locating a culprit and identifying them as an enemy is a significant part of disenfranchised and discontented citizens. Much of this was exacerbated by the government's handling of the pandemic, resulting in participants reflecting the "Cummings effect" (Fancourt et al. 2020, p.464), whereby the event of Dominic Cumming's flouting government COVID-19 restrictions in 2020 undermined confidence in the government and created a substantial lack of trust in the government to handle the pandemic. This evidently intensified participant's feelings of political disillusionment and hopelessness with the UK government. The fact that Brexit strengthened the Conservative government is also significant, as this brings about questions whether citizens voted Leave with this in mind, hadn't thought about it or felt it was a price worth paying for.

Scholarly discussion also notes the alignment of 'left behind' citizens with a type of reactionism that is engaged in wanting to maintain an exclusive national identity as well as perceiving threats to one's national culture, which holds identity-based hostility to groups who aren't deemed to be in favour of this (Abts and Baute 2021). Stravakakis (2007, p.22) has called this the "return of the repressed", whereby displaced psychic energy is focussed and directed towards anti-EU sentiments. The term *ressentiment* is central for understanding the psychological foundations of Brexit's style of reactionary political behaviour, particularly as it acts as an emotional mechanism (Salmela and Capelos 2021; Capelos and Dermertzis 2022). Salmela and Capelos (ibid, p.200) argue that ressentiment is an "emotional mechanism centred on victimhood", which functions off of two objects: one's valued identity and the self. This is central for understanding how it can act as a foundation for reactionary politics. Reactionary politics combines resentful affectivity with perceived injustice, betrayal, economic anxiety, cultural fear and nostalgic hope (Capelos and Katsanidou 2018; Capelos and Demertzis 2018; 2022; Lilla 2016), much of which was present amongst participants' expressions in interviews.

Certainly amongst participants, there was clear scepticism and fear surrounding issues such as EU bureaucracy, policy and transparency, confirming the notion of the EU as a detached "alien institution" (Spiering 2004; p.139) that attempted to impose laws and treaties across the English Channels and onto a "democratic and free" Britain (Daddow 2012, p.1220). However, participants were expressing additional factors in their decision to vote Leave such as a more focussed discontent with the EU Freedom of Movement and agricultural policies and impacts of EU immigration on Britain. Participants' expressions highlighted a desire to return to a time before the UK was part of the EU, and when Britain still had its imperial global standing. This reactionism too is bound with melancholia and nostalgia and reflects understandings of Brexit from previous studies that Brexit acted as a vehicle

for expressing resentment with the 'way things are' and wishes to return to 'the way things were', due to an aversion to the 'new' (Capelos and Katsanidou 2018; Capelos et al. 2017). These elements combined, show how participants' expressions towards politics had an affective undertone that was bound with frustration, powerlessness, anger, fear, nostalgia and perceived injustice (Capelos and Demertzis 2018). This resonates with understandings from scholars such as Cromby (2019) and McKenzie (2018) who note the power of experiences of exclusion and anger from the result of neoliberal conditions. The positions participants took up in relation to Brexit and British politics were reflective of the defensive nature one may take up when confronted with uncertainty, fear and anxiety, and the employment of psychosocial defence mechanisms, as I will show throughout this chapter. The consequences of discontent with 'the way things are' ultimately provided an ideal environment for participants to indulge in these mechanisms of defence, which included seeing Brexit as an apparatus for a range of functions; disturbance (of political power structures), protest (against discontent and voicelessness) and as an instrument to restore British pride. This shows how resentful or ressentiment-ful activity can determine the paths of citizens' political behaviour and attitudes (Capelos and Demertzis 2018). This goes some way in showing that emotions such as anger, resentment, and anxiety combine with other emotions, and intensify feelings to certain groups that are regarded" as being opposed to one's own interests" (Sullivan 2021, p.271). Along with experiences of alienation, evidently these emotions can be further perpetuated by rurality, due to disconnect and both the real and psychological distance from bureaucratic and political decision making.

5.2.   Fragility of English identity

The fragility of English identity was evident amongst participant's expressions of Englishness as something meaningless and empty, whereby they were unable to locate it as a stable identity. In previous chapters I have explored the difficulties surrounding defining English identity since its awakening post-devolution. Participant's expressions of an inability to locate Englishness reflects arguments from Aughey (2001), who states how the English have never felt a need to exert or question their identity, that it was something that has always been omnipresent and never under threat and therefore the need to defend or explore it just hasn't been there, unlike the Welsh and Scottish. As Weight (2002, p.726) describes, England is a "stateless nation" and therefore with no devolved political community, there hasn't been the foundations to form a coherent sense of identity around. As Goodhart (2006, p.22) states, it's the "the relative absence of an institutionalised Englishness" that foregrounds this. The idea of a general identity void that needs filling is common across discussions of Englishness in scholarly literature (Kumar 2010; Aughey 2007; Bryant 2008), and perhaps the idea of

it as a void is a more helpful metaphor. Young (2008, p.236) argues that there is perhaps a 'curious emptiness of Englishness' that lacks 'cultural essence'.

Furthermore, Kumar (2010) argues that this has meant that people have difficulty in filling it with any substantive and fundamental content. There are arguments to be made about the danger to this, as without the foundations to build a sense of English identity, this absence can leave free terrain for assimilationist distinctions which exclude and Other, with the potential for that space to be mobilised by specific xenophobic forms of nationalism. The presence of this idea was evident amongst participants who expressed tensions with Englishness they did not want to associate themselves with due to the negative connotations that were bound up with ethnonationalism. This was also evident amongst participants who showed awareness in their interviews of the contentious nature of English identity and its potential for conflict. Cameron (2000) explains that "it is natural to make judgements about what kinds of talk are good and which are less good" (ibid, p.viii). In Condor's (2010) study she too found that her interview participants were often invoking normative judgements regarding the right and wrong ways to talk about their English national identity, this is something that I found across participants who also felt forces of censorship were at play when expressing their sentiments, therefore assuming the role of the suppressed victim, and amongst those that felt tensions with English identity. This shows what Condor (2010) and Cameron (2000) describe as the 'reflexive' character of British and English dialogue. By recognising its potential for conflict, participants were showing an understanding of the social norms of talk surrounding English national identity.

The inability to form a substantiated English identity when existing without a political entity arguably has implications for any potential community building. Arguments concerning the ways in which this erodes the capability for a sense of belonging require attention. As belonging reflects "emotional investments and desires for attachments" (Yuval-Davis 2006, p.202), its usefulness as a frame for solidarity and union are becoming more important given the fast pace of globalisation and its effects. An inability to belong in a national community hinders the ability to locate oneself and find meaning in the world (Bell 1999). Not only this, a lack of civic structure to build a national identity around can harm the ability to form an identity that is inclusive and diverse (Mason 2000). This is due to the way that a civic national identity endorses that idea of the nation as being composed of all those who subscribe to the same set of political values and practices, regardless of their gender, language, ethnicity, class and race (Ignatieff 1994). The lack of capability to view Englishness as something that could encapsulate this was evident amongst the participants' expressions. The salience of this was evident during the European football championships 2020, with Gareth Southgate, the England

football team manager, fulfilling a space to give meaning and depth to 21st century Englishness, by promoting Englishness as something diverse and inclusive (Southgate 2021).

Although participants struggled to locate and substantiate Englishness with meaningful definition or significance, attempts were made to fill it with expressions that ranged from a variety of functions, however these were arguably insubstantial and fragmented. References to aspects such as culture and class were sporadic and failed to resonate unanimously. Ultimately, as Kumar (2010) suggests, there are small scraps that make up for Englishness such as cultural aspects like the countryside and an aversion to cities. Much of this was evident in the participants' answers, who located Englishness as something embedded in the rural traditions in England. Englishness was also referred to as a meaningful value system that embodies loyalty and an assimilation of ideas connected to law and respect, as well as something that was an acquisition from birth.

In contrast to prior studies on Englishness (Leddy-Owen 2014a; 2019), I did not find my participants' expressions of English identity to be based on racially exclusive notions of whiteness. However, there were some exceptions and whilst they did not make direct reference to race, they did make reference to assimilation, boundaries and Englishness as a birth right. Exclusionary distinctions of English identity were something that came up in some participants' answers, as they defined their sense of Englishness with exclusionary notions of assimilation and insular ideas. Some of the participants would be quick to root their English identity in their place of birth, suggesting a combination of both civic and ethnic distinction of national identity (Kiely et al. 2005). This suggests English national identity as an ascribed identity at birth rather than an acquired identity (Bechhofer et al. 1999) Furthermore, participants claimed that English identity is something you can only claim if you were born in England, this corresponds with essentialist approaches (Erikson 2001; Smith 1991; Geertz 1973) and proves the multidimensionality of identity. Reference to blood was made by one participant, which reflects ideas from Ignatieff's (1994) ideas regarding blood, belonging and the exclusivity of ethnic identity. Some participants' sentiments also highlighted clear themes of loyalty to England, suggesting notions of abiding to traditional civic behavioural norms in England, however these norms were British in nature, further showing that English identity perhaps lacks its own cultural norms and is still heavily conflated with Britishness, as argued by Hall (2001).

These elements outlined participants' ideas about inclusion and approval and point to ideas surrounding social cohesion. This is as minority groups' willingness to "sign up" to national identification is widely regarded as an important indicator of the social cohesion within national societies (Nandi and Platt 2014). Statements from participants regarding loyalty and obedience perhaps points to ideas surrounding minority groups' ethnic or cultural distinctiveness posing as a

challenge to the national consensus they believe in. This corresponds with the arguments surrounding how the maintenance of strong ethnic identities is often regarded as "problematic for an integrated society" (ibid, p.1). Ultimately, sharing a national identity purely by citizenship and residency, participants felt was not enough to substantiate an English Identity, which is in line with subjectivists who argue that in order to share a national identity people must possess distinctive *common* characteristics, a "way of life" (Mason 1999, p.262).

However, participant's strict ideas about inclusion and approval was not unanimous, as stated previously, there were definitions of Englishness that did not rely on these ideas and instead looked to cultural points. At points, participants defined Englishness in cultural terms, being left to identify with everyday cultural stereotypes of Englishness corresponds with Skey's (2011) ideas on everyday nationhood and Coll's (2002, p.212) idea of the English as "left-over people". Symbolic nation traits in everyday cultural products like fish and chips and football were located by participants and this reflected ideas from Billig (1995) on 'banal nationalism'. The ways in which some participants made reference to Euro '96 and English football shows the cultural significance of Euro '96, and football more generally, on popular imaginations of Englishness; it seems that there was a shift in which English identity entered both the popular culture mainstream and the collective national imagination, particularly following the period of New Labour and 'Cool Britannia'', which came together in the decade following '96. However, the register here was English, not British, furthering England's symbolic entanglement with Britishness (Aughey 2007; Hall 2001). This sporting event provided participants with a vehicle to exercise and define their newly found English identity, foregrounded by associations of class, masculinity and popular culture. Sport often ignites national identity, and football particularly, is commonly a manner of expressing and exercising national identity (Perryman 2008).

Previously I have discussed Anderson's (1983) concept of nationhood as a deep horizontal comradeship, but within this idea, Others are non-members to which this deep horizontal comradeship does not extend (Heath and Tilley 2005), particularly with those identifying as English. The only instance where those that saw themselves as English imagined this form of comradeship was when rooted in locality, suggesting a localised comradeship. In previous studies on Englishness, researchers have also found notions of Englishness as a "rural class" (Mann 2011, p.119), which corresponds with participants' placed importance on quintessentially English rural traditions. Regional identities in the South West are often bound by components such as rural, fishing and farming culture (Deacon 2001; 2004; Willet and Giovanni 2014). These can act as ties to one's national identity; participant's made reference to upbringing, which also suggests a nostalgic dimension of his regional

identity (Devine 1992). Participants making reference to their communities returning to 'how it used to be' during the COVID-19 lockdowns is reflective of this. There are arguments surrounding the ways that the culture of capitalism and neoliberalism hinder communities' ability for cohesion (Snell 2006), and perhaps the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent local lockdown measures had in fact helped participants restore their attachment to their local area and community. Community cohesion is an important factor for some participants, and in this local sense, it is not only 'imagined' as Anderson would have it (Anderson 1983) and instead something real and immediate that provides roots to their English identity. This represents how identity within regions and rural areas are based on social and communicational identity (Keating 1998). Furthermore, the references of my participants to rural territory as having claim to a cultural individuality of its own (Wagstaffe 1994), marked by working-class histories and tradition, are reminiscent of ideas from Thompson (1968) and show the significance of territorial history in forming identities (Deacon 2001; Smith 1991). This isn't to say that it is particular to the South West region; rather it is prominent there and may also be equally dominant in other rural areas however this hasn't been tested.

Ultimately, definitions of Englishness and the exploration of it in participant interviews did find some points of definition and meaning, particularly when rooted in culture and rurality. However, these were fragmented, loose and differed across participants. The nature of this disjointed and contentious identity is ultimately fragile and at risk of becoming appropriated by exclusionary sentiments. This could already be seen happening with participants pointing to acquisitions such as birthplace, and elements of strict abidance to English laws and customs, with some participants expressing the need for assimilation in order to identify as English. English identity in some cases also had a victim-like nature, whereby some participants felt that the presence and space for minority ethnic Others to practice their cultural customs in England was a direct threat to Englishness; this reaction is rooted in a belief that the customs of the Other contradicts Englishness. Conversely, it was also clear that there was opportunity to build upon existing cultural and localised ideas that are associated with agricultural life, working-class identities, food and music - attributes that don't require the same hostile notions involved ideas of assimilation. With participants noting the tensions they felt with English identity and it's conflations with the far-right, English identity remains something fragile and insubstantial. As it stands, there is not much potential for Englishness to perform any kind of facilitation of an affective holding environment, possess the 'containing' (Bion 167) qualities that national identity can offer, such as belonging (Richards 2007), which may impact how and where people seek containment from, as will be explored at a later point.

5.3.   Devolution and Englishness

My findings found that amongst English identifying participants, Englishness was heavily defined with reference to ideas on sameness and difference, particularly in relation to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Not only did this resonate strongly with ideas of an Other being required for national identity to provide its function (Leed 1991; Smith 1991; Wodak 2009), but there was a sense of bitterness and envy in this respect, which provided insight into the ways that participants understood themselves in a devolved UK. This reflects much of the literature on English identity post 1997 (Deacon 2012; Aughey 2004; Bognador 1999) however with a psychosocial angle I can explore the affective nature of such dynamics which will happen in this section.

When describing English identity, participants often made reference to the rising prominence of Scottish and Welsh national identity post UK devolution, which corresponds with arguments surrounding England's awakening and emergence following devolution (Mycock 2013; Rees 1999; Guibernau 2006). Factors that led participants to begin calling themselves English was ignited by Scotland's self-expression and campaign for autonomy, which has elements of competitiveness. This correlates with discussions on the awakening of English national consciousness as a response to devolved nations' perceived desire for independence, and a reactionary English back lash (Curtis and Heath 2000; Bognador 1999). Kumar (2010) argues that a powerful response to the void of Englishness is not just experiencing its lacking nature, but also bitterness. He goes onto explain that this is a common trait amongst former imperial powers, where a sense of victimisation plays a strong role in shaping identity (ibid; Mycock 2013) A common form of national identification is based upon foundations of 'sameness' and 'difference' (Wodak 2009) and implies a relationship between themselves and an Other (Leed 1991). Condor (1996; 2006) explains how in England there is a general tendency for people to construct their national identity and imagery through the use of intranational components. In turn, they define themselves in contrast to an Other, which is something I have shown in participants' definitions of England in contrast to Scotland and Wales. Furthermore, Condor and Abell (2006a; 2006b) explain that those from England are more inclined to perceive their own orientation with national identity through both comparison and similarity to others. This is described as "a contrast to an imaginary class of compatriots" (Condor 2011, p.39-40), whom can be located in various places; a historical past, geographical location, social class, generation and amongst an ideological group. Kumar (2006a; 2010) argues that as England's identification with its imperial history moves further into the past, its focus becomes more emphasised on its nearer neighbours, reflecting its changing position in the world post-decolonisation. Furthermore, as the UK is no longer part of the EU, its attention may turn inwards on itself. Participants' expressions showed how formations of English identity are still persisting to form around a dynamic relationship with neighbouring Others

after having only just come out into the open in the relatively recent past. Constructions of English identities through a relationship to an imagined Other echoes Gillis (1994) and Eriksen's (1995) arguments surrounding the construction of national identities in contrast to an Other, whereby English national identity is functioning in relation and in opposition to an out-group (Deutsch 1955). The devolved nations in the UK act as a vehicle for out-grouping. Suggestive sentiments of betrayal felt by participants in response to England's neighbouring nations gaining autonomy, was interpreted by participants as direct opposition to the idea of a united Britain. This brings into question whether this sentiment increased due to the four nation approach used in government communication during the pandemic.

Through the lens of psychoanalytic object relations theory, one could argue that participants are living in a world where they feel conflicted and defensive in terms of their national identity. One can understand the idea of Britain here in terms of unconscious investment in Britain as a trusted good object (Winnicott 1953). Once that attachment fails and is annihilated by an Other (a neighbouring nation in the British union exercising its self-determination), the identification with Britain as a good object fragments and produces conflict. Sentiments and cultural positions that participants took in relation to their nationality and their ambivalence about Englishness links to feelings of rejection and betrayal. In response, a new object (England) is found in retaliation, to source identity and to shore up a sense of self and restore the ego. One could say that this process reflects patterns of attachment and disillusionment repeated at a national level in England following Brexit (Henderson and Wyn Jones, 2021). Calls for self-governance in England from English identifying participants show a desire for a civic institution to provide a sense of belonging and containment, or what Richards (2007) calls 'emotional governance'. As discussed in chapter two, section 2.3.10, without a nation's ability to provide psychological dimensions of identity and belonging, there is a possibility that a nation and its disenchanted people will see appeal in "regressive ethno-nationalist" sentiments, which goes some way in explaining participant's inclination to use ethnic and assimilationist ideas to fulfil a sense of Englishness.

Participants made reference to Wales and Scotland being "allowed" to express their national identity, whilst feeling as though they themselves could not do the same in England. I have previously mentioned how Kumar (2010) and Mycock (2013) note a certain sense of victimhood amongst the English, and Oaten (2014) also notes the sense of collective victimhood felt by members of the English far-right. Some participants felt they could not assert their idea of national identity without receiving criticism. This suggests English national consciousness as having come from perceived oppression in that there is a sense that the English are being prevented from expressing their identity. Here, as I

have shown, participants felt that the English cannot express or articulate their national identity in the same way that the Scottish and the Welsh can. There was a clear sense of perceived oppression and lack of ability to exercise their political liberty (Weight 2008).

Pilkington (2016) says that a sense of victimhood in this context stems from a failure to identify as a majority, and instead people see themselves as a discriminated minority, where power relations have been inverted in their mind. Here, as I have discussed in relation to the participants in this study, there is a perception that the Other's (Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish) ability to exercise their identity is weighted against that of the person wishing to take up their English identity. This sense of disparity further indicates that English identity is shaped by an experience of victimhood tarred with envy (Mycock 2013; Weight 2008). Here one can argue that that UK's devolution is asymmetrical in regards to the perception that English identity is denied whereas Scotland and Wales are given free rein to articulate their identity. The sense of grievance experienced here, brings to mind Klein's (1946) description of persecutory anxiety, whereby in order to fend off anxiety, one splits the external world into a black and white paranoid reality. The positions taken up by my participants also reflect ideas of displacement (Freud 1937; Freud 1937b) and projection (Klein 1946) whereby they project and displace unwanted emotions onto neighbouring devolved nations.

Ultimately one can argue that Englishness continues to form around comparison and contrast with its neighbouring nations. This shows little progression since 1997, and reflects the persistence of the problematic issues bound with Englishness and its precarity. In turn, one can see how English identifying participants' relationship with Englishness and the significance of Scotland and Wales as a mode of difference is reminiscent of the psychosocial dynamics involved in the defence mechanisms discussed in this chapter. The aspiration on the part of my English identifying participants for their own devolved government is arguably likened to a wish for the nation to provide the kind of affective containment and emotional governance discussed by Richards (2007). Therefore, this is an advantageous framework for understanding the dynamics of national identity and political sentiment in turbulent times.

5.4.   Hostility to 'Others'

British identifying participants explored a range of perspectives on Britishness in their interviews with me. Some participants echoed Britishness in England as being associated with civic structures of identity, reflecting ideas surrounding Britain's institutional history of the Church of England, Rule of Law and Crown and Parliament (Colley 1996). This echoes previous findings amongst the literature, as these elements historically enable the fusing together of common identity as these institutions act as overreaching pillars of security, rights and laws for its citizens (Ignatieff 1994 ; Greenfeld 2016; Parekh

2000). The construction of a civic British identity also allows multicultural communities to feel a sense of affinity to the existence of a British national community, as it is not one defined by race or ethnicity but instead on belonging to a common identity bound by institutions. Pride expressed by participants in these established civic structures and institutions reinforces ideas surrounding the civic nature of British national identity following those such as Parekh (2000) and Greenfeld (2016). Civic identities help fuse together a collective identity that doesn't rely on birthplace, race, culture or ethnicity (Curtice and Heath 2000; Smith 1981), and the adoption of civic Britishness amongst some participants made it clear that national identity based on race and ethnicity was something they were uncomfortable with. Instead they embraced the cosmopolitan and multicultural nature of Britain, adopting elements of cosmopolitanism due to the way that it enables citizens to live together in a community that focusses solely on shared morals, values and democratic institutions (Kleingeld and Brown 2013).

However, not all participants held these sentiments. When some of the British identifying participants began to explore their sentiments towards Britishness, ideas of threat began to manifest. The nature of their sense of Britishness also became binary, and adopted notions of Othering. In British identifying participants' cases, the characteristics of the Othered group were defined through cultural traits such as religious practices, which they felt were not British. It is widely accepted that racism extends "beyond biological characteristics accorded to race" (Pilkington 2016, p.93). According to Barker (1981), this is 'new racism', a cultural form of racism that functions by using ideas surrounding genuine fears concerning immigration to imply that there is a threat to ways of life or culture, therefore becoming ingrained in structures of inclusion and exclusion, which is common amongst traits of islamophobia (Pilkinton 2016; Allen 2010). Participants were also expressing ideas surrounding assimilation when answering questions on whether they felt "anyone" could be British. Mason (1999) defines two forms of assimilationists; radical and moderate. Radical assimilationists are more extreme in nature, aiming to create a society in which minority cultural communities abandon distinct cultural customs. However, moderate assimilationists, aim for a society in which members of these minority cultural communities abandon just "those customs and practices which are either unjust or in conflict with some of the central public customs and practices of the dominant group" (ibid.). Using this framework is useful for perhaps understanding these participants as moderate assimilationists, due to the perceived dominance of minority cultures in England as a threat to the expression and an undermining of British identity and ways of life.

The boundaries of Britishness that were drawn by participants using "cultural markers" (Smith 1991, p.23) of religion and birthplace, signifies a desire for 'sameness' amongst fellow nation members.

These cultural markers cement ideas of both "us" and "them", which are common amongst group identities (Volkan 2004). It is clear that ideas of national or cultural exceptionalism face challenges from the trans-cultural forces of globalisation (Orgad 2015). This has impacted the way that participants understand and comprehend Britishness and Others. Participants were engaging in a process of differentiation marked by rejecting all that is perceived to be alien from the self, furthermore reflecting the idea from Guerra (1992, p.128) that "the Other becomes the repository of all that does not belong to the collectivity".

Ideas of 'them' and Others manifested amongst some participants when locating an out-group that did not conform to their ideas of Britishness. Participants expressing these sentiments were primarily making reference to Islamic culture in the UK. Ultimately, participant's perceptions of a negative out-group that threatened Britishness were identified as predominantly people of Islamic faith. The presence of this amongst interviews with participants shows the salience and prevalence of hostility towards these groups. It reinforces ideas of social categorisation and comparison (Festinger 1954; Tajfel 1974) as well as Barker's (1981) understanding of cultural racism. Participants' responses showed a clear presence of these ideas in expressions of Britishness, therefore showing a relationship between cultural racism, exclusionary Britishness and hostility to the mobility of different cultures in the modern globalised world. Islamophobia's long history and presence in the United Kingdom is widely noted, and used mostly to describe a new cultural racism and the rejection of and discrimination against resident Muslim populations in the 'West' whereby it's socialised fear and associated perceived threat has manifested post 9/11 (Allen 2010; Barker 1981; Modood et al. 1997). Muslims have been perceived as a negative out-group to which participants perceived as a threat to Britishness and British way of life. There are significant psychosocial dynamics at play here; Joffe (2007) explains how dominant group processes of out-grouping others can assume a paranoid quality, whereby they are associated with undesirable social qualities which are perceived as threatening to the core values of society. In some participants' cases, these included perceived threats of Sharia Law and the subsequent erasure of British cultural customs. These sentiments also reflect Morgan's (2014; 2016) arguments that migrants often come to serve as the ideal projective object, onto whom people project their own unwanted anxieties which become fused with cultural racism. It is also important to note that along with ethnic minorities, EU migration was also located amongst participants as a source of discontent and reasoning behind the Leave vote. This further shows how powerful unwanted Others are in shaping political sentiment, and suggest a binary black and white paranoid state of mind, where complexities are simplified into digestible ideas in order to rid oneself of unwanted persecutory anxiety, which must be eradicated (Bollas 2018; Klein 1952). This provides an understanding of the hostile attitudes from participants towards immigration, giving further insight into the Leave vote.

Hostility to immigration is also reflective of the desire to maintain national boundaries in reaction to modern globalised living, where different cultures are now more mobile and thus transcending traditional boundaries (Orgad 2015).

Morgan (2014; 2016, p.1) discusses the xenophobic rhetoric amongst the Brexit campaigning, he considers how "bodies – both individual ones as well as the body politic they constitute – attempt to stay safe under conditions of perceived threat". Discussing how psychoanalytic ideas can be useful in helping understand attitudes towards the Other, he explores how the migrant can come to serve as a perfect projective object where one can dispose unwanted anxieties, which can often be fused together with excessive racism: "They become the barbarian at the gate" (ibid). Morgan explains that what is significant here is the way that these social processes support the denial of one's own nature and bolster the splitting off and evacuating of uncomfortable characteristics of ourselves and locating them in Others, also known as projective identification. Earlier, in chapter two I explored Perryman's (2008) argument that the rejection of immigrants is linked to a rejection of a European identity, that the English mourn an all-white Englishness, which suggests a defensive phantasy element as there never has been an all-white Englishness, as post-colonial historians remind us (Gilroy 2004). It could perhaps be argued instead that there is an inability to mourn and therefore this leads to further questions on the themes of melancholia, a point that will be explored in the next section.

Participants' sentiments towards the Other reflect powerful divisions between "us" and "them" as explored by Joffe (2007). This split can also be seen in the rhetoric seen amongst both UKIP's campaigning during the 2014 European election and the 2016 Leave campaign, the most classic example being UKIPs 'Breaking Point' campaign (Virdee and McGeever 2018; Durrheim et al. 2018). Not only did this rhetoric conjure up images of European Migrants, but it also included middle-class Remainers, an Etonite metropolitan elite ruling over in Westminster and a faceless bureaucratic Brussels elite. Amongst the Leave Campaign rhetoric on immigration, one can see that from a psychosocial perspective, this largely centred on the idea of a lost object, whether it was financial or material, and how it had been taken away or destroyed by welcoming of immigrants. Bollas (2018) argues that at a time when uncertainty and anxiety is high, a tendency to create physical objects to keep out unwanted fears can occur and manifest in paranoia:

> "Scapegoating simplifies a highly complex set of fears. "Mexicans" can therefore be translated as "any unwanted person". Trump ostensibly (and improbably) intends to create a physical object to keep out the unwanted" (Bollas 2018, p.101).

We can understand this example in a British context as the Zeitgeist Trump and Brexit are closely linked; European immigrants have often taken the role of the scapegoated Other. At points, participants located immigration as a source of blame, as well as the EU as representing the entitlement of political elitism in Brussels that dictates the everyday liberties of British people. European migrants were also blamed for destroying a sense of national community in Britain, taking jobs and harming British traditional life. Bollas (ibid) explains how this psychology was cultivated in British minds during the Brexit campaign, where people's interpretation of the external world was reduced to black and white. This kind of paranoid thinking bound people together with affect, simplifying complexities into digestible ideas that appear to be cohesive and assumed to be accurate. Through projection, they could rid themselves of unwanted persecutory anxiety and aim this to an Other who could then be eradicated:

> "By confusing migrants with terrorists, by suggesting that the EU programme of open borders stole British jobs, a failing Tory government and disenchanted people who were indeed struggling to make ends meet (as they had to for decades) had found their scapegoat. People far removed from the shores of this gentle isle were to blame" (Bollas 2018, p.103).

These ideas reflect some of the sentiments from participants, who at times were quick to locate a scapegoat to blame for their disenchantment. Some participants believed that Britain was "falling apart" due to immigration and "open borders" which they linked to the influence of a strong left-wing influence in politics. The term "woke" or "wokeism" in politics has been branded as the name for a perceived left-wing agenda more widely within political culture, identity politics and society. "Woke" can be defined as one becoming awakened to society's ills and social injustices, whereby histories of oppression are highlighted and there is acknowledgment of their repercussions today (Kanai and Gill 2020; Velasco 2020). Criticisms of "wokeness" and political correctness are often characterised by those who either oppose movements it is associated with or believe the issues are exaggerated. Bollas (2018) explains that when political movements are based on paranoia surrounding an Other, the group dynamics will become more isolated and dangerous once they discover that thousands of other people share the same sentiments. This retreat into paranoia, then becomes something of confirmation and assurance, those who do not share this paranoid vision are regarded as "aliens" who threaten the interests of the in-group, "a migrant seeking to cross the borders of the mind" (ibid, p.110) and must be kept out as they threaten the paranoid's defensive identity.

5.5.   Post-colonial melancholia

When speaking to participants who had told me they identified as patriotic, it became clear that Britain's imperial past was for them, a dominant source of pride. By discussing Britain's war-time and

military efforts, participants' sentiments were reflecting a sense of melancholia, which points to a difficulty in mourning and letting go of a version of the past. References to Britain's military engagement were contributing to narratives of heroism, which in turn acted to strengthen feelings of Britishness.

Those, such as Langland (1999, p.64), state how the shared collective experiences of history is reinforced by a sense of "territorial attachment to an island homeland". Law (2005) describes Britain as a mental island, and finds the source of British nationalism amongst myths and symbols of maritime and sea power. Emphasising the image of borders and water, he states that "this kind of island nationalism derives its force not only from land-based 'roots' but also from the imaginary relationship of the collective group to the sea and the coastline" (ibid, p.267). These boundaries provide space where "strangers may arrive and natives may depart" (ibid). Sea borders can fulfil imagined political, military and cultural fantasies and tensions between "defensive and offensive functions" (ibid) where power is projected over the sea. Law continues to explain that the English Channel separating the British mainland from the European continent propagates its inhabitants as "island people" (Childs, 1997, p. 47), where their attitudes towards the outside world, particularly Europe can sometimes be reflective of this. The significance of territory was evident amongst participants expressions of British patriotism and reflects ideas from Storey (2001) and Deacon (2001) on the symbolic value of territory, battleground and borders in the national imagination.

Following on from the previous section, it has been understood that 'difference' is common amongst identity politics. It is this notion of sameness and difference that make up the foundations of national identities. Law (2005, p.267) writes that this kind of mentality of uniqueness amongst island nations are caught up within ideas of boundaries as they "express and define the inside and outside of the island nation as a cohesive social unit" and thus find expression in the "width and shape of the boundary line". Law (2005, p. 267) argues that island nations surrounded by sea borders, in their physicality "accentuate and colour the imagined political, military and cultural tension between the defensive and offensive functions inscribed in the boundary". Participants acknowledged in their interviews that they felt Britain was exceptionally unique in its island geography and ability to fend off and protect itself against foreign attack. Such ideas reflect rhetoric that focussed on these elements in the peak of Britain's imperial expansion in the 19th and early 20th centuries and has continued into the 21st century (Daddow 2018). This, Daddow argues, has left an imprint on Britain, whereby its approach towards the outside world has been projected in terms of the supposed uniqueness of its past, present and future destiny. This defensive attitude to the outside world in turn, has run deep into British identity constructions, thus making British people deeply rooted in the "geopolitics of its

'island story'" (ibid, p.2). This in turn, has made it difficult to ground any kind of supranational identity such as a European identity, which shows some indication as to why a European identity failed amongst those that voted Leave. Participants' perceived exceptional views regarding the uniqueness of Britain reflects those wider island anxieties about external threats to Britain's projection of power. Emphasis on Britain's island borders and how this makes Britons 'different' is also reminiscent of Churchill's pseudo-biological British island race discourse (Churchill 1964; Barnett, 1982), which proved to be resonant at the time of interviewing.

Emphasis from some participants on the "positive things" about the circumstances of British imperial history reflects arguments from Curtice and Heath (2000, p.1) that Britain, specifically England, has always had an advantage in enjoying "the fruits of a great and prosperous empire" but at the same time exclude its darker sides and the persistence of its inequalities that exist today (Pendlebury and Veldpaus 2018). Ideas from participants also reflect ideas from Macphee and Poddar (2007), Gilroy (2004) and Kumar (2001; 2003) who argue that Britishness is largely associated with the British Empire, where ultimately, the Empire persists to exist as a position of privilege, authority and liberty in expressions of Britishness. This post-imperial mind-set therefore poses a threat to multiculturalism in Britain, due to the persistence of ideas surrounding white-British superiority and privilege. Furthermore, the shared historical collective narratives of war and the British Empire has enabled and reinforced a large group identity bound by the chosen glories of the past (Volkan 2004), and facilitates territorial attachments to an "island homeland" (Langland 1999, p.64). One should also note the possible presence of the dominance and persistence of imperial narratives in the public sphere from political figures such as Winston Churchill, Enoch Powell, Margaret Thatcher, and more recently in light of Brexit from those such as Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson, where uses of highly emotive and contentious phrases such as "take back control" and "global Britain" echoed throughout the Leave campaign have suggested a nostalgia that relates to sentiments of power and loss. Similarly, statements and themes of protecting and recovering territory, and remaining strong and forceful in face of intimidation amongst participants, particularly surrounding the Falklands War were largely reflective of Thatcher's rhetoric during the 1982 Falklands war (Monaghan 1998), which pushed back against ideas of decolonisation (Kenny 2017). The collapse of British imperial power occurring following the Suez crisis, represented a significant moment of imperial British shame (Peden 2012), Dodds (1996, p.571) stated, "for many people in the UK, the 1982 Falklands War continues to signify the determination of the British people to restore the wounded pride of the British nation", particularly following the Suez crisis. Further academic discussion identified the narratives

surrounding the Falklands war as historical phantasy[12] and a national mythology (Barnett 1982; Gooch 1990). It contains suggestions of post-colonial melancholia and imperial nostalgia, which, as defined previously, is associated with the loss of empire and the decline of national grandeur (Lorcin 2013). For example, references from participants to colonial military figures, and reference to the 1964 film Zulu made by one participant, reflects the emotional investment in such imperial narratives. The central themes of Zulu are the heroism, defiance and inventiveness of imperial officers and the unwavering courage and bravery of the ordinary British army (Lievan 1998). The war itself has come to serve as a piece in Britain's "Empire Story" in which its heroes have been celebrated due to the heroic defence and the glorification of Britain (ibid, p.426). The film thus serves to mythologise war and promote macho ideas of masculinity where such narratives become "myths of nationhood itself providing a cultural focus around which the national community cohere" (Dawson 1994, p.10). Emphasis on British military and colonial history and reference to Zulu therefore shows continuing resonance of heroic themes amongst Britishness that are conflated with ideas of macho masculinity today.

Furthermore, the defensiveness and victimisation amongst participants in response to the removal of statues seen in the summer of 2020, shows the ways in which British patriotism is in entwined with the narratives that these statues represent and represented. Simmons (2007, p.1; Drichel 2018) views the narcissism of Britain's imperial history as pathological, stating that it is a "portrait of narcissism [as] a grandiose sense of superiority alternating with feelings of loss, rage and revenge" where notable figures provide a "variety of ways to reflect back to the imperialist a grandiose self-image". Coming to terms with the realities of British history through the BLM movement gaining national media coverage thus disrupts associations and investments in grandiose self-images of Britain as a positive heroic force on the global stage. Themes of patriotism that were at play here came in the form of "blind patriotism" (Huddy and Kathib 2007, p.231). Following on from this, one can argue that the participants' patriotic pride suggest an unwillingness to accept or give criticism to the nation. In contrast, participants who identified as British, expressed shame with Britain's colonial past and expressed a desire for active political change - thus reflecting a "constructive patriotism" (ibid) where participants were invested in positively improving the country for the better.

Psychosocially speaking, one can argue that British identity amongst participants melancholic for Britain's colonial past, having been disrupted by the events of the BLM movement in 2020, had a limited ability provide psychological fulfilment for citizens. Therefore, with such qualities absent, it is

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[12] Here I use the word 'historical phantasy' to highlight the unconscious nature and investment of national mythology

possible that participants became disenchanted and sought to defend against such uncertainty by adopting a position of victimhood and identifying with nostalgic forms of nationalism that paint a picture of a perfect and uncomplicated past. Such images and sentiments are also shaped by modes of phantasy associated with melancholia and narcissism. Taking up a position of Victimhood can be seductive and emotionally powerful; victim identities can lead groups into to a sense of shared social cohesion and blind followership to national, religious and political leaders and groups, that offer an experience of emotional fulfilment and containment (Gilroy 2004; Volkan 2004; Richards 2017; Sklar 2018). As Freud explains, people suffering from melancholia may "cling to [the past] emotionally; they cannot get free of the past and for its sake they neglect what is real and immediate" (Freud 1910, p.16). This means that the past may have a dominating effect on one's ability to comprehend the present, which offers insight into sentiments from participants that placed value on commemorative statues from Britain's colonial past. In psychoanalysis, mourning is referred to as a process that ends with a kind of acceptance, whereby the mourner feels able to engage in the external world once again, despite the loss having significantly changed it (Freud 1924; Sklar 2018). The difficulty of mourning and its manifestation into melancholia is part of a process of denying unpleasant realities, as it causes a disturbance to the pleasure principle (Freud 1910). One can perhaps understand the events of the BLM movement (which brought the harsh realities of colonialism into public debate), acting as this disturbance, which has ultimately to the indulgence of myth and manipulation of historical narratives as a means to navigate unpleasant truths (Psarrou 2003).

At certain points, when confronted with the realities of Britain's problematic imperial past, participants reacted defensively, retreating to a role of victimhood to which perpetrators were located amongst simple explanations of a "woke agenda" engulfing politics. Processes of victimhood were at play here, where people "respond to accusations of being privileged by listing various disadvantages or hardships to disprove the accusation", and may even counter accusations by condemning their accusers as the 'real' privileged ones (Campbell and Manning 2018, p.161-162). Critics to political correctness often highlight that left-wing people are the ideological majority and thus enjoy the privileges that come from being members of an overwhelmingly dominant group, therefore policies such as affirmative action or space and time given to minorities are therefore believed to be unfair and detrimental to non-minorities. This can lead to increased resentment towards those who are in categories that do not receive much concern, and Participants expressing the perceived injustice at recent political attention to social justice causes are reflective of the conflict and bitterness bound up with resentment (Capelos and Demertzis 2022), which provides an obstacle to accepting an Other, which is common amongst the 'culture wars' (Gordon 2018).

My findings have shown that post-colonial melancholia has operated through individual expressions. Participant's sentiments were suggestive of a sense of melancholy for a time before globalisation, when Britain held an influential position on the global stage due to imperial expansion. This aids understandings of why the EU was perceived amongst participants to be a hindrance to Britain's prosperity, which enacted a role reversal; "the coloniser assuming the role of the colonised" (Koegler et al. 2020, p.585). This has a powerful affective dimension to it as it is foregrounded by loss, suffering and blame. Such emotions have been key in the ways in which Britain's colonial past is brought up as a source of collective national self-esteem, and used as a defence mechanisms to deny perceived unappealing historical narratives that have surfaced into the public sphere during and following the BLM movement of 2020. It is arguable that this has also taken the form of collective narcissism which can be seen as a "defensive type of in-group commitment", where there is "exaggerated perceptions of threat to the in-group and a propensity for hostile responses to those threats" (Chichocka and Cislak 2020, p.70). According to Chickocka and Cislak (ibid), are especially those showing signs of collective narcissism may also be sensitive to any signs of disrespect or criticism, the defensive nature of such dynamics which will be explored in the following section.

