“Brace yourselves Brexit is coming”: A critical analysis of the mergence of political discourse and popular culture in the Brexit campaign

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ABSTRACT:

The Brexit referendum in June 2016 to decide whether Britain would remain in the European Union (EU) was the site of extensive political campaigns and social media focus. This thesis is concerned with critically investigating how popular culture and political discourse merged and intersected in the Brexit campaigns. To execute this investigation, the following research questions were developed. The primary research question: "What is the relationship between political discourse, entertainment, and popular culture in the construction of the Brexit campaign?" and secondary research question "How was the official referendum discourse of the Brexit campaign reflected in the popular culture narrative?" To assist in answering these questions, a data group of social media texts from prior to and post the Brexit result were selected from Yahoo News and Imgur respectively. The data was analysed in the context of interdisciplinary research across scholarship on political communication, popular culture, and participatory culture. It is posited that the social media content constructed a popular culture narrative of the events of the Brexit referendum. The popular culture narrative constructs Britain's identity and character in regards to the events of Brexit, and interplayed with and reflected the referendum campaign discourse while communicating independent meaning from the official political messaging.

Keywords: Brexit, Britain, the EU, leave campaign, remain campaign, popular culture, political discourse, social media, thematic analysis, textual analysis

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Megan Celina Thompson

27/07/2017

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> The EU is a complicated, bureaucratic, overbearing, inspirational, and consistently irritating institution, and Britain would be absolutely crazy to leave it. Especially because if it stays, it can reap all the benefits while still being a total d*ck about everything, as is the British way."
>
> – John Oliver, comedian and political commentator

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to critically analyse how popular culture and political discourse merged and intersected in the Brexit campaigns. The Brexit referendum was held to decide whether Britain should remain in the European Union (EU) (Calamur, 2016). A data group of social media texts from prior to and post the Brexit result have been selected from Yahoo News and Imgur. In applying thematic and textual analysis to the data sample, this thesis will provide an analysis of the popular culture content of the Brexit campaign and its relationship with the referendum discourse. The analysis will be grounded in scholarship on the interconnected nature of political communication, popular culture, and participatory culture. This introductory chapter will provide a background and grounding for the research, outline the research questions directing the research, establish the thesis structure, and define key terms present in this work.

1.1 Background

The Brexit referendum, also referred to as the "European Union Membership referendum" or "EU referendum," was a national referendum held on June 23 2016 on whether Britain should remain in the European Union (Calamur, 2016). The British public voted to leave the EU with a final result of 51.9% of the votes for Leave, and 48.1% for Remain (Withnall, 2016). The Brexit referendum campaigns prompted widespread media coverage and debate on both an international and domestic scale (Berry, 2016). The official campaign process for the referendum lasted approximately 3 months from April 15 2016 – the date the referendum campaigns were first launched – to June 23 2016, the polling day (Foster, 2016). Two official campaign advocacy organisations were launched: "Vote Leave" and "Britain Stronger in Europe," abbreviated to "Stronger In" (Calamur, 2016). This thesis will explore how popular culture reflected and reinterpreted the official campaign discourse and employed popular culture content to depict Britain's decision to leave the EU.

I consider myself both British and a New Zealander, having grown up in the United Kingdom (UK) and then moved to New Zealand in my early teens. Britain's vote to leave the EU resulted

in widespread shock on an international scale, impacted the lives of my friends and extended family living in the UK and across Europe, and influenced my own options and opportunities for the future. I wanted to understand how the decision came about, and the reaction outside of my own social media echo chamber. I have always had an interest in both politics and media communication, and the impact of the Brexit campaigns and the wider political upheaval of 2016 prompted me to analyse in greater depth the political discourse and how it was reflected in popular culture.

1.2 Research Rationale

The thesis is situated at the intersection of scholarship on popular culture, participatory culture, and political communication, as it examines how the political discourse was reinterpreted through popular culture on online media. As I investigated theoretical scholarship on political communication (Franklin, 2004; Street, 1996), I noted scholarship emphasised the marketing of politics (Couldry, 2011; Kelty, 2013; Street, 1997) and participatory politics (Jenkins, 2014; Scammell, 2016; Tay, 2015; Van Zoonen, 2005). I uncovered in-depth discussions of the role popular culture and mediatization played in a range of previous political campaigns and perception of politicians over the past several decades, including the British Labour Party's campaigns (Wring, 2005) and the British Conservative Party (Savigny, 2005). I also explored scholarship on the role of participatory culture in a wider political context, significant the American electoral campaigns (Tay, 2015), and the image construction of multiple politicians including Margaret Thatcher (Scammell, 2016), Tony Blair (Wring, 2005), Barack Obama, and Hillary Clinton (Tay, 2015). Nonetheless, I noted that due to the recent nature of the Brexit referendum campaign between April and June 2016 (Foster, 2016), only one month prior to the beginning of this thesis in August 2016, there was a gap in scholarship examining the role of popular culture in the referendum campaigns specifically. This research fills a critical gap in providing an analysis of how the Brexit campaign fits into the wider discussion of the influence of popular culture in political discourse.

1.3 Research Questions

Remaining consistent with the considerations discussed, a primary research question and two sub-questions were developed to direct and guide this thesis:

1. Primary research question: What is the relationship between political discourse, entertainment and popular culture in the construction of the Brexit campaign?

2. Secondary research question: How was the official referendum discourse of the Brexit campaign reflected in the popular culture narrative?

Both questions address the interdisciplinary nature of the thesis in encompassing notions of both popular culture content and political discourse, enabling an examination of the intersection of the two areas around the Brexit campaign. The data corpus of social media texts was selected from Yahoo News and Imgur in order to discuss these questions. The data was analysed using both thematic and textual analysis, and supplemented with theoretical scholarship to construct a critical analysis and discussion.

1.4 Thesis Structure

The following thesis is divided into nine chapters. Chapter Two, the context chapter, will establish a background of the socio-political context of the Brexit vote, the approach of the referendum campaigns, Britain's historical relationship with the EU, and discuss the growth of social media. Chapter Three, the literature review, summarises existing academic scholarship on material relevant to this research, primarily popular culture, political communication, participatory politics, iconography, personification, and nostalgia studies. Chapter Four, the methodology chapter, explains the research method and methodologies employed. Chapter Five, the results chapter, will present the key data findings gathered from the social media texts. Chapters Six and Seven will analyse the role of British iconography and personification in popular culture materials in connection to the Brexit campaign while Chapter Eight will examine how the consequences of Brexit were depicted in connection with notions of British Empire and nostalgia. Chapters Six, Seven and Eight operate in conjunction with each other, invoking differing but intersecting aspects and content of popular culture to construct a popular culture narrative of the Brexit events and reinterpret the campaign discourse. Finally, Chapter Nine will conclude this thesis summing up key findings and offering paths for further research. The references and appendices follow the conclusion.

1.5 Key Terms

Certain terms, words and phrases have been employed throughout this thesis. A glossary is provided in Appendix I with definitions of these phrases.