5.6.   Myth and nostalgia as defence mechanisms

The Participants' expressions of the threat that they felt the EU posed to Britain's global influence is reminiscent of what Dorling (2018) calls Britain's "imperial hangover". As Beaumont (2018, p.380) argues, "devolving power to the EU [has been] experienced as especially destabilizing to nationalists' sense of self-esteem and progression". It is true that Brexit has triggered large-scale "speculations about social insecurities and national trauma", whereby the "the colonizer assumed the role of the colonized" (Koegler et al. 2020, p.585). This is bound with melancholy and nostalgia (Gilroy 2004), which were expressed amongst participant's expressions of loss and desire concerned with the British Empire, as I have shown in the previous section. The selective deployment of Britain's national past in participant's expressions of British pride points to discontent in current social and political circumstances. Lorcin (2013, p.94) defines imperial nostalgia as "associated with the loss of empire […] the decline of national grandeur and the international power politics connected to economic and political hegemony". This form of nostalgia is therefore collective, something that is "associated with the symbols and devices of a public, familiar, and widely shared character" therefore it is a social emotion (Davis 1979, p.122). This can be understood as an imperial nostalgia, rather than colonial nostalgia, as imperial nostalgia is concerned more with the loss of being associated with a hegemonic past and its associated national and international grandeur. Alternatively, colonial nostalgia is more

concerned with a past lifestyle and sociocultural standing (Lorcin 2013). Amongst the data, participants were engaging in mythologised interpretations of the past and frequently using them to justify modern political positions (Smith 1991).

When delving deeper into participants' attachments and meanings of Britishness, some participants were expressing deeply entrenched behavioural ideas of Britishness, such as stoicism. The idea of the British stiff upper lip has been conflated with ideas of British masculinity (Boyce 2012), and suggests notions surrounding repression of emotionality as a collective norm (Partridge 2013). These notions of stoicism go back as far as the 'Keep Calm Carry On' public messaging during the Second World War, and these ideas of suppression of emotion have subsequently became engrained into the collective British psyche and has arguably evoked a certain nostalgia for a stoic British character (Lewis 2012), which is reflected in attitudes towards and surrounding political events such as Brexit and responses to COVID-19. Participants' expressions of the idea that Britain has a "soft touch" approach is reflective of the Eurosceptic culture more widely in society, much of it born from right-wing UK tabloid press' reporting on immigration, asylum seeking and welfare (Thielemann 2004; Mason 2007). These sentiments are important to consider as they reflect a form of Britishness that is bound with nostalgia, which in 2020 specifically, has seen a resurrection as a response to crises.

When participants were asked about national heroes that they felt encapsulated their ideas of Britishness, some participants responded with various historical figures such as Winston Churchill and other past military and political leaders that led during a time of conflict, rather than peacetime. Lule (2001, p.82-83) states how heroes are often dramatized, idolised and personified to reflect fundamental values and ideals of a society in which their story is featured. Ultimately, there are many forms they take; "warriors or pacifists, leaders or rebels, saints or sinners, rocket scientists, rock musicians or sports stars". These figures come to be 'performers of national identity' (Bowes and Bairner 2019, p.537) which citizens feel embody 'Britain'. A psychosocial viewpoint of leadership and supporters portray them as intertwined through the "psychological mechanisms of phantasy, identification and the affective ties between leader and follower" (Yates and Weissmann 2018, p.1). The celebratisation, glorification and mythologisation of political leaders of the past and present have been a key tool for mediatisation in the public sphere (ibid; Richards 2007; Yates 2014), and this has arguably held significance for ways that participants express Britishness. This echoes ideas of national identity as something constructed from collective myths and memories of a nation, whereby legendary figures from a 'golden age' embody national identity; "In these 'golden ages' among idealized heroes and sages, they could create a vivid panorama of life" (Smith, 1991, p. 92). Thus, these

expressions of national identity entail elements of one looking backward (Nairn, 1977; Gellner 1992; Barrington 1997).

There is also a phantasy of rescue playing out where the leader is a 'good father', this phantasy links to the dynamics in groups as according to Bion (1967; 1970) to defend against anxiety. It is possible that for these participants, the national narrative evolved within them in response to the trauma of the World Wars which was bound up heavily with threat, death and conflict particularly with Nazi Germany (Tranter and Donoghue 2021). This in turn, has contributed to a large group identity which has been bound by collective transgenerational (or at least the assumption of it) trauma, where a positive "object" has been located amongst leadership figures such as Winston Churchill, Montgomery and Mountbatten, to which attachments have been established and positive phantasies can be projected onto them (Volkan 2004). This partly explains why war was the immediate reference point, even though in the interviews I didn't necessarily ask them about war as such. There is an aspect of mythologisation at play here, due to the fact that participants were born long after Churchill's time in leadership, so they did not experience his leadership first hand. These stories of Churchill have been passed down through generations and have taken on a mythological nature due to their glorification. Fielding (et al. 2020) argues that Churchill has manifested as a powerful figure in social memory, where the ideas of Churchill are commonly used as reference to Britishness and are inherently bound up with myth and phantasy. This in turn has been the prism through which many British people "imagine their relationship with their past, present and future" (ibid. p1). As a tool of mediatisation, he has been present amongst the wider media sphere amongst films and television[13] that help sculpt Churchill in the social memory, cultural productions that position Britain in a heroic role that emerges in victory over external aggressors feed off of and propel empire nostalgia and "scenarios of World War II-type post-war austerity" (Koegler et al. 2020, p.588). More recently, he has been reanimated to frame Britain's response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Gunput 2020). In a similar sense, this desire for public figures to portray notions of strength and resilience was reflected amongst stories of one hundred year old Captain Tom Moore's walk for NHS fundraising, which in turn become emblematic of the triumphs (and devastations) of the pandemic, whereby his fundraising became a national symbol of teamwork, sacrifice and generosity, uniting British people in times of adversity, thus being "woven into the tapestry of the UKs national mythology" (Ramadan 2021).

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[13] Several films and programmes have been made about Winston Churchill and the World Wars. The television programme 'Churchill's Secret' was released on ITV1 on 28 February, 2016, the film 'Churchill' was released in the UK on 2 June, 2017, the film 'Dunkirk' was released on 21st July 2017 in the UK, the film 'Darkest Hour' was released on 12 January 2018 in the UK and the film '1917' was released 4th December 2019.

One has to note that sentiments toward Churchill may have also been heightened due to some of the wider circumstances surrounding the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests in the Summer of 2020, to which Churchill's statue was boxed as means to protect it from the same fate of Edward Colston's statue in Bristol[14]. Ultimately, these social memories of Churchill have shown how the afterlife of Churchill has emerged as an avenue through which the past has come 'to inhabit the present' (Fielding et al. 2020 p. 23) amongst understandings of Britishness. Idealisations of Churchill as encapsulating Britishness are thus bound up with mythology, phantasies and group-binding processes. Similarly, Gamble (2015) discusses Thatcher's warrior myth, whereby she has been remembered as someone who was "prepared to take risks, act on her principles and face down opponents" which foregrounded the warrior-like myth that formed around her, particularly after her passing. This warrior-esque character is akin to previous findings of idolisation of Churchill, who use him as a figure to shore up the myth of British stoicism in adversarial times.

Furthermore, representations of Nigel Farage were also of someone that participants admired and who they felt encapsulated Britishness and the stoical British character. However, Farage was also seen as providing a voice for ordinary people and the subsequent martyrdom during his positions as the leader of UKIP and EU MEP amplified this. Farage was described as "speaking the truth" and "standing up for British people" regardless of opposition and experiences of castigation. Kelsey (2015) discusses mythological hero figures and states that Farage took on a rebellious role in his ideas and values, where he presented himself as somebody who knew what was best for Britain. Furthermore, by setting out to take on the establishment, the political elite and the EU from his standing as a leader of a minority party and spokesperson of "the people", he carries a message of "truth" which he argues will save the nation (ibid, p.976). Participants' admiration and sense of Britishness was therefore rooted in Farage as an heroic figure who is brave enough to speak for ordinary people and stand up to a perpetrator, thus demonstrating the populist appeal of Farage (Bossetta 2017; Mouffe 2011).

Readings and mis-readings of the past become cherished narratives and myths, which are maintained via vivid re-telling through means such as education and the media, as mentioned previously with the mediatisation of Winston Churchill. These myths and narratives create "sacred history", thus validating present ideologies (Batista 2009) which uphold the ideals and values of today. Again, it is important to note the presence of Second World War nostalgia in Britain amid the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, where speeches by the Queen and Prime Minister included lyrics from Vera Lynn's ballads and statements that the cabinet "must act like any wartime government" as a response

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[14] The statue of Edward Colston was dismantled and ditched into the river Avon by Bristol protestors on 7th June 2020

to the crisis. Here, one could say that mythicized remembrances of the World Wars were playing out in political culture during this time. Nonetheless, there is evidence to suggest that this is something that has been a prominent feature of UK political culture since 2015 (Kenny 2017).

The nostalgia of some participants in my study shows how the desire to turn back and reminisce can be used as a way to shore up the present, respond to anxiety and shape current understandings of British national identity. This may help people tolerate the changing nature of British national identity, whereby looking to the past rather than the present has perhaps become a means to tolerate and respond to modernity's uncertainties (Stauth and Turner 1988; Tester 1993), and particularly the fast speed of cultural change seen within Britain post World War Two and via forces of globalisation (Bollas 2018), where narratives of history are becoming contested, challenged and ultimately decolonised. History has become an object which needs protecting and there is a lot of conscious and unconscious investment in it as an object of attachment. Others have noted the ways in which nostalgia has been characterised as a resistance to modernity (Lorcin 2013), particularly by those who have been 'left behind' by modern patterns of social and economic development, to which Kenny (2017, p.264) locates as those living away from "urban metropolis" in rural and coastal areas, a nature which has proved prevalent in this research.

5.7.   Discussion summary

This discussion chapter has shown how the research findings can be understood in context to wider understandings of national identity and political sentiment, and has explored the psychosocial forces at play amongst some of the themes identified in the research data. The chapter has shown the resonance of conceptual understandings of national identity that was explored in the literature review, these helped facilitate the exploration of participant's sentiments and expressions. In some cases, the data resisted some of the understandings from the literature review, in turn helping shed new light on current matters of national identity and political sentiment post-Brexit and in light of the pandemic. The psychosocial angle helped facilitate a nuanced focus on the affective and emotional investments in participant's national identity and how wider political circumstances can influence and direct citizens' emotions which can lead to political action, as seen with Brexit.

6. Conclusion

As stated previously, the aim of this study was to explore in-depth the diversity of views, thoughts, attitudes and feelings on national identity and its relation to political sentiments in rural areas in England. By using a semi-structured in-depth interview approach with a thematic analysis of the data, the study's openness was utilised to inform the complex relationship between politics, nation and mental life via an interdisciplinary analysis that foregrounds a psychosocial approach. I will now reflect on the thesis' research questions that I laid out previously in chapter three and tie together the knowledge gained from this research.

This research, as laid out in the previous chapter, explored sentiments of alienation and resentment in rural areas and understood the nature of political discontent, which was largely driven by localised precarious experiences of neoliberalism, the isolating nature of rural deprivation and the perception that Westminster *nor* Brussels understood concerns of voters. These sentiments acted as a driving force in foregrounding the Brexit vote, despite participant's awareness that this may lead to political and economic disruption. In fact, in some cases the political and economic disruption that Brexit would cause was a motivator to vote leave. This confirmed previous scholarly understandings of 'the left behind', political disillusionment, resentment, reactionism and populism and gave insight into their vivid and emotive playing out at a local level on the ground.

The fragility of English identity explored in the discussion chapter contributed to understandings of the dynamics of English identity in 2020, following Britain's withdrawal from the European Union and amidst the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic. It confirmed previous understandings of English national identity in England as being contentious, lacking substantive meaning whilst having small cultural elements and aspects such as rural life and social class. It also confirmed a victim-like nature to Englishness, particularly in response to UK devolution, and found that without concrete political community to establish it's self around; those defining English identity were quick to adopt out-grouping sentiments and ideas of assimilation. The desire for further devolution to provide England a political roof contributed to understandings of ideas on the future of the UK from the viewpoint of English identifying voters. The application of a psychosocial framework facilitated understandings of how this played out on an emotional level, particularly that with no devolved political roof, a vehicle for emotional containment was not present, possibly leading more vulnerable English identifying participants into adopting the regressive tendencies associated with nationalism.

This research also showed that there was a contrast in how participants were exploring their British identity. Whilst some were responding with ideas that corresponded with the civic and cosmopolitan

nature of Britishness, others were expressing a clear hostility to Others such as migrants and those of Muslim faith, which they deemed to be a threat to a British way of life. This same dynamic was at play amongst participant's understanding of forces of political correctness. This resonated with previous scholarly work and ideas of cultural racism and wokeism; however this finding was further explored with a psychosocial approach which provided new insight into the dynamics of Othering in this context. This approach helped to highlight how the worldview of participants had been reduced to a paranoid and binary black and white vision, where within their answers they were adopting processes of projection and scapegoating, perhaps in order to defend their identity.

Amongst the participant's discussion of British patriotism, themes of postcolonial melancholia began to arise; this was present amongst participant's responses that expressed difficulty letting go and mourning a heroic and exceptionalist imperial Britain. Ideas of memory, territory and myth correspond with understandings of national identity and patriotism laid out in chapter two, however the psychosocial nature of these dynamics emphasise the ways that nostalgia can relate to sentiments of power and loss, where notable national figures have provided a vehicle to reflect on an imperialist grandiose Britain. For some participants, the reflection of a superior Britain was disrupted by the BLM movement in the summer of 2020, which disenchanted them and led to the enactment of psychological defences against uncomfortable feelings of uncertainty. Therefore, participants were taking up positions that reflected victimhood and resentment, ultimately providing an obstacle to accept decolonised narratives and Others. The psychosocial angle here has unearthed understandings into how emotions have been key in understanding how Britain's colonial past is brought up as a source of collective self-esteem in Britain and utilised as a defence to deny perceived unappealing historical narratives.

The findings of this research has also highlighted a new angle to understanding political sentiment and national identity by utilising psychosocial frameworks of defence mechanisms to show how participants were selectively deploying and repeating mythologisations of Britain's national past to navigate feelings of discontent in Britain's current social and political circumstances. By evoking certain nostalgia for a stoic British character and resurrecting a time when Britain was basking in imperial glory, participants were shoring a sense of pride and restoring a damaged collective self-image in the present.

In regards to research question one, *what is the relationship between national identity and political sentiment,* one can understand the following. As a significant and central mode of identity, national

identity functions as a source of political legitimacy (Parekh 1995). The nation will often represent the strongest motives behind a large majority of political mobilisation and action (Greenfeld and Chirot 1994). National identities' affective nature also has the ability to be mobilised into political sentiment (Richards 2017). Attachments and identifications with a nation and its territory not only have a geopolitical nature, they provide a psychological space and draw upon sentiments associated with belonging, pride and sameness (Yuval-Davis 2006). Such affective sentiments can be harnessed by political forces, particularly in patriotic frames, to bolster support for meeting political goals as seen with Brexit and support for Prime Minister Boris Johnson during the pandemic. National identity also has powerful political sentiment due to the way it can bind citizens together in collective group identities (Volkan 2004). There have been a number of examples in the research findings that have shown the powerful nature of national pride and collective identities, particularly in face of political, economic and global uncertainty, particularly the powers of neoliberalism, Brexit and COVID-19 pandemic. Political goals can overlap with national goals, as seen with English identity and the desire for England's self-governance, and belief in Britain's exceptional nature in its withdrawal from the European Union. The collective nature of national identity is also intrinsically linked with political sentiment due to the way that national values can overlap with political values. The nature of national identity that requires out-grouping to ensure the identification of the in-group, can translate into political identities particularly when concerned with matters of Others. Amongst the fast pace of globalisation and the uncertainty that comes with it, groups may look backward in time rather than forward, as a way to restore pride. Therefore, national nostalgia is a powerful political tool as it contains affective dimensions, as understood in research objective two.

Reflecting on research question two, *how does this [the relationship between national identity and political sentiment] manifest psychosocially,* one can understand that as previously demonstrated, national identity commonly lies at the core of political sentiment, due to its role as a core underpinning of identity. The affective dimensions of such dynamics have a range of uses such as belonging, binding people together in collective identities, as well as providing self-esteem, pride and protection particularly in times of uncertainty and anxiety. The nature of widespread uncertainty caused by external events can enact defence mechanisms. When defence mechanisms are triggered by anxiety and uncertainty, one may find good and bad objects and groups to identify with in order to provide a sense of psychological fulfilment that one is missing in their nation. The nature of globalisation has triggered the fragmentation of national identities, as territorial boundaries become loose and there is an increase and flow of people, information and culture, therefore interrupting nationalist narratives in the national imagination (Held et al. 1999; Storey 2002). Ultimately, identity is produced in relation to place, this shapes how they understand themselves and the world around them (Elder 2020), so

when these places are at risk of changing, one's identity may be disrupted and become fragmented, leaving them in an anxious state of uncertainty. A sense of uncertainty was prominent amongst participant interviews, having been mostly driven by many of the consequences of Brexit and the circumstances of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The inability to be "flexible and adaptable" (Bauman 2007, p.1) in times of uncertainty can bring about feelings of fear and anxiety which are "disturbing and frightening" and "likely to be related to the sheer scale of change on so many fronts of our existence" (Minsky 1998, p.1). Indulgence in nostalgic narratives of nationhood and attraction to political narratives that reinforce these ideas therefore may become desirable and attractive, as it can restore self-esteem and act as a defence mechanism against all that is anxiety inducing.

In response to research question three, *what role does geographical rurality play in political thought and national identity;* the research findings have shown evidence of significant discontent and disillusionment in rural political sentiment. As well as this, rural experiences of deprivation and localised effects of neoliberalism often foregrounded participant's dissatisfaction with UK politics and the Westminster elite, who were thought to be selfish, uncaring and lacking authenticity. Rurality and distance from the nation's capital amplifies feelings of alienation and abandonment, which has manifested in a hostile rural-urban divide. This has left those in rural areas vulnerable to populist messages that locate an 'evil out-group' whilst focussing on the economic and political marginalisation that rural areas suffer (Woods 2021; Rodden 2019). The declining nature of social and civic assets such as community centres, post offices, leisure centres, independent businesses and small farms that prop up rural economies, along with lacking political mobilisation and frames for resistance, have eroded and caused rural communities to collapse into insecurity, political disillusionment and cynicism. Therefore narratives that focus on returning to a previous time where the nation and its people held pride and were prospering, is attractive and offers psychological fulfilment that they are unable to locate elsewhere.

In this thesis I have proposed a new psychosocial approach to political psychology that combines and applies different disciplines to add new insights and deeper comprehension of the experience of political life at a turbulent time in UK history. It has showed how nationally circulating discourses or phenomenon such as Brexit, the Black Lives Matter movement and the COVID-19 pandemic impact and shape attitudes and feelings at an individual level and that individual experience and political emotions also shape and intersect with discourses at the national level. In developing this new approach to political psychology, I have advanced an explanation for the complexity of peoples' inclinations to adopt the sentiments and dispositions that manifest in their thinking about national identity and political feelings. The qualitative in-depth interview method has been useful in this

respect, as it made it possible to avoid reductive arguments that rely on binary thinking (for example rational versus irrational, us versus them). Instead, it provides a highly nuanced qualitative perspective of participants' political sentiments regarding national identity, during a period of political turbulence from 2016-2020. I have paid attention to the affective dynamics at play in a region suffering from political disillusionment, alienation, deprivation and discontent. My new psychosocial model of political psychology as presented in figure 1 shows that there are more dimensions to political experience than has previously been acknowledged. Rather than exploring the outer layers in isolation, I have shown that they need to be viewed in relation to levels 1 and 2 which show the significance of the emotional drivers that shape conscious thought and feeling. The research in this thesis and the model it proposes take on a particular urgency in the current era of emotionalised politics where greater understanding is needed of the complex affective dimensions that drive and shape political sentiment at individual, regional and national levels.

Exploring national and political sentiment over the period of 2016-2020 and undertaking this research throughout that time, I was inundated with inspiration from the political events happening around me. Therefore, I cannot make any claim that I have exhausted every topic, concept and framework relating to psychosocial studies, national identity and political sentiment in England. All topics and conceptual ideas that are included in this thesis are ones that appeared to be particularly relevant and most useful in exploring the topic of research. Other topics that did arise in the thematic analysis but were not fully examined and are nevertheless notable in providing promising areas for further research were the following: the persuasion techniques used by participants to get the interview 'onside' with their beliefs, participant's experiences of Brexit's polarisation and subsequent conflict in their social lives, the negative stereotyping of Leave voters from Remain voters, national identity and shame, and generational conflict arising from contrasting political worldviews. Whilst expressions from participants weren't always logical, they were certainly powerful; sentiments were strongly shaped by affect. Therefore, there is significant potential to explore this in further research.

This thesis provided a nuanced exploration from the ground up of the wider political themes that play out on a collective level, to contribute a deeper understanding of national identity and political sentiment in England, whilst presenting a new analytical approach to understand psychosocial forces of emotion and defence mechanisms at play in one's reflections on national identity and politics. It is my hope and belief that the work will contribute to a new and growing area in political psychology, and that in the post-Brexit and pandemic era, it provides a timely snapshot of an extraordinary period in modern political history.

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7. Appendices

7.1. Participant information and consent form

<u>Participant information form</u>

How will my information be managed?

Bournemouth University (BU) is the organisation with overall responsibility for this study and the Data Controller of your personal information, which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it appropriately.   Research is a task that we perform in the public interest, as part of our core function as a university.

Undertaking this research study involves collecting and/or generating information about you.   We manage research data strictly in accordance with Ethical requirements; and current data protection laws. These control use of information about identifiable individuals, but do not apply to anonymous research data: "anonymous" means that we have either removed or not collected any pieces of data or links to other data which identify a specific person as the subject or source of a research result.

BU's [Research Participant Privacy Notice](#) sets out more information about how we fulfil our responsibilities as a data controller and about your rights as an individual under the data protection legislation. We ask you to read this Notice so that you can fully understand the basis on which we will process your personal information.

Research data will be used only for the purposes of the study or related uses identified in the Privacy Notice or this Information Sheet. To safeguard your rights in relation to your personal information, we will use the minimum personally-identifiable information possible and control access to that data as described below.

Publication

You will not be able to be identified in any external reports or publications about the research without your specific consent.   Otherwise your information will only be included in these materials in an anonymous form, i.e. you will not be identifiable.

Security and access controls

BU will hold the information we collect about you in hard copy in a secure location and on a BU password protected secure network where held electronically.

Personal information which has not been anonymised will be accessed and used only by appropriate, authorised individuals and when this is necessary for the purposes of the research or another purpose identified in the Privacy Notice. This may include giving access to BU staff or others responsible for monitoring and/or audit of the study, who need to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations.

All the information collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly in accordance with the current Data Protection Regulations. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications. All personal data relating to this study will be held for five years before being destroyed. In this time the information will be kept in a secure location on a BU password protected secure network where held electronically. We will restrict access to your personal data to those individuals who have a legitimate reason to access (the researcher and supervisor). The audio/video recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis and the transcription of the recording for written analysis. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

Sharing your personal information with third parties

Your un-anonymised information will not be shared with any third parties.

Further use of your information

The information collected about you may be used in an anonymous form to support other research projects in the future and access to it in this form will not be restricted. It will not be possible for you to be identified from this data. To enable this use, anonymised data will be added to BU's online Research Data Repository: this is a central location where data is stored, which is accessible to the public.

Keeping your information if you withdraw from the study

If you withdraw from active participation in the study we will keep information which we have already collected from or about you, if this has on-going relevance or value to the study. This may include your personal identifiable information.   As explained above, your legal rights to access, change, delete or move this information are limited as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. However if you have concerns about how this will affect you personally, you can raise these with the researcher when you withdraw from the study.

You can find out more about your rights in relation to your data and how to raise queries or complaints in our Privacy Notice.

Retention of research data

Project governance documentation, including copies of signed participant agreements: we keep this documentation for a long period after completion of the research, so that we have records of how we conducted the research and who took part. The only personal information in this documentation will be your name and signature, and we will not be able to link this to any anonymised research results.

Research results

As described above, during the course of the study we will anonymise the information we have collected about you as an individual. This means that we will not hold your personal information in identifiable form after we have completed the research activities. When discussed in the findings you will be assigned a pseudonym and all personal information that may make you identifiable in an obvious manner will not be included.

You can find more specific information about retention periods for personal information in our Privacy Notice.

We keep anonymised research data indefinitely, so that it can be used for other research as described above.

Contact for further information

For more information email the researcher Tabitha Baker at **talicebaker@bournemouth.ac.uk** or the first supervisor Professor Candida Yates **cyates@bournemouth.uk** if you require further information about this project.

In case of complaint:

Please contact Professor Dinusha Mendis, Deputy Dean for Research & Professional Practice, Faculty of Media & Communication via email to researchgovernance@bournemouth.ac.uk.

If you decide to take part, following is a participant agreement form to sign and this participant form is to keep.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research project

Participant Agreement Form

Full title of project: The Psychosocial relationship between Nation, Identity and Brexit

Name, position and contact details of researcher: Tabitha Baker, PhD researcher, talicebaker@bournemouth.ac.uk

Name, position and contact details of supervisor: Professor Candida Yates, project supervisor, cyates@bournemouth.ac.uk

Agreement to participate in the study – please fill out highlighted areas

You should only agree to participate in the study if you agree with all of the statements in this table and accept that participating will involve the listed activities.

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions.
I understand that my participation is voluntary.
During the task or experiment, I am free to withdraw without giving reason and without there being any negative consequences.
Should I not wish to answer any particular question(s), I have the right to withhold my answer
I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet (ethics ID: 28268, Version 1) and have been given access to the BU Research Participant [Privacy Notice](https://www1.bournemouth.ac.uk/about/governance/access-information/data-protection-privacy) which sets out how we collect and use personal information (https://www1.bournemouth.ac.uk/about/governance/access-information/data-protection-privacy).
I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop participating in research activities at any time without giving a reason and I am free to decline to answer any particular question(s).
I agree that BU researchers may have access to my anonymised personal information and answers as described in the Participant Information Sheet
I understand that taking part in the research will include the following activity/activities as part of the research:
my anonymised words will be quoted in publications, reports, web pages and other research outputs without using my real name
I understand that, if I withdraw from the study, I will also be able to withdraw my data from further use in the study **except** where my data has been anonymised (as I cannot be identified)
I understand that my data may be included in an anonymised form within a dataset to be archived at BU's Online Research Data Repository.

	Initial box to agree
I consent to take part in the project on the basis set out above	[INITIALS HERE]

I confirm my agreement to take part in the project on the basis set out above.

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant (BLOCK CAPITALS)	Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	Signature

_____	_____	_____
Name of researcher (BLOCK CAPITALS)	Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	Signature

Once the Participant has signed, the researcher will **sign 1 copy** and take 2 photocopies:

- Original kept in the local investigator's file
- 1 copy to be kept by the participant (including a copy of PI Sheet)

7.2. Ethics checklist

About Your Checklist	
Ethics ID	28268
Date Created	18/10/2019 13:08:25
Status	Approved
Date Approved	04/02/2020 10:58:58
Date Submitted	28/01/2020 12:32:35
Risk	Low

Researcher Details	
Name	Tabitha Alice Baker
Faculty	Faculty of Media & Communication
Status	Postgraduate Research (MRes, MPhil, PhD, DProf, EngD, EdD)
Course	Postgraduate Research - FMC
Have you received funding to support this research project?	No

Project Details	
Title	A psychosocial study of the relationship between nation, identity and brexit
Start Date of Project	28/01/2019
End Date of Project	04/04/2022
Proposed Start Date of Data Collection	01/04/2020
Original Supervisor	Candida Yates
Approver	Sue Sudbury

Summary - no more than 500 words (including detail on background methodology, sample, outcomes, etc.)

This study seeks to understand the psychosocial relationship post-Brexit between nation and identity in England. By conducting in-depth interviews and focus groups in rural areas in South West England this study hopes to identify key psychosocial themes that emerge when provoking thoughts, feelings and emotion on national identity. Participants will be given participant information sheets which will detail data confidentiality, the scope of the study, how audio recording will happen, how their data will be stored and what the data will be used for. After this they will be given the opportunity to opt in or out of the study and consent their interviews/focus group to be audio recorded and transcribed. The ethics process will consider the fact that these political and social topics are contentious, therefore precautions will be put into place to keep participants safe and comfortable. It will also consider and address the importance of data confidentiality and participant anonymity.

Approved Amendments	
Message	Notification of Amendment:Due to Covid-19, interviews will be moving online and intending to use Zoom. I'm also now using online social media platforms for participant recruitment such as Twitter and Facebook. Using Zoom means that the data collected from participants are in video form as well as audio, the participant agreement form has been updated to include consent for recording video and audio interviews. The same process of deletion will follow once transcription is complete. I will also be using password protected meeting rooms on Zoom for further privacy protection.
Date Submitted	31/05/2020 19:21
Comment	
Date Approved	05/06/2020 10:06
Approved By	Sarah Bell

7.3.   Interview guide

Demographics

Age range (delete as necessary): 18-25, 26-39, 40-55   56-65   66-75   75+

Education (please delete as necessary): Tertiary education, Post-16 vocational, Post-16 higher education,

Occupation:

National identity (what do you identify as?):

Location (delete as necessary): South West, South East, Midlands, East Midlands, West Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber, North West, North East

Area (delete as necessary): Isolated dwelling, Rural village, small town, Large town, Small city, Large city

Part 1: Exploring national identity

Ask the participants how they would describe their national identity:

- ➢ Why do they identify as that?
- ➢ Have they always identified as that?
- ➢ Can anyone be British/ English?
- ➢ Would they describe themselves as patriotic?
- ➢ What is patriotism to them?
- ➢ Can they think back to a time when they felt most proud of their national identity?
- ➢ What was is that made them feel most proud particularly?
- ➢ In contrast, is there anything that makes them embarrassed or ashamed of their national identity?

Part 2: Identifying foundations of national identity

- ➢ Do they have any national heroes?
- ➢ If so, why?
- ➢ Is there any point in English/British history you feel important to remember?
- ➢ Is there any point in English/British history you feel should have more attention?
- ➢ If so, why?
- ➢ What do they feel British/English characteristics are?
- ➢ Do they think there are any distinctions between English, Scottish or Welsh or Northern Irish?

Part 3: Devolution

- ➢ What is their understanding of U.K Devolution?
- ➢ Did they think devolution was fair?
- ➢ If yes/no, why?
- ➢ Do they think England should have their own assembly?
- ➢ If so why?
- ➢ Do they feel parliament is best suited in London?

Part 4: Rural politics

- ➢ Are they aware of arguments concerning regional devolution? What is their opinion?
- ➢ Would they like to see the South West have their own assembly?

- If so why?
- Do they identify strongly with your county identity?
- Have they you ever visit any cities nearby?
- Do they experience any localised issues?
- How do they manage these?
- What are the positives of living where they do?
- Have they ever gotten in touch with their local MP?
- Do they feel represented in politics at the moment?
- Do they usually vote in general elections?
- How about local elections?

Part 5: Brexit

- How did they vote in the 2016 European Union Referendum?
- Was there anything particular that made them decide to vote that way?
- What issues were most important to them concerning the EU in the lead up to the referendum?
- Why?
- Did they ever identify as European?
- Do they think it's possible to be both British/English and European?
- How did they feel when they saw the referendum result?
- Have they ever experienced any conflict with friends or family over Brexit/politics?
- How did they feel negotiations went?
- How do they feel now that the UK has left?
- What do they see for the future?

7.4. Participant recruitment

Call for participants advert

Hi everyone, thanks to admin team for accepting. I'm looking to speak to residents of _____ and surrounding areas in_____.

I'm a post-graduate researcher from North Dorset studying at Bournemouth University. I am doing my PhD on political attitudes in South-West England. I am looking for people who reside in South-West towns and villages to take part in an interview with me, either over the telephone or Zoom. Topics discussed will be relating to national identity, Brexit and politics in Britain. There are no right or wrong answers and all of your responses will be anonymised. For more information please see contact details below.

Contact details: you are welcome to message me here on Facebook, email me at talicebaker@bournemouth.ac.uk, or give me a text/call/voicemail on 07752092393

Facebook community group areas targeted:

- Over 60 and live in Weymouth and Portland
- Honiton Community Page
- Puddletown Community
- Barton on sea, New Milton and surrounding area Community Group
- Wincanton News and Views
- Eggbuckland Community Noticeboard
- Bridgewater and Somerset Matters
- Exmouth Community UK
- Axminster Notice Board
- Shepton Mallet community group
- Tamerton Foliot Community
- Weston-super-Mere community grapevine
- Yeovil Noticeboard
- Dorset, Devon and Somerset Farmers!
- Cirencester – A local town for local people.
- Porlock -
- Launceston Community board
- The Portland Group UK
- Gillingham DORSET
- Cullompton selling page
- Bruton, Somerset
- Devizes Issues

- What's on Stroud, Nailsworth and Local Area
- Lulworth, Wool, Bovington and Wareham community
- Nailsworth Chatterbox
- Frome community notice board
- Minehead community debate
- Bovington Wool and Bere Regis
- Tiverton selling page
- Newlyn fishing town
- Melksham Community Group
- Bathampton Community Group
- Heart of Warminster - Group
- Everything Plymouth UK
- What's On Lynton & Lynmouth
- The Silverton Community UK
- Sherford, Plymouth, UK
- Wiltshire Notice Board
- Marlborough Wiltshire Notice Board
- Buckfastleigh, Devon
- Okehampton notice board
- Chippenham & Calne Today
- St Judes and Mount Gould Plymouth and Bruno's Notice Board.
- Redruth community notice board
- Helston community group
- Butleigh village group

7.5. Participant demographics

Participant	#1
Age	40
Education	Post-16 higher education
Occupation	Unemployed
National Identity	English
County	Dorset
Area	Small town
2019 General Election vote	Labour
EU Referendum vote	Remain
Ethnicity	White

Participant	#2
Age	65
Education	Post-16 vocational
Occupation	Retired
National Identity	English and British
County	Dorset
2019 General Election vote	Conservative
EU Referendum vote	Leave
Ethnicity	White

Participant	#3
Age	43
Education	Post-16 Sixth form
Occupation	Delivery driver
National Identity	English
County	Wiltshire
2019 General Election vote	Labour
EU Referendum vote	Remain
Ethnicity	White

Participant	#4
Age	62
Education	Post-16 higher education
Occupation	Receptionist
National Identity	English
County	Somerset
2019 General election vote	Liberal Democrats
EU Referendum vote	Remain
Ethnicity	White

Participant	#5

Age	*69*
Education	*Post-16 Higher education*
Occupation	*Retired*
National Identity	*English*
County	*Somerset*
2019 Election vote	*Labour*
EU Referendum vote	*Leave*
Ethnicity	*Jewish*

Participant	*#6*
Age	*62*
Education **Participant**	*Post 16 higher education* *#7*
Occupation **Age**	*Retired (previously housing)* *29*
National Identity **Education**	*British* *Post-16 higher education*
County **Occupation**	*Dorset* *Business advisor*
2019 election vote	*Liberal Democrats*
EU referendum vote **National Identity**	*Remain* *English*
Ethnicity	*White*
County	*Devon*
2019 election vote	*Labour*
EU referendum vote	*Remain*
Ethnicity	*White*

Participant	*#8*
Age	*33*
Education	*Post-16 higher education*
Occupation	*Project co-ordinator*
National Identity	*British*
County	*Wiltshire*
EU Referendum vote	*Remain*
2019 General election vote	*Labour*

Ethnicity	*White*

Participant	*#9*
Participant	*#10*
Age	*60*
Age	*60*
Education	*Post 16 Vocational / higher education*
Occupation	*Company secretary*
Occupation	*Teacher*
National Identity	*British*
County	*Devon*
Area	*Small town*
National Identity	*British*
EU Referendum vote	*Leave*
GE 2019 vote	*Abstained*
County	*Devon*
Ethnicity	*White*
EU Referendum vote	*Remain*
2019 GE vote	*Labour*
Ethnicity	*White*

Participant	*#11*
Age	*61*
Education	*Post 16 vocational*
Participant	*#12*
Occupation	*Social services*
Age	*40*
National Identity	*English*
Education	*Post 16 HE*
County	*Devon*
Occupation	*Educational advisor*
EU referendum vote	*Remain*
National Identity	*British*
GE Election vote	*Conservative*
County	*Dorset*
Ethnicity	*White*
General election 2019 vote	*Labour*
EU referendum vote	*Remain*
Ethnicity	*White*

Participant	*#13*

Age	56
Education	Tertiary
Occupation	Printer
National Identity	British
County	Somerset
EU Referendum vote	Leave
GE 2019 vote	Liberal Democrats
Ethnicity	White

Participant	#14
Age	60
Education	Post 16 HE
Occupation	Retired
National Identity	British and English
County	Dorset
GE 2019 vote	Conservative
EU referendum vote	Leave
Ethnicity	White

Participant	#15
Age	66
Education	Tertiary
Occupation	Unemployed (Universal credit recipient)
National Identity	British
County	Dorset
2019 Election vote	Labour
EU Referendum vote	Leave
Ethnicity	White

Participant	#16
Age	77
Education	Tertiary
Occupation	Retired
National Identity	English
County	Somerset
2019 Election vote	Conservative
EU Referendum vote	Leave
Ethnicity	White

Participant	#17
Age	46
Education	Post 16 HE
Occupation	Pre-school assistant
National Identity	British
County	Cornwall
2019 Election vote	Liberal Democrats
EU Referendum vote	Leave
Ethnicity	White

Participant	#18
Age	75
Education	Post 16 vocational
Occupation	Electrician
National Identity	English
County	Wiltshire
2019 Election vote	Conservative
EU Referendum vote	Leave

Ethnicity	*White*

Participant	*#19*
Age	*42*
Education / Participant	*Post 16 HE / #20*
Occupation / Age	*Sales / 56*
National Identity / Education	*British / Post 16 HE*
County / Occupation	*Dorset / Retired*
Area / National Identity	*Large town / English*
2019 Election vote / County	*Conservative / Gloucestershire*
EU Referendum vote / 2019 Election vote	*Leave / Liberal Democrats*
Ethnicity / EU Referendum vote	*White / Leave*
Ethnicity	*White other*
Ethnicity	*White*

Participant	*#21*
Age	*19*
Education / Participant	*Post 16 A-levels / #22*
Occupation / Age	*Student / 58*
National Identity / Education	*British / Post 16 HE*
County / Occupation	*Dorset / Retail*
Area / National Identity	*Village / English*
2019 Election vote / County	*Labour / Cornwall*
EU Referendum vote / 2019 Election vote	*Ineligible (age) / Conservative*
Ethnicity / EU Referendum vote	*White / Leave*
Ethnicity	*White*

Participant	*#23*
Age	*20*
Education / Participant	*Post 16 A levels / #24*
Occupation / Age	*Hospitality / 50*
National Identity / Education	*British / Post 16 HE*
County / Occupation	*Dorset / Unemployed*
Area / National Identity	*Village / English*
2019 Election vote / County	*Conservative / Wiltshire*
EU Referendum vote / 2019 Election vote	*Ineligible (age) / Green party*
Ethnicity / EU Referendum vote	*White / Leave*

Ethnicity	White Other

Participant	#25
Age	46
Education	Tertiary education
Occupation	Prison officer
National Identity	English
County	Dorset
2019 Election vote	Labour
EU Referendum vote	Leave
Ethnicity	White

Participant	#26
Age	60
Education	Post 16 HE
Occupation	Civil servant
National Identity	British
County	Somerset
2019 Election vote	Conservative

Participant	#27
Age	23
Education	Post 16 HE
Occupation	Student
National Identity	British
County	Wiltshire
2019 Election vote	Labour
EU Referendum vote	Remain
Ethnicity	White

Participant	#28
Age	55
Education	Post 16 HE
Occupation	Self employed
National Identity	British and English
County	Gloucestershire
2019 Election vote	Conservative
EU Referendum vote	Leave
Ethnicity	Mixed race

Participant	#29
Age	50s
Education	Tertiary
Occupation	Prison officer
National Identity	British and English
County	Dorset
2019 Election vote	Conservative
EU Referendum vote	Leave
Ethnicity	White

7.6.   Interview transcription participant #19

so, first of all can I just get your confirmation that you have had a read of the participant information document?