Brexit: A term for Britain departing from the European Union (Foster, 2016).

Brexit or EU referendum: National referendum voted on by the British public on whether Britain should remain part of the European Union (Calamur, 2016).

Brexit or Referendum Campaigns: The political campaign groups for leaving or remaining in the EU.

Leave Campaign: The 'Vote Leave' campaign for Britain to leave the EU (Mullen, 2016).

Remain Campaign: The 'Britain Stronger In Europe' campaign for Britain to remain in the EU (Calamur, 2016).

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUALISING THE EU REFERENDUM AND BREXIT CAMPAIGNS

2.0 Introduction

The Brexit referendum, also referred to as the "European Union Membership referendum" or "EU referendum," was a national, referendum held on 23rd June 2016 on whether Britain should remain in the European Union (Calamur, 2016). The British public voted to leave the EU with a final result of 51.9% of the votes for Leave and 48.1% for Remain (Withnall, 2016). This chapter will provide the context for this study's exploration of the mergence of political discourse and popular culture in the Brexit campaign by examining the political climate surrounding the campaign, the content of the official campaigns, and the responses to the referendum result.

2.1 Background of the Referendum and History of Euroscepticism

The Brexit referendum drew significant political and public engagement, with 72% of the eligible British public turning out to vote – over 17.4 million people – making it the highest turnout for a British referendum and the highest turnout for a national vote since Britain's 1992 general election (Erlanger, 2016). British Prime Minister David Cameron announced the referendum on February 20 2016, (McCann, 2016) having previously promised an EU membership referendum in January 2013 during the Conservatives' general electoral cycle (Helm, 2016; "Roots of Euroscepticism", 2016). The referendum question was phrased in the following format with two options to choose from: *Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union? Remain a member of the European Union* or *Leave the European Union*. Cameron had accepted a suggestion from the Electoral Commission to change the responses from Yes/No to Remain/Leave (McCann, 2016).

The 2016 Brexit referendum was an element and result of deep-rooted Euroscepticism in Britain, both politically and within the media (Helm, 2016; Mason, 2016; "Roots of Euroscepticism", 2016). Euroscepticism – also known as EU-scepticism or anti-EUism – is defined as criticism of and strong opposition to the European Union (EU), and opposition to increasing the powers of the EU (Helm, 2016). British Euroscepticism was inherent to the formation of the EU, as Britain did not join France and Germany in forming the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, and only applied for entry in 1961 – gaining approval in 1973 (Helm, 2016; "Roots of Euroscepticism", 2016). Early reluctance was largely due to opposition to and suspicion of the EU from across the political spectrum – particularly from the Labour party – for a variety of reasons, including fear of losing sovereignty and control of the economy, and loss of Britain's 'great power' status in the Commonwealth (Helm, 2016; "Roots of

Euroscepticism", 2016). However, in Harold Wilson's 1975 national referendum on whether to remain in the EEC, 67% of the British public voted for continued membership ("UK embraces Europe, 1975; "Roots of Euroscepticism", 2016). Nevertheless, in the 1980's, political positions reversed and new political opposition against the EU developed, with a shift towards Euroscepticism and division in factions of the Conservative party under Margaret Thatcher, and later John Major, while Labour moved to a pro-EU stance despite resistance from unions and the left. This trend continued in the mid 1990's with Tony Blair's pro-EU Labour government, while the Conservatives became more Eurosceptic, including starting to openly advocate leaving the EU (Helm, 2016; "Roots of Euroscepticism", 2016). The UK Independence Party (UKIP), a right-wing populist political party, was founded in 1993 (Hunt, 2014) – another sign of growing Euroscepticism in the British political establishment.

Furthermore, the increased Euroscepticism in the Conservative party impacted on Prime Minister (PM) David Cameron's decision to call the referendum, as the referendum was the final step in a line of actions in his Prime Ministership to pacify Eurosceptics ("Roots of Euroscepticism", 2016). Cameron previously cut the EU budget, vetoed integrationist plans in Brussels, and his January 2013 Bloomberg speech promising an EU referendum was aimed to appease internal Conservative party politics and divisions, paralleling Wilson's 1975 referendum (Cassidy, 2016; Helm, 2016; "Roots of Euroscepticism", 2016). Overall, developments in the party system have led to Eurosceptism becoming entrenched in British politics (Helm, 2016; "Roots of Euroscepticism", 2016).

Likewise, the UK press and broadcast media shifted towards being increasingly Eurosceptic since Britain joined the EEC, which influenced the calling of the referendum; prior to and during the 1975 EEC referendum, the press almost unanimously supported Britain remaining in the EEC ("Roots of Euroscepticism", 2016). However, in the 1980's the majority of UK newspapers, including the Murdoch press, moved towards opposition to the EEC: adopting hard nationalistic Eurosceptic stances, popularising concerns that the EEC was damaging Britain's historical free trade and democracy, and regularly employing imagery of Britain 'standing alone' in World War Two compared to a "'daft' Brussels" (Cassidy, 2016; Helm, 2016; "Roots of Euroscepticism", 2016). In the 1990's, with the exception of *The Independent*, *The Guardian* and *The Mirror,* press reporting was largely hostile towards the EU and dominated by negative themes, and broadcasting media largely reported clashes between the EU and the UK so the relationship was framed as "conflictual" rather than collaborative (Berry, 2016). Euroscepticism emerged from the radical fringes of British politics to a mainstream feature of political and public discourse, and developed into a cultural issue, with Britain forging its identity against perceived threats across the channel (Helm, 2016). Overall in the context of the 2016 EU referendum,

Euroscepticism had combined legitimate analysis and criticism of the flaws of the EU with emotional appeals and narrative of Britain standing alone against Europe (Berry, 2016).

2.2 Campaigns

The Brexit referendum campaigns invoked widespread media coverage and debate on both an international and domestic scale (Berry, 2016). The official campaign process for the referendum lasted approximately 3 months from the April 15 2016 – the date the referendum campaigns were first launched – to June 23 2016, the polling day (Foster, 2016). Two official campaign advocacy organisations were launched: "Vote Leave" and "Britain Stronger in Europe" abbreviated to "Stronger In" (Calamur, 2016). Both the official Leave and Remain campaigns were given government grants of 6000 pounds each to fund their activities, in addition to donations the campaigns received from corporations and individuals (Mullen, 2016).

Vote Leave was chaired and directed by campaign strategists Dominic Cummings and Matthew Elliott, while Stronger In was chaired by Stuart Rose and strategists Stephen Gilbert and Craig Oliver (Mullen, 2016). Individual political figures played a central role in leading the two campaigns. Vote Leave was publicly backed and directed by Conservative Members of Parliament (MP) Boris Johnson and Michael Gove and Nigel Farage, the leader of UKIP. Stronger In was led by PM David Cameron and supported by Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and the First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon (Calamur, 2016). On a broader political scale, the campaigns were split along party lines with the Stronger In campaign backed by the majority of the Labour party, the Greens, Liberal Democrats in England, and the Scottish National Party; Vote Leave was led by the UK Independence Party, although the Conservative party remained internally divided on the issue ("Where the cabinet and MPs stand", 2016). There were a variety of non-official, grassroots campaign groups on both sides: Leave EU, Grassroots Out, Labour Leave, the Freedom Association, Better Off Out, and Get Britain Out which supported leaving the EU, and Labour In for Britain and European Movement EU which supported remaining (Calamur, 2016).

The messages of the two campaigns varied in content and approach. Vote Leave focused on a simple, central argument of "Take back control" [from a "corrupt, failing, alien, oppressive, and anti-democratic Brussels"] and repeated it frequently (Meyer, 2016; Mullen, 2016). The Vote Leave campaign focused on several major themes within the central message: anti-immigration, the expense of membership, and loss of sovereignty (Crines, 2016; Keaveney, 2016). For example, the campaign repeatedly emphasised the dangers of immigrants and incoming refugees from Europe, and fears of Turkey joining the EU, with content such as UKIP's "breaking point" poster depicting migrants as overrunning Britain (Crines, 2016; "Nigel Farage's anti-EU

poster", 2016), as illustrated in Figure 2.1. The emphasis on the cost of the EU was based around advocating for redirecting the money going to Europe to the NHS (Britain's National Health Service): "We send the EU 350m pounds a week let's fund out NHS instead", which was painted on the battle bus that toured Britain (Travis, 2016).

Figure 2.1: "Nigel Farage's anti-EU poster" from *New Statesman,* 2016, June 16. Retrieved from: http://www.newstatesman.com

The leave campaign was also marked by a nationalistic discourse (Hoyle, 2017; Lamb 2017). Calhoun (2016) notes that the vote became centred on multi-culturalism versus English nationalism, with the leave campaign rhetoric promoting ideas of British sovereignty and superiority over mainland Europe. Likewise, Jack (2017) and Hoyle, (2017) argue that nostalgia was the dominant sentiment driving the leave vote, with the leave campaign focusing on historical imagery, concepts of the 'good old days' and a push to return to the security of the past (Jack, 2017; Hoyle, 2017). Nostalgia for British imperialism in particular was prominent, with the leave campaign romanticising the British empire and promising to recapture the era when "Britannia" ruled the world (El-Enany, 2016). Rodriguez and Nakagawa (2016) note that the leave campaign defined a narrow version of British identity based on imperialism which gained traction among voters.

In contrast, the Stronger In campaign lacked a simple, clear narrative or message, partially because Labour and the Conservatives were both running the campaign and had different views on key issues such as immigration and the economy (Berry, 2016). The dominant theme of the campaign was Risk - risk to the economy, services, and pensions (Crines, 2016; Keaveney, 2016). The campaign was labelled "Project Fear" for focusing disproportionately on the dangers of leaving the EU and "scaremongering" the public instead of providing a debate (Irsyadillah, 2016).

Overall, in terms of approach and messaging, Crines (2016) argued that Vote Leave relied more on pathos (emotion) style rhetoric in stirring up feelings of the UK being mistreated by the EU, promoting pride in British culture and identity, and framing the remain campaign as detached liberal intelligentsia who were disconnected from the poorest in society. In contrast, the Stronger In campaign employed a logos (logic) approach to rhetoric, emphasising the benefit of access to the single market, fiscal stability, free movement of people and ideas, and the risk to the economy leaving posed (Crines, 2016). This is reinforced by Keaveney (2016) who noted that Stronger In, predominantly maintained a measured attitude, while Vote Leave was inclined to attack. Vote Leave also employed ethos (character) based arguments in constructing likeable personas for Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage, while David Cameron, and even John Major and Tony Blair, were painted as distant establishment (Crines, 2016). Furthermore, the two campaigns contrasted by targeting different groups: Vote Leave reflected the worries and identity of the 'baby boomer' generation; that the EU and immigrants were undermining British identity. In contrast, the Remain campaign built positive arguments targeting the millennials about their growing opportunities and brighter future by remaining in the EU (Crines, 2016).

Both campaign groups focused on targeted digital approaches in their campaigns, employing the internet and social media for fundraising and message dissemination (Mullen, 2016). Analysis of the social media and twitter campaigns of the two sides reinforces the different messaging (Kirk, Zimmerman & Dunford, 2016). A comparison of tweets published by the @StrongerIn versus @Vote_Leave campaigns between January and June 2016 showed that 22.3% of StrongerIn's tweets were on the economy, compared to 3.3% of Vote_Leave's, and 1.8% of StrongerIn's tweets were on immigration, compared to 7.2% of Vote_Leave's (Kirk, Zimmerman & Dunford, 2016). Furthermore, the majority of the fear-based and negative focus for StrongerIn was on economic issues, while Vote_Leave was largely negative regarding immigration (Kirk, Zimmerman & Dunford, 2016).

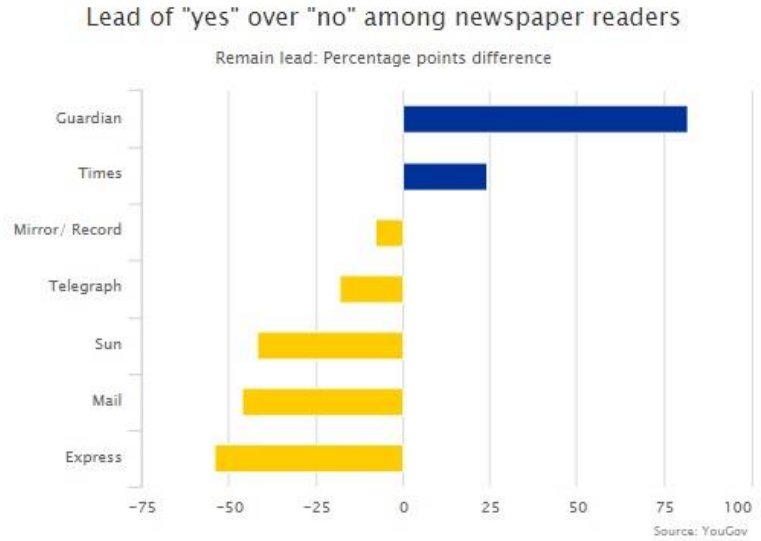
The campaign dominated television and broadcast coverage: An analysis of evening television news bullets on Channel 5, Channel 4, BBC, ITV and Sky News over the ten-week campaign prior to the 23rd June established that half of the total news – 571 items – were related to the referendum process (Cushion, 2016). Of the 571 items, the economy took up 20% of the coverage and immigration just over 10%, although there was intersection with other issues. Of the significant campaign figure that made on-screen appearances, Vote Leave figures were more prominent with Boris Johnson making up 8.7% of appearances, while Farage made up 4.4% of appearances. On the Stronger In coverage, David Cameron made up 7.2% while Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn made up 2.4%, a lower level of prominence than the leave campaign (Cushion, 2016). This reinforces the previously established discussion that the Vote Leave campaign was

more successful in establishing prominent character and authority on the topic. Furthermore, the TV coverage lacked external, independent voices of the issue and was dominated by content generated by the leave and remain campaigns themselves: Only roughly 25% of the arguments and statistics from the Vote Leave and Stronger In campaigns were given further scrutiny and analysis (Cushion, 2016).