Yes I have.

And you have signed your consent to take part?

I have yeah.

Great. So first of all I just have some demographic questions to go through if that's alright. Could I get your age?

42.

Your education level?

I have a degree.

Okay. and you current occupation?

[husband's name]'s wife. (laughs). I am a sales manager.

Okay and how would you describe your national identity?

British. I'm South African but I've lived in Britain for 24 years.

Okay, and how did you vote in the December 2019 election?

Conservative.

Okay, so you identify as British? If I asked you why, what would you say?

Because I was born to British parents, we've always had family business in the UK, and I feel that I am British.

Have you always identified as British?

No, well yes I kind of have my whole life, I grew up in South Africa and we spent a lot of time going back and fourth to Britain.

Would you describe yourself as patriotic?

Yes I would.

Okay so what is British patriotism to you?

My grandfather was a pilot in WW2 as well as my uncle and my grandmother was a nurse, both of my grans were nurses. And I just feel that patriotism is about protecting the history, remembering why people died for and why they died for the UK. Patriotism is about conquering democracy and... I just feel proud to be British. Its the history that makes us proud to be British.

So can you think of a time in your life where you felt most proud to be British?

I think probably during the Brexit election period, that's when everyone came together to realise how patriotic they are.

So what makes you feel positive about your Britishness?

Because I think we are one of the largest economies in the world and I also think that we are a leading country. In every aspect for schools, products, technology, you name it. The law, and the judiciary I think we lead on a global scale, yeah. What was the question again?

What makes you feel positive about your Britishness?

Because we live in the most wonderful country on the planet in my view that leads in every way. That's why.

Is there anything that makes you feel negative about your Britishness?

I feel that the UK has opened its borders too wide and we are starting to lose our identity. I don't want to live in a Muslim country I want to live in a Christian country and I believe our religious aspect of the country is falling apart .I think we are taking too much of an open borders approach and I'm concerned

that it's becoming to woke and too left wing because of bringing in too many different nations that nobody even knows who they are or what they are anymore.

Do you think anyone can be British?

Yes, I think if you live in the country and follow the laws and you conform to society and you don't try and change the British way of life, anybody can become British. But when you want to move in and try and make us live a different way of life, then you threaten Britishness.

Do you think this happens?

Yes.

Could you elaborate on that?

Well, I mean. I believe that teachers, teach a very left wing perspective in schools which are training our children to become completely la-la, I believe that we are allowing - I don't understand why Sharia law is being allowed to happen in the UK, I don't think that is a good thing for any country to start accepting the laws of a different culture. I think different areas and parts of the UK have changed so much demographically that I think it's giving a signal that, that's not British you know? and I think we've had too much immigration in too shorter space of time to actually sit back and put into perspective what's actually happening on a socio-economic level. On a social level, it's out of hand right now.

So in your eyes, what is the social level like at the moment?

Confused.

Do you have any historical or modern day national heroes that you look up to?

Heroes... I was a fan of Magaret Thatcher, I am a fan of Boris Johnson, and I am a fan of Jacob Rees-Mogg, on a political front I like those three.

What is it you like about them?

I like that they stood their ground and they delivered and... You know I kind of like the way that Jacob puts people back in their boxes in the most eloquent of British fashion... I like Boris Johnson because he's delivering on democracy and that's his only goal and I'm impressed with how he handles the media especially the left wing media isn't doing him any favours.

Okay. Is there any part of British history you take pride in celebrating or you think is important to remember?

I take pride in WW2... I take pride in the Falklands war... from what we achieved there... I take pride in, what's the other one? Which is the one where we went and.... where South America had...?

The Falklands?

Yeah. I like the way we stand up for that island in Spain, I take lots of pride in Britain. I've travelled India loads of time and I take pride in what we did there, without us having been in India they wouldn't have had the infrastructure, the railway systems, the bridges, the buildings that they have because they are a mess and were a mess after we left. I've travelled through the whole of Africa and when you see what Britain did in those countries they would be no where without having the British infrastructure put in place by us.

Okay. And is there anything you feel should be either celebrated more or remembered more that isn't?

Yes, I think we should have a much more... You know it is so terribly sad that London never celebrated the departure of us from the EU in a greater fashion. Sadiq Khan was awful in paying £400,000 to make the London eye blue and yellow in a sign to welcome everyone into London, but on the night we left the EU, why wasn't the London eye blue and red? Do you know what I mean? Why couldn't we have celebrated as much more of a positive thing because it was a democratic decision. And I think it's sad that we didn't celebrate that as much. When we celebrate our fallen if I'm honest, we do it maybe a little too much there. But I think we should celebrate our monarchy more.

What do you like about the royal family?

I am a royalist but I don't think they're doing much for their reputation recently in the last few generations but I think it's important for tourism, and it keeps people coming back, the whole tourism thing. I think if something is bringing in 80 billion a year in tourism you don't let it go very easily.

Okay. So, are you familiar with UK devolution, the process that happened in the late nineties-early noughties? Did you think it was a positive step?

I think it was at the time but I think now it has been proven to have been a big mistake.

Whys that?

Because of the way they behave. I think also for them it was a positive step because they could've managed things in a small section but it needs to be reversed definitely, because Scotland has proved

financially they cannot handle themselves, Wales is proving financially they can't handle themselves and the Labour government in Wales just doesn't seem to be working it just seems like a lot of shouting and very little action. So I would end that.

So if you had the choice would you want England to have their own assembly?

So do I think we should all split up? No, no I don't think we should.

Okay. And so have you lived in the South West long?

Yes, um... Let me think. I lived in London for a while but I ended up wanting to settle down out here, because I'm near Southampton and It's good for work. The reason I left London was because I was on the bus behind the one that blew up in the terrorist attack in London in 2007. Then I was just like, I'm not living here anymore.

That's quite traumatic.

It was hectic. And then you just realise, is it really worth living in a big city when you're probably going to die over something you don't really care about or believe in? So you're just like it's not worth it! I'm just as happy living here, and I'm a sailor so It's good to be near the sea for my boat. It suited me.

Is life much different living out here?

Completely yeah.

In what way?

It's much quieter, you're not in the rat race, it doesn't cost you a fortune to go out. The cost of living is so much better. I grew up in a small town in South Africa so I like living in a small town. I just like it. It feels more in control, London is just too big. London was great fun especially when you're young but when you get older it's nicer in the country.

Do you know who your local MP is?

Yes.

Did you vote for them?

Yes I did.

Have you ever written to them?

Yes I have.

What about?

I wrote to him about the un-controlled immigration into my area. I have friends at local schools who are having to employ translators because the children are all Eastern European and can't speak English. I just don't think it's right. SO yeah I wrote to him about immigration and development issues. Over development, too many flats being built in the area.

Did he get back to you?

Yes he did.

What did he say?

He said they can't do anything about the immigration until we're out of the EU. Which is next year. Then it's gonna be a much more formal structure.

So do you see any positives about British politics at the moment?

Yes definitely. I think in history. So I lived through apartheid South Africa where I was protesting in the streets for the end of apartheid and that to me I thought would've been the most exciting time in politics in my life but it wasn't. The last three years in this country have been fascinating for me. We are in a really interesting time in history and politics it's absolutely brilliant, it's exciting.

In what ways do you find it exciting?

Because I think it's going to give so many people pleasure to realise all that scaremongering paranoid ridiculous carry on about Brexit and how it was going to be the end of the world and it's clearly not going to be the end of the world it's going to be wonderful. You know? and also I think we have to appreciate what this government has done through corona. It's incredible. I mean what other country in the world has paid our furlough like this country has you know? What other country in the world has supported people, what other countries are paying 80% salary and below? You know, supporting businesses, supporting rates, what this country has done in the last few months is incredibly positive for everyone.

And on the flip side, do you see any negatives?

Just in my opinion, I think we have a very week opposition. I think Labour is a weak party, I don't think they know what they stand for, I don't think Keir Starmer knows what to do, one minute he says one thing the next he says another thing. I think they're all so tied up in racial debates that you know, a lot of the non-white politicians, all they keep on about is banging on about this racial divide. Well, I've never felt a racial divide in this country until all the BLM rubbish started and I've lived here 24 years. Most of my friends come from the West Indies so they're all pitch black and they say they've never felt the racial divide in this country until this BLM bullshit started. Labour was the driving force behind it. I think this continuous victimisation culture is so negative for the country, it's not bringing us together it's dividing us. I see Labour as a very divisive party, we need a different opposition party that is stronger who actually knows what they are saying. At the moment this lot are just yo-yo-ing in every direction and I'm not sure if it's a way to disrupt the country as we leave the EU but they're just dividing people. I think if we just let the conservatives do what they do, they are the party of business, just let them do what they need to do but we certainly have a very weak opposition. The liberal democrats are a joke and the SNP need to give up their argument about independence because they're not going to get it and they're certainly not going to get it until we leave the EU.

What is a good opposition to you?

There are none at the moment that's the thing. There just isn't a good enough second party, none of them. Do you know what I mean? None of them. The policies of the Labour party in the last election were an absolute joke. Do you really think that de-funding private schools is going to solve the problems of this country? My brothers been to private school, my father was not a rich man, he worked himself up from being a coal miner and the greatest pride in his life was that he could send his sons to private school. And now you're going to take this away from some people because you're upset that fathers work hard to give their kids a good education? What kind of a policy is that? Do you know what I mean? And it only effects 2% of the population, all of that and all of that election campaign and all it did was upset people and divide people. This whole 'i'm rich you're poor' politics it has to end, because nowadays a poor man can become a rich man in ten years if he applies himself. Do you know what I mean? And then he gets slated because he's successful and worked hard? It's very old kind of politics from the days of mining when everyone was down the pits you know, politics has

evolved from then and none of the opposition parties are evolving with modern day life and how life actually is and the reality of it. They all fall back on 'we are the victims' you know. and 'you are the wealthy'. It's not cohesive politics.

Okay. So thinking about the European Union, can you think back to when you started to question it?

Well I studied law, and I started to become very very cautious of the EU when the purposive approach was being used in the UK judiciary when they would start using the European laws and the Human rights laws 1998 and they would start using all of the European Union laws to over rule British law. and then you'd start to realise, you can't remove terrorists from our country, we have to accept any Muslim who arrives here on a boat from Dover, we can't do anything about it. Do you know what I mean? We can't do anything about it. We have to bring back terrorists like Shamima Begum and all of her mates who think it's funny to behead people. We can't do anything about it while we're tied to the European union and I think the European Union is Human Rights gone completely mental and it's starting to affect the public safety of individuals living in this country and that's where I'm very opposed to the European Union.

Yeah.

Also It's stupid things like I've got friends who are calamari fishermen so they own huge calamari fishing companies in South Africa, the biggest the best most delicious calamari you've ever tasted in your life. They had to throw four tons away because the label on their stocks didn't say it doesn't contain fish. Do you know what I mean? It's like they've gone completely barmy in my view, it's too much. It's, what do you call it? Bureaucracy. It's too much bureaucracy, the European Union is just a joke, we need our own laws, our own rules, our own legislature, to me it's a legal thing. Because now what's happening is judges can find a way round everything to chase after that leftist view, and that leftist view is gonna make our country more and more dangerous. I'll tell you what. I grew up in South Africa when they started opening the borders to Somalians, Zimbabweans. Nigerians. Mongolians. Do you know what happened? 36 murders a day. Nobody understands these cultures, we are just opening the doors to them, we can't get rid of them. They are violent, inbred, no not inbred, violent within

their own cultures and I come from South Africa and studied cultural tourism, the Zooloo will kill a Zooloo and not even think about it they have no value. Life has no value. And now you're saying welcome to my country, it's okay get a knife and go and stab and just carry on living like the way you live there and there's nothing we can do about it because the European law says no, let them in. Take them. You can't get rid of them. A guy can come into this country and he's a terrorist from another country and he can turn round, you know that guy who killed people the other week? [referring to the stabbing in Reading in July 2020] I read his court case, that kid who killed and went stabbing people in a part in Reading, he's in this country because he came and overstayed on a tourist visa, and when he got caught, he got given the right to remain because he said sorry, I drink, I'm an alcoholic with a drinking issue you can't send me back to my Muslim country because drinking isn't allowed there, and he was allowed to stay. Because European law says that's fine. UK law doesn't say that. You would've been out. So we need to start being real about what is going to help this country progress and what's going to help protect our borders because there are some very strange cultures out there that are flooding into the UK at the moment.

So you mentioned the bureaucracy you didn't like, what was it about that you didn't like?

I don't think it's a democracy, you don't have a fair vote for your own leaders there. I don't think Brussels is a democracy at all it's a dictatorship. It's a German led dictatorship. Nothing seems fair there, nothing seems fair in Brussels it just seems to be like a very managed staged show to get everybody's money to do with it what they please. Also what rubbish is it that there are starving people on our streets in the UK, I mean I'm dreading them kicking the homeless out of the hostels soon but yet we are giving 15 million a week or however much it is to Brussels a week, 1.3 billion a month, but yet we've got homeless sleeping on our own streets and we can't even look after our own, what is all of that about? Do you know what I mean? We don't need them. We never have needed them to be honest. Also how many more parliaments can you have, there's Scottish parliament, Welsh parliament, English, European, where does it end? and they want to start putting more and more and more on top. We don't need them. That's my view. We never did.

So have you ever identified as European?

No I'm not European I'm British.

What's the difference?

We have different cultures we have different languages, I find German culture completely different to our own. I also grew up in a German town in SA and they logic completely different to our logic, they do different business in a different way. Sexually, religiously, all Germans I know are atheist, you know, we are more of a Christian country I would say. But then look at the Italians, they're all Catholics. Germany, I think we are completely different cultures. Let the Germans be Germans and be happy and let the British be British and leave us to be happy. You know what I mean? There's no need to be mixing it up.

Okay... and thinking closer to home, are you a member of any political party?

No, I thought about joining the conservative party but I haven't decided yet. I did run for the Liberal Democrats once as a candidate.

How did that go?

Well it was a mess, the Lib dems would give everyone what they wanted for free if they could. I remember being in a meeting and it was the exact time I thought oh god I really regret this, because this one woman stood up, bless her she had been a lib dem councillor for like 30 years and anyway they gave her the room. And she stood up and said how she was absolutely shocked and disgusted because there are a couple in her area, that rely on social services, they have their council house and their state payments, and the council have said they will stop it if they don't tidy up their front garden as it's a mess. And this woman wanted to get someone from the council to go and clean it up for them. Now we're not only handing them free housing, free money, but now we're also going to start doing their gardens for them. I mean what's next, are we going to start going in and cleaning their houses

for them too? You know? The logic of the lib dem party is beyond my brain. But at the time I liked their policy of free education. I think everyone should have the right to free tertiary education.

What made you want to run?

I love love politics. Love it. I find it fascinating. It's like a hobby to me, to wind up lefties.

Do you ever find yourself engaging in conflict with those that voted remain or the opposite to you?

Yes, yes. I used to enjoy going onto those remain sites and winding people up, then I realised I was just winding myself up so I just leave it now. Also, it's over, we won!

Has it ever caused conflict with friends or family?

Yes. I've lost one friend permanently. Because she kept posting stuff like constantly trying to say people that were leavers all read the Sun, I've never read the Sun in my life, and stuff like well done steak eating common local people. You know, she was saying that people who voted to leave were just common and low class and didn't have a brain and I just took offence to that so I cut her out very quickly. She can't even eat with her mouth closed at a dinner table so how can she lecture me about class?

So how does it feel when you do get stereotyped?

Very angry. Very very angry. Very angry and very, you know, I think I feel a lot better because when the vote came in it proved it right? Then even more when the December vote happened. It solidified it. So actually, that trail of thought is very much the minority. And you can't argue with democracy. I got very cross about it in the beginning because that was the take that the UK media was taking, you

know what I mean? But the BBC, no body has respect for them anyway anymore they've kicked themselves in the foot.

Do you still engage in arguments?

Yes I will do, if I find something I disagree with passionately about i'll have my say on it. I went to a party the other day, and you know it's not something you'll say to people when you meet them but I soon found out that everyone there was a leaver and it was very much hush, you know. But we found out we were all leavers and it was like the secret was out. You don't want to be tarred with being a thick racist. But people didn't vote leave because of the EU, people voted leave because in 2009 when they opened up the borders to Easter Europe, that was not immigration dear, that was a mass invasion. You know what I mean? When I go to Southampton you can't even get a cup of coffee in English anymore. And the problem is, I know a lot of people that have lost their jobs and I know it's the same old thing but when you let 10 million people in, in a very short space of time, it's not going to tick everywhere. And it didn't go down well with people. That was the biggest shift. I'm an immigrant but for pete's sake, I'd never seen anything like that before. Were you too young to remember?

Yes.

It was a shocking shocking experience, because literally the borders opened, and they just flooded. And everybody wants to come to England, Manchester united, Arsenal, you know what I mean? And the infrastructure wasn't ready for them. The housing wasn't ready for them. The schools weren't, the hospitals weren't. The country wasn't ready for what happened. And they can fluff it up as much as they like but the country wasn't ready. You have to have the infrastructure ready when you have a population growth. Otherwise life becomes uncomfortable for a lot of people.

So when you saw the referendum result how did you feel?

Very happy. I had a party going on here.

Did you do anything on January 31st?

Yeah I did I went to parliament square with about 4 or 5 friends. It was terrible because there were no toilets anywhere so I was like peeing in doorways, it was a little neanderthal like but it was amazing. It was amazing I felt liberated.

What was the atmosphere like?

Amazing, people were so happy. I was a bit scared because I remembered the bombing you know so I was a little bit scared but I really wanted to be there so we went. I was so surprised at how many like, black people there were there, Indian people, like, it was such a mix of everyone and everything and it was actually amazing! It was fun! It wasn't that well organised, they tried their best but they didn't have a lot of money because obviously Sadiq Khan was holding the purse strings but yeah it was amazing.

Who was there?

Loads, Hartley-Brewer spoke, she was brilliant. Farage spoke, there were loads it was very exciting. There was lots of singing, and music and there was that guy who sang the Brexit song, he was up there going for it. It was actually a really cool night. Because it was history wasn't it? History in the making. I just wish the UK media got more on board and made it more of a celebration for the country rather than portraying it as a negative because it's not a negative thing. The EU is going no-where. Italy is going to be out of it next, then France, then the Netherlands are going you know what I mean? They're just waiting for their national elections to come up. Then the EU is a goner. What it is now is not what we signed up for.

What do you see for the future?

I see the UK becoming the fiscal hub of Europe. I hope. The banking capital of Europe. I see us starting to trade a lot closer with countries like India, African countries, Australia, I think it's gonna boost a lot of tourism between America and the UK, I think personally if they can get control of the borders and we can start doing things properly the UK will flourish outside of the EU. We've been very constrained. Also remembering that a lot of the UK was made up of beautiful fishing villages all the way through Cornwall all the way through Scotland, and those villages are just desolate now if we could get our own fishermen back with our own borders, reviving all these small coastal towns, trading more freely with other countries, I think we are going to thrive. If they can get control of the population and borders, because at the moment the population is out of control.

Okay, well I've gone through my questions now but I wanted to give you the opportunity to bring anything to the table or elaborate on anything, was there anything you wanted to talk about?

What is it you're doing this for again?

My PhD.

Wow, well done you. What an exciting time to do it, the world is in such a state at the moment.

Yeah.

Well I wish you all the best with your study.

Thank you so much and thank you so much for your time.

I hope you manage to get a nice approach to it all.

Thank you, Have a lovely day.

And you, bye bye.

7.7. Coding table for thematic analysis

Code/Theme	Description	Example
Patriotism	National loyalty and pride	"I suppose it's loyalty to your nationality, loyalty to country, but I still think that's to the country rather than necessarily to a political aspect of the country. If you see what I mean. So loyalty to Britain rather than necessarily loyalty to the government of the day." - *Elliott* • "I feel that anyone could be British, but they need to have a loyalty to what Britain is. Which you know, I wouldn't like to think that people could become British with the intent of changing Britain to be more like somewhere else" – *Elliott* • "Well, I was trying to talk to my driver 12 year old daughter and I was trying to explain to her today that it's the proximity of stuff makes a difference. So if we were in a crowd and some terrible incident occurred, obviously, there's plenty of examples to choose from, I said, you know my duty to her as a father would be to deal with her first, even if there were other people nearby that were, you know, similarly injured you've got to prioritise something and my duty to her as a father would say that. And then if she wasn't there, but I was there with a group of friends, again, I would expect probably to look at their needs first and then other people and then you know there comes a point where you've got to make a decision about prioritising somebody… you know the Englishness is the sort of biggest step of that, you know, I would think of myself as a Gloucestershire person or a West country person or an English person." - Derek • "[how would you describe your patriotism?] To be loyal to the queen basically and obey the rules of the country and stick up for English people wherever you can." – Colin "[what is patiriotism to you?] Well I voted for Brexit. I'm not a great fan of mainland Europe ruling us, you know." – Mandy "I feel very very lucky that fate has chosen to pop me into into Britain if you like. So, yeah, I would think of myself as being more patriotic then I have had before, I think we're very lucky to live in this country comparison to some of the other parts of the world." – Lee "Most people choose a St Georges flag around here. Then you've got this whole weird thing that came up with Brexit where people start identifying as European. I mean who you know who the hell? You know, some people do now, but it's a new phenomenon this identifying as European it only happened due to Brexit. It's taking something away from somebody. They suddenly realized they wanted it and it was another fight to get behind innit. Everyone needs a flag to get behind the British flag wasn't their flag that was taken by the leave campaign. The English flag was taken. It's been taken by football Hooligans in the EDL and people like that. And so what flag do you get behind? Random European flag? That's weird." - Ian

Military pride	Pride in the British military, past and present.	"I think when Britain has done things that have been successful; I suppose going back a bit in history. I was proud of the outcome of the Falklands War in 1982. I think I was fairly proud of what we achieved in Afghanistan in the 2000s but less proud of the 2003 invasion of Iraq because I didn't think that was that was warranted." - *Elliott*
		"And I'm going to probably sound a bit like a warmonger but I think the conclusion of the first and second world wars are things that I do make a mental note of and I suppose remember and think with some pride of the achievement" – *Elliott*
		"Reasonably. Yes, I would tend to want to you know, do the remembrance days and the sort of thinking that military veterans should be looked after and all that sort of thing. I'm patriotic in terms of military and what have you" – Derek
		"I'm old enough to remember the Falklands War. So I was you know, quite proud of the Armed Forces having achieved recovering recovering the Falklands, sorry that it happened but pleased that we weren't sort of pushed around to that extent in that the people there that wanted to be rescued were rescued" Derek
		[Yeah, and can you think of a time where you felt most proud of your national identity?] When I was in the armed forces, so probably then. [Could you elaborate more on that? What specifically made you feel proud?*]* Just the fact that we were very professional well known throughout the world that British forces were some of the best in the world." Shane
		"My grandfather was a pilot in WW2 as well as my uncle and my grandmother was a nurse, both of my grans were nurses. And I just feel that patriotism is about protecting the history, remembering why people died for and why they died for the UK. Patriotism is about conquering democracy and... I just feel proud to be British. Its the history that makes us proud to be British." – Jackie
		"I'm proud of all of the historical interventions that we made whether it's the first world war the second world war, not too proud about Boer war, but all of the things that on the surface Britain's tried to do and achieve it in the world." – Tony
		"I would say every Remembrance Day is when I feel like the most proud, It's an old one because I would say definitely Remembrance Day, especially when we go into like the second world war and the Cold War side of it when the first world war to me is although I'm very proud of Britain. Like when I think about the first of all Remembrance Day first world war like every side was pretty much the exact same it was Kings as kings whereas World War II like especially World War II and the Cold War there was to me there was like a very right and a very wrong sense and every Remembrance Day, because my dad served, you know, my dad was in the forces like that is probably my highlight of my year of feeling that you know, without us the world could be a very very different place." – Tom
		"say I look up to people like, well the classic answers going to be Churchill and there's quite a few obviously Britain's always been a naval power so it's quite a few captains and admirals like Lord Jericho British admiral from the first world war" Tom

		289	"I think our military is one of the best in the world" – Neil
			"[is there any part of history that you feel isn't remembered or celebrated enough?] I think we are getting better at marking things like BoB and WW2 and times where we protected our island. I think there should be a Battle of Britain day. I think there is one but I don't think many people know of it. [Why does that hold importance to you?] Because without the sacrifices that these people made we wouldn't have our own identity." – Ruby
			"the biggest one for me, because I was young enough to remember it, was the Falkland's war. We were a nation that was shrinking, we had a large country that took over one of our territories, but we still managed to muster an armada, we sent the best troops we had and took back what was ours. And Margaret Thatcher to me was one of the best leaders this country will ever have, ever. Wonderful woman, amazing woman. I think she personified my opinion of what this country is. An amazing woman. A great woman, a great example to so many women out there that you can achieve and become the top of what they are. I think that's brilliant, in this day and age, bloody brilliant." - Martin
Monarchy	Royal family and monarch as a point of pride and identifier		"There's a historic not quite direct link but a member of my family name rescued Charles from the parliamentarians and a very famous government got him abroad and things like that. So we have a family crest and motto which may not be directly related to us but it's close enough, about guarding the Royal and all that sort of thing. So there's sort of a mild interest in that sort of thing and I'd be open to you know, I'd be more of a royalist than a republican" – Derek
			"I think we should celebrate our monarchy more. I am a royalist but I don't think they're doing much for their reputation recently in the last few generations but I think it's important for tourism, and it keeps people coming back, the whole tourism thing. I think if something is bringing in 80 billion a year in tourism you don't let it go very easily." – Jackie
			"I like the fact they are a figurehead of this country. There's certain members I like more than other members. But I take a great interest in all their marriages, births and scandals"- Celia
			"they lead us through difficult times, they are a symbol of our country worldwide." – Ruby
			"I'm very much a royalist when I joined forces in 1971. I signed allegiance to the queen. Yeah, I believe that still that doesn't go away. My beliefs have actually strengthened more in the last few years for various reasons" – Billy
			"Well I firmly believe that we are a strong nation and a very, very proud nation. Very proud nation. I'm a very strong monarchist. You go anywhere you want to go in the world, you get them to name a king or a queen. They will always say the queen of England. They all say that. They won't say the king of Norway. Because that's the power this country still has. And I want to hold onto that." – Martin

British civic pride	references to British civic institutions and ideas as an identifier for Britishness	"Regardless of any sort of political aspects to it, you know in the field Britain sort of stands for fairness, justice and democracy even if it doesn't always feel very democratic" - *Elliott*

"I think for me it's about being just being open-minded being fair" – *Elliott*

"The only one that comes to mind is the 2012 Olympics. That felt like there was a real sense of community in the country, a coming-togetherness." – *Charlie*

"Probably around the 2012 olympics, it did make me feel very proud because everybody internationally and in this country expected them to be a bit rubbish. And we did it so well and it was so good, so friendly, it was so lovely. It made me feel really proud". – Jenny

"I think one of the things I'm most proud of is the fact that we have been traditionally a very open and tolerant society. We don't have very strict rules about all sorts of things that in other countries, because of the influence of the church in catholic countries there's lots of rules and laws that people stick to, and the fact we are open and accepting to other people is something to be proud of. I think it's beginning to slip a bit, that's current circumstances. But I still think it's something to be proud of." Jenny

"I think we try and have a sense of fairness. We try and have I think, as with all bureaucracies it ends up being over complicated and whatever but I think the intention is good, you know that sort of parliamentary system, judicial system. Some of those structures although they're clumsy and you can find specific faults with them. I think they're well-intentioned and I think they're better than the sort of chaos of not having them if you know what I mean. So to that extent I think some of the some of these established structures and institutions are something to be proud of." – Derek

"being British is necessarily a mix of stuff and we still need a lot of support and energy from people, our population demographic obviously is changing tremendously. And so although I think they've been some tremendous problems in some areas with some European immigrants in other areas I think they've been fantastically positive." Derek

"[is there anything that makes you feel positive about your British identity?] Democracy, freedom of speech, it's a pretty Multicultural country. So I think that's proud of I think those are probably the main ones." = Abby

"I think British Patriotism is a lot more subtle. It's a lot more content with the way that life is in Britain. America's very like in your face like flags out, truck rallies. Whereas I would say British patriotism is much more just about content with the ideals that Britain is set around and it's living through those ideals. So I would say promoting our ideas on like a freedom like equality" – Tom |

			"[Would you describe yourself as patriotic?] I mean, yes, in that I worked for and supported, you know, the Democratic institutions that make our country, you know and make what it is and I used to have difficulty persuading some of the people who worked in the same area that some of the reasons that we were doing were so that people could actually go and protest and not be locked up in many years or killed or tortured and things like that. Umm. It's difficult because you know, some of the far right-ers have taken elements of patriotism in a sort of way to try and make it their own and narrow and I think you know, it's just sensible to you know to other pride in your country and where you live. And it's a lovely place to live and our institutions are fallible, but they're a lot better than many other countries, you know." – Sandra "I mean all the all the positive steps in like enfranchisement of women in the voting age in equality act things like that things that have given people more rights? I mean even go back to the Magna Carta the foundation of Rights and Liberties and things like that. That's all very positive and all the people who've protested and achieved amazing things. The inventors, like the inventiveness like the technology that's come out of Britain. That's pride I think." – Josie
British characteristics	References to British character, psyche and personality		• [what makes you feel positive about your national identity?] The fact that you know, it's the old British stiff upper lip, you know, whatever happens. We just knuckle down and get on with it." – Shane • "[So what's your idea of patriotism?] Pride in the people and the nation and being British is not necessarily rooted in the establishment put it that way. [Okay. So where would you see it rooted in if not the establishment?] Maybe the common understanding of what British means in the world which maybe something that doesn't exist. I've got to be careful what I say here but I see Britain and being British as a set of collective ideals and morals. I'm not naive enough to know that you know, we're not, you know whiter than white, but I do think proud of the history with all the baggage that comes with it. But our positioning in the world in terms of what we potentially stand for is sort of what I align to." – Tony • "So, there was a captain of a ship in World War II called the [inaudible] it was just his very British tone of knowing that everything was lost but we might as well give it one good last try and what we can do now, like his famous words are "we're going down so we might as well make a good run of it" and that sense of Britishness on that ship to just be like, well it's over but we might as well make the impact we can have now. I'm sure every country has its people like that but that to me, there's a famous saying that the British military and the British officers don't duck because they just accept what's coming like it just happens. What's going to happen happens. I think that's a very British mentality is if it happens it happens, and if it doesn't it doesn't, if you survive then good. I think with the Duke of Wellington and he is kind of a symbol of Britain whether you see for the Empire or the Commonwealth to pull very very different groups of people together whether in a good way or a bad way, but the Duke of Wellington's like the Battle of Waterloo was pulling together a very very broken coalition that have been beat seven times in seven different Wars and he managed to pull it together. He is somebody that in a military standpoint is another one of my greats, you know, someone that had been countlessly torn through Europe, a masterminding technician, it was that Britishness to pull everything together and go this is what we've got. And this is what we've got to do, it is the resourcefulness I think. I think it's that ability to overcome and adapt" – Tom • "I'm very proud of our British history, I wear union jack trainers all the time, I have union jack everything, I love the identity of being British, I'm very proud of being British, I'm very proud of everything we've done in the

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			past, generally I'm just very proud to consider myself British" – Ruby
			• "We have a sense of right and wrong, a sense of fair play, I think the European approach is far too lenient in terms of accepting large numbers of people coming into Europe. I have a lot of sympathy fr refugees but I think that every country in Europe, it needs to be spread amicably. I don't think that is the case. I know that as a country we support people who are struggling financially, we are seen as having a soft touch, so people wanting to escape from their situations are desperate to come to the UK because we have a softer touch in comparison to other parts of Europe." – Ruby
			• "I like to be very fair and I like to be I was going to say abrupt it's not abrupt, it's more It's what you see is what you get. I've done that business in my personal life or whatever. So if I disagree with somebody, I'll tell them. But I won't say You must change your way of thinking to mind are quite happy to have that discussion and debate and still walk away shake hands and disagree. So I think and that's something that I'd see certain other... I was going to say... let's use the word certain other countries or people, don't do that. They are black and white if you don't agree you're wrong. And I think we're big enough and I'm big enough to say sometimes even what I believe in genuinely believe may be wrong. But if you don't convince me, I'll start carry on believing what I believe. " – Simon
			• "I think that it's where there's diversity and like acceptance and stuff like that, I know it's not really like that at the moment but you know that's how I see us. We are quite accepting and a mix of nationalities and a mix of races and stuff like that." – leanna
			• "I think now because of this weird and horrible and crazy time of covid we've been pulling together during lock down and it felt like we are all in this together and doing it for the country I think clapping for the NHS and when the NHS ask for volunteers that was filled up in less than a day and I was like hell yeah people want to help other people and that's just our culture that's who we are." – Samantha
			• "Nobody wants to be do they? [laughs] It's only a group of people in Northern Ireland that want to be British. The welsh don't wanna be. The Scottish don't wanna be. Well maybe some. And there's a group of people in Britain that hold on to it. I mean can anyone be British... I guess so by but at the same time, they're welcome to that. They are welcome to that Legacy of Empire but it's not for me. Yeah for me to say [laughs]. I'll let them fight over that." - Ian
Cultural assimilation	Ideas of minority group or culture adopting the country (Britain) inhabitancy's majority group's values, behaviours, and beliefs		• "Well other countries have different standards and different acceptable behaviours, and I think if anyone could be British then you need to conform to British standards and British behaviours and not with the intention of trying to change Britain to, you know, this isn't about accepting other people's cultures, but some things that are acceptable in other countries are not acceptable in this country, and I don't think they should be" – Elliott
			• "Yes, I think if you live in the country and follow the laws and you conform to society and you don't try and change the British way of life, anybody can become British. But when you want to move in and try and make us live a different way of life, then you threaten Britishness." – Jackie
			• "I think anyone can feel British and I think that sharing cultures and ideas is important, but it's just as important to make sure there is a separation. So for example, I think what Sikhs have done so well is they brought over their culture and people love their culture. They love their food. They love like, you know, they're not forceful when trying to get people to convert their religions like Christianity and Islamism and I think they've done so well with assimilation but keeping their identity. So I think anyone can be British but it's whether it's the willingness in your mind to be British." – Tom

		• "I think we sometimes are very soft targets for shall we say non British people? We don't stand up for ourselves in an appropriate manner sometimes. [Okay. Could you elaborate on what you mean by that?] Well, yeah, I mean the classic is I know you have to be inclusive and welcoming people because they do and have contributed greatly to the wealth and community in the country. However, if I want to go abroad and drink alcohol and certain countries, there's no debate about whether it's allowed or not. It's not. If you go to certain countries and deface their religion, it's fact, you're not allowed to do it. But if they come here and do it, we're told we're intolerant if we don't let them do it. So there's an imbalance at the moment that we have been perhaps a soft touch in the past, trying to be, dare I say it, too left wing and therefore now we're exposed to everybody and anybody says well, you know why you're doing it and we're not standing up for ourselves as a country." – Simon • "[Do you think that anyone can be British?] They should be British if they accept, they can follow their own beliefs, but they should not expect our beliefs to be trashed or that we must change to their belief. So yes, I'm quite happy for anybody to come to this country. So long as they stick by classic phrase 'our rules', but our rules are very liberal. So they can do what they like nine times out of ten in this country, but they expect to us to bend to their way of thinking sometimes. I use a horrible phrase saying "their" way of thinking but that's the best way of expressing it. I think it's one-way traffic too much. But yes, anybody can be British people have been here 10 years. They are British by definition. They're contributing to society." - Simon
National heroes	Responses to whether Britishness can be encapsulated by a modern day or historical figure	"I think one of them, and it probably sounds a bit crass but it's Winston Churchill. Because you know, he was the right man in the right place at the right time […] he demonstrated leadership." – *Elliott* "this is very predictable but Winston Churchill. Because again he was undervalued and he really stepped up at a time that the country needed someone to step up, he wasn't somebody who anybody thought would be any good and he pulled it out the bag for us, so those two spring to mind. But I don't think I do heroes generally. I just like the fact that Churchill was a really hard worker and was written off as a young man because they really thought he was stupid and useless and he made some misinformed choices early in his career that would've finished some people off and they would've just gone off somewhere and done some quiet job but he was a very determined character and I think that's something the national character has fed off. Certainly in war time, we needed people that were going to keep going and keep trying and be resolute" – Jenny "I think that'd be quite a few movers and shakers that would have my respect but no one specific. if you needs be I'd say Churchill. Actually in that category I'd also say Margeret Thatcher." – Derek [why?] "Just seeing through a big change. Obviously whether it be a war or a financial thing or whatever. It's the one thing about Tony Blair that I give him some credit for is the Northern Ireland agreement, which I think there's plenty of problems with but to actually get it done. The easiest thing in the world is to talk about stuff and not get it done and actually getting something done is quite an achievement. So, you know, obviously Churchill leading the war effort, Margaret Thatcher's, if you look at the changing culture from where we were in the 70s with the unions and the lack of getting stuff done and then changing it to being really quite productive and the economy taking off, with all sorts of problems." Derek

"[Is there anything that makes you feel positive about your Englishness?] I think our heritage. We can go back a long way and point to things that English people that have done, Churchill, we can go back a long way. Churchill and people like that, people that were proud English people that advanced the country so to speak. [What is it about people like Churchill that you particularly liked or admired?] Their resolute determination to see things through I think." – Colin

"I admire Nigel Farage for speaking the truth and standing up for British people really in the face of a lot of opposition. He's always as far as I'm concerned spoken a lot of sense and that's why he's been castigated in the past and had bad press because he speaks the truth and people don't like it." – Colin

"Heroes... I was a fan of Magaret Thatcher, I am a fan of Boris Johnson, and I am a fan of Jacob Rees-Mogg, on a political front I like those three. [What is it you like about them?] I like that they stood their ground and they delivered and... You know I kind of like the way that Jacob puts people back in their boxes in the most eloquent of British fashion... I like Boris Johnson because he's delivering on democracy and that's his only goal and I'm impressed with how he handles the media especially the left wing media isn't doing him any favours." – Jackie

"I think Baden Powell did a lot of good but I think he was a man of his time and I think it's good to be aware of all the negative things he did and not fully celebrate him as a total hero, you know." – Abby

"I mean my family hate Winston Churchill but I just happen to think that he was, through all his flaws and everything I think he was a patriot and he saved us from the nazi's and fascism, in my opinion. " – Mandy

"[do you have any national heroes?] I absolutely loved Mountbatten. I really thought a lot about him. And Churchill, and Montgomery. [What makes them appealing to you?]

Because of the way they lead the country during the war years. I have great respect for them. Their leadership. Very much their leadership and their leadership capabilities. Maggie Thatcher, I didn't like her at all. Theresa May was just wishy washy. To be a leader of a country you've got to have leadership qualities. [And what are important leadership qualities?] One is the ability to delegate. You've gotta be able to delegate. Otherwise you'd be swamped. And that you say something and you believe what you're saying. You know, nothing is gonna change your mind. What you've said, you thoroughly believe it. I think some people say something because it will get them a vote. Or say something because it'll make people like them. But I like a leader who truly believes what they say is right." – Celia

"Although I think that Trump and Boris are buffoons, I really like them. I really think they bring some laughter to our government and that's a bad thing I know because they should be stiff upper lip but I enjoy watching them both. And actually, I do think Boris talks a lot of sense. [What is it you like about them when you watch them?] Well I I'm not a conservative but I like Boris because he shows leadership, he's strong and says what he means. Same with Prince Phillips, he may make stupid remarks like the one about the Chinese, but I think he's wonderful because he says what he thinks. He doesn't try and put icing on it or dress it up or hide who he really is. You see himself. [Do you appreciate honesty?] I do, I really do. I like to see the real person. In church, we say you can tell who the real Christian is when you live in their home for a week, everyone may be on their best behaviour in church

		295	but it's when you are like it at home too. The picture to the outside world needs to be the real person." – Celia

"I don't believe that Jeremy Corbyn was anti-Semitic. I thought he was for everybody. I know he was pictured with Palestinians and Arabs but I don't believe he was anti-Semitic. I know he would be just as happy to be pictures with Jews. He was badly misread. I liked him very much. He was for the people no matter what race or creed. When Grenfell tower burnt he was down with the people cuddling them and talking to them. He was close to them, he wasn't all horty torty oh I'll visit when safe, he was there on the ground and he wasn't in posh clothes. He was just on his bicycle. That's what I liked about Gordon Brown, when all the other candidates were out canvassing he was in church. He got his priorities right. Again, it's a case of whether these people are real or not" – Celia

"Boudicca. Her righteous fury, was so legendary it has stood for two thousand years. And the smack she brought down on the Romans was glourious. Of course everything that's been written about her has to go through the lens of Roman historians fictionalization. I mean, they have always picked up size of the armies that the Romans went up against in order to make Romans look better. But you know, when you're looking at history, it's always twisted through a lens." – Jack

"Winston Churchill had to make some very very difficult decisions, some of which were unpopular, but he still went ahead with it. So he was a very consistent and confident in his mind of what he wanted to do." – Neil

"I don't think we have any strong political leaders at the moment. We are too stuck with these positions of right and left and centre and so on." – Ruby

"I'd have to go back to suffragette movement and thinking about Emmeline Pankhurst and the whole array of women around that cause. They would have been heroes of mine at the time. Mmm, okay. I'm going to say it. Jeremy Corbyn. I thought he was an inspiration. " – Susanna

"I think Churchill and the Tudor monarchs I think I resonate with me because of their very clear and strong leadership, you know, the means by which the Tudors did some of it. Yeah, the older I get and the more I think as a society we've taken the veneer off of some of the further back history, but they are still there as heroes." - Sam |
| Rural-Urban divide | Highlighting differences/boundaries between urban experiences and rural experiences/behaviour/culture/attitudes/treatment | | "I suppose perhaps having always sort of lived in the countryside. I see more of a more of a difference between city and country and town and country them between you know, between the individual nations." – *Elliott*

"The there's a greater awareness and understanding of farming, of wildlife, of the environment. Whereas I think in urban areas there's a tendency to see, you know, there's a lack of understanding of where food comes from and and there's a view of the countryside as being a playground rather than a working place." – *Elliott*

"It does bug me sometimes I suppose particularly, you know, when you see really poor behaviour […] clogging roads up by inconsiderate parking. Also when people come out of towns and fly tip into the countryside or people don't appreciate that fields are there to produce food. They're not then they're for them to go and traipse across and drive the cars into or have a picnic in. - *Elliott*

"I don't feel particularly represented. It's the rural thing, but I've always kind of felt that the Southwest always loses out probably because it is more rural than other areas of the country, you know, and rural areas take second place to urban areas." – *Elliott* |

"If I think about it I feel resentful. But it's something that I've just got used to." –*Elliott*

"I'd feel less safe in London feeling that I'd always have to be on my guard which I don't feel down here, you know, if I left something outside, it would gone in the morning." *Elliott*

"If you walk around Butleigh, the majority of people are white, middle-aged." – *Elliott*

"I do most of my weekly sort of shopping in in Somerton which is only a small town and during the election campaign of David Warburton was there and he was talking to a crowd group of people outside of the shop that I was in and there was several people sort of asked me. Who's that? I was like, well, that's your MP." – *Elliott*

"Urban living was faster pace, it's more anonymous, it's noisier, there isn't any sense of community in my experience. When I moved here people said 'oh that must've been nice being in Surrey!' and I thought, well no actually. Not everywhere in Surrey is nice. But there's much more community spirit here and everyone knows each other and that makes an awful lot of difference. I didn't know neighbours where I lived before, I knew some of them a bit but I know my neighbours now. Like I properly know them. and I find that areas where people know each other, kids behave because they know their parents will find out if they don't. It makes such a difference and Devizes is a relatively small town population wise so people do know each other. I've worked all over town so I know loads of people and their cousins, and their aunties, and their boyfriends mums, you know, it makes such a difference." – *Jenny*

"when I moved here, there were reasonably bus links and then by the following year they had started cutting them back to towns nearby, they went from every 2 hours down to three a day. That makes life difficult, I don't drive, there's no train station here, there's coaches but they go once a day and and come back once a day. So it's an issue. Some people would say lack of decent shopping is a pain. Hospitals as well is an issue because you've got to go a fair way to get to a decent sized hospital." – *Jenny*

"I think that money and time and expertise in the UK is disproportionately focused on London and that if it can be spread out amongst the wider communities that would be a good thing, it'll be inefficient and it'll be expensive. But if that means it gets done then maybe that's the only that's the least worst option. So I think yes, you know some measured political devolution I think is sensible whilst the Union as a whole, you know also has some value." – *Derek*

"I think that the increased sort of financial proportion thats's particular down to London means that there's lots of people in London and therefore in the political system, that they're quite clever, but they seem to have lost the ability to recognise the things they don't know and I think you know, I'd be the first to say that there's lots of other people's jobs that I can imagine, but I'd recognise that when you try doing somebody else's job, there's lots of stuff that you hadn't imagined and it feels to me like the politicians particularly, you know London people perhaps in general other big city folk have sort of lost sight of the extent of their own imaginations and their perhaps a

bit overconfident about stuff and I'm sure that applies to the way I'm sure there's lots I can't imagine about the city situations, but given that the city people are largely making the decisions." – Derek

"I think the people that are doing stuff in the countryside have been doing it for quite a long time and the people in the cities that are really doing stuff have done it quite a long time and there's a difference there. Obviously what we've had in the last couple of generations is a lot more flowing in-between so a lot of country folk have gone to the cities to find work and a lot of the rich city folk come out to the country and where you know, a hundred years ago, there was just a few of each, in the last 20-30 years. The numbers have been much bigger. So the Cotswolds is heavily populated with money and people that have come out of the city and bought a pretty place in the country to live in so it depends which one's you're calling the country folk. But yes, I think, you know, if you go into the cities and I've worked in Jaguar Land Rover met people from the factory that are second and third generation and some of the skills and attitudes and things they've got are very different to the sort of working folk in the countryside. They've got like an equivalence but they're very different. So yeah, I think there is a difference at that level that sort of management and political level. Those are the people that are moving around but it's still disappoints me that it seems like the political decisions tend to sway more on the the London basis even though probably all those people are spending quite a bit of time in the Cotswolds. It feels like they're not quite grasping it or giving it the same way. " – Derek

"I think that part of the sort of City / Country divided that we talked about earlier was that the city folk, this is a desperate generalism, but the city folk just assume that everyone was happy with the way it was because they make they were making lots of money. So therefore it must all be great, the country folk, certainly the employers were much more saying well, you know, this really isn't working as well as it could and maybe it is time for a change and that view really wasn't taken into account. I don't think at all. I think that's one of the things that the city folk just chose to ignore and you'd have it, it sounds terribly pompous, you know, even in the queue at the cafe waitrose in Cirencester, you'd have people saying well surely people are allowed to have an opinion. Oh, no, surely there's only one answer and there's just this quite a pronounced remain bigoted attitude that no one else could possibly be worth considering you know, and I've seen quite a lot of that be like well nobody could tell us what leave look like and you'd say well, okay. So if we stayed in the EU where would that be going? They said well, you just stay under the same roof. It doesn't the changes constantly all the time. Doesn't it? Yeah. It's not a static position. It's an evolution as we go along and I never found one that had any kind concept or could describe anything positive things coming. They just didn't want the status quo to change it felt to me."- Derek

"I think the pace of life, it's a lot slower. It's not so hectic. I've been to London and it's full of people running around everywhere and I will feel quite manic when I go there. I don't necessarily like it. I think it's a lot more open spaces nice views and I much prefer being where I am than being in London or any big cities, I don't like big cities." –Shane

"I lived in London for a while but I ended up wanting to settle down out here, because I'm near Southampton and It's good for work. The reason I left London was because I was on the bus behind the one that blew up in the terrorist attack in London in 2007. Then I was just like, I'm not living here anymore. It was hectic. And then you just realise, is it really worth living in a big city when you're probably going to die over something you don't really care about or believe in? So you're just like it's not worth it! I'm just as happy living here, and I'm a sailor so It's good to be

near the sea for my boat. It suited me. I like living in a small town. I just like it. I feels more in control, London is just too big." – Jackie

"there's a difference between part of the Indigenous population that has been brought up in the country people and people who move to the country there for a reason so by definition that they're here for what they want. If you're a young person living in a rural area, obviously the opportunities are less and hence with the evolvement of megacities around the world and with the youngsters having to leave the rural area to go into the into the big cities in order to gain, you know advancement in employment"- Tony

"It's important that you know, I mean my children were all born here and they all call themselves Cornish, their father is Cornish too. I think that Cornwall is just a different place to anywhere else in England because we think we are another country. it's a fishing town, and it's all pubs and drunken fishermen. " – Mandy

"My local area is about 100 years behind the times. We are so old fashioned here it's unbelievable. That's not just my husband and our campsite it's the local area. In Bridgewater we say everybody is related to everybody else, our village has a lot of retirees and we are just very behind the times and you know you go to the doctors surgery and you can walk in with muddy welly boots because we're country folk. That's okay, no-body bats an eyelid. Our doctors come out to visit us whenever we ask and they come in and have a cup of tea and they'll take a bag of apples. We call our doctors by our first names and they call us by our first names, we are very much a community. I can't imagine you'd get that in London." – Celia

"I mean you have the differences here, you have the people that move out of London and buy homes in the Cotswolds and there's different parts of south Dorset which are far more London centric like Bournemouth or Exeter because they have univerisities and then you've got Poundbury. You've still got a lot of estates in the South West that are owned by the rich Richard Drax types. You don't see much Black Lives Matter protests out here if you know what I mean. But there are all sorts of deprivation because of low wages and seasonal work. But that's all because of the rural economy. Nailsea is a prosperous place but we have had to start our own food banks, the level of deprivation I've seen here is devastating. On the surface it looks nice, comfortable, very middle class and prosperous but underneath it all is people with very hard lives." – Sandra

"Everyone just seems to be based in the towns and cities and I feel like for example with building and planning permission, I don't think they take into account that we need the green spaces, they just seem to be building on everything. They don't take into account the people that live here." – Rebecca

"Where do you come from? [Me?] Yeah. [Dorset.] Oh well you will understand. A West Country person will walk around locally in their dirty wellies, dirty coat, etc. etc. The incoming people have the nice brand new wellies, the nice brand, new barber, that have never seen the light of dirt. And a big old 4x4 that's never been on grass. There in lies the story. Being a Dorset person you'll understand that. The other's are toffs." – Neil

"[what do you like about living where you do?] Peace and tranquillity. You feel protected from the trials and

tribulations of the country and the world is experiencing. Its sort of like how England used to be, people have time for you. It's definitely more protected down here in it's own period of time." – Ruby

"you know this all dates back to austerity and how you know, the southeast of England had done really well at the expense of almost every other region and I entirely agree with her with that I think how the southeast has been allowed to dominate or you know, it has benefited from things whilst all the other regions haven't and you know, obviously Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Northeast ,Northwest, Southwest, you know everywhere else is being left behind." – Phil

"I think because we are rural-ised we haven't had the exposure to the percentage of foreigners so we are probably more insular down here. I'm either British or Devonian and it sort of fits both ways. If f I had a choice, I'd build brick wall from Weston-super-Mare to Poole in Dorset and shut off the whole of the west countries." – Simon

[also on devolution] "We live in different areas and culturally and mentally. Yes. We are different. Definitely. It's all about peer pressure, your growing up environment is nothing by design. It is a fact and you can't just sweep that away and say well we're all the same because we're not you go to Wales and the viewpoint on on things are completely different. And in fact, you could argue that even in our country you go to the city in London and their view on things are completely different to us down here in the west country because of the ethnic mix and the country living environment you're living in." – Simon

"You could live in the city and not know your next-door neighbour for after year after year. There's more of that happening down here, which is sad, but as a point principle when we get neighbours, we have a wine and cheese evening invite the people that we do know locally invite the new people in and they may not choose to come but if they do and even if they come and just say hello to you and you don't speak them on a regular basis there is an awareness that you've acknowledged the new people in the area and I think in the city, sometimes you're afraid to even knock on next door to know who's in there. So for me, that's the big draw. That's why I stay down here is I like the community spirit. I was born in a small village. I didn't move out of the village I was 25 and and sort of that to me is what;s missing in the bigger city. The ability to feel that you're part of it. In London you're just going through the motions. You gotta go to work you go home. You may have social activities and groups that you join in but you don't know. I mean when I was growing up, I knew everybody in a ten-mile radius where I live just doesn't happen in the cities as yeah, and therefore there isn't that support and the feeling of oneness." – Simon

". I just I feel the Southwest is pretty much forgotten about, everything is very London or Southeast Big City Centric and I often think the Southwest is just it's one of those areas that is of low interest till it's about tourism." – Josie

"[When did it begin to change do you think when I started becoming more aware of?]

Just the publicity of like the Scottish would call it the like this there's got his vote for Independence. Yeah, and I thought yeah, that's when I'm going to start called himself English, but it's that box doesn't always appear does it okay that you have to put other and then it might say what is the other and then I try and put English rather than British. I am very British. Yeah, and I agree with the British Isles. I am British, but I want other countries to call themselves British as well. Not just the English which I feel that is the way things are going." - Billy

			"I think there's lot more deprivation in cities. And I know that farm in rural communities are quite deprived but we keep the deprivation hidden. Whereas in cities you'll see the homeless, you'll see the addiction and people have more of an opportunity to get help. In the countryside I think because there was for instance a man living in a tent in the village and the community rallied round and made sure that he was fed and watered, and he at the time he wanted to live in a tent. I don't sure where he's gone now, but he was being looked after and I think in cities you lose that identity. You're just another drunk drug addict that's homeless sleeping in the doorway. You don't see it here. I wish there was a magical cure for homelessness and deprivation. But yeah, if I'm not seeing it, I mean, obviously I realize that it's there, but now I do see it when I travel to Bristol. I went there a year ago and it was such a shock to see the deprivation and then a drug addict wandered out just just by me and then just fell over and landed on his head and we call the ambulance and that sort of thing and you don't see that where we are. I don't know… and I don't even like Poole anymore. I'm really a country bumpkin. These places just make you feel kind of uncomfortable. However many people you let into the country. There's going to be a point where you go we can't take anymore. So whether it's now or whether it's in 20 years time, whatever your politics you can't say at some point we're just going to carry on letting people come in whether they're economic migrants or whether their refugees or whatever." – Billy

"I think it's probably more. There's probably more rural culture. It's both laid-back and more wary. It's a seemingly more wary at the same time. So there's a higher level of apathy and less drive because you know, it's all right innit. It's alright 'ere. So this tends to be what you can't get people going on stuff is because you know what's wrong with this? It's alright, you know, it's alright innit." – Ian

"In the city there was a lot more people crowded together, but it didn't feel quite like the same sense of community. Whereas in a more rural area Community means if you don't know the person that lives next to you, you pretty soon find out who they are. Whereas in a rural area, community means community. In a city you can spend a lot of time there and not know those people. You form other communities around interests rather than having that wider sense of community, which is what you get in rural areas, which is where you might find people with common interests but you also reach out to people just because of geographical closeness and you get in that diversity then builds community. Class divisions in cities a much more pronounced than in rural communities. You've got, you know, you know that people are from a different class, but actually they might be one of four people that are in the pub at 12 o'clock on a on a Sunday and you just taught everyone talk to each other." - Ian |
| Unfair/Asymmetrical devolution / Scotland /Wales/ NI | UK devolution as dis-favouring English politics and policies | | There's always been that thing as know that that Scotland has control of its affairs Wales had some control of its affairs but Scotland in particular can influence English affairs because there isn't a separate English assembly. There's only the British government so yes, I think if we're going to have devolution, there should be a degree of devolution for England as well." – Elliott

"we are definitely separate from Wales and Scotland and Northern Ireland but I don't feel that personally like but then again I must do because I always put English rather than British down on forms. I guess there is a difference but I don't know how to verbalize it." - Samantha

"Well one of the things is the Scottish and the Welsh generally, because they haven't until the last 100 years they've tended to stay in Scotland or Wales, or around the borders, I just think they're genetically and socially more Scottish and Welsh than the English are. The English are |

| | | | much more genetically and in every other way a mongrel race. I don't think the English feel the identity feel their identity as strongly as the Scots and the Welsh do, we don't have easily identifiable national costume or things that mean as much to us. You think of Scotland you think of kilts and red hair, and I know they're all cliche but there are certain things that are really obviously Scottish and really obviously Welsh and I don't think the English have hat so much because I think the population is much more diluted, or certainly has been in recent history. I think we've kind of lost some of the Englishness that the Scots and the Welsh and the Irish have held onto a lot better than we have." Jenny |
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"I think there are some matters that should be decided locally. Scotland for instance has always had different laws, there's no reason that laws made in Westminster should automatically apply, and they don't in some cases but I do think devolution is a good thing and as I said it helps them hang on to their culture in a different way which I think is good, I don't think we should lose the culture that we have left." – Jenny

"There is something to be said for the argument that why should Scotland and Wales get a say in laws that only effect England. So I think for some things, I wouldn't be able to be sufficiently informed to say what, but I think it shouldn't work that we don't have a say in their laws when they have a say in ours. That's just daft. Somethings need to be right across Great Britain but if it's been devolved to other parliaments it should be only English or wherever law makers that decide what happen" – Jenny

"Englishness isn't necessarily all bad and that one should consider it as an equivalent to that. So I'm not for breaking up the union but if the Scots wanted to go and they've really thought it through then I would just I would respect that and it feels like that sort of thing and in that context I would obviously be English." Derek

"at the point of devolution, we'd found a George's cross and we put that up and somebody came along and said why have you done that? And we said oh, well, now we've had political devolution we should fly this. So I suppose compared to other people. I probably do recognise it a bit more than some" – Derek

"Yes, I think that with some frustration that the Scots who bang on about Westminster being a problem, but actually the Scots have a disproportionate, you know influence on Westminster. There have been a lot of very significant Scottish MPS, and it feels unbalanced that there are issues which quite reasonably been devolved to them at Holyrood. But at Westminster they're still voting on the bits that apply to England. So it sort of feels it feels unbalanced in that respect, on the other hand the conservative in me feels like we're paying for a lot of parliament's and do we really want another one? But yes in principle." – Derek

"[Back when devolution happened and they got their devolved assemblies, did you think that was a positive step?] No I didn't I thought it was sad. [Why?] Well, because I'm a proud Englishman but as I said I'm proud to be British. And when that starts happening, it was almost like we were becoming less British. The countries were going off in their own directions thinking that they could do better maybe, but my feeling is we could do better as a nation if we stuck together."- Shane

" I can never understand why Scots sit in Westminster when they've got their own assembly, I've never

understood that. And northern Ireland, some of them sit there, but they have their own parliament so I don't understand the need for them to sit in ours. So I've never understood that. So in answer to your question, yes, but we need a over arching parliament to cover the whole of the UK. So four assemblies with an umbrella parliament would probably be a good thing." - Colin

[Is the staying together of the union important to you?] I wouldn't like to see it broken up. Not at all. I wouldn't like to see the Scots go their separate way. I would like to see a united Kingdom, I'd like to see it stay but who knows what will happen in the future with Scotland. [Why wouldn't you like to see it broken up?] I think as a United Kingdom we've been a united front to all invaders in the past, a united front against all sorts of things, I think it's important for us to stay together for Britishness." – Colin

"I think now it has been proven to have been a big mistake. Because of the way they behave. I think also for them it was a positive step because they could've managed things in a small section but it needs to be reversed definitely, because Scotland has proved financially they cannot handle themselves, Wales is proving financially they can't handle themselves and the Labour government in Wales just doesn't seem to be working it just seems like a lot of shouting and very little action. So I would end that." - Jackie

"[on the future] Hopefully with a greater spread of wealth and opportunities across the UK and I think once the cranky woman in Scotland, you know doesn't get what she wants, well she won't get what she wants anyway because it doesn't make sense anyway for me. Did you know Scotland can only make and can only be sustainable $120 a barrel of oil. Otherwise, they're bankrupt. So once that's all that's put to bed. I do believe there is an opportunity to face a lot of the social and political issues we have in this country from a UK perspective." – Tony

"I'm sure it [devolution] is positive but for the unity of the British Isles, there isn't enough cohesion there. I don't know a lot about it to be honest but I just think that if you're part of the United Kingdom then be united. " – Mandy

"I also sometimes think the Scottish Parliament is used too much by Scotland to try and act like it's the second Westminster but it isn't and I think Scotland sometimes needs to realize. Unfortunately I see a lot of SNP and stuff on social media, which is very skewed. Like it's not you know, it's not necessarily the truth. Which happens in all referendums and campaigns, but it's also like it's a very fierce nationalistic perspective to put on something that they don't even have the real power to be, it's not like two countries going always separating. It's literally like they're not a second Westminster and I do feel like Scotland tries to you know, kind of just like stir up trouble being like oh Wales you know, maybe you should have a parliament next maybe you should be asking for that and I feel like Scotland is trying to divide… [he reflects] sometimes being maybe a bit selfish and a bit angry at the Scottish independence movement. I do sometimes wish you know, why don't you just cut ties and see how bad it is and then kind of hope they would come begging to be let back in but it would be a shame for all that history and unity to be wasted in the pursuits of maybe a slightly better thing which might be quite hypocritical for me to say with the EU but I think the blood and the connection between Scotland and England is far deeper and runs through far deeper than anything ran with the EU. I would be very upset if the union was to break up. " – Tom

"Well the Scottish are inclined to be mean. I don't think they are as, I wanna say they aren't as 'huggy' as the English, I know the English have this stiff upper lip thing but I've never found that, I've always found us all to be huggers. I think people would be surprised to know that. I find the Scottish very stand off-ish and too proud of their Scottishness. I don't go around saying 'I'm English, I'm brilliant' but they will go around like 'I'm Scottish I'm better than you' they're show-offy. I don't have much to do with the Welsh but I can't stand their accent. That's an awful thing to say isn't it. It just really gets to me. The Irish, the only ones I've been in contact with are the Irish

travellers and the majority of them cause trouble. I know we had soldiers over there at one point, I don't really understand their politics and why… you know we are supposed to be a civilized world but some of the things that have gone on in Northern Ireland are barbaric. So I don't feel they are very civilised" – Celia

"the English should've had an assembly as well shouldn't they. If you're going to go down those lines, then why would you leave out one part of the country? That was never really brought up as an issue. They seemed to work off the basis that we had regional mayors and that was enough. But there never seemed to be a particular desire for it. But when I was in Wales at uni I knew a lot of Welsh nationalists, whereas here there isn't that push for our own assembly." – Sandra

"Scotland and Wales are devolved but England still finances them. And... let me get this right. Scottish MPs can come into the British parliament but English MPs can't go into the Scottish parliament. That's not right. If Scottish MPs are allowed to interfere with English law then the English should be allowed to interfere with Scottish law." – Neil

"I really think devolution was a step backwards. I really kind of wish you many ways of that hadn't happened because that just is another step closer It seems to all these parts about our island being obviously more divided and yeah self-governing but at the same time if the British government had paid attention and really focused on the needs of all of these countries rather than prioritising in certain areas like London, if they have really taken notice what was happening in Scotland what was happening in Wales, and again treated all those parts of our country fairly and equally then I don't think that self-governing thing would probably even come up." – Lee

"In London you just had so much more variety so much more variety and particularly in the people that you would meet. You know, you'd meet Asian people. Black people. We lived on the borders of Brixton and Kennington. So we were really used to being around a large black population. Yeah a large Indian population and it was like you didn't think twice about it, you were around many different nationalities all the time. And in fact in some parts of London, you felt swamped by that, as being a white person as such you were quite often in the minority. Whereas here, it's like it is so rare to bump into a black person. You know, you have a greater chance of seeing an Indian person as such or possibly a Chinese person than you do a black person. Whether I'm framing all of that right in you know race wise or not. I don't know. But that's the gist of it" – Lee

"All those things you don't have here has a huge effect. For people of all ages but particularly for the younger people, you know, leaving schools and colleges and things like that. You think to yourself. Wow, what are you going to do? It's like, you know, you will be or you are going to be so culturally deprived in comparison to living in London or living in a really big city. It's worrying and I really do worry for particularly the younger generations for that as well. And a lot of that revolves around transport as well because they can't even get into into work and into places for opportunities. Obviously the transport has been cut back quite often and routes have been closed is quite often got worse and worse. Some of the outskirt villages like out here are horrendous if you don't drive. So yeah, it's really all the difference between the city and here that I've said before, what we don't have here that just has a massive impact on people and then when the government's turn around and say again a little bit more political but when they say that the council's have to be self funding a lot of the time. think that's just disgraceful they should be central funded for basic amenities." – Lee

". It's like a massive generation of the employable but with no employers. We need to attact business to come into the area and stuff. You know, actually provide work opportunities, you know, looking what Milton Keynes and things they had these huge areas didn't they where they tried to attract the cream of the crop of people. Why don't we have more Next, you know or Gap and all these other bigger brands that only get in like big shopping

centres, it will be wonderful re-vitalize the highest string particular. I don't want to lose our high streets. I mean, they're like a really important part of social life. We also need really good education and good health facilities here. I think the lack of transport and education around here stunts young people's lives and it reduces their opportunities to be able to do things that people in cities can do without even thinking about. Just getting to work on time or having really good frequent transport links. So you've not just got one or two buses a day going into a town." – Lee

"I wish that the whole devolution argument would stop, it's been driven by one particular person in terms of Nicola Sturgeon who is trying to use her treatment of what's happening with covid in Scotland to further her agenda, she will not let it go. She is trying to tie the whole covid-19 argument in with her own personal ambitions to have Scottish independence. I don't think Boris would let that happen. But I have no time for her." – Ruby

"I think we actually are a lot less knowledgeable on our own bits of history funnily enough. I would say Scots and the Welsh are more intense and more proud." – Phil

"Please don't judge me on some of my answers. I think we're more confident than them. I think there's an insecurity. It feels to me as if there's always an insecurity and and almost like a slight jealousness of the fact that we are the biggest country of the United Kingdom, have the most people have effectively we are probably the richest, you know, you could say that the oil in the North Sea might have changed that balance slightly certainly probably per head, but I think we are more confident. There's a negative side as well because I think because we are a bit bigger. I think we are less united I think Scott's a Scott, an Englishman is possibly a northerner or a southerner or West Countryman and and I think and that's that stands true for Wales and Northern Ireland as well. Northern Ireland is the difficult one, isn't it? Because I think there are there are there cracks in their society that aren't anything to do with with the geography. My arrogance would say we're better than them. But I don't really mean it. I'm a bit naughty.When I really know about equality, I still got this thing in me that has me saying well, we're best. I think I just can't help it sometimes." – Sam

"I think the Scots don't love the English and I think certainly an element of this includes Nicola sturgeon. I think they're actually racist towards the English, which I think that's really disappointing because when I was in the forces I was in it with a lot of Scotsman and they're very very good at what they do and those Scotsman are against independence in general. So yeah, what makes it I don't know. I love the northern Irish when I was over there. Absolutely remarkable group of people. Obviously, there was the nasty people amongst them... I fully appreciate the Welsh speaking Welsh but a long long time ago. I walked into a bakery in North Wales and the people were speaking English. And as soon as they found out that we were English they spoke Welsh. And I thought that was rude but by all means and it's not for me to say whether they should use Welsh or not, they should carry on their Welsh traditions and as we should be allowed to carry on our English traditions and not be criticized. I don't know it's more of a feeling than a something. You can actually put your finger on it. I still like to be known as English. You know, and follow English traditions." – Mike

"I think that if we're going if we're going to still be called Great Britain…. You know, it was the Brexit vote really that made it clear that we don't get on and you've got Scotland voting the way they did and.. It's very difficult situation, isn't it? So what, we're just going to build Hadrian's Wall higher and stop the Scott's coming in now? I don't think so. But it was a democratic vote voted for by Great Britain and I think it should be followed through by everyone." – Billy

"Since they got their own assembly we are kind of divided. More opinions divided. We are divided on so many things nowadays. I just want everybody to be happy and live together in peace and harmony. All around the world. I mean, you know, not just in Britain. But we're not going to see peace around the world because of religious factions

		predominantly and political factions causing trouble." – Billy
		"people are largely the same. I mean some of them speak a slightly different language. It's they all speak a slightly different version of English, but then so do a lot people in England, you know, it's depends which flag they want to get behind. You know it's a strange thing, it's strange, we all just want a flag." – Ian
		" [Devolution] I mean it's incomplete. So I mean that was devolved Parliament, you know, and in Northern Ireland, they had all sorts of problems. Don't they, but devolved parliaments in Scotland have worked out well for Scotland the devolved Parliament in Wales has worked out well. And it's all been brought back into focus with this covid-19 stuff that's going on at the moment, you know with differences with different countries having different National Health Services. So different approaches to you know, different approaches to the lockdown. I don't think it went far enough. I think we could have federalized a lot more in England. I think that could have been broken down into more areas, you know more areas. I mean when you go back like centuries when you know it root of englishness is the angles isn't it? You know, so the kingdoms of Wessex and East Anglia and what the other ones are called Mercia and yeah and all of that and so they would have kingdoms that were broken down into even smaller areas. Because they obviously felt that they had distinct cultural differences even then. But I just think it's more. I just think it's in terms of governing. It makes sense to break things down into more manageable pieces. And yeah, being run by London doesn't work for me." - Ian
Discontent with the Government	Discontent, distrust, disenchantment and disillusionment with UK politics, grievance	[on handling of covid-19] "A lot of things have been very ill considered and it's quite disappointing as well because it's at times like this that you really feel you need a strong opposition within parliament in order to hold the government to account except all the opposition does is say well you should have done that more quickly instead of challenging whether it was the right thing to do at all." – Elliott
		"I tend to see the party I vote for as being the least worst option rather than the best. " – Elliott
		"it's an absolute pigs ear. I feel my levels in confidence in politicians are almost as low as they were over the whole expenses scandal, you know the floating duck house and all the rest of it. I think everyone is just sick to death of politicians." – Jenny
		"I think people don't understand the decisions that are being made, they don't feel they are explained and they don't have confidence in the reasons behind the decisions. And I think particularly, Brexit and covid has meant that people don't have confidence in what their being told and because of the expenses scandal and various other scandals have damaged politicians image so much, people's default setting is to not believe them." – Jenny
		"But I think this is probably the worst bunch of politicians we've ever had in the history of our country. I think they're selfish. I think that they're in it for their self and I'm not just on about the conservatives. I'm also going on about you know, some of the labour ones aren't great either but you know, but yeah I think they are selfish. I think they're in it for their selves and I think right now this countries crying out for a strong leader real strong leader, and we've not got one." – Shane
		"I think what's really interesting is when I was younger you were in government to serve the country you weren't

there to serve yourself and with social media what's happened is, and it's not just politicians but politicians are now becoming celebrities. They're more interested, you know, it started obviously in Tony Blair's time, but they're more interested in their image, their career, what they look like, in my day you never heard from them they just did a job. They managed. Look at what's happening now with Boris's gang. It's so transparent they haven't got a grip of anything because they're not managers they're are not leaders. They are celebrities. And so when you talk about frustration or whatever, that's what I'm frustrated with." – Tony

"I don't like any of them to be honest, they're just a necessity, just there like curtains or carpets, you've gotta have them. I don't hate any of them but I don't admire them." – Mandy

"I have a lot of French friends, Belgium friends, we are very much the same. We all eat chips and think the same, you know. I truly think it's not the people, it's the people who are running our countries who divide and conquer, it's horrible. The general people, the populous, we are all the same we're just people." – Mandy

"I know that we're heading for an interesting time. Because of politics. My problem with politics, is the reason why we are heading where we are heading. Dishonesty." – Jack

"when you see them in parliament and they're making all that noise, you know that noise, I don't know why they do it it's like children in a classroom, it is all very old boys school and the people that are there are meant to be representing us and they don't seem to have anything in common with any of us so I just think it should be scrapped, the whole lot of it and we should have people that have more knowledge of what the common people need." – Rebecca

"I just wish that... I have no confidence in our government at the moment. And that seems to be the case to be honest with you quite a few government's I just wish that they would have the interests of all of us first and do what, rather than doing what's right for themselves or for the party or for the short period of time that they're elected for and just trying to make sure that they forced through the things that they want to have this on their agenda. I feel very hugely let down by its like and if they fail in a policy by telling the truth, yeah if they fail. I would rather they fail by letting us know truthfully why the failures happened rather than inventing all these long-winded round and round scenario reasons of blaming one person or one organisation against another it's like and because of that is like I just feel let down by them." – Lee

"it's still in a mess but it was so much in limbo and i feel we've gotten through it. if covid hadn't come along we would've been a lot further along but we've just been stuck in such a rut over Europe for years. We've been in such a rut over the last few years and our current politics has totally stalled because of it." – Ruby

"I must have written 20 letters to him [local MP] and not had one reply. Not one. When I was out of work and made redundant I asked him, you know if what he does to try and bring employment to the area, I explained the only at that time to get a new job so I could find were what they would call in the gig economy, you know on zero-hours contracts where these people are treating their workers awfully you know, terribly, five successive weeks. I was told yeah come in on Monday on the previous Thursday

			and then you get the Monday and you then you get a text saying no there's no work this week and that happened five weeks running. You can't treat your workforce like that. And if that's the only work around then, you know, people should hang their heads in shame." – Phil

"Parliaments a joke, question time is just again, they're just point-scoring and therefore and if they made a statement we can use the bus for use whatever you like at no point has anybody gone back and said you made that statement. This is now tacitly proved incorrect. You're responsible. They all hide behind this veil of non responsibility and in business if you make a mistake and get it wrong, you stand accountable for the consequences but politicians don't stand account for the consequences." – Simon

"I personally find it hard to say which of our politicians could be trusted. I have often pontificated and I think a lot of people in politics are very well off and have had quite a lot of privilege in their lives and not a lot of the know what it's like to live on benefits or be a single parent and so we are being governed by folk who are out of touch. [How does that make you feel, having people out of touch in power?] I get really cross. I know Dominic Cummings isn't a politician but I shout at the television quite a lot because it's quite... yes I feel they're out of touch. [Yeah, what kind of things do you shout at the television?] I just sit there saying this is ridiculous! Sometimes I say I think they're lying through their teeth. I think Boris Johnson just says anything he thinks people want to hear. And I don't know if whether he thinks anything through and if he is guided by advisors I wonder about it really I wonder what advice he's getting. When he says things they just aren't true or a load of fluff." – Donna

"Well I do believe strongly that elderly people are being abandoned and there isn't enough services." - Donna |
| Lack of political representation | Lack of political agency | | "Well because my constituency down here is Conservative and Richard Drax is the MP and he's a multi millionaire that can't really I don't think in my view... I mean I've spoke with him and I've wrote letters to him back and forth and he can't identify with myself who's from a council estate and working class. I don't see how he has any idea how he can help me going forward when he's got no idea.[How does that make you feel?] I get angry, we are still allowed to get angry aren't we? I get angry and frustrated at it, you know sometimes you think who'd you speak to when you've got major, you know big strong feelings when the person that you should write to really you think, well, he's not going to do nothing for me because I can't identify with the bloke." – Shane

"I just think that they're completely out of touch with that. They're all millionaires. Aren't they, most of them. They are out of touch with the majority of people in this country. Completely out of touch." – Shane

"I'm on the older generations and pensioners have to live on half the living wage so as far as pensions are concerned no they don't take much notice of the needs of older people these days, councils are shutting care homes because of financial reasons so as far as I'm concerned as an older person I feel the government doesn't particularly care about me." – Colin

"He's[local MP] another example of privilege, the only reason he get's in is because he's Tory, he doesn't get in because of him. Useless. I'm not represented very well." = Tony

"they live with their heads up their arses. That's the kindest way I can say it. If they came and lived a month in my shoes I think a lot of their ideas would change. But that's the way it is. We don't live in a communist society or anything so there's always going to be them and us. You know, how can a public school boy or girl know what it's like to live in a Cornish fishing village? They don't. That's just how I think, I think most of the time they don't |

		have the good of the country in their mind, I think it's like a great big pot of nothing. I'm just not a fan to be honest with you. I think they're all rubbish. Not just the parties I don't support, but all of them. They're all nonsense." – Mandy
		"I think that they are all out for themselves, they're liars, you can't believe them. They only care about what they can line their own pockets with. It just makes me feel cross but also I'm just resigned from it all you know? It's just all the same. There's always been that kind of divide hasn't there, between the have got's and us peasants, working away. But yeah you can't trust any of them they're all out for themselves. [how so?]They're telling us how to behave and what we should do and what not, but they seem to be the complete opposite, there's always scandals coming out. Like in lockdown, they seem to be breaking the rules while telling us what to do for the best? I don't know if that came out right but do you know what I mean? It's also like, all the nurses and teachers and that can't have pay rises but they get huge pay raises and quite a lot of money for doing their job but the people who actually keep the country going can't even afford to feed their kids sometimes because they aren't paid enough." – Rebecca
		"It just seems all throughout the BBC there seems to be a negative bias. It favours the left-wing of the country I think. That's the best way of saying it." – Neil
		"There are things that affect everyone it's the fact that some things that if you live in England things are centralized if you if you live in Scotland or Wales and Northern Ireland, sometimes you're more represented. So you miss out if your English especially if you live in somewhere like Dorset where you've got a unitary Authority for example, as your council, you're probably you know, you're probably going to be the least represented people in Britain." - Ian
Political self-harm	Enduring harsh political actions for future gain	"I do sense a lot of people don't take much interest in politics and don't really sort of kind of get involved. So maybe we get the government we deserve." – Elliott
		"I wasn't expecting it and I actually I heard it on the on the morning news as I was driving into work. So I was driving at half past six in the morning and the news came on and said we voted to leave and my initial reaction was oh good grief what we've done?" – Elliott
		"The adjustment will be tough but it will be good in the long-run" – Jenny
		"I want Brexit to happen because we need a reality check. And it is going to hurt. It is really going to hurt." – Jack
		"All the way through I just wish they'd gone for a harder Brexit. Just got it done and dusted, you know," – Simon
		"it's going to be difficult. This is this year is going to be yeah we go and it's going to be painful financially, but I think it'd be worth it in the long run 10 years from now and I think this country will be absolutely flying economically." - Billy
UK-EU relations	Perceptions of the UK-EU relations	"maybe if our government had treated you a little bit more like the French where you you agree to everything but only implement things that benefit you and expect everyone else to implement the things that dis-benefit them then I would have been you know more kindly disposed towards it." - Elliott

			"as a headstrong student, I soaked up a little bit of the anti Maastricht sentiment, I didn't understand it. But at that point I started soaking up a bit of cynicism about whether it was good… I was in Jordan working in 2013 and saw the Syrian migrant camps and was very disappointed with the EU response. But as I said to you the start was quite hopeful that Cameron's government was going to get some money to them. Some European money, but the Europeans promised it and then didn't deliver which I was quite annoyed about and I thought the European wide response to the migrant crisis has been wholly unfair to them and unfair to us and ineffective and that caused a great deal of political dissatisfaction with the EU for me and then I looked at this business assessment of the European arrangements and along with a lot of other people that read it thought actually, you know what, it's time to move on. So, yes, it was that there was a long period of transition from being fairly neutral about it to then becoming a leave voter".- Derek
			"[Do you identify as European?] I'd like to say I am but I don't think I can say that. [why?] Because I was born here, maybe if I was born in France I could say that I was European but because I was born here I feel like, because we aren't joined onto Europe it doesn't work. Whereas if you were born on the continent you could…" - Leanne
Euroscepticism	Scepticism towards the European Union		"I think it's because it [the EU] was giving the country less control over its own destiny" – *Elliott*
			*"*They've never had their accounts ratified by whoever did their accounts, they've never balanced out, if the EU had stayed as a common economic area rather than a platform for bureaucrats we wouldn't be where we are today we'd still be a trading area. But because various bureaucrats stuck their nose in and it turned into a monolith, an unaccountable monolith, they've taken more and more powers from individual countries and turned it away from a proper trading area which it was set up for in the first place, to more of a political organisation. So i've always been against the EU really, when it started to look like what it came out like which is a bureaucratic organisation that's when I became sceptical. I voted not to join in the first place." – Colin
			"[why did you choose to vote leave?" I got eight answers to the question (he brings out a list on a piece of paper and begins to read from it) so number one is I don't understand well, I don't like and don't understand why you have to combine economics, politics and social agendas. That's a man-made thing that's been put together. So yeah, that's the one thing, obviously I believe in free trade and everything else but I don't like the idea of you can't trade with us unless you've got the same social or political point of view." – Colin
			"what does European even mean? It comes back to race, identity, culture, creed or whatever. I am a European by the fact that I live in the continent of Europe. Badging me a European because I follow a set of social rules, political rules and economic agendas doesn't make me European. I celebrate the differences within Europe. I like France. I love Europe. Absolutely adore Europe. So again coming back to the free trade peace and the economic side, I don't understand all of these agendas to try and create this homogeneous piece of people when it's built on forced foundations of economic doctrine." – Tony
			"I didn't vote to enter it all those years ago. I remember what it was life before and, cut me off if I waffle, but I remember when Cornwall got objective one money and I saw the millions of pounds being wasted and frittered and I thought, that's our money anyway coming back to us. You know I just think that we can't be the money pot of Europe and I'm not a political creature at all but I know what I believe in." – Mandy
			"I'm not a hater of Europe I just don't want to be part of the European Union. The fact that all that money was going, and when we got a bit thrown back to us everybody went oh look at this, this is funded by the European Union, and I would just think, no you fool, it's funded by