There were two main televised debates on the referendum (Shaw, 2016). The *ITV Referendum Debate* on the 9th June 2016, with Stronger In represented by Nicola Sturgeon, the First Minister of Scotland and leader of the Scottish National Party; Amber Rudd, a Conservative MP; and Angela Eagle, Labour MP and shadow Secretary of State for Business, innovation and Skills. Vote Leave was represented by Gisela Stuart, a Labour MP; Boris Johnson; and Andrea Leadsom, a Conservative MP (Kerr, 2016). *The EU Referendum: The Great Debate* on the BBC was held on the 21st June 2016. The remain campaign was represented by Sadiq Khan, the current Mayor of London; Ruth Davidson, the leader of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist party; and Frances O'Grady, the General Secretary of the British Trades Union Congress. The leave campaign was represented by the same group as in the ITV debate ("Leave and Remain clash", 2016).

The two campaigns employed different approaches concerning press releases and media tactics. Vote Leave was more active in press releases and media strategy in both planned material and reactive or opportunistic materials. Vote Leave was better at "piggybacking" off unrelated news events and directing it back to the issue of leaving the EU, which Stronger In failed at doing (Keaveney, 2016). England's national newspapers also took stances on the referendum issue, which was reflected in the coverage. *The Daily Mail, The Daily Telegraph (*and the *Sunday Telegraph), The Sun (*and the *Sun on Sunday), The Sunday Times,* and *The Express*, (and the *Sunday Express*) supported leaving the EU (Bennett, 2016). Meanwhile, *The Financial Times, The Times, The Mail on Sunday, The Guardian*, *The Observer, The Mirror*, (and *The Sunday Mirror*) and *The Independent* supported remaining in the EU (Dean, 2016). This divide was reflected in the voting of newspaper readership in the June 2017 pre-election polls, as illustrated in Figure 2.2.

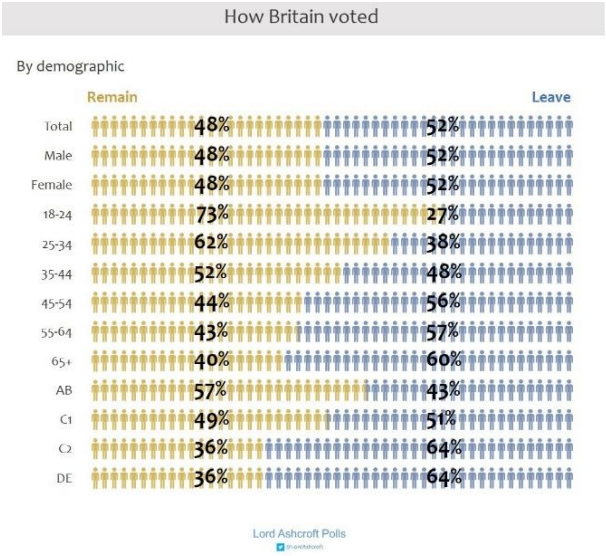
Figure 2.2: "Lead of 'yes' or 'no' among newspaper readers" from *The Telegraph,* by Kirk, A. 2016, June 22. Retrieved from: http://www.telegraph.co.uk



2.3 Voter Results and Response

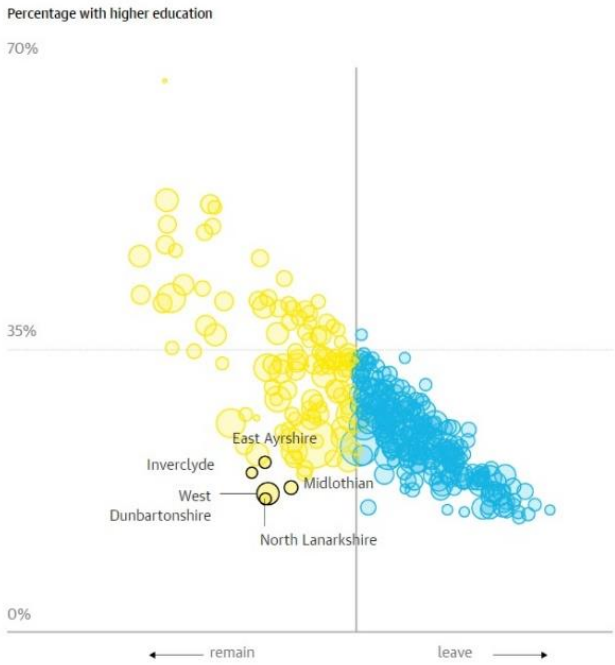
As established, the final referendum result stood at 51.9% for Leave and 48.1% for Remain (Withnall, 2016). British voting results were divided along generational, geographical, and economic lines, as illustrated in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3: "How Britain Voted: How the United Kingdom voted on Thursday… and why". From *Voting Demographics,* 2016, June 24. Retrieved from: http://lordashcroftpolls.com



As shown in Figure 2.4 there was an educational divide in the voting results, with geographical areas with higher levels of education voting to Remain, while areas with lower educational levels voted to Leave.

Figure 2.4: "The areas and demographics where the Brexit vote was won" from *The Guardian,* by Barr, C. 2016, June 24. Retrieved from: https://www.theguardian.com



Additionally, as shown in Figure 2.5 the vote was divided by rural versus urban, with the majority of the population in cities and urban areas voting to Remain while rural areas largely voted to Leave. The exception being Scotland and Northern Ireland, both of which voted overwhelmingly to Remain.

Figure 2.5: "How the United Kingdom has voted" from *The Telegraph,* by Kirk, A., Coles, M., & Krol, C. 2017, February 24. Retrieved from: http://www.telegraph.co.uk

The Brexit referendum prompted international attention, with multiple foreign leaders weighing in on the issues (Calamur, 2016). In the United States, President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke out in favour of Britain remain in the EU, while Republican Presidential candidate Donald Trump supported leaving (Calamur, 2016). In Europe, there was widespread support for Britain to remain from both politicians and the general public: European Council President Donald Tusk, EU Parliament President Martin Schulz, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel openly supported remaining (Calamur, 2016). Furthermore, initial polls established that European citizens widely believed that Britain leaving would be bad for the European Union: 89% in Sweden, 75% in the Netherlands, 74% in Germany, 70% in Hungary and Spain, 66% in Poland, 65% in Greece, and 62% in France (Stokes, 2016).

Finally, British corporations and banks largely favoured remaining in the EU (Gross, 2016), with the Bank of England's governor Mark Carney warning that an exit from the EU by Britain could lead to a technical recession (Calamur, 2016), and over one third of Britain's 100 largest companies openly advocated that the U.K remain in the EU, including Goldman Sachs International, HSBC Holdings, Royal Dutch Shell PLC, and Richard Branson of Virgin Airlines (Gross, 2016).