		310	our taxes. It's our money we've given away and they've given some back to us. So that was another reason, I just thought, keep that money here in this country and let's use it for the good of people here and people who come here." – Mandy
			"[Can you remember when you first began to question the EU?] The first thing was when I found out how much money we was giving them. Here we are propping up poor countries and then I thought well Germany is in the EU… we are still paying Germany for reparations from the war when they are the ones that started the war! And now we are giving them more money! And I thought no. I can't go along with that. And then the fact that we couldn't have a crooked banana or a crooked cucumber. It was so pathetic it really was." – Celia
			"it was just all that money we had to pay. Then when negotiations started and Theresa May had no clue what she was doing and it turns out we had to pay another load of money to leave I thought hang on… we've got to pay to be in and then pay to leave… I just would've walked away from them and not given them any money at all. I'm quite sure we could survive on our own and with the commonwealth. We don't need Europe's help. We don't need anything from Europe. I know we will still get stuff from them because that's in the deal but they need us as well. Ports will still be used and they won't wipe us out. We aren't gonna turn down their food and products and they won't turn down ours. I'm just totally against being in the EU full stop. So when it came to the EU referendum I was very happy to vote out. I just wasn't happy with either May or Cameron." – Celia
			"For me, there's a north-south divide in Europe. I think I think we align quite well from an attitude point of view with the more Northern countries in Europe, and I think we don't so well with the southern country so Scandinavia. Germany, Holland, I think we we have similar attitudes we have I don't know I think to an extent it almost feels as if we've got common attitudes. I think as soon as you start to look for the south, then it feels as if we are a different type of people. I don't like the French. [why?] Because they're the old enemy. The history is effectively they fold under pressure. They'll stab you in the back and my daughter hates my attitude to the french but the silly thing is I'd hate to be without because actually I love to hate them, its part of me. They are our oldest enemies. " - Sam
Voting leave for autonomy , EU has a dictator	Lack of control in the EU, wanting to regain autonomy and sovereignty, EU positioned as dictator		"I felt that I wanted our country to have control over itself and its own laws and its own regulations and not be driven by you know, an alternative government that's sat above it." – Elliott
			"I think the frustrations was the limitations put on decision making by the EU parliament was absolutely unjustifiable. There were too many examples of Britain obeying rule set by Europe and other countries not, or other countries bending them or other country's just ignoring them. And it frustrates me, and I never thought going into the EU was a good idea and I was only, 9 or 10." – Jenny
			"But I just didn't like the EU telling us we can't do this we can't do that, well I'm sorry but we have a tradition like, it's just silly things. People in this country in prison were not allowed to vote,I think that's entirely reasonable. You've broken our laws and you've been put in prison because of it. Why should you be joining in the decision making process? All sorts of daft things like that. I don't fall for the economic argument that we need Europe because there's a whole world out there that we can trade with. It doesn't have to be Europe if they are going to be difficult. I think Europe didn't want us to leave because if one of their states go, other ones will think maybe we can do this too. So it was a very difficult decision to make but on balance it was no, we don't need to be tied into Europe. Europe is a bit of a mess anyway I don't know why we need to be tied into it. I don't see the benefit." Jenny
			"Well there's many many reasons isn't there and a lot of people go on about immigration and what have you but

immigration for me, that's not an issue. If there's people in other countries that are in really bad ways and need to move then we should welcome with open arms. But the main reason for me is that I'm fed up of being dictated to by people from Brussels that have no idea how we do things in this country. For instance the fisheries, you know, we'd have fishermen from Spain and France that could catch three times as much than what we could in our own waters. Now to me that's just not right and I'd had enough of hearing these stories, and I just wanted to get out of that and take Britain back for Britain, to be British." - Shane

"[where there any main issues that stood out to you during the EU ref?] The main issue for me is was the fact that all our rules was all European this European that and we've changed because of this. Well hang on a minute they're telling us what we've got to do all the time--and I don't like that. It should be it should be British. It should be British people being led by British people." – Shane

"[Why do you think in your opinion Britain voted to leave?] I just think in the end people were fed up. They're fed up of being, well it seeming like we were being told all the time what we have to do from somebody that's sat in Brussels that had no idea what was really going on in our country, and the rules here, we go by different rules than the French, and Spanish, and I like that, I like that it's all different. I don't like the fact that it's a euro thing. I like the Crusaders, I like the Franc. I like the different identities and it made it so much better, but I don't like it now. I can understand why, it's the old safety and a little bit more power in numbers Etc. But I just don't think it works." – Shane

"I don't think it's a democracy, you don't have a fair vote for your own leaders there. I don't think Brussels is a democracy at all it's a dictatorship. It's a German led dictatorship. Nothing seems fair there, nothing seems fair in Brussels it just seems to be like a very managed staged show to get everybody's money to do with it what they please. Also what rubbish is it that there are starving people on our streets in the UK, I mean I'm dreading them kicking the homeless out of the hostels soon but yet we are giving 15 million a week or however much it is to Brussels a week, 1.3 billion a month, but yet we've got homeless sleeping on our own streets and we can't even look after our own, what is all of that about? Do you know what I mean? We don't need them. We never have needed them to be honest. Also how many more parliaments can you have, there's Scottish parliament, Welsh parliament, English, European, where does it end? and they want to start putting more and more and more on top. We don't need them. That's my view. We never did." - Jackie

"[what was life like before the UK joined the EC?] we were more self-contained and we didn't have to have permission from un-elected people who don't do anything and who were just there telling us what to do, I think that's what it was. I felt like our leadership had been taken away from us when we joined the union and I didn't vote for it and never wanted to be in the EU at all. It will never be the same again. No matter how long we are out of it. That's all I can really say about it, I just think it was better." – Mandy

"I became anti-EU about 10 years ago. [how come?] The rule making that just seem to walk all over us. Unelected people trying to tell us what they wanted done. The one thing that really annoyed me about the European Union was that it was mostly an un-elected assembly. I wasn't happy at all with the fishing system and the immigration. Those are the main things." – Neil

"My dad was very very anti-European so I think it came from that but the reason I voted to vote leave because I was fed up of our country making a decision, then it being over-turned or over ruled by un-elected members of parliament in Europe. Brussels parliament were largely un-elected and self serving, I have never been part of the EU election process so they just basically governing themselves where I didn't feel in any shape or form i was involved in the way they ran things or the way they made decisions. i just felt totally disenfranchised. I've always

disliked having a European passport. I think if you're French you should have a French one, if you're Italian you should have an Italian one, if you're British you should have a British one. we are different from the whole conglomerated mass of Europe. So I voted to keep our British characteristics." – Ruby

"for me the most important thing was taking control of our own rules and regulations, obviously it was about the numbers coming into our country, taking control of our borders, taking control of our economy, taking control of our own way of life which I felt we were trying to be turned European rather than keeping our own Britishness." – Ruby

"Fishing is a huge issue whether they would ever get the rights to the fishing grounds back. I don't know. It's this thing of one thing saying that you want something to happen, but to can it? One of the main reasons is probably the main reason I voted leave wasn't to do with trading with the UK and all the rest of it. It was unelected officials in Europe running the states of Europe. Not once I think I'm right in saying in the last 11 years of they audited the accounts they've never been signed off. These people are spending vast fortunes of our money completely unfairly because they're unelected and they're not even being policed and to my mind it's like throwing as a businessman. I just wouldn't run a business like it and therefore that was completely contrary to what I felt was a comfortable position to be in because they've gone through this expansion. And again, most of the countries coming in are joining because they know their a net gainer, the cost of that is falling on the few if you like that can afford it. That's a socialist approach. Yes. It may be, but it's not one. I want to be party. Support your own people in your own country." – Simon

"I think we were losing national identity. I think that I mean obviously we I'm speaking with better knowledge now, but I think we're losing national identity. I think the ECHR were having too much of an influence or the ultimate influence over our Law Courts. And I just think that that unelected bureaucrats in Brussels were having too much of an influence on our lives. It really came to the point when without any without any consultation they all of a sudden come up with the European national anthem. Well, it's not a nation. It's a group of Nations. If they carried on as a as a trading partnership as was voted for originally. I think that would be absolutely brilliant. But for this this one Europe one political agenda, I think it's just think it's doomed and the best thing we ever did would was stay out of the Euro. Otherwise, we would or I would never be in the position to make her own choices and come out as we are doing is very sad. Very sad. I think there's a few people in Europe who were pushing things in the wrong direction too far. Not just too fast, but too fast too far and you know Vonderleyen, she hasn't been elected by anybody, it was set up by the other people around her and I know you can say well Boris has only been voted for by his but at least we have the option to vote them out." – Billy

". He did that so the likes of me and you can have a drink without the fear of intimidation, without the fear of abuse or discrimination. Or anything like that. And I think that's what we need to hold onto and that's what we lost. And I think the EU fundamentally at its core is good, but I think it's become so diluted I don't believe it knows where it's going anymore. I think we have to get away from that. I do think we have to get away from that. And that's not about immigration or racism or anything like that. It's about, just stop. You know, you can't do this 'cos health and safety, you can't do that, you can't say this, you can't say that. For goodness sakes. What happened to banter what happened to a bit of fun." – Martin

"They've completely destroyed who we are and what we are. You know, you can't be what we are and be a member state of the EU. You just can't be. We are too proud a nation and too proud a people. Will we ever get back to that? I don't know." - Martin

The agricultural leave vote	Agricultural justifications for voting leave	"it was that control over agriculture that disadvantages British farmers and to me disadvantages us as consumers as well because it was you know, it restricts our ability to buy British grown food, you know, it restricts the ability of our farmers to produce food. " – Elliott
		"The way the EU handled for instance, the animal feeds then became the BSE crisis. That was a European regulation, which we'd argued against which they insisted on doing. We then got BSE and all the other member states basically denied ever having it despite the fact that same food was everywhere and you just think well, hang on a minute, you know, you can't have it both ways. So that caused me some significant cynicism about the EU and I think probably a lot of the Agricultural world would probably be on a similar path to me. And then the bureaucratic nature of it, so although I'm agricultural businesses have as individuals benefited tremendously from some of the financial arrangements made under the CAP and things like that. I think they would also say that that that, you know, the structure wasn't always sensible because they're trying to cater for you know west to east north to south of Western Europe and there is so much variation that it's very hard to make rules apply equally to all those different situations, so there was some questions over that and then the bureaucracy of it, just is extraordinary, you know the number of documents and systems and are even now the field mapping, you know, we have three different sets of maps for the same fields for the different people. They can't all just use the same thing. So that level of frustration comes in" – Derek
		"I felt like we were giving an awful lot of money away and getting very little in return. Our farmers were growing crops they couldn't use and never getting subsidies. I think England is sensible and we grow most of what we need but that wasn't happening. When I voted at the beginning I thought I was just voting to go into a common market and sharing our produce I had no idea it would become stupid laws. That really annoyed me." – Celia
		"Purely from a farming point of view, I think farmers need to be allowed to manage their own land. For example with TB, I think if farmers are allowed to manage their own laand so if they have a set of badgers on their land that are infected with TB they should be allowed to get rid of them and if there's a set of healthy badgers then keep them because they'll keep the infected badgers out, TB could've been wiped out years ago so it's from a farming side of it I voted to leave. I think some of the EU stuff is good, like animals and export and welfare, that is good but it's all the subsidies and all of that I don't know if that was a good idea. You've got great lengths of fields going to waste really, but they are getting subsidised for getting put toward this that and the other but you can't actually grow crops and that on it, I think farmers should be able to be self-efficient without all the subsidies." – Rebecca
Immigration	Hostility towards matters of immigration and EU freedom of movement	"I see as being it makes it much easier for people whom to get to places where you don't really want them to be, or to take things that you really don't want in your country." – Elliott
		"Some of the shenanigans that have gone on with other countries and their interpretation of EU law really annoy me. It frustrates me. I think one of the things that influenced me that I don't like to admit is the way being the country we are, having our welfare state, we have a very extensive welfare state, I do think that was taken advantage of by some people and I think other countries in Europe have been much stricter about letting people who have moved into the country for work or just moved into the country, claim benefits. I think there was a very big argument to say, there is no reason that if you come and live in this country and you don't have a job, that we should be supporting you. I think that's been taken advantage of and I think unfortunately a lot of politicians preyed on that. It's a difficult thing because I don't want to sound racist or unwelcoming but I think there is a limit and I think we had been too kind in this country and we probably should've reigned that back quite a bit. Financially" - Jenny.

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"all the Eastern Europeans that come over you know, they'd get up in the morning. They come to work. They work hard all day. They do a sensible job and it's very hard to find local people that will work as hard. I'm also farm-based and although we don't have a lot of casual work, you know within the agriculture community, it's the same experiences. So we definitely need people to come and do it and if they come and make a life here and contribute to the society in a positive way. So beyond just working hard, you know, but actually joining the society" – Derek

"we have no control over our borders, the European court of justice was making laws that we had to abide by. We had no control over who came out of the country basically which I think a lot of people felt, that immigration was out of control and the type of people we were getting in were not the professional people we needed or wanted. We felt as though we were not a sovereign country anymore and we were controlled by the EU and talks of the EU having a European army and things like that it really put me off the EU even more. It made me even more determined to vote leave." – Colin

"I believe that teachers, teach a very left wing perspective in schools which are training our children to become completely la-la" - Jackie

"I wrote to him about the un-controlled immigration into my area. I have friends at local schools who are having to employ translators because the children are all Eastern European and can't speak English. I just don't think it's right. SO yeah I wrote to him about immigration and development issues. Over development, too many flats being built in the area." Jackie

"It's too much bureaucracy, the European Union is just a joke, we need our own laws, our own rules, our own legislature, to me it's a legal thing. Because now what's happening is judges can find a way round everything to chase after that leftist view, and that leftist view is gonna make our country more and more dangerous. I'll tell you what. I grew up in South Africa when they started opening the borders to Somalians, Zimbabweans. Nigerians. Mongolians. Do you know what happened? 36 murders a day. Nobody understands these cultures, we are just opening the doors to them, we can't get rid of them. They are violent, inbred, no not inbred, violent within their own cultures and I come from South Africa and studied cultural tourism, the Zooloo will kill a Zooloo and not even think about it they have no value. Life has no value. And now you're saying welcome to my country, it's okay get a knife and go and stab and just carry on living like the way you live there and there's nothing we can do about it because the European law says no, let them in. Take them. You can't get rid of them. A guy can come into this country and he's a terrorist from another country and he can turn round, you know that guy who killed people the other week? [referring to the stabbing in Reading in July 2020] I read his court case, that kid who killed and went stabbing people in a part in Reading, he's in this country because he came and overstayed on a tourist visa, and when he got caught, he got given the right to remain because he said sorry, I drink, I'm an alcoholic with a drinking issue you can't send me back to my Muslim country because drinking isn't allowed there, and he was allowed to stay. Because European law says that's fine. UK law doesn't say that. You would've been out. So we need to start being real about what is going to help this country progress and what's going to help protect our borders because there are some very strange cultures out there that are flooding into the UK at the moment." – Jackie

""When they would start using the European laws and the Human rights laws 1998 and they would start using all of the European Union laws to over rule British law. and then you'd start to realise, you can't remove terrorists from our country, we have to accept any Muslim who arrives here on a boat from Dover, we can't do anything about it. Do you know what I mean? We can't do anything about it. We have to bring back terrorists like Shamima Begum and all of her mates who think its funny to behead people. We can't do anything about it while we're tied to the European union and I think the European Union is Human Rights gone completely mental and it's starting to affect

the public safety of individuals living in this country and that's where I'm very opposed to the European Union." – Jackie

"People didn't vote leave because of the EU, people voted leave because in 2009 when they opened up the borders to Easter Europe, that was not immigration dear, that was a mass invasion. You know what I mean? When I go to Southampton you can't even get a cup of coffee in English anymore. And the problem is, I know a lot of people that have lost their jobs and I know it's the same old thing but when you let 10 million people in, in a very short space of time, it's not going to tick everywhere. And it didn't go down well with people. That was the biggest shift. I'm an immigrant but for pete's sake, I'd never seen anything like that before. Were you too young to remember? [Yes.] It was a shocking shocking experience, because literally the borders opened, and they just flooded. And everybody wants to come to England, Manchester united, Arsenal, you know what I mean? And the infrastructure wasn't ready for them. The housing wasn't ready for them. The schools weren't, the hospitals weren't. The country wasn't ready for what happened. And they can fluff it up as much as they like but the country wasn't ready. You have to have the infrastructure ready when you have a population growth. Otherwise life becomes uncomfortable for a lot of people."

"When I see, oh it sounds so awful but what can I say, we've always had refugees in this country and I think that's lovely but you know we have boat loads of people coming in and again in Europe, I drive over there a lot and it never phases me having to stop and go through customs because I'm of the belief that immigration and customs keeps us just that tiny bit safer than all the travelling about from country to country. Which is true when this virus came, because all of a sudden, Belgium put a border up, France put a border up, and I thought oh, how strange. Now they've taken them down again. I just thought well there obviously is a need for them." – Mandy

"I don't think there should be freedom of movement I think we should bring in draconian rules over who comes in. I have no problem with people coming in if they have a job to come to and I have no problem with people coming in if they can financially support themselves but anybody that's coming in just because they wanna come in should not be here. I think we do need to go down the points system." – Neil

"The biggest reason for that was because of the immigration thing and by that what I meant was that we're only a small island and the amount of people that were being allowed in from Europe right, was growing and growing and growing and you can say that was mismanagement by our government yet again for allowing that to happen in that way when other countries that are a bit more strict control over it even though they were in the EU as well. As more and more people being allowed in it seemed to be a continual flow of people coming into the country. And there were getting less and less jobs for the people in this country and it's like and quite often a lot of the other European people that were coming in were far more desperate. They came from far worse countries, with much stricter regime's and everything else and they prepared to do things that a lot of the British people would think nah I'm not gonna do that, right, but they were prepared to do it. But what needed to happen was that, because so many of those people were coming in that train of thought was just going on and on and on it's like and I just thought that in itself cannot continue, where does it end? It's like I don't know however many hundred thousand a year it was coming in but it was like hundreds of thousands of people over periods of years. They were continually flowing into the country and it's not just the the primarily male workers that were coming in right but it was like after certain period of time it's like I think they will be entitled to bring their families over or children as well. And I don't I don't know all the ins and outs, but basically it was becoming a huge thing and I just thought that can't continue and I had no confidence in the government to tell us how many people were actually coming in because they were forever

			spinning the figures and stuff. So once again you felt as though you weren't being given the truthful information and that was primarily the main reason" – Lee
			"[was freedom of movement an issue for you] Yes, and controlling our borders. Irrelevant of race, creed or colour, we are an island with our own population and we should have a proportionate share of people escaping from their situations." – Ruby
			"I live near a chicken processing plant, where 85% of the workforce is casual, rotating migrant Eastern European labour, and people get angry. I think it fuels the racism. Their experiences are very real" – Phil
			"The money would be better spent enhancing training bringing people up to speed on jobs rather than bringing in for cheap labour and then supporting them through the welfare system. So I'd rather see money invested internally put a cap on people. But yes, if there's a particular industry that struggling change the cap, but if you bring these people in it's not on short-term, you've got to be able to offer them the ability if they come to stay forever their lifetime there is the issue of how far do you allow that we connected families and that's a different issue that to my mind is never been fully investigated. But if I was let's say going to a job in France and I was going to commit five years of my life at the end of that I'd want to know that actually they're not going to kick me out. I've just got that short-term Visa. So if people are coming in to live and work give them the right to stay long term and then you'll get the right people come." – Simon
			"I think anybody should be able to call themselves English as long as they as long as they embrace the English way of life. I'm thinking of how people who immigrated to this country and then try to change things and I'm thinking about a particular attempt to introduce Sharia law. We have a legal system. We shouldn't accept anybody coming into this country who then tries to change our legal system. I wouldn't dream! But that's me. I wouldn't dream of going to Spain and demonstrate against bullfighting or I wouldn't dream of living in France and trying to be a town mayor with the idea of changing things, you know. I'd never try change someone's religion, I think we've got to be careful that we maintain our Britishness if you like." – Billy
			"I think there are elements particularly with in big cities. Who trying to change things and change Britain and I don't like what I'm seeing. I don't believe that, you know, if people want to celebrate their religion in a mosque then great, brilliant. If they want to bring it out onto the streets and caused a disturbance or even shut roads because they're spilling out onto the streets and just stopping traffic going past that that should be resisted against. So it's a matter of you know, I don't want to see cultural change within this country brought into this country by other nationalities or other religions." - Billy
Negative stereotyping of leave voters	Negative stereotyping of leave voters by remain voters		" I voted to leave and a lot of people who wanted to remain would have said well, I was obviously a racist because I didn't want to stay in the EU which is not the case at all. You know, I like other cultures. I'm interested in other cultures. I like visiting the continent. I like, you know, I like French people, I like Swiss people. So yeah, I think it will got very bitter and acrimonious and and there was very little sort of logical and reasoned debate. […]It made me feel quite resentful." – Elliott
			"It wasn't immigration, I want to say that straight away. Because I have no problem with immigration generally speaking." – Jenny
			"this issue of the way that Europeans dealt with the migrant crisis. I felt that was very complicated. But I felt very let down by that. Yeah, and although it obviously doesn't affect me physically directly, emotionally that was definitely one of the things that helped tip the balance for me to leave. I felt that a lot of the remainers talked about having opened the the thought of letting the people in Germany and and what have you as being a positive and I was very surprised because I thought you know making people puddle across the Mediterranean or walk through

		317	the Balkans wasn't really a very kind approach and I thought that actually you know, what the EU should have done was had immigration centers, you know down in Turkey down in Libya down in Jordan and that if these people were going to be giving money to people smugglers actually what they should be doing is flying in a British Airways, you know, and although I'm you know, stereotypically cast as anti-immigration. Actually. I'm what I'm more interested in is doing immigration well, and that doesn't preclude that people coming from these places. It just means that we should deal with it, you know fair to them and fair to us and that's something that I think, It hasn't been I don't feel ways been well reflected in the wider debate, you know, that's that always comes over as a negative against leavers, but I think actually quite a lot of the leavers would wish to be represented differently." – Derek
			"Yes. I've lost one friend permanently. Because she kept posting stuff like constantly trying to say people that were leavers all read the Sun, I've never read the Sun in my life, and stuff like well done steak eating common local people. You know, she was saying that people who voted to leave were just common and low class and didn't have a brain and I just took offence to that so I cut her out very quickly. She can't even eat with her mouth closed at a dinner table so how can she lecture me about class? Anyway you don't want to be tarred with being a thick racist." – Jackie
			"Yes I will do, if I find something I disagree with passionately about i'll have my say on it. I went to a party the other day, and you know it's not something you'll say to people when you meet them but I soon found out that everyone there was a leaver and it was very much hush, you know. But we found out we were all leavers and it was like the secret was out." – Jackie
			"I think the problem is that you've got in any society people who have different understanding or people who vote for the right reasons or the wrong reasons. I don't think there's such thing as a typical leave voter or a remain voter. And as you know most people up north voted for brexit because they were dissatisfied. That's why I talk about brexit bringing together or identifying the polarization in society and the issues, you know, a lot of the things that people think about immigrants coming in taking jobs all that sort of stuff you look at it and it's on the whole mumbo jumbo. But when people start stating those points as their argument, then it really clouds the water because but as a leaver that's not what I think yeah, but it perpetuates that thinking and those stories. " – Tony
			"I do get a bit irate when they say Leave voters just wanted to leave because they didn't want foreigners here and that, I just think well that's not why I did it, I'm more than happy and I think we need them, so I get a bit sad because I voted leave I might be seen as racist, you know what I mean? I feel like I really have to explain myself or just not even join the conversation." - Rebecca
Defensive	Defensive verbal behaviour, questioning the interiewer		"I'm not some right-wing Nutter who believes everything that he reads and flies the flag by my house. I suppose. I'm more of a pragmatist. And yeah and I would say they are a lot more people in my mindset where I live actually, whether that is accident or by design. I don't know. So yeah, I suppose the person you're talking to and the other people that you've spoken to... It will be interesting to see if they are similar. I've got people literally across the road. It's quite interesting, I tend to find, and don't take this as some kind of thing, but the people from up North that have moved here, there seems to be a pattern between the people who come from up North move down here because they don't want to live up North but vote Labour and would vote remain and then you got the people who like myself, who want to live and enjoy the benefits where they live. So which we all want to do but there's just seemed to be, seems to be I don't know whether it's to do with my background or people like me or their background but I can always predict, where I live people's political persuasions. And hopefully I'm not a bigot okay, I'm not somebody who's intransigent or can't accept new

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		ideas because because I'm not, but I find there is a real trend of set of people and you could say the youngsters here, a lot of the youngsters here are lot more left-wing. Hmm, so I don't know. It's your field. You're probably probing me to put me in this box, which is what all the questions were doing, but I don't think I do fit in a box. You might think I do. I'm actually quite open-minded and liberal in the sense, but I suppose when you've travelled the world and you've been involved in business you see the realities of life, you know. You have a different point of view. **[I mean, I'm not trying to put people in boxes. I've chosen a method of research that allows people to answer openly and honestly about their thoughts. So have you ever experienced any conflict with those that voted remain]**" - Tony
Political cynicism	Cynical feelings towards politics	"I couldn't help feeling that I thought and I'd kind of fell in a way that regardless of the outcome of the vote there was going to be some discussions with the EU and I felt whatever the outcome was the politicians would foul it up." – *Elliott*

"because it's been Tory for so long it doesn't feel like there's much hope around here for anyone else to get in." – *Abby*

"Sometimes I feel some hope and that hope is normally crushed." |
| Global late-modern identity | Globalised and malleable identity in the modern world, | "Well I don't feel like I have an allegience to a county. I've never felt like I have had an allegience to Britain. I live in Britain and sure I'll support them in sports and things like that but in terms of national identity I don't feel like I have one" – *Charlie*

"I think that there are different cultures and they [Scottish and Welsh] have their own traditions and beliefs that I think are inherently different to Britain, so in that sense you could consider them a different people but in the same way that anybody can be British I think anybody could be Welsh or Scottish." –*Charlie*

"I wouldn't put a big part of my identity in relation to my country really. [Okay, why's that?] I prefer to be skeptical and I think patriotism sometimes can take that away. I do love my country sometimes but I don't think I'm fully patriotic because of that. I don't see it as a bad thing, but I don't see it's a good thing either. [Why's that?] I think a lot of the values that a lot of British people have who would consider themselves patriotic has kind of turned me off just, well a lot of the country to be honest and the people in power at the moment as well. " – *Abby*

"I just think well a big part of it is that I think where you're born doesn't really affect who you are as a person very much which is kind of the same reason. I don't identify with being English much" – *Abby*

"My national identity isn't a source of pride for me. I would say that pride comes from having done something good. Yeah, I don't think where you from is relevant to pride and I don't think anyone should be jumping around saying their proud because they accidentally happen to be born in a particular place. Yeah, that's nationalism not patriotism." – *Jack*

"we need to look at ourselves whether it's comfortable or uncomfortable. It's no accident that in Hollywood the bad guy turns out to be an Englishman. " – *Jack*

"I think there are those that scribe too much of their own identity to that which is circumstance prevalent and luck. I have a rather nihilistic view on those terms." - *Jack*

"I think I've got such a small... My little world is so small, we don't go on holiday, we don't travel abroad, so I just don't think I've thought about it. I'm proud to be Cornish but other than that you know, no. I'll tick white British on all the ethnicity boxes on forms and stuff but I don't really think about it if that makes sense." – Rebecca (localised identity) |

		319	"I think it's actually wrong you know, when you get into the wider world and you see other points of view and you spend some time in other countries you suddenly realise that much as much as we might want to be the centre of the universe, we're actually not." – Phil
			"I'm always a bit careful in pushing hero worship on the people." – Phil
			"We need to be far less insular. We gotta stop thinking that you know, that brass music, sun glinting off the wings of a spitfire and me granddad won the war all on his own. That's gotta go. We all got to grow up."- Phil
			"Even though we voted for Brexit and I think it's racist here I do think it's quite diverse, I volunteer at a café evening for refugees and asylum seekers and there's a lot of different kinds of people in Swindon. I like that we aren't all the same, we aren't all carbon copies. I like that even though we voted for Brexit, I there's people here that are welcoming./2 – Leanne
			"I totally don't have any problem with people coming over from other countries and emigrated over here and doing there yeah whatever you call it and becoming British that doesn't bother me at all. I have no problem whatsoever with people who weren't necessarily born here but feel like being here as part of their identity that's completely fine to me. Identity is a social construct and if you feel like that is what makes up part of your identity then that's fine with me." - Samantha
<mark>Negative association with patriotism/country of residence</mark>	Negative association with British and English patriotism		• "In my head patriotism is like nationalism, they coincide with each other because it's about us and them and othering the rest of the world and closing yourself off from the rest of humanity and I personally don't agree with that so I stay away from patriotism" – *Charlie*
			• "It's a false sense of community, I know I mentioned that the 2012 Olympics felt like a wider community then, and there have been moments of it but when I live in London and I'm sat on the tube and no one is making eye contact, whereas once VE day happens.... You know it's like Britain has this false sense of community where we all band together as one country for certain things but when it comes down to the day to day there isn't that sense or feeling among people. So that does disappoint me about Britain, it's especially noticeably in European countries and you see the completely see the opposite over there. People on the bus will say hello and that sort of thing." – *Charlie*
			• "I think British has slightly, right-wing connotations to it. I don't like to say British because it pushes you that way in peoples views." – Jenny
			• "I think there's a lot of belief in which what we've been taught has been absolutely correct. And there's a sense of us always having been at the centre of things and centre of good things and you know, we'd rather turn a blind eye or don't even know about some of the poorer things as we've seen recently with statues going in the docks and things like that, you know, so I think my idea of the patriotism that I'm a little bit resistant to is the fact that some of it is based on a not always great education." – Phil

		• "I think we have a handy habit of feeling triumphant about things and when the boot's been on the other foot, we rather forget that we've got a bit of clouded history that we need to perhaps, you know, need to be aware of I think there's been I think there's a lot of things. I'm of a little bit of the belief that even Remembrance Day could be phased out or could be reduced or bits and pieces of it anyway, which I don't like I find it a little bit insular. We certainly didn't win a world war our own." – Phil
		• "I have seen or I'm worried about the rise of fascism actually and that sense of you know there are more far right amongst us who like to take those holidays, you know their celebrations and turn them into something that champions are very English cause perhaps. So I didn't know if that whole Churchill and yeah. What am I trying to say? This is really complicated subject isn't it? Really complicated? And I was very interested in my sense of patriotism compared to friends because I do feel patriotic and I do feel that I was getting lost. But I'm not proud of our country's nationalism, that sense of that nationalistic kind of resurgence that worries me and I think friends seeing bunting outside thought that may represent something more nationalistic. Yeah, so I did feel I had to put my bunting out to represent how I feel about remembering such a terrible period of history rather than cheer leading our current political situation. " – Susanna
		• "I love freedom of movement. I think it's absolutely brilliant. I wanted that for my children. I love being part of something bigger in terms of the EU and that sense of belonging to Europe was very important to me." – Susanna
		• "I have Scottish Heritage as well. I feel a bit more comfortable with being the idea of being British than the idea of being English. I don't know. I feel like being English is maybe has a bit more negativity attached to it nowadays, but I've got I've got Scottish Heritage so I don't feel like I'm a hundred percent English also." – Josie
		• "I probably think about it [patriotism] quite negatively. Yeah, unfortunately. But flag-waving like loving I'm not a monarchist. I don't mind the queen. I don't mind if she's there but I'm not a particular fan of the Royal Family. Yeah. I know patriotism and nationalism and not the same thing, but I started associate being patriotic with being a nationalist in a negative sense. I think more as I've grown older. [in what way?] It's the think is the English elements. It's yeah, the, I mean in recent years the growing 'got to do what's best for Britain' 'put Britain first' 'you've got to do what's best for England got to do what's best for us over the people' and I don't like that. I think of myself as European as well. I don't think of myself as just British and European as according to my ancestry DNA I did I am also part Nigerian which I didn't know about. I mean I obviously don't look Nigerian. But yeah, I don't like that what I've sensed as a growing, 'Britain is most important'. 'We must protect British jobs we protect Britain. We must protect ourselves.' 'We must all that' and that's where I got get the negativity from." – Josie
		• "that kind of stuff where is you know we felt that we had the right to go around and rule other countries and that we were a big part of the slave trade I feel like that are lots of negative connotations with being very patriotic and it always comes down to to the real racism that happens when people talk about other countries and people coming over here and immigrants. I'm not like that at all I'm actually the complete opposite. So I'm very open-minded in that sense and I feel like me stigmatizing them, there's just too much associated with them. Like all that stuff about people going round and taking down each other's flags like I don't have a problem with the st. George's flag but also I wouldn't want to be seen doing

		that and have people thinking that I'm against everyone else." - Samantha
Shame	Shame associated with national identity or country of residence	• "I'd like to think we were one of the forerunners in the world in terms of equality and fight for liberalness. I don't think we are that liberal in the grand scheme of things." – *Charlie*
		• This is a tough one because as a younger person I just would've said I was proud to be British but being British is one of the things I'm not proud to be anymore. I think as you get older you're much more aware of the problems with the country and particularly the empire side of things so I wouldn't say I'm proud of that – Jenny
		• "I think behaviour, certainly in the last few months, some bits of society has been appalling and it does make me ashamed. Some countries in the world seem to have dealt with restrictions due to covid a lot better than we have and I think it's made us look very bad. I think some of the reactions to the whole Brexit debate have been appalling on both sides and it was one of the things that I felt quite badly about with the leave campaign, it really did pander to uninformed racism and that was a mistake and not something that politicians should do, but they do, so. Those tings in particular is what I'm least proud of." – Jenny
		• "the end of Empire, some of the ways in which some of the countries were handed over. So I think there with hindsight, I'm sure it was not easy at the time, so I'm not suggesting that any individual was in the wrong. But obviously we look back and look at the situations that are involved and to that extent feel like it didn't work out as well as one would have liked. So therefore there's a regret about those sort of things." – Derek
		• "I've done a lot of studying that my university degree because I do history and a lot of it is pretty horrible. Like there's some, like with colonialism and everything before that. There's always been some horrible things going on.[…] I don't think we should celebrate history at all. I think we should record it and everyone should be encouraged to learn about it, but I don't think we should necessarily celebrate it." – Abby
		• "although I know that the UK has done a lot in the past to be ashamed of but I also live near Bridgewater which was the first place that went against Slavery which I'm quite proud of that. I'm glad we took that stance against slavery. That was the UK's largest debt. And we've only just finished paying it off. This thing about black lives matter is they said right, so our taxes have been paying for our freedom. It's been an interesting discussion" – Celia
		• "where we are at in the world today is a direct result of the things that we've done to other countries. Race horses we've taken, people we've taken. Movements that we've quashed." – Jack
		• "[would you describe yourself as patriotic?] Not particularly. I guess those people that are like 'Britain is the best' and better than other people and things like

			that. I'd say I'm actually quite ashamed to be British. [Could you elaborate on that?] You know like with the football, and England football fans and things and holiday makers getting drunk and causing trouble when they go on holidays for matches and they're just twits really." – Rebecca
		•	"the way the political scene is at the moment is I actually feel quite ashamed of Britain. " – Lee
		•	" [on VE day] I deliberately didn't choose Union Jack bunting I chose red white and blue bunting and that's not because I don't love the Union Jack as in I don't love Britain but it has become something that doesn't necessarily represent my view so that far right connotation to the flag. Probably lesser the Union Jack and more the the English flag, St George's cross. So anyway, I deliberately didn't buy any in Union Jacks and I put my White and blue outside and felt like I was commemorating a bygone era that I really supported. " – Susanna
		•	"[on VE day] the only two things I had was and was an England flag that was amongst my dad's stuff and Dorset flag. That was mine. And so I hung those two things out my window, but I did umm and ahh about sticking the cross of st. George out the window and what it might what it might say in terms of my form of national identity or how it might reflect on me to some people." - Ian
		•	"The Empire, slavery, again It's that sort of selfish Britain, putting us first and taking what we want from countries and that's I think the main route of shame, some involvement in Wars as well in arms sales things like that. I'm think of myself as a pacifist and that I find not comfortable. It's a bit like an involvement in the Middle East as well." – Josie
		•	"I feel like there is a weird boundary that I'm not ever completely sure which side I sit on part of me is like yes I'm English that's great but I also wouldn't put that in somebody's face. . Those boundaries I don't like. I'm also of the point of view that looking at a country, so the whole black lives matter thing going on and our past with all the colonialism and everything get that and go we did really really shit stuff , and we did that as a country, that was us, where is my dad would just be like oh no that's just something we did and brush it off. Like no that was really shit. So I guess I'd be less patriotic in those times but I still kind of feel like I'm English if that makes sense." – Samantha
		•	"I mean there's this and this immense level of shame that comes with Englishness isn't there, for sure that some of us, as well as a lot of pride for some people, but a lot of Shame for others, and I think it's because it's those that are so proud of it that they hijacked our national identity for something that's quite toxic, you know and often racist and that makes it difficult for me to kind of I don't know." - Ian
Political polarisation / Conflict	Dividing nature of politics and attitudes in the UK		"Yeah I think Britain is so divided right now, it's so clear how divided Britain is especially in terms of politics. I'm very aware that I'm a young person and inside an echo chamber, and inside my echo chamber I fight for liberal values like equality, but I'm inside that quite a lot and I suppose because I'm inside that echo chamber it's quite divided in terms of the rest of the country. I don't know." – Charlie

"I have tried very hard not to on the grounds that I have stuck to not discussing religion or politics because I think people would fall out with me. It got so divisive during the campaign that afterwards, I didn't discuss it with anyone during the campaign, in the family we agreed not to talk about it. It got so nasty that I thought I'm just not going to have conversations with people about this because I'm not gonna change their mind and their never gonna change my mind." – Jenny

" You see it reported quite often some quite unpleasant extreme leave right-wingers that that go as far as being quite racist and there seemed to be quite a lot of the extreme remain people that would say that if you voted leave then you must be a racist, if you voted leave you must be uneducated and all that sort of thing and most of my ex college friends and friends who are all employers were all degree qualified, we're all in business, you know, not quite everyone but most of the ended up voting leave after some consideration and really don't feel like that stereotype applies to us and I had a number of acquaintances who were ardent remains supporters who couldn't talk about it in any sort of sensible fashion. Got quite histrionic about it. You know, I mean, it sounds petty but yeah, the number of people that unfriended me on Facebook because they couldn't even consider discussing anything to do with the EU would get quite animated and could get quite rude about it, you know, but it felt to me like there was no Recognition that the extreme remain supporters were just as vitriolic and unpleasant is extreme leave supporters. Yeah. So yes, I've experienced it and yes I find it quite troubling it, I think it's quite a big problem." – Derek

"I love love politics. Love it. I find it fascinating. It's like a hobby to me, to wind up lefties. [Do you ever find yourself engaging in conflict with those that voted remain or the opposite to you?] Yes, yes. I used to enjoy going onto those remain sites and winding people up, then I realised I was just winding myself up so I just leave it now. Also, it's over, we won!" – Jackie

"I find remainer's are more intransigent than the leavers. And I remember in fact, there's one guy who was a remainer, and he was trying to explain to me that I didn't understand anything. I asked him. I can't remember what the question was but I asked him 15 times and could'nt answer and I think part of the problem is people and the whole yes or no thing to start with, And I think people almost come to the argument with a viewpoint isn't just about brexit, I think If you have if if you better say experience the life whatever is a certain up bringing whatever it is. You will probably have a strong correlation or even age and demographic with way people voted and I think that all brexit did was bring together all those differences which were polarized in one particular thing. So, you know, I don't think it was just brexit the created that ill feeling. I think the country is polarized anyway, all this just bought it to the surface. "- Tony

"I think people think again, coming from others view points, people think you are a nationalist, racist, bigot. Yeah, there is a lot of that thinking not particularly against myself but I think there is that thinking and that show proves that naivety and again the intransigence of thinking and what I said before. I do find that with the people who voted remain it's like... If you start getting into a deep conversation with them, it all then comes down to emotion rather than a logical rational debate its very emotionally based, you know. It's all oh you wanna do that because you don't care about this and all of that. And that's what I find hard in the whole brexit conversation. But as I said before, I don't think unless you're well-read. I don't think the information was necessarily out there, things were spun both sides. So I think that created that that sort of emotional conflict."- Tony

"But it has definitely definitely caused conflict. Sometimes within the household and I would say it's at school more. It's actually quite upsetting. I've lost, let's have lost a lot of people that are used to be friends with down to the fact and it seems to be I don't know whether this is just me being biased but it seems to be one way like I've lost lots

of friends that were like labour. I lost a lot of them because they say, you know, they just can't believe someone my age could have the views that I do and I try so hard not to be in an echo chamber like, you know, I follow Jeremy Corbyn on Instagram. I follow John McDonald even know I despise him on Twitter and everything. But I would say yeah, I've lost a fair majority of people that are used to talk to you about respectively now, now they've got into politics and themselves and never used to be at school. I would say like, you know, a lot of people that I'm following or I put something up on Instagram and it's a very quick message. Tell me what an awful human I am and I would say definitely amongst friends, but I would say me to personally I'm probably like... There's definitely a set of modern Tories and some that are still old guard and that causes conflict too sometimes." – Tom

"All my friends voted to leave I think. I don't think I mix in the circle that voted remain." – Celia

"But then again on other levels, I've spoken to people who I have always thought to be very sensible only to find out they voted leave as well. I think a lot of people who voted Leave didn't understand what it meant and just saw it as 'getting back our fish' and that sort of nonsense. [What do you mean?] You know that typical Britishness small-mindedness is probably the best way to put it." – Sandra

"I'd say ten percent of our country know for sure what is the right thing to do and I'd say another ten percent know the wrong thing to do. But eighty percent of our country haven't got a fucking clue and they'll just go with whatever makes them feel comfortable in themselves which is dangerous and how we got where we are today." – Jack

"[Has there ever been any conflict or confrontations when talking to friends or family that voted remain?] No I tend to bite my tongue. I don't talk to people about it I don't think it's anyone's business. Me and my partner don't even talk politics in the house because we have very different ideas. [Different?] Well we both voted leave but he generally voted Tory and and I generally don't so... All our ideals are completely different really. So we don't talk about it becaue we will fall out. I think he tends to be more "i'm alright, pull up the bridge" whereas I like to look at the wider community and I'm very passionate about children and childcare so I tend to look at it from that perspective whereas he's like, 'I'm alright, the farms alright, pull up the bridge, I'm not going to worry about anyone else" – Rebecca

"I have spoken to people that have wanted to remain but generally what I tend to have done. I have quite soft sort of approach with it. You know I can always understand their point of view. But for me it was such an important over-riding issue that I knew there had to be change. Often those discussions only happened a lot of time as the deepening divisions went on right after the vote that actually happened. So once you start to get into a year after the vote that happened, more and more political fuel had been chucked on the fire. More and more people were aware of all these other repercussions that we weren't aware of right at the start, so it become a much more inflamed and sensitive issue but it only became like that because of the way that the government have handled it. It didn't have to be handled like that, it could have been a relatively clear-cut decision if they wanted to abide by the referendum. But as you know, we are still going through it now, right? We still have - I have have we actually technically left? Does anyone really know? It had supposedly been on the 31st of January, right? any discussions you have with anybody about it now are generally much more inflamed simply because it's all, 'well, you know, my son has lost his job and he's like this industry is going down the pan' and that's going to happen simply because of how the situation has been handled. So if I talk to people about that now, right, I'm generally, I wouldn't generally say which way I've voted. And that's just how it is " – Lee

"I was very very surprised when the result came through that we were leaving, I was very concerned because I knew that voting to leave or remain had split the country.

People are very entrenched in their views especially round here and so now everything is divided." – Ruby

"I've always avoided conflict, I always respect other peoples decisions but sometimes that is not reciprocated. I've been called just right of the Taliban by a colleague and this was in a school where I taught, people felt very very passionately and I knew people would be very upset so I delieratly didn't start any conversation but when I heard leavers being called Nazi's I would bite back and say you know, no. It was very awkward in my family because my family and I voted leave but my brother and three sons are passionate remainers. So we just decided we wouldn't discuss politics. We wouldn't let it become a huge issue in the family." – Ruby

"I've been in a pub in Wales when England has been playing Australia on you know, there's rugby or whatever and really surprised that the Welsh are cheering for the Australians. Whereas I would always cheer for the Welsh because I believe I'm British. Yeah, so I can see that there are great divides" – Susanna

"I might be in a little bit of a bubble now on social media with like-minded people so that does keep you going and I've recently culled the people that had kept on social media who represented different political views. I thought were important and I kept them on there right up until black lives matters, actually. Yeah, and that was the final straw when people were getting so upset about a statue or whatever and I just and and wouldn't couldn't see beyond their blinkers. So I had the cull a couple of weeks ago. And now I'm in a total bubble of people that think like me and that does cheer me up a bit. . It was too exhausting trying to... So with with black lives matter. I decided to try and you know challenge where I could and it just got so exhausting that I realised. I can't do that anymore and some people will just never change their views and that's that. So yes, I'm now, you know in a little bit in a bubble of people who all think the same as me." – Susanna

"I was pleased initially, but then sorely disappointed because I knew it wasn't a result that would carry enough of the population to become a comfortable thing. It was too marginalised. There was no clear agenda about what it really meant and everybody put their spin on the exactly the same numbers and got completely different out. It was the old adage in their statistics statistics and damn statistics. You can make them say and do what you want them to do. And so yes, I think within a couple of weeks it was very clear that it actually achieve nothing if anything it just set families against each other and more importantly, I think it actually was a de-motivator for businesses because they didn't know what the future was going to be. So the result was it was in the right way for me, but I don't think it actually resolve the issue." – Simon

"Yes in the very morning of the referendum. I got in the car with the colleague. I'd lift shared with and I just assumed that she was of the same opinion as me. I mean teaching is fairly. It's tends to be a fairly liberal left-leaning sort of profession. And from what most of my colleagues were saying. I was just hearing this. Oh my God, they can't leave sort of thing and I got in the car and I was just like I cannot believe it. I said no just went on around and she just turned to me and said well, I actually voted to go to believe. Then we had a very awkward car journey and we actually stopped car sharing not very long after that. Yes, get damaged our relationship quite badly." – Josie

"my husband we had an argument because he didn't vote at all. He was off at Glastonbury having a fun time. We had an argument. I had some friends who voted leave. Very few. Actually. It was the odd one or two. I think I to me voted for selfish reasons in their industry probably would benefit from leaving. But yeah, that's again. It's the idea of selfishness is not everyone is going to benefit." – Josie

"I don't think people are silly for voting leave, I just think they don't understand… but maybe the don't think I understand because I voted remain… I just think that if you're telling people what you voted it doesn't need to be so divisive, just give your reason and listen to each other,

			but nowadays it's all "you're in this camp and I'm in this camp". – Leanne
			"On the day of the result when I went to work and I heard at work that somebody voted leave and I just couldn't talk to them I was just like, I can't talk to you right now especially when they explained why and they said they don't want these people in our country and I was just like… I can't deal with this right now. There's just a lot of racism out there." – Leanne
			". My first reaction when my boyfriend told me he voted leave was – how are we even in a relationship? Because that is fundamentally something that holds different values to me, I literally didn't understand it. Then we had a conversation about it and I was really awful and blunt but luckily we talked through it" – Samantha
			"Then you've got people like my mum who asked my dad who he was voting for and he said Remain and she said right I'm voting Leave then to even out the vote. Like, what? What the hell? I still don't understand that in the slightest" - Samantha
Rural living = backwards attitudes / cultural deprivation	Old fashioned and traditional opinions and actions in rural towns and villages, thought of travelling backward in time rather than forward		"It just annoys me that nothing ever gets donehere. It also feels like you're trapped. A lot of people I've grown up with get too easy and complacent and don't move on" – *Charlie*
			[on London] "There's things going on, there's a lot more intermingling of different cultures in London. Whereas in tis town it's very segregated, it's very multicultural but they are all in their own sections of the town and don't intermingle." –*Charlie*
			"One time I was on the tube with friends, I was quite intoxicated at the time, and we ended up pushing this woman's pram with her child in it and having a lovely conversation with her about where she's come from, she had moved over from India and we were talking about her life and how she's ended up here. It was quite nice. I don't think that would happen in this town." –*Charlie*
		•	"There have been rallies [BLM] but as far as the rest of the town is concerned, through social media the opinions of the town, it's just been met with negativity from everyone. And that disappoints me because it's not even questioning the thought processes behind it... It makes me feel incredibly disappointed. Angry to a certain extent." – *Charlie*
			[on experiences of racism] "I remember in primary school a kid had a watch, I wanted to look at it, and he said no, you can't look at my watch, you're black. I didn't understood how that made a difference" – *Charlie*
			[on experiences of racism] "I get called a choc ice or an oreo quite often, black on the outside, white on the inside because of my middle class-ness. I don't adhere to the black stereotype that exists. I get a lot of that, I get a lot of people asking if they can touch my hair. They happen more here than in London." – *Charlie*
			"I just don't identify with being from here.. I guess I don't. I don't agree with a lot of the overall views in this area of the country and I don't know. I don't know. I can't think of the word. But, I think like, if we look at our MP which has been Tory for years and years now I think and it just feels quite frustrating. Not enough young people vote. So it's going to be very difficult for young people to feel

			represented. Whereas in my uni city it's a lot more diverse. Like I've met so many people from so many different countries which has been great. It's been great because there's a lot of different opinions and types of people to talk to and I think that's one of the big reasons and I guess it's a lot more left-leaning, the MP in my area. There's is labour, so I feel a lot better. " Abby
		327	"I think that there's a lot of bigotry around here like it's not necessarily overt bigotry. But like if you're talking to someone that at the pub they'll give a like a racist offhand comment or a transphobic comment or something. It just feels like opinions just aren't very progressive around here. The biggest reason is it's mainly older people around here who vote and not enough young people. So he's representing the interests of the people who vote for him and he's not he's not gonna try to represent someone like my interest because I expect he doesn't think many people like me will vote for him." – Abby
			"know some small villages. It's a very like pack mentality, their pub is their pub, and I think for young people it can cause a sense of... They don't necessarily get to experience like a wide range of things and they might not necessarily go for all the options that they may enjoy because life is always been the same" – Tom
			"When the councillors make derogatory comments, for example that we should all be executed, I went to my local police and made a racism complaint and he got another policeman to come round and he said would you consider not prosecuting if the councillor resigned his post. And I said yes if you resign and make a public apology I wont take it to court. So I did that. Then another lady in the public eye had called people pikeys so we took her to court and got a £4,000 compensation for the victim."- Celia
			"We want to stay a small village; we don't want to grow big. We want to stay surrounded by our farms, we get on with the farmers and they help us out and we help them out." – Celia (theme, anti-globalisation sentiment?)
			"There are differeneces between city life and rural towns...the levels of deprivation for start and the cultural diversity. It was the first time it was especially for some of the schools around the old docks area. And there was one mother who had eight children, one of every colour. She was a prostitute and had a very large family so coming from Weymouth and seeing this was a shock to me"
			". I think also things get done a lot more by each other in the community, the local handy man and things like that. You tend to get set within your social circles in a smaller community as well, less chances of branching out and you don't make as much of an effort to do so, we are quite complacent." – Sandra
			"there's this sense of incomers and outsiders here... I think it's regional, you see on television, when they have TV characters from the south west they always get our accents wrong don't they. Then again, when I lived in Weymouth there wasn't that many people who came from outside, there was an Italian community but it was very small.... There was one French boy I went to school with but that was about it. It's very south-west centric. Most of us ended up leaving because you know, you have to move away to work." – Sandra
			"it's kind of like a time warp down here" – Ruby

"the way I choose to bring my children up is very different to how I see a majority of people in this area. So for example, I feel I have to take my children to London and Bristol ever since they were little really to make sure they understood that it can look different to where we are. This is hugely white area. There are negatives in our village, you know, there is racism. I do feel I have to stand up to that sometimes most people are much older. So you have to do that gently because they're not even understanding their racism. So yes, that's where we're living but also my children tell me that even amongst their generation, you know, and I've had calls to ring and complain about things when I feel they haven't handled situations sensitively. There's a lack of awareness in this area and it was a bit of a shock moving here. So we moved from London, Windsor then to here. Yeah. And so one one of the first things that happened to us was a Christmas play that our children were in and it was called Christmas around the world and they just stereotyped every nationality each class. So I mean one lot of children came on in animal prints to jungle drums. Another another class came on as Chinese people with their hats and we were shocked. We were really shocked when we were saying. Oh my Lord and nobody else was and we were like, wow, where have we landed? Yeah, it's been very it's very different." – Susanna

"I think actually the word experience is very interesting because what I quickly saw was that lack of experience and so many people especially, you know children and not understanding the diversity and differences that we have in communities. Having worked in education, you know children, who are worried about going to London in case there's a bomb. So many different sort of things that just felt quite alien to us. And as I said, I've had to challenge quite a few things, there's one incident that happened. Do you remember the Manchester bombing? The school needed to reassure children after that and the way they chose to do that was to tell them not to worry because there's only three Muslims in the school. So luckily my children came home and told me that and I was able to challenge that but the way they address that was to apologise for me which wasn't necessary, what they needed to do was re-educate their staff. And support their staff to grow. But anyway, that didn't happen." – Susanna

"I watch them all go to pick up their Daily Mails in the morning and walk back to their houses and read The Daily Mail. and I do I know quite a few elderly people because my mum used to live here as well. And most of them would have voted for Brexit or Conservative. And so it's I don't feel they are thinking about the younger generation. I think they are thinking about themselves. I don't think that they are understanding of equality or justice, so, you know and I get really cross at some of them when they're going to the doctor's getting their prescriptions so paracetamol because it's free and you try and talk to them and say but that would only cost you 50 pence, you know, and there's a real sense of well, I made it. So that's what I'm entitled to and and I feel there's a selfishness in the majority of the elderly people who I'm finding it hard to find respectful because they're not even the generation that fought in the war they are the generation that had to live after the war. So I do find that hard. And we put our black lives matters posters outside and we live on the High Street and it was really interesting. Just watching people's reactions as they walked by and looked at it, and they would tut, a couple actually did come up to me and had really lovely conversations about it. So not everyone's the same but there is a big majority who teah, who I don't feel have been thinking enough and I've had to challenge people's racism. You know, when I've had people, you know, people putting stuff out 'there's foreigners in the village. They're going to rob us' you know, those kinds of conversations hear about travelling communities as well. You know, there's just such a fear of outsiders that it does really make you feel cross with them. " – Susanna

"in my in my upbringing I had very little exposure to people with coloured skin and things. I went to grammar school and in that whole grammar school, there was

		329	probably only three or four coloured people there, certainly none of Asian persuasians. Yes. I've worked all over the place now and therefore I get exposure to them. But it is this peer pressure at an early age, is what you're used to growing up with, and I think over the last 10 years what with Brexit and all the rest of it. I just get the impression we're being pushed all the time and we're not standing up for ourselves." – Simon
			"I just think that people think they can say what they like and do what they like and not necessarily understand what its happening and why people live here. One of my friends is Asian and grew up in Swindon and after the referendum people started telling him to go back home and he was born here. So people just don't think."- Leanne
			"I've grown up my I've widened my horizons and moved into a much more open mindset, going to Exeter uni help that a lot. Where I live is a community which is full of White English very middle class you know that type of outlook on life that is like we are here and nothing else matters I don't want to say closed minded but it's a very isolated community that can be potentially quite racist and it's very I don't know what the right word is but yeah. So going to university and widening my horizons and doing that stuff has helped me in being quite open-minded."" – Samantha
			". I think that less centralised decisions is a good thing because everything is done in London. Like I live in a really rural community and decisions that I made a London might not necessarily affect me as much as they do with people in London. I'd be fine with us making our own decisions but then that just sounds like I'm using us and them and that's really awful." – Samantha
			"Devon is a big part of who I am and my life and it is a big part of my identity and I strongly associate with it." – Samantha
			"They're quite conservative in their behaviour as in they want to keep things as they are and they sometimes think things were better many years ago…" – Donna
			"living here where all the population is moving towards older than anything else there are lots of services that are stretched and I do have personal knowledge of this because when I was working I was aware of how many people had carers and how many of them had such limited time to spend with each person. I think services for the elderly are very stretched." - Donna
Generational divide	Polarising divide of political opinions amongst generations		"I remember very distinctly during the EU referendum we went to go and visit an uncle of mine, it was a family gathering and they were talking about the EU referendum. I remember piping up, I can't remember what it was about but it was something like what we were paying to the EU. I wasn't too informed, but I spoke out anyway and the whole room turned to me like what? you think we should stay? and that felt overwhelming at that point because there were all these older people that evidently know more than me or I felt like they know more than me, are attacking me with their political opinion. I had a cousin in the room around my age that also kept quiet after that for the same reason." – Charlie
			"I want there to be a lot more representation of the young. I don't know if there is a law that stops you from being an MP. I think there's a law that stops you, you have to be over 30 don't you?" – Charlie
			"a lot of the youngsters want change a lot of youngsters are living in environments where they see the need for change because of the impact of urbanization. But that isn't necessary that the big sort of collective picture, but if you're there and you rely on public services etc more then I think you have a probably a different view to life than people like yourself living out here." – Tony

| | | "I don't understand my sons. Yeah, absolutely. I mean the whole technology thing, the whole mindset, the whole way of thinking. what's important, what isn't important, expectations. I think that they are completely different. " – Tony

"I think these days with the youngsters. It's a tougher life because of the globalization and competition. It's harder. I mean just getting a job for instance. Just getting a job when he's doing his placement what he had to go through these different companies to actually get an industrial placement compared to what I used to go through is massive and I think they live in a different world now, you know, the whole social media thing. It is a different planet" – Tony

"I think there is a certain element of younger Generations who are against our military intervention anywhere. In fact, I think well, I know there's elements of different generations who are actually against old people in general, and oh for an instance. I was called all sorts of names. When somebody very close to me made their own mind up how I voted for Brexit without knowing the truth. In fact he told me that I shouldn't have a vote. And everybody who went to University should have two votes. And that's when I started getting very informed and since the Brexit vote. I've actually probably read and watched maybe 4,000 hours. Okay. I did a calculation about a year ago and it was about 3,000 hours. So it's probably 4,000 now and I got myself educated about the EU so that if people for instance like I was called a racist bigot, which I don't believe I am in any way shape or form. I started getting the self-educated to have an argument back. Yeah, and since then I've read about European politics European finances and British finances and I feel I can't always remember it because I got an old brain but I've read at the time, you know, and this hardened my view and now I'm ready if a generation or part of the generation want to argue with me. I'm more knowledgeable to have that argument now. Yeah, and I do feel that it's not just a generation thing. I know it's a long time since I came out of the forces, but I think there's a there's a general part of the population who resent older people in the armed forces and any part that we have to have to play in world politics, which is unfortunate…I mean that's actually quite upsetting what I said to you when I was called names, that person called me dreadful things. Then goes and votes for a party which is partly anti-semitic with yeah, that is racist and bigoted so that educated person sort of doesn't voice that opinion to me anymore, he doesn't call me racist and bigoted because maybe he's realized that the party that he was voting for is racist and bigoted. When he called me a bigot. I didn't even know what a bigot was, but now I do and I don't feel as if I'm bigoted. I'm not much more opinionated." - Billy |
| Emotional hurt | Painful or uncomfortable emotions associated with politics | "I remember going to work the next day and the feeling in the office was very hurt. Especially with the stuff that was going on around the time as well like with Trump it just felt like the world was moving in the wrong direction. It kinda hurt." – *Charlie*

"It's quite upsetting. When you've considered that you have paid national insurance and tax for 50 years it makes you feel a bit under valued, which pensioners are anyway because we don't contribute much to the government because we don't earn anything. I suppose they consider us a burden. We're just a burden it seems to me some of the time. Nothing will ever change that, pensioners will always be pensioners and it seems like the government just pay out as least as they can and seem to get away with it." – Colin

"Well I was very saddened that people took it that we didn't want or let foreign people and foreign workers coming in here, that was quite upsetting for me because that was wrong. I remember going into the community hall to vote and feeling really under pressure to vote and to make the right decision. I just remember feeling really |

under pressure because it felt like the biggest thing you'd ever had to vote on, especially in my life time." – Rebecca

"Politics just makes me feel sad and it makes me feel disappointed. it makes me feel betrayed and negative and as though I really do not matter in their eyes at all as a normal person. They couldn't give a shit. I'm not even on their agenda. As I said you before I dearly wish it wasn't like that. I really wish it was far more positive, but It's very hard to find any positives in here. And the sad thing is I can't see it changing. I feel like I'm caught in some sort of like, you know, like a really bad recurring dream, I'm trying to think of that film where the guy wakes up and it's like the start of a new day every day the alarm clock goes off and he's back in the same day every day... Groundhog Day. Yeah. Yeah, that's how politics generally makes me feel. To see so many of them up there, they're spending so much time twisting the facts sometimes blatantly lying about facts and figures and just carrying it on and on and on. I think yeah, that's the hardest thing. Where's the change? When is the change going to happen Tabbi? It feels like there's going to be some kind of French Revolution to kick out the whole class system that politics revolves around." – Lee

"[on Brexit]I was shocked, horrified, total grief. I didn't understand how that could have happened. And it only got worse actually, it just got worse and worse as more and more that you know barriers came up as to you know, how we could even complete the process."

"I stayed up to see the exit polls just to have hopes dashed again, but just it was miserable. Actually. I remember things so miserable and I had to go to a party and just didn't even know if I could go. I was just sad. Yeah. Yeah, it was it was miserable to think. Yeah, and again just angry that I just everybody I spoke to that voted that changed their votes to conservative. It was over Brexit or false accusations about things they'd read about Jeremy Corbyn and in the media, it felt quite personal against him rather than looking at the manifesto and saying wow, is that great for us? They couldn't get beyond not liking him and that made me cross as well." – Susanna

"I just feel that's what should've been different and there were certain things that could have been reformed rather than totally thrown out. I actually felt I was in mourning and I still feel i'm mourning being a part of Europe. " – Susanna

"I felt genuinely upset, like almost like someone had died. I felt gutted. I was really angry. I couldn't believe it happened. It was headed in a bad year wasn't there because I follow the u.s. Politics as well. So it was the same year as Trump, I didn't understand I didn't, I couldn't fathom it and I was really angry." – Josie

"[How did you feel when you saw the result?] I cried. I wasn't very happy. I was going into work and I was working at a kids outdoor place and I had an international school over at the time and some of the kids and teachers asked what the result was and I told them and the kids started crying. I felt very defeated. I was surprised as well to be honest, ever election I hope that people have woken up and voted the other way but then I realise, people don't. And it makes me angry and disappointed and like, I don't know. It makes me realise how horrible people are for thinking and voting the way they do." – Leanne

"When I saw the result [December 2019 election] I cried. I was devastated. We tried so hard. I was angry at myself because I thought wow, why did I think it would be any different? But when you're going around canvassing and people are telling you they're going to vote labour you get your hopes up but I just... I thought that the way things are in the world it's been made so clear what the conservatives are about I just don't understand why people still vote for that. It's not just that but people whinge about how it is but then vote for the same thing. If you want change there needs to be a change so it's frustrating. Maybe people don't want change." - Leanne

Fear/ Uncertainty	Expressions of fear and or uncertainty in regards to the future or current circumstances	"I think the re-election of Trump will be an interesting moment because if he does get re-elected then people aren't seeing the problem. I think one of the problems as well is that the left is so divided, we are divided right and left but then the left is divided about what they want and how they want to get it and that doesn't help either. So yeah all of the things going on in the world make me fearful." – Charlie
		"That question scares me. I really don't know. I honestly don't know what way it's going to go. It's very uncertain. I don't know where politics is going to go and I don't see any light in it at the moment." –Charlie
		"The future everywhere is uncertain at the moment I think Brexit has taken a backseat because of covid but it's going to be a tough time for everywhere. It's going to be tougher than Brexit for some sectors" – Jenny
		"Yeah, and if you could have voted how would you have voted?] Remain. [Okay, and why would you have voted remain?] Because I don't think there's any positives I saw the leave vote, like at all. I think I think remain was probably a lot safer in general. I think there's a lot of like racism and going about that time and a lot of things in the media to distract us and I guess that might have been a part of it. [Why would you have preferred to remain?] I think just general stability, freedom of movement, trade, but I haven't look too much into the specifics, but it just it seems like it made a lot more sense. I felt kind of scared and upset. [Why?] Well, I guess like a lot of what my parents have been talking about and I guess because at that point we didn't really know what was going to happen and we were just assuming the worst and it seems like things haven't been worked out too great so far." – Abby
		"I don't see very good things. I'm torn between my children having children because I want little grand-children and then in another way I want to tell them don't have children because the world is a horrible horrible place and I think politics is the main cause of that. Our leaders just seem to be inciting more and more hate toward each other, their policies and everything just incite hate and no tolerance of each other. I don't know how to put it. I don't know much about politics but I think the system we've got at the minute doesn't work and we need to do something different and start from scratch." - Rebecca
		"I am really worried for our country now with us leaving Europe not having the overall laws that seem to generally be fairer. For my people's needs and point of view. Leaving all of that behind and just relying solely on this government at the moment that have no confidence and don't tell the truth all the time. And now we were relying on them to sort us out. It's shit. It's almost like if I had my time again and had a vote in a referendum I think now with the awful way that it's been handled. Yeah, I would have no option but to vote the other way. Yeah, so yeah, I really worry for our country. I really really worry for not just the young people but everybody in it. I really do not know what's it going to be like 10 - 20 years. Is this austerity thing going to carry on? We're now gonna have the excuse of, well, the cutbacks are happening because of billions money pumped in to the coronavirus support systems. And you know now you're going to have that hanging over your head. It's like years and years that will be the scapegoat for so many other cuts and policies that they decide to do and I can see why Wales and Scotland in particular want to be self-governing. Maybe they're looking at that and they're thinking we do not have trust in the English government to look after us, we're gonna have to do something to try and protect ourselves. We are not high on their priorities. I can just see a more split

country and the a divide between between people that are okay with money and those that are not and that gap just getting wider and wider and wider and it's like fuck, what's it going to be like? Really is scary." – Lee

"I feel that our politics is on hold while we try to come to grips with this awful virus and this is why I wish there would be a stop to this swiping at each other and there was a group together to deal with this because I'm sure it's going to come back in the Winter and be even worse. I feel quite negative about the future because of covid, a lot of people have really struggled with the virus, I immediately became a volunteer so I've been supporting elderly folk and they are very very scared. My mum is in a care home and has found the lockdown very difficult, so have the youngsters. I live on my own so I met up with a mate of mine and obviously we had to be 2 metres apart and I suddenly thought, I haven't had a hug in four months. So that's actually quite difficult. I've struggled. The mental well-being of the country, I have great concern for." – Ruby

"Well I don't know. I find it hard to believe that the current Parliament can make a success of the situation that we're in. So if you're asking how things are going to go I think they're going to go downhill. I can't believe that there's anything good. I can't see how how anything really better can come out of this now. Yeah, it's really really worrying." – Phil

"I'm very worried about that harking back to better days. You know, I've had lots of people talk about 'oh it be lovely just like after the war'. It worries me that we seem to want to go back to the past and not being progressive. It worries me for the future of my children. It was me for the future of the planet. So, yes, it all feels like something happened around that referendum that changed everything. " – Susanna

"For my kids I am fearful because if I'm ultimately honest I think all this will end up not in Civil War. That's probably too harsh but it will be civil unrest the gap is getting bigger, they cannot bridge it and I am fearful that once you start splitting off countries the natural progression from that is you're just spitting off part of the country and we will end up all insular and there will be civil unrest I'm sorry, but I don't want to be here but I just don't know how you stop that. I just don't know how you stop that progression to that, you know, even now if there are fairly subjective issues coming up that people are very upset about, gone are the days of trying to make a case. You hit the streets now, that's all they do. And these protests are 99% find peaceful, but there is an element who may not even be politically aligned to the arguments that are taking them over and using them for their own devices. I fear that that will become the norm rather than the rarity." – Simon

"I think there's a lot of unemployment, we lost Honda because of Brexit and that's going to be a problem. The mental health teams are really under-funded and that's a problem. Then local issues like to do with recycling, that's not good. But a lot of those problems are national things like the nhs being underfunded and we've now seen how important it is with the pandemic and when we come out of it there's going to be a lot of problems with everything, there will be such a knock on effect with health and employment. It worries me. I just think about how it's not in my control, I can't control it." – Leanna

"[on January 31st] To be honest, there was a sense of relief that finally, something had been done." – Donna

"Yeah, you can see I'm quite passionate. I don't always express myself well but I'm very passionate about this country and you should look after it. Yeah. I'm loud enough to say well, I don't want it to change." Billy

Disillusionment	Disillusionment with politics, the government, society, EU	"I feel Alienated. I actively avoid watching the news because I think the news reports focus on suffering and on atrocities. Watching politicians just alienates me because, I don't feel like I'm watching and listening to a human being. I'm listening to a robot throwing out facts, placating me." –*Charlie*
		"parliament used to move around the country with the king or the queen, and I think one of the biggest problems in politics nowadays is that most people feel totally cut off from the political process, they really don't see the relevance to them at all. Which is why people don't bother to vote. They don't think that even their own MPs know what's going on in their own area. I think a political presence, a bit of showing how things work to outside London would be good." - Jenny
		"I just think of how it takes much too long for things to be decided. I think it seems to be expensive and large, over populated. I think that some really farcical things have happened over there and it's the fact that when you have democracies with proportional representation there's always this coalition and trade offs and you vote for this and i'll vote for that and it just doesn't seem to be particularly meaningful. They just seem so cut off from everybody's day to day life, you never seem to hear what was going on in EU parliament unless it was something massive or someone behaved badly or whatever. You didn't seem to know what was going on and you seemed not to have any influence on things, I always got the impression that things were decided behind closed doors and implemented and you just think well when did that happen? You know there just seemed to be so little real democracy and I'm sure it's decided equally but there's all the trade offs and the coalition and countries agreeing to do things behind closed doors and then their MPs being told how to vote and it's just all a bit of a mess as far as I can see." – Jenny
		"I think the trouble with Parliament being in London is that London is a thousand miles away from me and it's totally different they haven't got any idea of what a lot of the country needs or what they're going through. It might as well be on a different continent or country." – Rebecca (rooted in rurality)
		"There's no point in voting for anyone else here, I don't think there was even a Labour candidate." – Rebecca
		"It's really hard. It's really hard because no matter what your vote in Dorset always ends up being a Tory win. So I think I do it because I feel as though... I feel as though I have to yeah, I feel as though it's a bit like being in the lottery. It's yeah, it's like you can't win if you don't play it. So I just feel as morally I should even though I know that with this political system It's like it's not going to make one bit of difference in this particular county. Somehow or other I hope that it will make a difference in my heart.I know my head it's not going to but I just hope that if you keep on voting for the choice that you feel is the better choice not saying it's like it's going to be the best choice, but it's the only choice you have. How can we not have proportional representation in this day and age? " – Lee
		"Actually you will hate this but I abstained. I felt so de-motivated by what was going on. I wasn't politically motivated. I don't belong to a political party. I'll be honest. I've voted Conservatives for probably 80% of my life but recently I have questioned whether they've lost the plot. I think there's a real lack of statesmen that lead of all political parties. That's what we're missing is the statesmen, the person to lead the country who actually puts a country and it's people before his party and I understand they can't because they get voted out. So it's a problem, but I think we have lost the way politically in the country completely. It's my perception. I may be completely wrong. But all I can say is that's my perception of it. I clearly hope that you know going forward, you know, everybody starts to hug and kiss everybody and the

| | | 335 | economy thrives and we go back to a position where people are comfortable but i just fear there are so many sub groups there now putting their cases forward without looking at the other side of the issue. I do not know how you resolve and bring everybody back together. That's the problem. I think. Yeah. I want to make a wall from Weston-super-Mare to Poole and just be the West country and then I'll be happy." – Simon

"I have a strange relationship with politics when I was younger I was very disengaged and I felt like it was all pointless because nothing that I have an opinion about would ever matter because politicians lie to get their seats and then never held to any kind of standard about what promises they make and that frustrates me. But now I feel that if I don't stand up for what I believe in there's no point in me even caring about it so I feel like I need to, now that I care more about stuff. For me personally because of where I live I'm actually quite out there because I live in a very conservative area surrounded by rich farmers who traditionally are very conservative where as I'm the opposite of that." – Samantha

"Lots of problems. I feel like the whole basis of politics frustrates me. I'm just like, fuck politics really, what's the point no one listens. Because they'd be like "here's a load of promise that we're going to break in our manifesto that we're going to break once in power" because once they're in, they aren't held accountable for it. It feels like most of it is a popularity race. For example during the last election I voted labour, and I spoke to my dad about voting and he's pretty old school and stubborn and he was adamant he wasn't voting Labour because he didn't like Jeremy Corbyn. And I was like okay dad, have you looked into any research or have you just been looking at outlets who are spreading propaganda and he's like "no no all this stuff is true he's an anti-semite" and I'm like okay, have you properly looked into any of what Boris has said? But he wouldn't. I just struggle because nothing feels honest, it just feels conceited and I can't even watch PMQs and keep up to date, because in the House of Commons it's a load of shouting and screaming at each other and I can't stand it because they're meant to be the people running the country and instead they are acting like children about issues that are really, really important." - Samantha |
| Anger | Expressions of anger and frustration | | "It makes me angry. I just want these people to be real with us. I think politics would be a lot more stomachable if they were. It angers me because I feel like it's tactics to alienate the public and make them feel like, oh you can't listen to me right now because I'm talking a whole bunch of garbage that you don't need to know anything about." *– Charlie*

"All our major industries have been sold off our utilities have been sold off, the manufacturing capacity in our country is now so low, it is unbelievable and we've gone into the assistant where it's like we make money from moving money around the Stock Exchange Market and all that is like and the people creaming huge millions and millions of banks off of doing that activity and it's like so I just say, very little manufacturing. It's like you've got a governments that can't seem to decide what to do about something. and I just wish that the government would just or people that make up the government would just start doing the right things. The things the country needs. We need to start being able to make things again rather than import things all the time. I wish they would look after our whole farming communities so much better. What is more essential than the food that you eat and gas and power and oil all these things? It's like everything just seems to get sold on. Everything seems to get privatised and as soon as it gets privatised the main priority it seems in those companies is we are here to make money. We are here for our so-called shareholders. Christ...I suppose you'd say that it's a miracle they've managed to keep the NHS going. That's incredible. That through everything that they've tried t do to screw it up. The money being cut from in everything else and it's still going." – Lee

"I went out with friends for a curry and I wore my t-shirt that says 'bollocks to brexit' on it and I did it maybe to just be a bit funny. I don't know but when we walked into the |

English identity	Distinction of English identity		

restaurant, I realised everybody else was sitting there with their little Union Jack's on the table waving them and I was the only person walking in with my with my t-shirt. And it was good-natured and it was sort of funny but underneath it, I didn't find it funny. They probably did because they feel very much the winners in this situation, but I felt I had to just smile and laugh it off when actually I just wanted to scream at everyone thank you for ruining my future and my children's future. " – Susanna

"Really really really sad. And angry. Really down. I think, like I say the basis of politics is a bit broken now and there's people who didn't vote and there's people who didn't care. I just feel like it was a complete and utter... it was just people putting across lies to make people in power get their way. It just makes me angry and sad." - Samantha

"I do feel English rather than British. I don't know if that makes sense but do you see what I'm trying to say? I do think there are differences between the Welsh the Scottish and the English and I was born and have lived in England all my life so I feel English rather than British" – Jenny

"the West country definitely has a definite culture and there are places around England where that sort of county culture is strong. But i'm not sure what Englishness is anymore to be honest." – Jenny

"I identify as English definitely. But you know, we are all conscious of the associations with the more nationalistic stuff, certainly more recently" – Derek

"As I said, I think there's this visible and obvious extreme right-wing element, which I don't feel I belong to and I suspect is more visible than its scale really reflects. I think my personal assumption is that the assumption that saying English means you're more right wing is an over estimate. I think it's an over reaction" Derek

"Because I was born in England. I'm very proud to be English and it almost feels like in recent years we're kind of not allowed to be English? I feel like you know people can say they're Welsh and they can say they're Scottish or Irish, but if your English, it's almost like an air of 'ohhhhh you're not allowed to say that' so I'm really proud to say that I'm English. And I'm also proud to be British." – Shane

"Well I believe if you're born in that country, that's where you're from. So I was born in England. So that that makes me English." – Shane

"I'm not Scottish Irish or Welsh. We have four seperate countries in the United Kingdom and I think Welsh Scottish and Irish people are all proud of their heritage and as far as I know I have no other identity or roots than English to be quite honest." – Colin

"I've never identified as European because I don't believe we are European. We might be in the European area but we're not European. We are English and proud of it." – Colin

"[do you think anyone can be English?] No I think they can call themselves English, it's one of those difficult one's, when in Rome, do as the Romans do, I think is a good mantra for being English. You've gotta be loyal to the queen, obey the laws of the country, and then you can call yourself English. You may not have English roots but if you reside in the UK and comply with the laws and respect the people then yes I think so, you can be called English." – Colin

"But the English do need to discover their identity from... I mean not to create conflict but, but to recognize probably being English. It's you know, it doesn't really mean anything. The difference between us is you got the Celts, you know, they've got an identity, with English with all the influences throughout the world and now the way that we've integrated whether it's a Romans all the way through Vikings or Normans, being English is quite hard thing to pin down anyway." –Tony

"I guess probably because it's easier and if I just identified as English, it would kind of sound a bit funny and like, a lot of people who only identify as English it kind of comes off

as a bit either nationalistic or some use it in a racist way, but I know that's not most people but I think British is just the easiest most of the time." – Abby

"Well the fact that I'm English! And the fact that my parents are English and I'm not a foreign national living in another country. I have lived in another country but I came back to my own country. and I just believe that, England isn't superior but it's just what I know. I would say that it's what I know, It's what I like." – Mandy

"[Can anyone be English?] Yeah, if they are born here yeah, it doesn't matter what your parents are I think if you're born here and brought up in English culture then you're English, of course you are." – Mandy

"I think it's important to link your self back to where you come from" – Tom

"I think I realised I was patriotic when I went to other countries and I found myself standing up for England and when I heard their answers on why there place is great I thought, where's our voice? I also like our royalty, other countries don't have that so I like it." – Celia

"I feel I am English. I am married to an English Romani Gypsy and the Irish travellers that come here are very naughty and they leave a lot of mess and the English Gypsies always get the blame. English Romani's are absolutely spotless." – Celia

"said the English Romani have actually been the backbone of English farming for hundreds or years. We've fought two world wars for this country and won three Victoria crosses. And a lot of our men have fought in further wars. So I said please get to know us properly. There is good and bad in every race, there is 300,000 gypsies in England and about 300 giving us a bad name" – Celia

"I think I'm English before I'm Jewish, I'm actually a messianic Jew so I don't abide by a lot of strict Jewish laws. I live in a mobile home and me and my husband can live as we want to so when we go out into the world we are just the same as any other English person. [Do you think that anyone can be English?] Only if their born here. I think you are what you are by your blood. A lot of people say to me, you live like a Romani, you're married to a Romani so you are a Romani, I say no I'm not, it's not in my blood. I'm Jewish by blood. I'm English by birth." – Celia