The decision to leave the EU resulted in on-going political, economic, and social consequences. On a political level, Prime Minister David Cameron resigned on the 24th June directly following

the referendum result (Erlander, 2016), and Theresa May was elected as the new leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister on the 11th July (Dunford & Kirk, 2016); Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn was under pressure to resign from his party and Nigel Farage resigned as leader of UKIP (Urquhart, 2016). Spain announced its intention to seek co-sovereignty of the British colony of Gibraltar (which voted to remain); Nicola Sturgeon, the head of the Scottish National Party, announced Scotland was looking at another potential Scottish independence referendum (Scottish independence vote highly likely, 2016); and Sinn Fein, the Irish republican political party, called for the reunification for Ireland and Northern Ireland (Urquhart, 2016). Domestically, reports of racial hate crimes increased by 42% the week before and after the referendum (Belam, 2016). There was significant backlash against the result, including a petition for a second referendum signed by 4.1 million people, although it was rejected by the government (Cockburn, 2016). Economically, within 24 hours of the referendum result, the British pound dropped to the lowest level since 1985 and Gilt yields and government bonds reduced from 1.355% on 23rd June to 0.778% by early July (Allen & Monaghan, 2016).

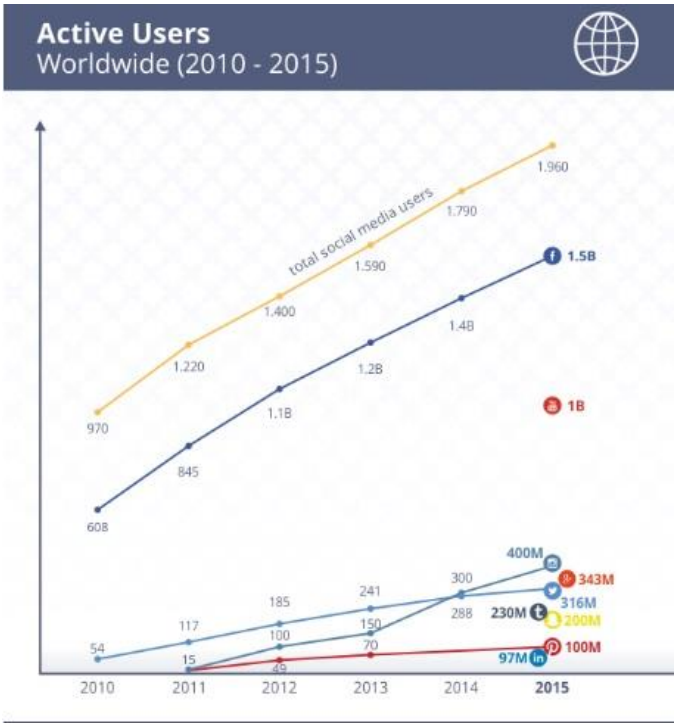
2.4 Growth of Social Media

A further contextual factor to discuss in establishing the background of this thesis is the growth of social media. Social media has increased exponentially in the last decade which has had an impact on the delivery and content of news. Social media is defined as forms of electronic communication through which people create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (Merriam Webster Online, 2016). Social media encompasses web-based communication tools that enable people to interact with each other by both sharing and consuming information (Lifewire, 2016). Examples of prominent social media sites are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Google Plus, Tumblr, Instagram, Snapchat, and Reddit (Lifewire, 2016).

Contextually regarding the use of social media, internet usage is growing worldwide; as of 2016, the number of active internet users worldwide totalled 3.4 billion - approximately 46.1% of the global population - compared to 3.185 billion users in 2015, 2.7 billion in 2013, 2 billion in 2010, 1 billion in 2005 and 400 million in 2000 (Internet Live Stats, 2016). The rise of internet usage correlates with a rise in social media numbers: By the end of 2015, there were over 2.2 billion active users of social media, approximately 30% of the total world's population (Social Media Today, 2015). The number of social media users rose by 176 million between 2014 and 2015, with 1 million active mobile social users added per day (Internet Live Stats, 2016).

The Figure 2.6 charts the growth of active social media users between 2010 and 2015, both overall and on the most frequently used social media sites:

Figure 2.6: "Social Media Active Users Worldwide." From *The Growth of Social Media* by Libo-on, A. 2016, February 9. Retrieved from: https://www.searchenginejournal.com



By February 2016, Facebook had 1.5 billion users, YouTube had 1 billion, Instagram 400 million, Google+ 343 million, Twitter 316 million, Tumblr 230 million, Snapchat 200 million, Pinterest 100 million, and LinkedIn 97 million (Libo-on, 2016). At the rate of increase, in 2015 Facebook added approximately half a million new users every day with six new profiles every second (Social Media Today, 2015). Twitter and Instagram had the next highest number of users, with Twitter increasing from 117 million in 2011 to 316 million in 2015, and Instagram went from 15 million in 2011 to 400 million in 2015 (Libo-on, 2016). Furthermore, an important factor in this growth and volume is that the younger demographics use more social media than the older age groups. In 2015, 89% of those surveyed between 18-29 years had a social media account compared to 82% of those between 30 and 49, 65% between 50 and 65, and 49% of over 65 year olds (Libo-on, 2016).

A further factor to consider in addition to the number of social media users, is the amount of time spent online on social media. In 2015, the average amount of time users spent daily on Facebook was 42 minutes, Twitter was 17 minutes, Pinterest was 21 minutes, and Instagram was 21 minutes (Libo-on, 2016). Additionally, an important factor to consider within this

context of worldwide growth is how much social media has grown in Britain specifically. Figure 2.7 shows the number of UK users of the most popular social media platforms, primarily Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and Google + in 2016. More than 70 per cent of UK adults who went online in 2016 had a social media profile, according to a recent Ofcom report – up from 66 per cent in 2013 (The Media Briefing, 2015).

Figure 2.7 "Social Networks" from *Most Popular Social Networks in the UK.* 2016, March. Retrieved from: https://social-media.co.uk

	Description	UK Users	Total Users	Useful information
Facebook:	A social sharing networking site.	32,000,000	1.65 billion	83.6% of Facebook's daily active users live outside the U.S. and Canada.
YouTube:	The top website used for video uploading and viewing.	19,100,000	1,300,000,000	3.25 billion hours of Youtube videos are watched each month.
Twitter:	A Micro-blogging platform.	15,000,000	645,750,000	50% of users visit the website of a small or medium business they follow.
Instagram:	A photo and video sharing social networking.	14,000,000	500,000,000	80 million photos are shared each day on Instagram. 14 million.
Google+:	A social networking project used to connect with businesses and users.	12,600,000	2,200,000,000	74% of Google+ users are male.
Pinterest:	A popular photo sharing website.	10,300,000		92% of Pinterest users access it through their mobiles.
Snapchat:	Send images and videos with a short life span over an app.	10,000,000	600,000,000	9,000 Snaps are shared each second on the app.
LinkedIn:	B2B platform for networking professionally.	10,000,000	414,000,000	The most overused word on a LinkedIn profile is "Motivated".
Tumblr:	A popular microblogging platform used to broadcast messages.	9,000,000		69% of Tumblr users are Millennials.
Reddit:	An entertainment, social news and social networking website.	6,600,000		The average time a Reddit user spends on the site is 16 minutes.
Vimeo:	A video uploading and sharing website.	412,085	170,000,000	Vimeo gets 715 million monthly video views.
Vine:	A mobile app used to record and share short, looping video clips.			1.5 billion vine loops are played daily.
Foursquare:	A local search and discovery app.		60,000,000	There are 1.3 million business pages on foursquare.
Flickr:	An image hosting website used to showcase photography work.		112,000,000	1 Million photos are shared daily on Flickr.
Periscope:	Twitter's new live-streaming video app.		10,000,000	350,000 hours of video is streamed daily on Periscope.
Bloglovin':	A blogging platform used by bloggers to gain awareness.		30,000,000	

2.5 Impact of Social Media Growth

The growth of social media has multiple impacts on a societal level. The increase in use and content of social media has impacted society by changing how people acquire information (Perrin, 2015). The increasing presence of social media makes a larger amount of information and content more easily accessible. (Perrin, 2015). The diversity of information online means users are no longer dependent on a single news source, but can use several different types of media for content (Auvinen, 2012). News and information is spreading more quickly than when the public was dependent on only television and print sources (Auvinen, 2012). However, there is also an increase in inaccurate and false information due to the unreliability of verification and the absence of regulation in social media (World Economic Forum, 2016). Information is more subjective due to the volume of false information that is spread and consequently believed (Auvinen, 2012).

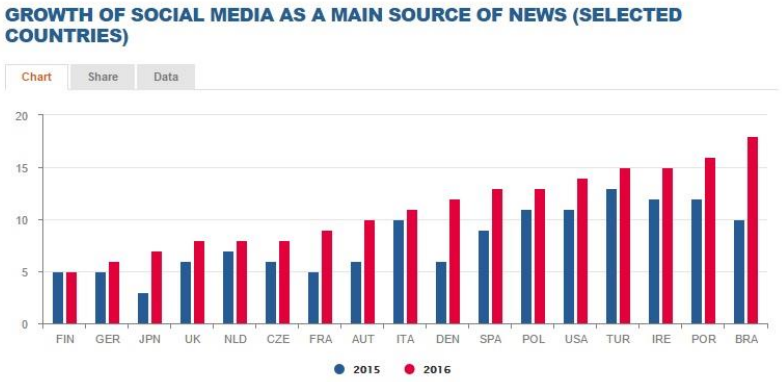
Social media has impacted how businesses and industries operated, as social media has moved from a possible option to an essential component of any business strategy (World Economic Forum, 2016). In 2013, 93% of marketers used social media for business, 70% of brands had a presence on Google+ (a 4% growth from 2012), 70% of marketers used Facebook to successfully gain new customers, and 34% of marketers used Twitter to successfully generate leads (Libo-on, 2016). Furthermore, social media alters the power dynamics in business competition, in that smaller companies and businesses can achieve global outreach and promotion compared to the domination of large, established companies when mass mainstream media was more central (Perrin, 2015).

Furthermore, the growth of social media has impacted news, both in news delivery and the content of news itself. Social media has altered the structure of news networks (World Economic Forum, 2016). With social media, the construction of news and information is less hierarchical than in print, television and radio; online anyone can be a writer, editor, or artist rather than having authoritative editors and regulators (Auvinen, 2012). Furthermore, social media means there is greater connectivity between individuals and groups for discussion and response among the readers of news (Perrin, 2015). On the other hand, people online can hide behind anonymity in discussions and interactions as the use of nicknames and aliases sheds responsibility (Auvinen, 2012).

A global YouGov survey analysing news consumers between 2010 and 2016 across 26 nations, including Great Britain, the U.S, Japan, Brazil, South Korea, Australia, and Canada, showed an increasing reliance on social media as a news source (Social Media UK, 2016). Between 2013 and 2016, non-social media online news sources – such as news apps and websites sources -

were the most accessed source of news, followed by television news sources. Social media as a news source saw the largest increase in use, while sales of printed newspapers declined (Newman, 2016). By 2016, approximately 51% of the overall population used social media as a source of news each week, while 12% used social media as their main source of news (Newman, 2016). In segmenting the growth of social media by specific countries, there was an overall growth in each individual country as illustrated in Figure 2.8.

Figure 2.8: "Growth of social media as news." From *Digital News Report,* by Newman, N. 2016, November. Retrieved from: http://www.digitalnewsreport.org



In both the EU and the United States, approximatively 46% of the population used social media as a source of news (Newman, 2016). However, in examining Britain in particular, the figure is only at around 35%, partly due to the longstanding reputation of key radio news shows in Britain (Newman, 2016). The EU average is counterbalanced by countries such as Greece which had over 51% of the respondents using social media (Newman, 2016). An average of 10% of the EU population say social media is their *main* source of news, compared to 14% in the United States and 18% in Australia. Britain is lower than the EU average with approximately 8% relying on social media as their main news source (Newman, 2016).

Furthermore, an important factor to take into account when examining the growth of social media and online news is the demographics that access different news sources. There is a trend for older consumers to access news via traditional print, TV, and radio news formats, and younger consumers to access news through online news apps, websites, and social media (Newman, 2016). Across all 26 countries, for every demographic group under 45, online news is now more important than television news (Newman, 2016). For the 18-24 demographic group, social media is more likely to be a main news source than radio, television, and print (Newman, 2016). This trend correlates with the previously discussed results that younger demographics used social media more, and were more likely to have social media accounts, reflecting the overall trend towards social media. Overall, approximately 44% of the total people surveyed use

Facebook for news and 19% use YouTube. Facebook is the largest source of news in every one of the 26 countries except Japan (Newman, 2016).

The rise of social media as a source of news has shifted the operation of news (Newman, 2016; Wakefield, 2016). For example, social media operating as a news site has led to negotiations in how news should be selected, and the benefits of algorithms versus human editors (Wakefield, 2016). Facebook –now the largest social media news source – used to use human editors for selecting articles in the "what's in the trending topics" section on Facebook (Wakefield, 2016). However, due to complaints that editors were supressing stories that supported conservative political viewpoints, Facebook switched to algorithms in 2016, which sorted and promoted news according to what the users and their Facebook friends had previously accessed (Wakefield, 2016).

However, the switch to algorithms has led to debate that algorithms create personalised news "bubbles" where dependence on social media for news means people only see news from like-minded viewpoints (Wakefield, 2016) and therefore miss out on important information or opposing viewpoints that traditional news sources offer (Newman, 2016). Per research by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, the majority of consumers were happy to have their news selected by algorithms, with 36% saying they would like news chosen based on what they had read before, and 22% happy for their news agenda to be based on what their friends had read (as cited in Wakefield, 2016). However, 30% still wanted the oversight of human editors and journalists to select the news agenda (Wakefield, 2016). Younger demographics were more comfortable with algorithms than with editors (Newman, 2016). Additionally, dependence on social media news sources has changed the content of news. Soft news stories – features, human interest or celebrity based stories – dominate social media, however traditional news businesses (newspapers and press outlets) still provide the hard news stories with heavyweight stories, and investigative journalism (Newman, 2016; Wakefield, 2016). Therefore, dependence on social media means a decrease in coverage of serious news stories (Newman, 2016). Overall, social media news sources have altered the news landscape by enabling more limited news viewpoints and sources (Newman, 2016; Wakefield, 2016).