"[why do you identify as English?] Because I was born in England. I've lived most of my life if not all of it in England and I got lots of friends who are Welsh and lots of friends who are Scottish and all sorts of friends of different nationalities. And yeah, they're definitely Welsh and definitely Scottish so I'm definitely English. All my ancestors were English going back a long way so... I mean British is the over-riding thing but you have lots of different layers. You know, it's another layer up, isn't it?" – Sandra

"I'm proud of our I think our literature. Yeah, I think it's perhaps more a regional basis. Most of my ancestors come from a very, you know, some small part of south Dorset. They were agricultural workers. And since they were agricultural workers I've got a love and fellow feeling for that part of the world." – Sandra

"I think because Englishness is so badly defined you just know that you're not welsh or Scottish and you like fish and chips and football. It's also because the other nations, perhaps it's easier to rush to a stereotype that you're sort of left with the class stereotypes in England. You know the upper class and stiff upper lip in films and stuff or you get the stereotypes of the cockney or the happy go lucky worker from up north. It is different because... I don't know, you do feel an affinity with people you come from the same area as you and it's mostly familiarity so you're comfortable with people. Not to say you don't like people from other areas but the people around you, you always have a connection with them." – Sandra

"My idea of patriotism is to be rooted in your country's culture and history. Whether it's comfortable or not. I'm a druid. I've been very much involved in nature as a driving force, it's so much as I go back to the Newbury bypass protest I was a full blown hippy, yeah. I've got vested

interests in preserving place on this planet as part of it in the full knowledge that it's going to carry on once we're gone." – Jack

"I think the English lost their sense of identity… [When do you think they lost that or how?] It was educated out of us when they decided to educate us, I mean there are things people take as a given nowadays, they don't really have any historical relevance." – Jack

"I would say the English are more subservient and prone to believing fantasy rather than reality. Sometimes I wish we would protest like the French do." – Jack

"[what is your national identity?] I'd like to say English but I guess I'll have to say British. [Why's that?] Because I believe that's what it says on my passport. I'd probably rather have English there. That's my dad coming through. [So what is the difference between Englishness and Britishness?] I would say that English is being dominated by the other countries like Scotland and Wales who all wish to be independent. I'd rather be an independent English, but otherwise we should all just be British." – Ruby

"i'm coming at it from the point of view that the Scottish and the Irish and the welsh are claiming that they are different from being English so as i say it comes back to well okay if that's how you feel then we should be allowed to be just English." – Ruby

"I think our our history, it interests me, but also I think it builds part of my own identity being English and all of that back history I suppose. " – Sam

"I like our 20th century history. I like the fact that we to a great extent stood alone in two wars. I like the fact that we are innovators, through time you look at the inventions and things that came through the 20th century You know, it's where I think the things that really sort of make me tick of the things where we were first and we were the innovators. But those big characters I think in our history make me proud. Just going back right the way through to pre-roman times, you know, you've got Boudicea and things like and those those big characters. I think I was I was brought up learning about all of those things and to an extent I think that's had an impact on me." – Sam

" A festival that really I think resonates with me because my family were farmers. Is the Harvest Festival. So our Harvest Festival, I love, I'm slightly cheesed off that Saint George's day isn't and more celebrated if you look at the celebrations around Saint Patrick's Day and Saint Andrews day and so on and so forth. They're much much better celebrated than than Saint George's today and I believe we should celebrate Saint George's day and that for me that's about Englishness. I have a belt that says British by birth English by the grace of God, which has got Saint George on it, which just makes me tick that one." – Sam

"I feel my Englishness is around my family strengths, every one of my relatives I love and contact regularly. We're a network and that's the way I was brought up and I feel that is part of my Englishness I feel that... and I grew up in a very tight community and and I think we drifted away from that and now drifting back towards tighter communities certainly in in Devon in rural areas and I feel that part of my national sort of identity and how it makes me tick." – Sam

"I think I saw the English flag I was like yeah. Yeah English flag, but now I see it hanging out people's houses at night. I think I jumped to EDL. I jump to the far right, I jump to that sort of ignorant England sort of idea which I didn't use to and I don't know what I presume. It's just the news that's made me go that way that yeah, I associated the idea of English nationalism with the groups like the EDL." – Josie

"I'd separate myself too from England because I don't think we behave in a good way and I don't really want to be grouped with that or tarred with that brush. But I'm English and that's the way I was born so I just got to put up with it." – Leanne

"I guess I see myself as English I don't know I think that comes through from my dad like I definitely associate with

Great Britain as a whole and that side but if somebody asks me to write down my identity it's always English. I think he's just always been very "I'm English I'm proud of it" it's probably just come through from there" – Samantha

"I feel like it's a really difficult time at the moment because I feel like our response to the pandemic hasn't been great so that's reflected really negative on us as a country. I think that can cause some disassociation with the country identity. I think being brought up and having it instilled in you that you are English had a big effect. And things where the country has been able to pull together to work things through, like the NHS is awesome that's very British.I can't think, I feel like there's this innate feeling of having this connection to England." – Samantha

"I don't know whether… out of all the people I know and have met throughout all my life I don't think I've ever had a conversation about Englishness. It's not something that has ever been a topic of conversation" – Donna

"I used to call myself British since the rise of Scottish and Welsh national identity. I think it's important that we start calling ourselves English. And that's why I call myself English. Yeah, and so I've always identified as that." – Billy

"I'm I'm not religious, but I believe in Christian values and I think in general Christian values are an English trait. I think we're inventive. I think we've got wicked sense of humour. So that's English values. you know like Morris men and country dancing you know, it's just standard Englishness, we do things slightly different in England." – Billy

"there was a time when I was a boy I was a young man. I was like, yeah Three Lions great, you know, but now as I'm older I probably don't I probably wouldn't identify in that kind of same sort of adolescent way with national identity and you know the British Bulldog and all that kind of stuff." – Ian

"England's Englishness is made up of such a lot of diverse cultures geographically and let alone immigrant cultures now that are also voices within that, so my Englishness is specifically a Dorset Englishness and I probably associate more with Rural Dorset than I do with you know, an urban Englishness which would be… Well which are multiple, you know. For example, London's of different place altogether. I don't identity with that at all, but it's the capital of England. I've got no identity with London. I can't stomach the idea of it. So that's why I chose that because it kind of showed lots of different Englishness's has but pointed out what which my particular Englishness was, but it did only did it by location, but interesting to my form of Englishness because I don't come from a culturally diverse area... but Britishness just seems like a completely false construct. Englishness seems the closest thing but probably Dorsetness is an even closer one," – Ian

"When I was younger for me it was you know I'm British. We won the war but were on the right side and they were on the wrong side and so it was very kind of clear cut of that point of it was a battle. It was still framed in a time where there was a battle between good and evil or it was certainly framed as such. I mean that battle od good and evil goes on in every human of all time. Doesn't it? But at that point it was framed very much like that we have with the goodies. They were the baddies. The Americans were our friends. The Germans were our enemies and the Japanese and the Germans did lots of nasty things so that's all what I knew so that idea of Britishness. Englishness was at that point probably a starting point of understanding national identity and later on it just became as I grew into my teens and early 20s. It was much more around football. I was 18 or 19 when you're a 96 took place, you know, and that was a big it took place on English soil and we did very well and you know the song Three Lions and all this kind of thing. All of that kind of stuff came into view and changed probably my feelings of national identity from being British into much more of an English Focus." – Ian

"I reject a lot of the labelling and I feel I think you should take a balanced view to it. I would say that I was patriotic I do care about my community I do care about my country.

			I do care about the country that we that we live in and that we leave behind I do care what the reputation of it is and it does make me angry that I do feel robbed of a national flag and the national identity because of it being appropriated by racists and Hooligans. That does that does piss me off. You know, I think this problem is probably some level of human nature. Everyone wants a flag to get behind. Yeah, you know, but we haven't really got one that we can all get behind." – Ian
			"If you want to identify as English, yeah, I mean when push comes to shove it's about shared cultural values. It's about if there are enough of your cultural and moral values that are the same." – Ian
			"a younger Michael Caine looks like a quintessential Englishman to me because he crosses those boundaries, he crosses a class boundaries but he's a working class lad. It seems to cross a class boundary in terms of his Englishness. Class is a really important factor in national identity and in how you identify. I think yeah." – Ian
			"Like I said, those that want it can have the Union Flag. It's too tied up with Notions of Empire for me, you know, it's a so, I don't know, you know. One of the things about with the initial questions to find an image was you know, if England's an idea. What's that idea? Well, I don't I don't really know. All I can really say is I probably think that Englishness is a sense of community and a sense of shared identity and you should kind of know who those people are when you see them and when you meet them." - Ian
Wartime	Expressions of war-time spirit (overlap with above military pride)		"But I still think that on the whole people pulled together and looked after each other. Most of them tried to do the right thing and I think that's very much part of the way people see the English, is that keep calm and carry on type thing and I don't think that's a bad thing. I don't think it's entirely the picture but it is in itself a good thing." Jenny
Voting behaviour / political parties	Political ideology and voting behaviour of participants		"I have been a life long Labour supporter but I always tend to live in areas where they don't get in so it's frustrating, it's a wasted vote which annoys me." – Jenny
			"It's very frustrating. I find it really annoying and I'm sure I'm not the only one, I'm sure lots of people don't bother voting because they think well I've got no chance of my candidate getting in so I won't bother. I remember when I was at university I did a politics module and there was endless discussion on voting and different electoral systems, I don't think there's a good one, I don't think the one we've got is particularly good, so I just feel sorry for everyone that lives in safe seats, they might as well not bother. It's a real shame because I think it's another thing that makes people disengage cos they say well I didn't bother voting." – Jenny
			"I think occasionally I'd find individual liberal Democrats that I could support at a very local level. So things like the town council and the district council and that sort of thing. I've then tended to go conservative as we go up the ladder of bigger areas." – Derek
			"[working in the public sector] It's made them [political views] stronger. I'm a labour voter and I'm more labour now than what I've ever been. Is that makes sense." – Shane
			"[what do you like about the labour party? I just think that their values, are for the union. I'm a union person, I believe in unions. You know, I'm a closet socialist. You know, I believe socialism would be would be the way forward but you know, there's too many people that doff their caps and are happy that the big strong men and

ladies at the top tell you what to do when you do it, but socialism for me. Is being all equal being treated the same and paid the same. That's surely got to be better than the way it's going at the moment where the rich get rich and the poor are getting poorer." - Shane

"Socialists just seemed to get laughed at a little bit. When I was younger, I didn't realise I was a socialist. I just think everybody should get treated the same and it should be equal for everybody. But then you know, I've read a few books and I thought well, you know, I think I agree with the socialists here, but capitalists think that's never going to work or won't ever work because you're keeping all the money for yourself, you know, you selfish buggers, so I'm a closet one but you know, in a discussion I'm quite quite happy to say I believe socialism is the way forward. Everybody laughs at ya" – Shane

"I think again goes back to our fathers and forefathers in the men and ladies that have lost their lives for us and given us the right to vote. I think whether you win lose or draw and you know, even if you know you're going to lose sometimes you still got to have your say come election day. Otherwise, there's no point whinging and moaning when things aren't going how you think they should be for your constituency. You know, you should voted then. Did you vote? No. Well don't moan then! That's how I feel."- Shane

"The policies of the Labour party in the last election were an absolute joke. Do you really think that de-funding private schools is going to solve the problems of this country? My brothers been to private school, my father was not a rich man, he worked himself up from being a coal miner and the greatest pride in his life was that he could send his sons to private school. And now you're going to take this away from some people because you're upset that fathers work hard to give their kids a good education? What kind of a policy is that? Do you know what I mean? And it only effects 2% of the population, all of that and all of that election campaign and all it did was upset people and divide people. This whole 'i'm rich you're poor' politics it has to end, because nowadays a poor man can become a rich man in ten years if he applies himself. Do you know what I mean? And then he gets slated because he's successful and worked hard? It's very old kind of politics from the days of mining when everyone was down the pits you know, politics has evolved from then and none of the opposition parties are evolving with modern day life and how life actually is and the reality of it. They all fall back on 'we are the victims' you know. and 'you are the wealthy'. It's not cohesive politics." – Jackie

"Simon Hoare has what like, you know, 18,000 seat majority. So some people do just get comfortable… so young people don't really have a chance to make a difference unless they moved to a city" – Tom

"My mums pretty much always voted conservative and but she's very subtle about it. But to me, my mum is probably one of my biggest reasons why I vote conservative not to the fact that she's ever preached to me. But the fact that she grew up in what you would probably consider like the most working of working-class, like tiny farmers cottage. Mum didn't work. Dad was a groundskeeper. Very very very working class and to be at the management level she is now, you know for a nationwide company is the basics of you know, Conservatives, social mobility through the roof" – Tom

" I was genuinely surprised I did not think that the leave vote would be higher than the remain here. So when my wife came and said it to me she said you're not gonna believe this, we're actually like we're actually leaving. I was like really? and she went yeah and she showed me but I thought, so there was like happiness you know, I thought yeah, that's really good. Brilliant. Yeah, that's really good it make us more independent, maybe make us a bit more self-sustaining and all of that so it could have really good knock on effects. But having said that I think the percentage of the result was so small that it shouldn't have carried. It shouldn't have been allowed to carry through. I think with things like that it should be at least at the very minimum a 10% difference between a for and

against vote of something that huge. So I think the percentage was so small that it shouldn't have been allowed to go through that stage. Cos it was like 30 million that did want it and 30 million that didn't want it. Like, come on. It's like you can't it's just too close to call. " – Lee

"I voted Conservative I think, yes. To try and give Boris some support. He was the only person I could see who could actually get the Brexit deal done. And without someone strong in control I could just see the Brexit scenario going on and on and on." – Ruby

"No matter how I vote, you know that because I'm in rural Dorset, the conservatives will always get in. I will always vote out of principle because people died for our vote. But it's a bit of a... the only time I felt my vote really made a difference was in the Brexit debate. I vote for principle but I feel sad that it makes no difference. I don't always vote for the same party, I listen to the debates but there's as I say, my vote doesn't really make a difference. " – Ruby – powerlessness

"Swap my vote it was called, it was a website and then that put me in a personal contact over Twitter. Then you both have to agree and you make contact we both said yep, we're going to do this. So you have to put your trust in each other. Yeah, but I felt I could and as I say my vote would have been completely lost in my area. So I had to do something." – Susanna

". I would say anybody with any viewpoint that doesn't coincide to an extent with the Tory viewpoint in Devon is a little under represented and that's because don't matter who you vote for in Devon. The Tories are going to be in the majority. Simply because that's what the tradition, for that to change would be an absolute earthquake politically. So and I have to say I'm a floating voter, I vote for what I think at the time. I'm not sure I've ever voted more than a couple of times for the same lot on the trot. I think a bit of change is healthy from time to time. A lot of the time I am represented because a lot of the time like say I float and I'll go with whichever policy I think is right the time so quite often those policies I do agree with but sometimes I don't so yeah." – Sam

", I think we're ready to already touched on the voting system the fact that it feels unfair. I would support going to AV or proportional representation or something where it felt like my vote meant something more. Yes to me first past the post is just ridiculous and not fair. I mean It's very difficult to say everything's changed because of coronavirus and you can't really say like but this is bad or this is good because it's just such a weird situation. I think Brexit is a massive massive mess. To me, and a huge error to me. Yeah, so that problem in British politics. That's the sense of not feeling represented in that the accountability. I would like some of the minor parties to have more of a say from to be a bit more maybe like the German Parliament I suppose because they have portion representation things like that." – Josie

"In 1997 when Tony Blair won, my neighbour was a member and we used to get leaflets and flags delivered. I was only 10 but I stuck the flags to my bike and rode around saying vote Labour because from what I was told, I knew it was the right one like Labour is for equality and they help out people that can't whereas Conservatives is like, looking out for their own and if you can't manage then oh well. So obviously at 10, that's what I thought and since then I've always been influenced by my family and neighbours." – Leanne

"The last time I voted I was in despair to be honest because I knew that the Tory chap was going to get in, I wasn't in favour of him at all so I didn't vote for him but I just despaired because I thought, my vote has gone to waste really." - Donna

Island nation / Britain as Unique/ Exceptionalism	Expressions of Britain as unique and exceptional on global stage	"I've heard all the arguments about federations and it being like America but it's not because we are different countries. I think the whole impact of Britain being an island was under estimated by Europe and by Britain, it gives us a whole different mentality about physical neighbours. We don't have countries with different laws and languages a couple of miles away like they do in France and Belgium, I think that makes a big difference". – Jenny
		"this sounds ridiculous but I don't like kilograms, I was brought up the pounds and I remember somebody being prosecuted for selling fruit by the pound and ounces and I thought that was utterly ridiculous. I don't get why we have to do things a certain way and that's when I began to realise that the island mentality and having a different language and different system is actually much more important than people realised. But it's been a gradual process that's been before we even went in and it's just gotten stronger over the years." – Jenny
		"I think we are very different. I think the whole fact that we don't have neighbours from different countries that you can walk over a border it makes us very different. I think we have a historical mental sort of difference in that we do see ourselves as different, whether we are or not, we see ourselves as different. I think the whole history of the Empire has clung on from that point of view and we don't see ourselves in the same way or as the way the Europe does. We do think we are different. I'm not sure how different we are. But I think the whole island thing is underrated in what makes us different." – Jenny
		"I don't think people in Europe understand how it is to be physically separated from other countries. I know people that live on borders in European countries and borders are not that much of an issue to them but to us, we have a whole sea round us and if gives us an isolated mentality just like Japan for example, they are culturally very different because they're an island and so are we. We've also not had wars fought on our soil in the way that has happened in Europe, I think that makes a difference. I think Europe's desire not to have another war, which is totally understandable, but it's different for Britain because the war was fought somewhere else. It makes us think differently. I don't think they quite get that. They probably think we are being stroppy and difficult and yeah that's fine, it's probably true, but they definitely don't get why we're like that."
		"Yeah I do, I think you know Spanish people are completely different to the French people and the French people completely different to the German people. You know, if you're from Germany, I don't think you're European I think that you're German, you know everybody has their own identity and every country has their own identity and I've gone around Europe a little bit and we are totally different from mainland Europe but also different from the French just as we are from the Spanish and the Belgian, etc." – Shane
		". I think probably being an island has shaped both our history and where we are now, you know, we may have been a less strongly independent nation over the centuries if we'd been on mainland. It would be a lot easier for people to have invaded us." – Elliott
		"I think we are more independent, because we are an island I think that makes a difference, if we hadn't have been an island, if we had been attached to France or Belgium, or Holland, if we were physically attached we may feel differently because we would have travelled around a lot more. I think that's what makes Europe how they are, they are all joined together, all those roads that go in and out of eachother, there's no border control, there's free movement of people and they probably think nothing of it, just driving around from one country to another. Whereas we've got this piece of water around us which isolates us from the rest of Europe and always has, so I think that's what makes us think differently. We don't want a European army or non-British people in high places telling us what to do, we want to make our own laws and control our own borders, whether that will work I don't know." – Colin

| | | | "I think we are one of the largest economies in the world and I also think that we are a leading country. In every aspect for schools, products, technology, you name it. The law, and the judiciary I think we lead on a global scale, yeah. we live in the most wonderful country on the planet in my view that leads in every way" – Jackie

"I think it's [Brexit] going to give so many people pleasure to realise all that scaremongering paranoid ridiculous carry on about Brexit and how it was going to be the end of the world and it's clearly not going to be the end of the world it's going to be wonderful. You know? and also I think we have to appreciate what this government has done through corona. It's incredible. I mean what other country in the world has paid our furlough like this country has you know? What other country in the world has supported people, what other countries are paying 80% salary and below? You know, supporting businesses, supporting rates, what this country has done in the last few months is incredibly positive for everyone. "- Jackie

"I would say a hundred percent like to me the world doesn't centre around the UK, but the UK has so much history like the modern history of the world has been so impacted by the UK and Great Britain that I'm kind of proud. I understand history is not perfect. But I am also like I'm part of the nation that is pretty much dominated possibly the last 400 years of world history" – Tom

"[is there anything that makes you feel positive about your national identity?] So it's knowing that Britain in many fields is at the forefront and that includes, you know with Europe as well like as Britain within Europe and Europe around Britain, like, you know, we are like leaders in scientific papers, you know us and the Europeans like per capita. We put out more literature, my sense of Britishness. Is that even for such a tiny island in the North Sea we still have a major impact there's countries that are 10, 15, 16 times the size of us that have nowhere near the influence on the world stage and it's the fact that we have adapted and overcome to so many challenges to remain relevant, which I think makes me see us as strivers of innovation and I think it's the ability, you know, we just look at the British aircraft industry got completely destroyed in like the 50s 60s 70s with terrible mergers and now we're one of the leaders in Aerospace. So it's the ability to realise that we might not be the biggest economy and you can't do every field but the fields we can do let's do them the best so we can you know we can have a nice slice of that market. So it's the Brirtish ability to overcome and adapt rather than try and be the best at everything."- Tom

"The West of Europe is definitely probably the most civilised place on the planet in terms of just, you know, carrying on through especially in the Industrial Revolution and since then I think Western Europe has probably done a lot and is probably the most stable region in the world" – Tom |
| Covid politics | Discussion relating to COVID-19 pandemic | | "Yeah, the adversarial system is good in that everything gets questioned and challenged but bad in that that often stuff gets challenged just for the sake of challenging it rather than because it feels productive. And so I do feel some of those things. So obviously one of the big things at the moment is the getting the kids back to school through the covid stuff and the unions and the Labour Shadow education secretary feel to me like they've been arguing about stuff in an unproductive way rather than a productive way. I'm not sure that the prime minister has been as good as he could be. I think the situation is very difficult. So I'm not going to you know point at any specific failing, but I do think that that his ability to progress and as a nation our ability to try and get somewhere with getting the kids back to school hasn't been helped by the adversarial nature of it. So I think that's a weakness in a problem at the moment and it does often feel, you know, there was something on the news yesterday, I remember who it was, the inspector or whatever she was. she was saying that the schools should be the last to close in the first door open and I thought well, that's what they have |

		345	done. The schools were the last close and everyone was ranting on about how they left him open for too long. And now they're trying to open them and everyone's complaining that they can't you know, they're not ready and they can't do it and you sort of think well, so this criticism that the government should have kept them open longer and open them sooner. I thought well actually if you listen to what they're saying that is what they're trying to do so it feels like within the politics sometimes the adversarial nature is just too adversarial to be productive".- Derek

"But if you look at covid and you look at the EU response to covid what was it? There wasn't one. It was shocking, in fact they had to apologise for it. But I don't know what they are apologising for because they didn't know what their role was in it. So each country, example, then put forward their own policies to how to cope with covid, the barriers in terms of coming in into the country and everything else. So there's a massive example of ,I don't believe in the system or the value, that in theory should be there but isn't there and I think it is one way, and the problem is I think they want to go more to an extreme State like that, but the moment Europe is completely ineffectual. From an economic, you know from a covid response, I wouldn't have been relying on the EU to give me any direction." – Colin

"Well politics at the moment, the labour party at the moment, I mean we are in the middle of a pandemic and they keep saying you should've done this and that I don't know why they can't just come together and work together instead of bad mouthing the other one. What I want to know is what you're going to do about the future. I get very annoyed when I hear them bad mouthing each other and going back over old ground. You can't change the past. You can only make the future better, so learn from it. And do something more positive in the future." – Celia

"There's some extent that covid has completely side-lined all political discussion, you hear occasional snippets that the discussions with Brexit aren't going. Well. The clock is ticking. So at some point somebody's got to come forward and say either we're doing this. It's going to be X or not doing it. It's going to be Y either way there's going to be a lot of unhappy people. " - Simon |
| The future | Sentiments towards the future of UK politics – range of hope and cynicism | | "I think, a great friend of mine who also ended up on balance voting leave, although I was quite surprised because he's a city slicker. He does international mergers and strong business strategy. So is a business strategy consultant and does all sorts of stuff and he said to me that he'd looked at it and he felt that it didn't make any difference to him. Personally. He's going to be fine. Either way. He's got two young daughters. I've got a young daughter as well. He said I've got two young daughters and what I'm thinking about is how the world's going to be when they're in their 20s and whether they're going to have good opportunities, and he said he'd ended up voting leave because he thought that actually it would free up more opportunity. In the sort of 10 to 20-year horizon and he said in the first 10 years that he didn't think it would make that much difference. Obviously. We're going to see a lot of businesses starting, going to see a lot of businesses failing those things happen all the time anyway covid is going to strongly exaggerate that but he said he thought that if we looked at it purely on a brexit point of view he thought in about 10 years, it wouldn't have made much difference. We'd be kind of in terms of the national figures. So obviously didn't individuals there would be differences but in terms of national figures in the 10 to 20-year horizon, we'd be probably you know in a stronger and there would be greater opportunity. His track record is pretty good so that's what I'm hoping for." – Derek

"[on Brexit negotiations] I feel hopeful but because of my age it doesn't really affect me as much as working people shall we say. With the possibility of jobs being lost. I don't want jobs being lost, I don't want that at all, but maybe I've got a different view of people that are actually working." – Colin |

"The EU is going no-where. Italy is going to be out of it next, then France, then the Netherlands are going you know what I mean? They're just waiting for their national elections to come up. Then the EU is a goner. What it is now is not what we signed up for. [What do you see for the future?] I see the UK becoming the fiscal hub of Europe. I hope. The banking capital of Europe. I see us starting to trade a lot closer with countries like India, African countries, Australia, I think it's gonna boost a lot of tourism between America and the UK, I think personally if they can get control of the borders and we can start doing things properly the UK will flourish outside of the EU. We've been very constrained. Also remembering that a lot of the UK was made up of beautiful fishing villages all the way through Cornwall all the way through Scotland, and those villages are just desolate now if we could get our own fishermen back with our own borders, reviving all these small coastal towns, trading more freely with other countries, I think we are going to thrive. If they can get control of the population and borders, because at the moment the population is out of control." – Jackie

"I see very slow progress. Like it's always like as always happened. I don't think radical change will happen overnight. I think we're just going to have very slow progress over time and I hope that progress is quicker, but there's always it's always going to be two steps forward one step back on most issues." Abby

"Well the fact that the Conservative party are in power. That Boris is our prime minister. Whether that grinds your gears or not, it's the fact isn't it. There are now lots more younger people than there were say ten years ago which means the dinosaurs are going out of our politics thank goodness, you know new ideas, new things might happen, maybe not in my time but it's the beginning of new things." – Mandy

"I don't know. I really don't know. It's all back biting and back stabbing, in my perfect world, if we could take the best from every party, and put them together and form another party I think we would have a perfect parliament. But I don't see anything for the future. I can't see it being any better ever." – Mandy

"I see politics becoming more divided. I see unfortunately kind of whoever shouts louder winning the day rather than reason, I think reason is kind of lost because if we use the reason I think more people would vote plant Lib dem or centre, I feel like you have to go to the extremes to get your reason heard now" – Tom

"There's nothing left-wing in this country left anymore. If you don't have both wings on a bird you'll just keep flapping round in circles." – Jack

"I hope that we as a nation, and I'm talking Great Britain, that we can keep our act together and come through out the other side everything that's going on at the moment, that's covid and Brexit, and stand on our feet and progress. The leavers are happy but the Remainer's won't let go." – Neil

"At this rate. I'm still hopeful that we get a change of government in four years time. However, I just feel I feel quite bleak about it. Actually. I felt hope with Jeremy Corbyn actually for real change and really bought into that and I was the most politically involved I've ever been with Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto and it really felt even though he wasn't saying let's get rid of the referendum result. I still felt that that was the fairest thing to give everyone another chance to do the right thing. But anyway, so my hopes were dashed in the last election. And now I feel quite bleak about it all to be honest. I think Keir Starmer is probably a better opposition, but he doesn't have the same or doesn't represent the same hope for real change that I felt with Corbyn." – Susanna

") I think I would love to think that we could get regional assemblies because I think for me that would make the biggest difference having a Southwest assembly would mean that we would… I think I think our politicians would be more accountable. That would that would be my hope but and it has been discussed. You know, it's been that thought has been floated a few times. I just hope that we

		347	will one day get to it may not be in my lifetime. But you know, yeah." – Sam
			"I mean everything is so uncertain at the moment with everything that's happened because of the virus and the way the economy is going will make a big difference. I fear that it will go further the way of populism and the economic crisis and problems will grow and drive that sort of polarization with a sense of 'we need to look after ourselves first', which I don't like I don't see why we should have better things, have the vaccine, have better health care, than people who live somewhere else in the world. Like I find it frustrating watching the news and I'm not seeing what is going on with the virus in Africa or Asia or South America very much. Seeing what's happening in Europe and what's happening in the US, but it's not it's always about us and It's like going that sort of idea of the Empire and no we're not taking over the country, but it certainly is a 'we don't give damn'." – Josie
			"I'm very doubtful about British politics. I think… No I'm just very doubtful I can't see anything very positive coming out of anything. In fact I think it's getting into a bigger and bigger mess. obviously the pandemic and they keep saying they're going to give money to this or that and I just keep thinking well where's all this money coming from what state is the country's finance going to land up in. That's a worry. Also the whole Brexit thing. It seems to me it's cost us an absolute fortune and I don't know what it's going to achieve, it just doesn't seem very positive to me" – Donna
			"I can see the union breaking down so I can see the United Kingdom of Great Britain breaking down. That will intensify feelings of Englishness and potentially resentments for some people. So, yeah, I can see English and has been starting to become more important than the Britishness. They're clinging onto it with their fingernails. These Tory's these Empire bastards clinging on to this idea of Britishness, it's theirs, it's their flag and all that. But the union will break down, the Union's breaking down as we speak. I can see it. I just can't see it hanging together for the next you know for another 15 years. Yeah." - Ian
Political correctness and censorship	Feelings of censorship and expressions of 'culture wars'		"It doesn't make me feel negative but it does make me feel angry that we're sometimes told we've got to act in a certain way or we're not allowed to say certain things where you know, it's not in my mind's not offensive just to be you know, proud of where you're from, but sometimes when you, for instance watch the mainstream media, it's their kind of a negative light on it sometimes and it makes me not very proud. If that makes sense.[So what kinds of things are you talking about? Do you mean like self-expression?] Yeah, you know, sometimes you're scared to say certain things because of political correctness and then I just think it's all gone a little bit too far to be quite honest." – Shane
			"the English people have never really celebrated like the Irish with St Patricks day and the Scots and the Welsh, I've never seen it celebrated to be honest. People have put up English flags and been told to take them down at times whether that's been reported in the media as correct or not I don't know, there's a lot of fake news about. I know several councils don't like the English flag being flown, but you know, no, in short. I don't know how it would be celebrated because we don't have a days holiday like they do in Ireland. If we had a days holiday it would probably make it more meaningful. " – Colin
			"I had lots of friends that were labour lots of friends that were lib dems, lot's of friends that are conservative and there's definitely a sense among being young that being right wing or more leaning right is not as acceptable and I think in the UK it does kind of sadden me. I'm a proponent for free speech and I think sometimes in the UK like sometimes in America people say awful things in the name of free speech but it kind of allows people to see how bad that is whereas in the UK. I think we're moving too much towards prosecuting and limiting what people can say in the name for a very very small minority." – Tom

", I think the term fascist is thrown around so frequently now for anyone that doesn't agree with anyone that we have kind of lost sense, especially in my generation or my age group of what a fascist and what was actually happening in Europe" – Tom

"there seems to be some silly nonsense where if you say you're English, it's frowned upon. I think we ought to have the freedom to say we are English just like the Scottish are able to say they are Scottish, without criticism." – Ruby

"and you know the end of the second world war. I think that's important. It can't be swept under the carpet. I mean the Germans celebrate the end of the war and we should be allowed to as well. And I think it was being swept under the carpet but I think there's been a general kick back against that because the older generation of putting up these like silhouettes of around towns and that sort of thing so we mustn't forget. We must we must never forget not just the sacrifice, but we must never forget. So hopefully we'll never deteriorate to that point again. And so that's why we should remember. [Yeah, so when you say swept under the carpet, who do you think has swept it under the carpet?] I think the younger Generations trying to sweep it under the carpet and I think we have to remember it" – Billy

- "And I'm sick to death of equality, diversity, it's never ever equal. How many massive pride events are there around the country every year to celebrate? And I've got no problem with anyone's sexuality. Anyone's beliefs. Anything at all. But you can't be proud to be white and you can't be proud to be British. Or English. And going back to many years ago, I mean I'm now divorced, but when I was with my wife, my brother-in-law was in the army and he was based in Hounslow, army barracks. But to get to his army camp you had to go through a massive, very large, Muslim area. And this was when England was in the world cup. So he put an England flag up in the window. And the police knocked on his door and asked him to take it down.[Is that true?]

  That is true. I've got two children, one is 12 one is 13. And I'll swear on both their lives. They asked him to take it down because the residents in the area found it offensive. Really? You want to live in this country? You want to have our benefits and our health service and all the rest of it, but you don't want to accept our flag? That was a key moment for me, because that to me is offensive. That's discriminatory. And that's where we need to be able to stand up and kick back against that and say no that's wrong. It's the flag of our country and we can proudly wave it." – Martin

  My son is currently looking at doing his options at school, and one of his topics he loves is history, but I was talking to him last week when he came to stay. They are currently doing all about the Second World War, Hitler, the Nazi party and so forth. And I said Britain's got a proud history you know. And he said what do you mean daddy? And I said do you know what daddy's favourite film is? And I said I tell you what, I'll show you, I've got the CD. So I put it Zulu. [I'm not familiar with Zulu can you explain it to me?] It's all about the British empire going into South Africa, fighting the Zulu's, so and so forth. It was quite a, yeah. It wasn't a good thing, they slaughtered an awful lot of black people. But it's history. I had parents evening on Wednesday night, so I brought this up. I said why aren't we teaching the children about this? [What did they say?] They said it's not on the curriculum so they weren't allowed to. Well, why not? They said there's a lot of fighting with black people and we shouldn't be celebrating it. So I said, I'm not on about celebrating it, but its history. You're happy to talk about Hitler, the Nazis, killing six million jews. But you don't want to celebrate our own history as a country? They said oh well you know, they slaughtered an awful lot of blacks. But, it's history! I'm not saying that's who we are today, we recognise what was done wasn't right but we can't hide history or lie about history we can't deny it. We aren't allowed to celebrate it and I think that is really wrong. You know, my son, is he

			gonna learn about what my great grandad did in the war? They are gonna learn about the Nazi's and what they did but not my grandad as a royal marine? I'm sorry but this is all wrong, the imbalance is ridiculous. Totally ridiculous. So wrong. So biased." – Martin
			"You know, we have an awful lot of influence and an awful lot of power, did we commit what would now be considered war crimes? Yes, possibly. But we are talking, a couple hundred years ago. The mind set of people was very different to what it is today. I'm not gonna deny that what we did wasn't right but we did what we did. It doesn't make who we are today. [And who are we today?] Well we are a soft society that panders to the few. Very much so. [Can you elaborate on that?] Oh very much so. I believe in equality. I believe in diversity. However, it has to be, we call it equality, but is it equal? No. we can have gay pride walk down the road. But I want to have a heterosexual pride. But apparently I'm not being understanding, I'm being sexist, I'm being derogatory, no, I want to celebrate who I am, you get to celebrate who you are, and I'm accepting so please accept who I am. And it's much the same with race, religion the lot. You name me on single Muslim country that has a church in it. [I've never been to a Muslim country.] Well it wouldn't be allowed to be built. Yet we, as a Christian country, allow mosques to be built everywhere. Where's the equality there? I cannot celebrate my religion in your country so you cannot expect your religion in my country. That's not equality. That's not equal. That's not fair. At what point on a job application form, and I know of many people who have done this, If you're a white heterosexual male, you are discriminated against. At what ppoint is it allowed for someone to go, I want to have a job here and this job is going to be perfect for a white male. You can't put that! You can't put that! It's so wrong, so discriminatory. Yet if they put we would prefer ethnic minorities from the female gender or from LGBT gender, how is that fair? You're discriminating against me for being who I am. And that's why I'd say the whole human rights act and whole equality is not fair. It's wrong." - Martin
Black Lives Matter movement	Hostility to BLM movement		"[Yeah, and can you think of any examples that kind of you've encountered recently where you felt political correctness had gone too far?] Yeah the black lives matter thing. [What was it about that?] Well I found that really offensive because I did a little bit of research on it and I believe certainly black lives do matter but it was kind of forced on us that black lives only matter, and I've got a lot of black friends and a lot of black relatives, etc. etc. And it made me feel not proud to be white. You know, it I felt a little bit vilified be a white person at that time and you know, I'm even a little bit nervous to say it now. You know, I mean, I wrote a letter of complaint to the Premier League saying are you sure that you want to be you know, if you research this, because firm from what I researched it was a Marxist movement and I understand, you know certain people didn't see it as that but I researched it and it was a left-wing Marxist movement and I didn't want nothing to do with that." – Shane
			"I think they're [Labour] all so tied up in racial debates that you know, a lot of the non-white politicians, all they keep on about is banging on about this racial divide. Well, I've never felt a racial divide in this country until all the BLM rubbish started and I've lived here 24 years. Most of my friends come from the West Indies so they're all pitch black and they say they've never felt the racial divide in this country until this BLM bullshit started. Labour was the driving force behind it. I think this continuous victimisation culture is so negative for the country, it's not bringing us together it's dividing us." – Jackie
			"whether you're a football hooligan or your you know, or whether you are black lives matter and you are rioting as well. The police just seemed powerless to do anything. There was a lot of times we watched on the news and the police felt a bit powerless and sometimes I do think the police need to be a bit more strong arm in their tactics,

			but it was also it was mainly about the Baden Powell statue down here. You know, I've been a Scout for almost 15 years now and when Poole council said they were going to remove it for its own protection. I thought we can't just bow down to a request from the minority to remove something that the majority want and also especially the baden-powell statue that was spread about was so untrue." – Tom
			"You know all this black lives matter stuff? [Yes.] Well gypsies are the largest minority ethnics in the country and we're the most persecuted. I used to live near Bristol and a white woman wouldn't go in St Pauls area because she would likely have been raped, beaten up and all sorts. I have nothing against blacks I have black friends but there's good and bad in every race so you've gotta take that into account. They've made George Floyd a hero, when in reality he was a rapist, he did aggravated burglary, he was a poor person, used drugs, it was wrong the way he was killed of course it was, and the police should stand on a murder charge. But he's not a hero, yet they've made him a hero. And now in England they are pulling down statues of our history. And that' makes me so cross because the people we've got statues up for did some bad things but they also did good things. If you look at every single person in the country they have good and bad in them. No-body is perfect, everyone is good and bad. I don't like them pulling down our history. The latest is they want to take the pictures of Jesus out the church because he looks like a white man. Everyone knows he would be olive skinned because he was Jewish, he wouldn't be black. It's just child playground rubbish to me. Arguing over stupid things." - Celia
Appreciation of space to talk			"I'd just like to say that I think being involved in things like this is really good, people need to start having their say on what they feel strongly about and not to be scared to have their say. I'm fed up with people you know, people feeling really strongly about certain things and then when you say to them, well, why don't you do something about it and they go well, there's no point and you're like well if you don't do something differently there's no point because nothing's ever going to change unless you have your say. Unless you have your say nothing's going to change because you never know your say might spark something in somebody else's head and they might agree with you and then they might talk to somebody else and before you know it, you are changing things because we have got the strength, the people have got the strength not just in Britain, but all over the world, but we just doff our caps and do what we're told and we say nothing's ever going to change and no it won't work. Well, not with that attitude. I just believe people should be more open, more honest and not be scared to say no. I don't want that to happen or yes. That's really good. You know, that's what I think. I don't agree with any extreme extreme views, but you know, if you've got strong views on a subject and then you should be allowed to have your say." - Shane
Brexit as national victory	Expressions of Brexit as a national victory		"[can you think of a time you felt most proud of your national identity?] probably when we voted to come out of the EU. It's difficult to say. I was quite pleased we voted to come out of the EU, I was proud of the British people for doing that." – Colin
			"the day we voted to leave the EU. It was a milestone in British history, not everybody agrees with it but 52% did, and the 48% tried to get it changed because it didn't suit them. But there we are" – Colin
			["So can you think of a time in your life where you felt most proud to be British?] I think probably during the Brexit election period, that's when everyone came together to realise how patriotic they are." – Jackie
			"it is so terribly sad that London never celebrated the departure of us from the EU in a greater fashion. Sadiq Khan was awful in paying £400,000 to make the London eye blue and yellow in a sign to welcome everyone into London, but on the night we left the EU, why wasn't the London eye blue and red? Do you know what I mean?