A further effect of the rise of social media is the impact on the funding of journalism and traditional prints newspapers and print newspapers have suffered reductions in sales due to the rise of online news and social media. (Wakefield, 2016). As a consequence, newspapers depend more on advertising as a sustainable business model to provide funding (Wakefield, 2016). However, the rise of ad-blockers offers another risk for newspapers to lose funding (Newman, 2016; Wakefield, 2016). The use of ad blockers varies between countries, with the lowest use in Japan, only 10%, compared to 38% in Poland. However, the use of ad-blockers is highest in the

under 35 demographics and amongst high news consumers (Newman, 2016). Additionally, the decrease in newspaper purchases and the advent of ad blockers means journalism is increasingly struggling to get the money to do the serious news stories and investigative journalism discussed above (Wakefield, 2016).

2.6 Social Media and Politics

The growth in social media use and dependence on social media is matched in dependence on social media for political information, particularly in younger demographics (Curry, 2016). According to Pew Research Centre, in 2016 35% of American respondents between ages 18 and 29 claimed that social media was the "most helpful" source of information about the 2016 presidential campaign and political coverage (Curry, 2016). For respondents aged 30 to 49, social media ranked third behind cable TV and news websites, while adults ages 18 to 49 trusted news and political information shared from friends more than news delivered from other sources (Curry, 2016). Additionally, politicians have increasingly depended on social media to run political campaigns (Auvinen, 2012). Social media sites have become essential in political campaigns (Curry, 2016), and employing social media experts for political communication has changed political discourse. Social media allows politicians to communicate more directly to the population, invoking the concept of creating a "global village" (Auvinen, 2012). Due to the power of social media, political campaigns can be targeted more specifically to different segments of voters (Murse, 2016). Furthermore, it is easier for politicians to gain feedback from voters and constituents, and monitor social media channels for negative responses (Murse, 2016). Social media enables general citizens to be a source of political ideas, plans, and initiatives, and make governments more transparent, which challenges the state's dominance in politics (World Economic Forum, 2016).

Social media has also developed more changeable political communication; in contrast to traditional print and broadcast media which presented more stable, coherent candidates and figures, the fast pace of social media means politicians are constantly adaptive and active (Carr, 2015). Rather than a gradual growth of authority and respect, on social media they have to earn respect anew each day (Carr, 2015). However, due to social media being so competitive for space and attention, blunt, confrontational and provocative candidates get noticed in media coverage, gain more Twitter followers, or take leads in polls (Clark, 2016). The oversaturated social media networks mean that news outlets are prone to prioritizing sensationalized stories, "blatant entertainment dressed as campaign fodder", and emotional rhetoric in order to grab attention (Clark, 2016). According to Carr (2015), "Social media favours the bitty over the meaty, the cutting over the considered. For example, political figures attacking people, groups and ethnic groups on Twitter does not have the same shock factor to scare people away as

traditional political news did (Clark, 2016). Overall, social media has changed the content of political communication and the relationship between politicians and the news media.

2.8 Conclusions

This context chapter discussed how the Brexit referendum was the culmination of a deep Eurosceptic culture within political, media, and public circles in Britain (Helm, 2016; "Roots of Euroscepticism", 2016). This chapter then examined the two Brexit campaigns – Vote Leave and Stronger In Europe – and their different campaign strategies. Vote Leave focused on fears of immigration and loss of control, and harnessed nationalism and hope for greater sovereignty in British national identity (Crines, 2016; Hoyle 2017), while Stronger in Europe emphasised economic fears and realities, and the risk of leaving the EU (Keaveney, 2016). Additionally, the referendum voting result and the differing outlooks across generational, economic, educational, and geographic divides within the British population were examined. Finally, this chapter examined the rise of social media and social media's increasing dominance on both a societal and individual level (Libo-on, 2016). In particular, the rise of social media being used as a source for news and political communication (Curry, 2016; Newman, 2016) was established, providing a context for analysis of social media content around the Brexit referendum and campaigns.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction

This literature review explores concepts and academic scholarship concerning interaction between political discourse and popular culture. The material covered in this chapter is not absolute, but does offer a thorough review of past study, establish a theoretical framework of existing research, and identifies relevance to my field of research. Establishing and critiquing past research will support my later exploration of my research question: What is the relationship between political discourse, entertainment, and popular culture in the construction of the Brexit campaign?

3.1 Popular Culture

The first theoretical framework to explore is scholarship around popular culture itself. The definitions and limits of what constitutes popular culture must be established in order to investigate how popular culture engages with political discourse, both broadly and specifically in the Brexit campaigns. To define the concept, I have drawn on scholarship works from popular culturalists Browne (2005), Danesi (2015), Hartley (2012), Real (2002), and Storey (2009). Defining the term "Popular Culture" in and of itself has historically posed difficulties; due to conflicting meanings, the concept encompasses (Storey, 2009) and a history of derision towards the field of popular culture and attempts keep the area out of academia (Browne, 2005). Real (2002) notes that popular culture theory has "fought an uphill struggle against the many forces lined up against it" (p. 167).

In dissembling the debates around the concept of popular culture, popular culturalist John Storey (2009), examines the definition of 'culture' itself as a foundation to discuss popular culture, appropriating two older definitions of culture from Raymond William's 1983: One, a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or group; and two, culture as synonymous with signifying practices (Storey, 2009, p. 2). Real (2002) provides an alternative, though not contradictory approach, in providing an anthropological definition of culture, defining it as "the systematic way of constructing reality that a people acquires as a consequence of living in a group" (p. 169). Danesi elaborates on Storey's definition, and in 2015 provided a recent definition of culture encompassing both the concept of a particular way of life, culture as practice and consistent with Real's anthropological definition:

> "[Culture] a system for communal life that include specific beliefs, rituals, performances, arts forms, lifestyle patterns, symbols, language, clothing music, dance, and any other

> form of human expressive, intellectual, ritualistic, and communicative behaviour that is associated with a particular group of people in a particular period of time" (Danesi, 2015, p. 2).