| | | 351 | Why couldn't we have celebrated as much more of a positive thing because it was a democratic decision. And I think it's sad that we didn't celebrate that as much." – Jackie

"We are in a really interesting time in history and politics it's absolutely brilliant, it's exciting" – Jackie

"I went to parliament square with about 4 or 5 friends. It was terrible because there were no toilets anywhere so I was like peeing in doorways, it was a little neanderthal like but it was amazing. It was amazing I felt liberated. [What was the atmosphere like?]Amazing, people were so happy. I was a bit scared because I remembered the bombing you know so I was a little bit scared but I really wanted to be there so we went. I was so surprised at how many like, black people there were there, Indian people, like, it was such a mix of everyone and everything and it was actually amazing! It was fun! It wasn't that well organised, they tried their best but they didn't have a lot of money because obviously Sadiq Khan was holding the purse strings but yeah it was amazing. [Who was there?] Loads, Hartley-Brewer spoke, she was brilliant. Farage spoke, there were loads it was very exciting. There was lots of singing, and music and there was that guy who sang the Brexit song, he was up there going for it. It was actually a really cool night. Because it was history wasn't it? History in the making. I just wish the UK media got more on board and made it more of a celebration for the country rather than portraying it as a negative because it's not a negative thing." – Jackie

"[what was going through your mind when you were inside the voting booth when you were voting in the referendum?] Personally for me it was all about reclaiming our identity, as a country." - Martin |
|---|---|---|---|
| Empire pride /history | Imperial pride and British Empire as point of reference when exploring feelings of patriotism | | "I like the way we stand up for that island in Spain, I take lots of pride in Britain. I've travelled India loads of time and I take pride in what we did there, without us having been in India they wouldn't have had the infrastructure, the railway systems, the bridges, the buildings that they have because they are a mess and were a mess after we left. I've travelled through the whole of Africa and when you see what Britain did in those countries they would be no where without having the British infrastructure put in place by us." – Jackie

"quite happy that Britain is still ranked, you know quite highly on like soft political power, you know, we still have influence around the world and I think as well it comes from the fact that I understand the world isn't like a clean place, like stuff has happened that people don't want to admit happens and while I wouldn't say it's always something to be proud of it's something that I'm glad we still have the capability to do even if it doesn't always shine through in the perfect sense, but I'm glad we're the ones sometimes doing it and not the ones on the receiving end." – Tom

"With the Empire we caused atrocities around the world, but you know, I've you know, I've been to Malaysia. I've been to Malaysia and we were speaking to so many people and like the capital city and stuff and it was very much like oh like obviously, you know awful things happened here and you know, the war came here because of the British we're here but we also have you know sewage and we have like we have basic rail lines and like so I would say maybe some aspects of the Empire need to be spoke about more as like, I wouldn't call it a civilising force, but like an industrialising force, but also you always have to you to counteract it with the bad"- Tom

" I was very sad to see the British Empire go. [Why was that?] I think the strength. When we were an empire, I mean we're only a little island and the fact the empire gave us strength and you know a standing in the world which meant we couldn't be stood all over and walked on. [How would you prefer it to be?] Well we would still be as one, and I wish we could get some of our countries back like Australia and Canada and all the rest of it. I wish we were still an Empire because the world is in such a state at the moment and I think we could be easily walked over, which is why I'm actually pleased we left the EU. I'd like to |

			see the commonwealth stay strong but I wouldn't want to be part of the EU I'm glad we aren't in that." – Celia

<table>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>352</td><td>"There's a misconception about things for example one of my son's is a lawyer yeah, a very left-wing lawyer. And he believed that we were the aggressors when we sent troops into Northern Ireland and I had to explain to him because his little community were under the belief that we were the aggressors and when I explained to him that we were actually a peacekeeping force like when we went into Kosovo to stop the genocide over there. We went into Northern Ireland to stop the Protestants and the Catholics killing each other and I mean, he's 32 year-old educated lawyer and his belief was that we gone over there as grasses, but actually we went over there to stop the violence that was the Protestant police picking on the Catholics and then Catholics actually turned on the British troops. So it was his belief because he hadn't been told any different and his beliefs are that we should give Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands back to the Spain and Argentina, but he doesn't know the history. So since his comments, I've found myself getting much more educated about why and when we stopped… Yeah… I know what I mean, but I don't know how to explain it, It's difficult, Isn't it, history? He disagrees with everything you know, he did bring up stuff about colonialism and I said well yes, I agree. We did do things wrong as a country in India. We've got things massively wrong in India, but we've left them with 2,000 Railway stations and 5,000 miles of Railway line. And if they didn't have that, they wouldn't have the economy which they have today. So don't look at on it all as negative and he sort of goes. Oh, yeah, okay, but he doesn't know he's always throws this like abuse that me and that's when I started becoming more like, defending what we've done. We didn't get it all right but there we go. Sorry. Yeah." - Billy</td></tr>
</table>

Questioning research intentions	Questioning the researcher intentions with the interview data	• Shaun "I am still allowed to get angry aren't I?" • Tony [when asked on national identity, national history and pride] " I can see what you're doing with these questions. I can see all the questions you're asking and what you're probably probing for." … "These really are leading questions" …"Oh I've got to be careful of what I say now" • Tony "it's quite interesting the triage that we've been through. I'm quite interested in what I've told you and how that fits at the moment within your dissertation or thesis and the experiences that you've had interviewing other people. So am I typical, atypical, are there common strands, common elements or am I completely mad?" • "Do you hand on heart, in all honesty, do you think that your tutors, are they non biased? When they read your work or what they want to see in it? Or is it purely judged on the science of the dissertation. Do you think they have a politics bias? Put it that way." – Tony "Please don't judge me on some of my answers." - Sam

Community (national/rural)	Importance of community in rural culture	"It's I think it's a sense of unity like I remember so even being in lockdown liked this VE day like it was a very nice sense of community. Like everyone's behind one purpose, even from 2-3 meters away, we're all you know, all talking, we've all got like memories to share. I feel like we have sort of lost the sense of community in Britain and I think it kind of does come with, you know, the rise in industrialization and like capitalism and stuff because people move to cities and that sense of community. I don't think is there as much so I think it's just going back to the roots of like talking to your neighbour, you know, knowing the people, you know, on the same street wherever. The highlight of the day is just everyone kind of behind one cause behind one flag and just really really feeling like you're part of a community because sometimes you do feel like in this massive world that you've lost like, you don't even know the people who live next door anymore and it is kind of like a bit strange because I've always grown up in tiny villages where you knew everyone on your street, but then I go to my dad's house in London. I'm like, I don't like how anyone can't tell one person from the next so yeah." – Tom

			"We live in a field a mile and a half away from the village, then there's the sea. If we didn't have a car we'd be stuffed. But our village has a stagecoach which is actually a taxi service but we can use our bus passes with it and they pick us up door to door and bring you home or out to town. You can ring up 24 hours a day. They are volunteers that run it and if we didn't have that we'd be absolutely stuffed. We've also through covid, had shops sending us stuff and helping everyone in the community out. When everyone knows everyone we look out for each other. When somebody dies we line the streets. I called up my friend who's a nurse the other day and asked if our village had any covid and she said, do you really think you'd not know about it by now? And it's true, because out here people will know about something you've done before you've even done it." – Celia
			"you know if I went into town you see people you know. The shop assistants in the shops you know them because you belong to the same community. They were people I've met through friends or through the church or they are children of friends. You know I know everybody who lives in my road. We all know eachother. I like that because my husband died two years ago and when you know everyone you don't feel so isolated, it would be different if you lived in an apartment in a city, I think that would be more isolating." – Sandra
			"I think there's not quite a sense of community as there is out here where people know each other and things. But that's just my assumption because I've never lived in a city or town. My assumption is that they aren't as community minded, people probably come and go more and there might not be that community spirit where people know each other and look out for each other." – Rebecca
			"A far as I'm concerned my regional identity is West Country. West country is good. Proper West Country people are proud of their heritage, we have an awful lot of people in the West country who are not West Country and they're not the same. Oh dear that sounds awful doesn't it." – Neil
			• "In this village, when you walk about the village everybody says good morning and good afternoon and if you don't speak you get asked what's wrong with you." - Neil
Remain	Sentiment towards voting remain		"[why did you vote remain?]Because the leave vote was just a complete and utter act of stupidity, it is insane and it is completely bonkers to make ourselves a small island standing on our own and the way that we're going about it is absolutely and utterly insane. It is the fruit of nationalism not patriotism. I didn't realise there was so many idiots. I thought better of us.it was an act of vandalism. And now we got one of the biggest vandals of the lot in charge. It's depressing. I was absolutely gutted. " – Jack
			"we're going to be a little island on our own for the first time since before the Empire and I don't think people realize that everything is economics. And it's going to be hilarious to see the penny drop figuratively and actually. One thing I do know about the British psyche is that we are a nation that learns the hard way. And we look back on things with regret. This is probably why we don't teach our own history properly. I'm looking forward to that." – Jack
			"I wanted freedom of movement. I love freedom of movement. I think it's absolutely brilliant. I wanted that for my children. I love being part of something bigger in terms of the EU and that sense of belonging to Europe was very important to me. I liked having a seat at the table in those bigger decision-making forums liked. I liked legislation that supported us to do better in terms of animal welfare and climate and sure, I do feel with any big bureaucratic system that there will always be flaws, but I don't think the flaws were enough to want to sever ties. I think some reform would have been goods and I just feel that's what should've been different and there were certain things that could have been reformed rather than totally thrown out. I actually felt I was in mourning and I still feel i'm mourning being a part of Europe." – Susanna

"Yeah definitely felt British and I definitely know the difference between being French and being British and being Spanish and those cultural identities are very different but I felt united. Also we travel a lot. That's the thing. And I love visiting Europe just being you know able to within two hours to be somewhere completely different but still feel that that that commonality and that commonality is there because we have those shared systems that supported us. So you have an EU health care for example was really important to me that I could access health care wherever I went in Europe so yeah, those those things are a real worry now." – Susanna

"Shocked, horrified, total grief. I didn't understand how that could have happened. And it only got worse actually, it just got worse and worse as more and more that you know barriers came up as to you know, how we could even complete the process. So yeah, it's got worse and worse myself and my children have been on marches. We've worn the t-shirts. We've signed the petitions, there was the hope it was all going to go away and that it was all a big mistake so we clung onto that for a couple of years. But yeah, it's been awful absolutely awful and my children don't understand it. I have a 16 year old who actually can't take Spanish A level in her school that she was planning to do because too few people want to do Spanish. That's really upset me as well because having languages are so important to connect to us. So we said okay. Well you can go and spend a year in Spain after your a-levels and get your Spanish up again then we realised oh, yes, that's going to be really difficult now isn't it? You can't just live and work in Spain anymore. So there's future opportunities for my children have been closed taken away. And that makes me really upset yeah." – Susanna

"I think to me it was just fun like fundamentally a question of the idea of being apart just seemed wrong. I think that I think the way forward in the world in general is to go more towards that sort of having a different into supranational organisation like the EU like the UN International cooperation and to cut ourselves off, it just seemed like going backwards it to me. It's that whole idea that Britain's more important and putting Britain first and I don't think that's the right way to go. My understanding my thought was that economically it would be more detrimental though. I do admit. I don't fully understand the economics and I don't think anyone's really like I don't think most of the population understand the economic. So I found it just bizarre that we were voting on something that I didn't fully understand everything like know very few people fully understood it if anyone and it's just it's remain seemed much more sensible. Much safer. I never considered voting to leave." – Josie

"Brexit has definitely annoyed me and me and my sister were in Greece not long after the referendum and in the evening the entertainment person asked if anyone was from the UK and we said yeah and people started boo-ing and we were like, it wasn't us we didn't vote for us to leave and I just think that it's just absolute shambles and it's not what we are about. My friend is from Swindon but lives in Australia and married a French man and they wanted to come back to the UK and she's quite scared because of how racist it is here now and I think it is quite racist here. So it doesn't make me proud." – Leanna

"I think because, well it goes back to when I started broadening my horizons and going to university at Exeter and it has a massive international student and staff population and you look at that and you go, like, I don't get why we wouldn't want to be part of the EU. I still don't now even understand. Looking at it objectively, I mean ahh, I'm really stereotyping but it feels like people were basically being racist without realising it saying people were taking their jobs when realistically they're not are they. They are adding value to our society. I can see why they have their arguments, propaganda is a massive thing. Even my boyfriend voted leave and I was so shocked when he told me and we had a huge conversation about it and he said he really regrets doing it because he felt like he was completely lied to by all of the leave campaign. There were parts he agreed with and then he realised it was all bullshit. He was fed lies and it created the outcome we've

		got. I would vote remain all day every day to this day forward. I find it really frustrating we are still going through it. It's obviously taken a back seat because of covid but yeah. I am remain and we should be open to people who bring value to our country and who we can help. Changing immigration would be awful. It just amazes me. I don't get peoples reasons for not." - Samantha
		355
Brexit as protest vote	Brexit as vehicle for protest	"My natural position is remain. It wasn't that I changed my mind this way and that, all throughout the days leading up. I knew I wasn't going to be able to decide because a big part of me wanted to protest vote, a big part of me wanted this chaos. Part of me wanted to show that in actual fact, our political leaders aren't worth hero status, they're actually just awful people with bad guesses, bad gamblers, just chancers. David Cameron, George Osborne, 10 years of austerity. Don't forget Mrs May said that that this was a kickback against us and she was absolutely right in my case. She absolutely summed me up when she said that. Thinking of the punk rock era, French revolutions, I was very much in that frame of mind at that time and even as my pencil hit the paper, I was still no come on, you know what the right thing to do is that's remain. This one is for chaos. And at the end of the day I thought well you're a 50 year old, you just got this one protest, they don't even answer your emails anymore, protest. So I did." – Phil

". In the company that I used to work for we had the management at one stage, they were trying to save money by redoing our wages and things so they wanted to push them down quite a lot, alter the shift rates, and they were like well you can go along with this or we'll take all of the work to Poland. So there was that sort of employment threat, that sort of thing. Of course. Yeah, that would have been in my mind as well when I voted." – Phil

"people like Jo Swinson the liberal democrat leader saying 'I will be the next prime minister' and that they would revoke article 50 as soon as they got in like the minute they got it. After two and a half years since the EU referendum we came to a general election and the majority voted not only for yes we will have Boris Johnson but she lost her seat. How much of a statement was that against revoking article 50, perfect britlliant. And I have to admit I woke up, I looked at the results, and I thought yeah. I'm proud. Finally ordinary working class said bollocks to this, we had a referendum, respect the result, thank god for that. This is what it's about. Yeah I'm proud." - Martin |

7.8. Reflexive activities

Notes on interviewing in an online space, June 2020

England is currently faced with the unprecedented event of the global COVID-19 pandemic. This means that whilst the interviews are taking place, both my participants and I are living amongst uncertain and volatile circumstances of self-isolation as advised by the UK government. This includes varying levels of quarantine, social distancing and national lockdown. At this point in time, most interpersonal communication between households in England is taking place via telecommunications and in virtual spaces.

There are arguments to be made surrounding the nature of research when it takes place within a virtual environment and when under such extraordinary external circumstances. Although I have previously outlined in my methodology that these virtual platforms do not impact the quality of qualitative in-depth interviews, one must take into consideration that virtual spaces have implications psychosocially. I must also acknowledge the impact that the wider circumstance of the COVID-19 pandemic has on my interviews and the relationship with my participants. I will address these now.

Whilst confined to a small cramped room in my parent's house that doubled up as both a storage room, nursery and working space, participants are too in in their homes, having been without regular human contact with people outside of their households for in some cases weeks on end. This unanimous experience that we all have in common makes the beginning of each interview more comfortable, it gives participants an ability to chat informally right from the beginning before any introductions had taken place, making exclaims such as: "god, this is all so weird isn't it" and "still only just getting the hang of this new whole thing".

Rapport and the interviewing environment, July 2020

In some cases participants tell me they were grateful and glad for the opportunity to speak to someone and see my face – "a new face" - expressing their desire for human interaction and interpersonal communication in a time of loneliness and social isolation. Having something in common with participants is making it easier to build rapport; we usually begin by talking about how we had been coping in lockdown and find commonalities. Participants tell me anecdotal stories about the on-goings in their families and communities, giving me insight into the dynamics into their social interactions in their local spaces. Establishing a relationship between participant and interviewer is important to me,

as this creates a comfortable space for disclosure; strong connections can facilitate these spaces particularly when there are real or perceived differences, politically, socially or culturally.

Not only is the shared experience of COVID-19 lockdown measures important, I also feel it's important to share aspects of my identity in hope of making participants feel more comfortable in sharing their thoughts and feelings with me. Sharing my identity and disclosing that I am too from a small rural population in the South West helps to establish an important level of rapport. Often participants smile and tell me about relatives they had residing in my area, or speak about local areas to me they were familiar with. I do have to be cautious when determining how much of me to reveal when connecting with a participant in order to avoid over-rapport, although the goal of reflexivity is authenticity, over identifying can interfere with participants' narratives and turn the conversation too much onto me. Nevertheless, I felt it important that they were not intimidated or put off by my position as a researcher from a university. I am not a researcher in a white coat hoping to pick apart their psyche, but a person with genuine interest and empathy in the topic areas I'm discussing. I hope that this comes across to participants.

Difficulties, June 2020

The initial friendly bonding with participants sometimes caused difficulty when further in the interview they would disclose extreme political views, internally I felt this somewhat betrayed by them; externally I had to remain neutral and withhold my reactions. In other cases when participants were experiencing hardship and explaining this to me I wanted to express my empathy and disclose my own struggles in order to relate to them, but I had to hold back so that I did not 1) reveal too much of myself and 2) not impact their narrative. This feeling was similar when speaking to participants with similar political standings to my own. This is where interviewing in a virtual space became useful, as this created a physical boundary between the participant and I. The physical boundary of the laptop meant that it was easier to mentally disengage following an interview, and maintain my objective role as a researcher as I was not easily drawn into managing some of the more heated sentiments from participants. Alternatively, when participants were sharing sensitive information and expressing sadness, it was more difficult to express empathy over video-conferencing. However perhaps, this was useful as it allowed me to maintain separation from my research subjects.

Hostile communication, June 2020

I had communication from a member of the public who responded to my participant ad. They first asked me some questions regarding the study and voiced concerns regarding data protection. Then they went on to express concern over the political leniency of my study and how their unconventional opinions will get victimised. They asked whether they would be censored to meet the study's views. They told me they were not willing to become persecutated with shaming and attacks. They told me they loved their country and felt this was not a popular opinion, therefore they did not want to be part of any fake propgaganda. Having dealt with respondents like this in the past I replied with all very basic information referring to the participant information form and emphasised anonymity, a space for diversity of opinions and honesty. They gave me their email address and I sent over the participant information form for them to read and they become quite volatile. They told me they felt they would be too offensive for the study, and that I might even censor them. They told me they felt I would follow the beliefs of my professors and that my study and it's sample would not be respected. They told me they love people who do research, but was very resistant to ideas of being involved in the study. By this point I knew I needed to cease communications, however their messages kept coming. They asked me what my history is. What is my love for this country? Before writing about terrorism, vividly describing the recent terrorist attacks on London Bridge. They then referenced the fact they came from an educated family, with a nephew being a professor at Cambridge. At this point I stopped replying and ceased communication, passing the information along to the research ethics board.

This communication is interesting to reflect on. Clearly, they had used the correspondence to discharge emotion and political frustration. It is an interesting example of transference in the psychoanalytic sense, one which indirectly tells us something. They fear being humiliated by me, since I represent hostile academia/the 'establishment' etc. So they are reproducing in relation to me the feeling which, we may hypothesise, underlies the anti-establishment, Leave sentiments of some amongst the 'left behind' - a feeling that they have been devalued, humiliated, abandoned, etc. by all the societal changes of recent decades. So they're sort of spontaneously answering my questions before I ask them. There is an intrusive quality to their messages - and linked to that, it's as if they are trying to turn the tables and become the interviewer. There's a lot of ambivalence there - they tell me "I love people who go out and do studies", but they seem most concerned about the risk of being humiliated by a study of which they are the subject. I also thought about whether their intrusiveness is - partly - an attempt to get around their own fear and suspicion by getting to know me as a person and so then being able to withdraw their transferential feelings towards me. Partly because there is clearly an element of aggressive control in it as well. I think that this exchange reflects some of the paranoid dynamics involved in conspirator thinking.

Addressing subjectivity

Below is a table adapted from Peshkin (1988), as explored in chapter three, which discusses the nature of my subjective I's and their influence on my research. This framework has been adapted to account for the potential psychosocial implications.

Table 2

My I's	Foundation	Key Idea	Potential psychosocial Implication
Up-bringing I	My welfare-class up-bringing, childhood, teenage years and subsequent socialisation	Has had influence on my attitudes and outlook on society and politics to that of being in-line with socialist economics, sometimes hostile and often intimidated of middle and upper classes	Enacting defence mechanisms when feeling uncomfortable. Possible projection of insecurities, transference of my own political persuasions
Caucasian I	My white-ness	Acknowledging the privilege I hold as a white person having not ever been subjected to racial injustices, discrimination or micro-aggressions	May effect the extent of my ability to empathise or relate to / with participants racialised experiences.
Nationally Inclusive I	Personal background having tensions with national identity, have strong local identity	Identifying with an inclusive multi-cultural Britishness/Englishness and West Country localised identity that encapsulates inclusivity, and geographical surroundings.	May contrast with participant's identifications, I may create splits and perceive my ideas as normative.

I conclude these notes by acknowledging that this thesis has perhaps reflected my own pursuit for identity, in a changing world where I don't feel strongly attached to my national identity, rather I feel my identity is in my community and local area. I wonder if my interest in this topic reflects that, along with my insights from my academic study over the years and your supervisors' work that inspired me, and me desire to uncover interesting patterns that other scholars might have missed. The events of 2016-2020 certainly encapsulate an interesting time where definitions and understandings of Britishness and Englishness have been thrust into the air and have found expression in politics. I often find myself wondering what this study may look like if conducted ten years from now.

7.9. Pilot study

Context, background and method

At 11pm our proud nation finally leaves the EU – Still a friend of Europe, but free and independent once more after 47 years. Now, on this momentous day, we salute… A New Dawn for Britain

(Daily Mail 2020)

Friday 31st January 2020 marked the day that Britain left the European Union, after having voted to leave 52% to 48% four years prior in June 2016. With two general elections, numerous deadline extensions, three prime ministers and repeated calls for a second referendum, the political chaos over the last four years had been building up to this day. The national mood was split in many ways, many mourned the 47 years of European Union membership, seeing Brexit as an end to an inclusive nation, leaving Britain "isolated, worse off, weaker and divided". Scotland was hopeful that the EU would "leave a light on for Scotland". Similar themes were re-enacted amongst events across the country with candlelit vigils and rallies taking place in Brighton, Oxford, Winchester, Swindon, Liverpool and Dundee.Processions and marches were organised in Westminster, meanwhile across the border Brexit Party MEP's were exiting EU Parliament sporting Union Jack flags and a bag-pipe player, before departing in a union jack themed taxi. In many parts of the country such as Oxford, its city council flew EU flags to mark "decades of friendship and cooperation" with Brussels, whereas Boston in Lincolnshire planned to "celebrate long into the night", amongst many others in pubs and social clubs

across the country. Binary adjectives dominated reports of Brexit day, "celebration and regret", "joy and sadness" were some of many that painted a dividing picture of a split and polarised national mood.

This short study conducted interviews and undertook participant observation at a Brexit celebration party in a traditional, British local pub in rural Dorset. Local community members were invited to celebrate Britain's exit from the EU, whilst enjoying British music and an array of "traditional" British food and drink, available at lowered prices to mark the occasion. In order to extract meaningful data without disrupting the event I engaged in the social context, socialising with the attendees. This, according to Ross and Ross (1974, p.64) enables participants to "co-operate with the researcher who in some way becomes part of their community". With the knowledge amongst the participants that I was also a Dorset local from a town near the area, I was trusted and accepted within the social context.

Pubs in general throughout history have always presented themselves as a form of public sphere which groups individuals together facilitating social contact acting as a 'small society' with its own set of social norms, thus allowing a subaltern space for discussion. The pub itself acts as a form of common identity, and the Brexit celebrations that occurred cemented this on a political level. The pub itself was small and cosy, it was owned by a husband and wife who worked behind the bar along with their young grandson, sporting matching union jack themed clothes. The relationship between the landlords and customers were that of an extended family, the pub itself was homely and the landlords were on first name terms with their customers. The customers themselves were all white, mostly male, and looked to be age 40 and over. After making light conversation with various people I found that customers came in three forms; some had popped in on their way in-between work and home, some attended mainly for Brexit celebrations, some attended as it was part of their daily routine.

I spoke with the landlady the evening prior to the Brexit celebrations, I was asking for more information after seeing a Facebook post advertising the event. She was welcoming and told me they were expecting lots of locals. She expressed her disappointment that she hadn't found anywhere in town that was selling Union Jack themed bunting, or decorations.

The landlady seemed shocked and surprised that there hadn't been an effort to mark the day from retailers on the high street, highlighting the importance and salience the day held for her. Regardless of this, she managed to order union jack bunting online, decorating the pub with it. British ales were knocked down to two pound a pint and there were trays of pork pies and sausage rolls being passed around the pub in efforts to celebrate British culture. I was assured by the landlady that only British music would be playing that night, and throughout the evening a range of 70s and 80s classics played in the background of loud chatter, cheering and drunken discussion.

I met the participant at the bar, he was drinking a pint of London Pride and shouting over the counter and bantering with who I assumed was a local friend. He had come to the pub alone and had been there for about an hour or so, mingling with various groups. As I waited for my drink I sparked up a conversation with him asking him if he was having a good night. I approached the topic of Brexit asking him how he felt about the day and he expressed his optimism for the future and pride that we had finally "done it".

> Four years in the making this was! We are finally here.

I invited him to sit down at a table with me to chat with me about what today meant for him, before explaining my study and what I was trying to find out. He obliged and agreed to be audio recorded. Throughout our conversation a couple of his friends joined us and agreed to chat with me, unintentionally forming a roundtable style discussion. In this summary I'll be focussing on three participants and the themes that arose; empire and military pride, perceived lack of autonomy and national identity.

Themes and Discussion

Respect for empire and military pride

Amongst our discussions there was a lot of emphasis on Britain's military history, which included the role of the empire and what it means today. When I asked the participants if they were proud of their nationality, they said yes, I asked them to expand on why and the first point that was brought up was Britain's history, the empire, and military pride.

> We have a very long history, very long. Which, I don't believe we are allowed to celebrate. Yes, we aren't an empire nation anymore, I accept that. But we once were.

The participant here shows the sentiment that people need to have a sense of respect for the empire, its enormity and its significance. He seems to feel that British history is suppressed from being celebrated and seeks reauthorisation of the nation's status throughout history as a global superpower. He makes the point to me that he accepts and has come to terms with the end of empire, perhaps suggesting a need to re-affirm that he is not 'living in the past' as some might think, but would like people to acknowledge the fact it happened.

> I'm very proud of the fact we've thought two world wars with a massive loss of life, it had a huge impact on so many families.

The participant has a sense of pride in Britain's war history, noting the significance of the detrimental effects of war and using it as reason for being proud of the country's bravery, stoicism and resilience. This reinstates the idea of British characteristic 'stiff upper-lip', and is a source of pride for him.

> *My grandfather fought in the Second World War. He was a royal marine, he suffered. He did that we can all have a drink without the fear of intimidation, without the fear of abuse or discrimination. Or anything like that. And I think that's what we need to hold onto, and that's what we lost.*

The participant uses a personal example drawing upon his grandfather's efforts in the Second World War, and how his actions have had salient and powerful social repercussions for us today. However, he believes that we have lost that. This notion of loss perhaps refers to the idea of 'standing up for what we believe in', similarly to other participant's ideas of stoicism, and that this has been taken away by the European Union. He believes that the European Union had been taking rule over Britain, and therefore Britain has not been able to assert its own identity which to the participant involves a large sense of autonomy and resilience that is characterised by battle and war. Similarly he suggests that perhaps the lessons from history are not being respected as they should.

I asked the men if they could elaborate on what they meant by feeling as if we cannot acknowledge or celebrate Britain's history, and the participant gave me an example from a recent interaction with his son's school teacher. He asked if they would show the film *Zulu* in his son's history lessons, to which the teacher replied no, telling him that it was out-dated.

> *My son is currently doing his options and school and one of the topics he loves is history. But I was talking to him last week when he came to stay; they are currently doing all about the Second World War Hitler, the Nazi party and so forth. And I said Britain's got a proud history you know. And he said what do you mean daddy? And I said do you know what daddy's favourite film is? And I said I tell you what, I'll show you. I've got the DVD. So I put on Zulu.*

The participant put emphasis on wanting his son to know that Britain had a proud history, that there was more to history than the Holocaust. To the participant, *Zulu* represented to him Britain's role in the world. The film itself represents masculinity in its most macho state, men teaming together and fighting to the end with all the odds against them. I wondered whether there was a reason for the participant to bring up *Zulu* on the day of Britain's exit from the European Union. Perhaps he saw Britain leaving the EU as victorious and battle like, having the same historical resonance as physical war. I got him to elaborate on why he felt he had to explain to his son that Britain had a proud history.

We aren't allowed to celebrate our history and I think that it is really wrong. You know, my son, when is he gonna learn about what my great grandfather did in the war? They are gonna learn about Nazi's and what they did but not my grandad as a royal marine? I'm sorry but it's all wrong, the imbalance is ridiculous. Totally ridiculous. So wrong. So biased.

The participant made it clear he felt suppressed from being able to celebrate his idea of Britishness which involved its history. It was personal to him, he wants his son to learn about his great grandfather rather than what he felt was 'European' history. Another participant had similar views on history and its importance for him.

You know we have an awful lot of influence and an awful lot of power, did we commit what would now be considered war crimes? Yes, possibly. But we are talking, a couple of hundred years ago. The mind set of people was very different to what it is today. I'm not gonna deny that what we did wasn't right but we did it and we did what we did. It doesn't make us who we are today.

Similarly to the participant, he wants recognition and respect for the influence and power Britain held during the Empire, justifying the war crimes using the idea of historical relativism. By stating that these war crimes don't make what we are today implies that the participant is perhaps fed up with the shame that surrounds discourse of British history.

Another participant also spoke of war when asked what the sources of his British pride were:

The biggest one for me because I was young enough to remember it, was the Falklands war. We were a nation that was shrinking, we had a large country that took over one of our territories, but we still managed to muster an armada, we sent the best troops we had and took back what was ours.

Interestingly, the participant directly highlights the importance of territory and military force. This epitomises how battle and war helps to restore pride and patriotism, and again hints as to why Brexit became such a moment of victory for these men. Although never having enacted in a war with the EU, it was a political one, which centred on not taking back territory but taking back "control". This leads onto the next theme identified.

Lack of autonomy

The participants had already discussed the fact that they felt they weren't allowed to celebrate their history, signalling at a liberal elite that has censored the real, authentic, gritty British history they wish

to remember. The conversation soon moved to their sense of oppression, and who these liberal elite were.

> *We're being ruled by people in countries like Luxemburg, why do these people have the right to make these decisions about me, my family, this country? Who are they? What have they done? Where's their mark in history?*

He shows clear sentiments of perceived oppression from the European Union, taking particular issue with smaller countries who don't have the "right" to be having a say in how Britain is governed. Interestingly this mirrors the internal national relations concerning UK devolution, for example 'English votes for English laws'. He signifies a lack of respect for Luxemburg due to an absence of stateliness. The participant touches on the European Union also making reference to particular laws and policies that he believes restricts his livelihood:

> *It's not about immigration or racism or anything like that. It's about, just stop. You know, you can't do this cos health and safety, you can't do that, you can't say this, you can't say that. For goodness sakes. what happened to banter and what happened to a bit of fun?*

The participant echoes the Euroscepticism seen in much of the UK right-wing tabloid press concerning policy and law, but goes a step further speaking about political correctness. He implies that there is no room to have banter amongst this unfamiliar social environment where he is being dictated what he can and can't do or say, implying he feels a lack of self-autonomy. The participants draw attention to the celebration of social diversity.

> *I'm sick to death of equality, diversity it's never ever equal. How many massive pride events are there around the country every year to celebrate? I've got no problem with anyone's sexuality or anyone's beliefs. Anything at all. But you can't be proud to be proud to be white and you can't be proud to be British.*

Here, the participant draws attention to his perception of a politically correct culture in which the white British are disadvantaged. The participant then began to discuss ethnic diversity and a threatened English identity:

> *A few years ago, my brother-in-law was in the army and he was based in Hounslow army barracks. But to get this army camp you had to go through a massive, very large Muslim area. And this was when England was in the world cup.so he put an England flag up in the window, and the police knocked on his door and asked him to take it down!* Is that true? *That is true. I've got two children, one is 12 and one is 13 and I swear on their lives. They asked him to take*

it down because the residents in the area found it offensive. Really? You want to live in this country? You want to have our benefits and our health service and all the rest of it, but you don't want to accept our flag? That was a key moment for me, because that to me is offensive. That's discrimination. That's where we need to be able to stand up and kick back against that and say no that's wrong, it's the flag of our country and we can proudly wave it.

The participant's narrative of ethnic diversity in Hounslow is intertwined with the belief that the state are presenting a lack of duty to protect English national identity and instead put the needs of the ethnic minority above theirs. This narrative heavily suggests a sense of powerlessness, the lack of ability to celebrate Englishness and the apparent lack of the state's capability to represent the nation, together suggests to the participant the state's desire to stamp its authority on society, and particularly, self-expression of national identity. Wolfe and Klausen come to mind here, who suggest a common perception amongst those who feel their national identity is threatened is that "if groups within the nation state receive greater recognition, it must follow that conceptions of overarching national solidarity must receive less" (2000, p.29). A participant echoes these sentiments:

I want to celebrate who I am, you get to celebrate who you are, and I'm accepting so please accept who I am. And it's much the same with race, religion the lot. You name me on single Muslim country that has a church in it. It wouldn't be allowed to be built. Yet we, as a Christian country, allow mosques to be built everywhere. Where's the equality there? I cannot celebrate my religion in your country but you can celebrate your religion in my country. That's not equality, that's not equal. That's not fair.

The participant suggests that the ability to celebrate religious identity is not equal between Muslim and Christian populations in Britain. He speaks of 'allowing' mosques to be built within a Christian country, again referring to the state undertaking excessive measures for its Muslim population, leaving the Christian population behind. He is very binary in his discussion of religion, suggesting a polarisation between the two where one is overtaking the other or has more privilege than the other, aided by the state. He believes this is contradictory for a government that puts a lot of emphasis on equality, suggesting that it's "one rule for one group and another for everyone else". He also partakes in role-play here using direct language "your country" and "your religion", suggesting notions of transference and projection onto myself as the researcher.

National identity and Brexit

Following the men expressing their feelings on celebrating the nation and national identity, I decided to ask them directly if they were proud of their nation and whether they could pinpoint any particular

points in history or any national heroes. The conversation slowly turned back to discussing the EU but before that, there was some discussion of the monarchy, the military and political leaders.

> *Well I firmly believe that we are a strong nation and a very, very proud nation. Very proud nation. I'm a very strong monarchist. You go anywhere you want to go in the world, you get them to name a king or a queen. They will always say the queen of England. They all say that. They won't say the king of Norway. Because that's the power this country still has. And I want to hold onto that.*

The participant reinstates the idea of Britain as firstly, a strong nation with strong national pride. Interestingly, he self-identifies as a monarchist, expressing that his source of pride is belonging to a nation with what he believes has the most famed royal. He associates this with power, and tells me he wants to hold onto it, as if it is something that is under threat by EU powers. This exchange re-instated the idea of Britain as powerful, influential and steadfast. The participant continues these sentimentalities and makes reference to the military:

> *It means so much. We have many overseas territories that you know, they still see the Queen as their head of state and still recognise the flag, that's sovereignty. That's not racism. You know. When I was younger I was in the royal marines and I remember going on exercises and we were with the Gurkhas. And you know, they're from Nepal, the Himalayas. They have absolutely no ties to this country in any shape or form other than the military, but I would rather fight alongside of them over anyone else in the world. Because their belief in the queen and belief in this flag and belief in Britain will destroy anybody. They are phenomenal people. How can such a small little nation like Nepal believe so much in the queen and the flag. That's sovereignty, that's who we are.*

The participant makes reference to the powerfulness of somebody's belief in the crown and country particularly in a military context. Recognition and respect for the nation and its monarchy holds significant importance and he implies that this level of obedience is desirable amongst those that aren't British, he hints at an aspiration for imperial sovereignty where obedience and respect is desirable and provides high standards for others to follow. Another participant on the other hand looks to a particular political leader as holding the characteristics of a British nation:

> *Margaret Thatcher to me was one of the best leaders this country will ever have, ever. Wonderful woman, amazing woman. I think she personified my opinion of what this country is. An amazing woman.*

Reference to Margaret Thatcher again makes reference to strong leadership particularly in the face of adversity and resistance. Thatcher was known for her tough, authoritarian leadership style and the participant implies that this characterises what Britain is; a steadfast and impregnable nation unafraid of using its power. He turned the conversation here to the European Union, he felt that Britain's power and influence has suffered during its EU membership.

> *The EU have completely destroyed who we are and what we are. You know, you can't be what we are and be a member state of the EU. You just can't be. We are too proud a nation and too proud a people. Will we ever get back to that? I don't know.*

He implies that Britain in all its grandiosity cannot practically exert influence in the world, perhaps as it has done throughout history, whilst in the European Union. Pondering on whether Britain will be able to get back to what it used to be, implies a sense of post-colonial melancholia (Gilroy 2005) and loss. A participant follows on from this, reaffirming that it wasn't an issue of immigration for him as many might think, but instead it was about holding on to British identity and not assimilating to the rest of the European Union.

> *It wasn't about immigration so much for me, it was about reclaiming our identity. How can you be a member state of the EU when we've never accepted the Euro? We've always wanted our pound sterling. We can't be that, we aren't that, we never will be that.*

To the participant, the reluctance of Britain to adopt the Euro currency signifies Britain's strength in resisting foreign forces or influence. He implies that this is not in Britain's nature. The participant then refers back to the moment he saw the 2019 general election result:

> *I have to admit I woke up, I looked at the results, and I thought yeah. I'm proud. Finally ordinary working class said bollocks to this, we had a referendum, respect the result, thank god for that. This is what it's about. Yeah I'm proud.*

It is evident that the participant felt that himself and 'ordinary people' finally had their say and managed to silence the liberal elite that did not want Brexit to happen. He saw this as a core characteristic of Britishness, being resilient and standing up for what they believe in. In the participant's eyes, this was a victory for the public and a defeat for the liberal elite.

Evaluating the methods: usefulness and limitations

The methods used had both their positives and negatives. The positives included aspects of the environment in which the data collection took place. Beginning with the positives, speaking to participants in a place they were familiar and comfortable with seemed to relax them and possibly allowed them discuss more openly and honestly about such contentious topics, whereas an artificial environment may have hindered this. Having something in common with the participants (locality, social class) also allowed for familiarity between the participants and I, thus allowing trust, an important component when dealing with participants' sensitive data when discussing emotive topics. Open ended questions that led the participant to divulge in their own personal experiences and narratives enabled greater context to the participants' attitudes and allowed me to explore the affective nature. Asking the participants to speak about British history and their most proud moments introduced interesting attitudes and interpretations of Britishness and Englishness that can be explored further in future one-to-one interviews. Although the format of the discussion with the three participants together was useful in provoking dialogue and stimulating discussion, there were a fair amount of negatives. Firstly, it made the analysis more complicated this format did not allow for consistent analysis of themes as per individual. It was also difficult to control the discussion, there was potential for the results to be skewed due to one individual dominating the group discussion. This also did not allow me to delve deeper into issues that came up, and hindered my ability to press on certain points and follow up ideas. Within this group there was also a lack of anonymity for the participants and potentially biased results due to group influence. Taking this into account, I think it may be beneficial to my research to conduct solely in-depth interviews as part of my data collection. I will be taking these findings into account when constructing my research design and writing my methodology chapter.

Images from the study