The scholarship on popular culture extends into discussions of defining popular culture, Williams (1991) provides a foundation for defining popular culture, in offering four definition of what constitutes popular culture: Well-liked by many people, inferior work, work setting out to win favour with people and culture made by people for themselves. However, a weakness of William's work is not settling on one definition but presenting alternatives in the form of open ended discussion. Hartley (2002), while querying the concept of popular culture as 'inferior', unites the majority of William's disparate definitions of popular culture and provides a broad definition of the concept as "what the public wants" or "what the public gets", defining popular culture as by the people, for the people (p. 179). Adorno and Horkheimer (2007), Browne (2005), Danesi (2012) and Real (2002) also provide unity in defining popular culture as forms of cultural expression of the "common people" in day-to-day life. The unity of the definition, therefore provides a critical foundation to explore popular culture around the Brexit campaign. Moreover, the definition of the concept of popular culture extends into debate of the form 'cultural expression' takes: Hartley (2002) suggests popular culture content, perceived as being for "entertainment" and for the masses, therefore encompasses media from film, television, music, radio shows, pop literature, magazines and games. Nevertheless, Hartley neglects detailed examination of popular culture content in the context of the internet and online media, this critical gap in the research is arguably problematic for the intentions of this thesis as it focuses on popular culture content on social media. Browne (2005) and Danesi (2015) provides insight into this gap of critical research, charting the development and change of popular culture content from historical folklore, spectacles and songs and videos on YouTube and internet, television programs, and movies in contemporary society.

A foundational critical framework to discuss popular culture, is the discussion of the relationship between low culture and high culture (Browne, 2005; Danesi, 2015; Real, 2002; Storey, 2009). Browne (2005) notes that historically, there's been a fine tuning of high or elite culture for example fine art, literature, classical music, gourmet food and wine that define the "best" of society in comparison to popular culture which appeal to "society's lowest common denominator" such as comic strips, best sellers, pop music and fast food (p.5). Browne provides a historical framework for scholarship, dating schism between high culture and low cultureback to western Europe in the fifteenth century when the upper and privileged class tried to differentiate the levels of society based on lifestyle. However, while Browne offers exploration

of how this trend develops, his work is fairly limited to one area and is decidedly Western – European and American in particular – focused. Nevertheless, Browne's central point of the division between high culture and low culture is reinforced by Danesi (2015) who, notes that in historical studies high culture is considered the form of culture that has had more impact on human life in comparison to low culture which was seen as purely recreational. Likewise, Real (2002), though not exploring the definition of the concept to the same depth as Browne and Danesi, reaffirms the arguments concerning the tensions between traditional high culture and 'low' culture, affirming that there is a history of elitist rejection of low culture as the expression of the masses.

Popular culture scholars Danesi (2015) and Storey (2009) offer discussions of how popular culture emerged in connection to high and low culture. Storey (2009) argued that the old definition of the boundary between high and low was fading, and that popular culture was present in the fluidity of that division. Danesi (2015) voiced the same theory, suggesting that popular culture emerged as the categorical distinction between high and low culture became less powerful, and the people in mass – outside of class or educational background – gained more power and influence. Danesi (2015), highlighted a particular argument concerning popular culture in differentiating the concept from high culture, arguing that popular culture belongs to the masses, as it can "be produced by anyone, not just by an elite class of artists and cognoscenti" (p. 4).

Ardono and Horkheimer (2007) and Hartley (2002) questioned the validity of popular culture being derived from "the people." Hartley (2002) was critical of whether the masses form their own experiences, tastes, habits and preferences or whether popular culture preferences are actually imposed on the public by forces such as media corporations and state agencies. Similarly, Ardono and Horkheimer (2007) argue that "the culture industry" – forms of cultural expression that were intended to be mass produced and mass consumed – do not liberate the people but control and enslave them. However, both Ardono and Horkheimer (2007) or Hartley (2002) neglected to investigate the variation of receptiveness of mass consumed products. In contrast, Storey (2009), while acknowledging the commercial nature of popular culture, rebut the suggestion that popular culture tastes are controlled by media corporations, arguing that commercial or mass produced culture is not uniformly accepted. Storey (2009) elaborated that mass produced culture does not universally succeed, for example many albums, books and films do not make a profit, and there is a degree of receptiveness and engagement with mass produced popular culture and which belies a level of choice and engagement (Storey, 2009). Accordingly, there is room for further critical exploration into the degree of choice in consuming popular culture and analysing what makes a product successful among the public.

The discusssion of popular culture being defined as being created "by the masses" therefore intersects with discussion of how popular culture is communicated. Contemporary popular culture is entwined with the medium in which it is communicated (Danesi, 2015; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Real, 2002). The study of relations between the media and popular has been flourishing across multiple disciplines including psychology, anthropology, sociology and cultural studies. (Danesi, 2015). Hartley (2002) is foundational in providing an analysis of popular culture in conjunction with how it is communicated and how that forms popular culture. However, a gap in Hartley's approach is the neglect of critical analysis of the role of the internet in communicating and impacting popular culture. However, Danesi (2015) addresses this area of research and examines how popular culture has become linked with mediated forms of communication, noting how popular culture is relayed through technology and interactive forms on the internet. Furthermore, McLuhan (1964) provides a foundation to this argument in suggesting that the medium is the message of culture. Nevertheless, McLuhan's argument was constructed prior to the internet and further critical investigation into how the nature of popular culture has altered due to the internet, could provide greater insight into how popular culture is shaped by the public in comparison the popular culture historically.

Elaborating on the concept of popular culture being created by the masses, a sub-area discussed by popular culturalists is the role of popular culture in defining and reflecting the identity of 'the masses', societies or groups (Browne, 2015). Polletta and Jasper (2001) discuss the concept of collective identity: "an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution" (p. 284). Polletta and Jasper (2001) argue that popular culture materials – rituals, clothing, verbal styles, symbols – are used to express collective identity, suggesting that popular culture captures community's motivations, including national communities. Polletta and Jasper's (2001) framework is adopted by Kligler and Shresthova (2012) in the context of youth participatory culture and how it interacts with civic or political engagement. Nevertheless, Polletta and Jasper's (2001) is limited in exploring popular culture's role, as the study is primarily concerned with defining the wider concept of collective identity and engaging in scholarship on the term, with popular culture a subsect of the discussion and not examined in-depth. Meanwhile, Browne (2005) and Danesi (2015) posit that popular culture in reflecting the tastes and values of the masses, therefore define and reflect the identity of groups, ranging from sub-groups to national identity. Danesi (2015) elaborates on this concept, suggesting that popular culture reflects the values and identity of different generations. However, Browne and Danesi frame popular culture's role in reflecting and defining identity as a minor aspect of popular culture and do not discuss the concept in depth or build on Polletta and Jasper's (2001) framework of collective identity itself. There is a lack of in-

depth exploration between the framework of collective identity and field of popular culture identity. A critical gap in scholarship is a detailed examination of the role of popular culture in forming collective identity, in contrast to the existing work in which popular culture's role in defining identity is discussed within an overview of wider scholarship.

3.2 Political Communication

This thesis examines the intersection of popular culture and political discourse; therefore, academia around political communication and the media needs to be established in addition to scholarship on popular culture. The evolution of political media cannot be examined in total and exhaustive depth in this review, but an overview of its role in the context of recent political communication and popular culture is relevant and applicable.

With the growth of technology and the internet, there is an increased volume of accessible information online, and mass media communication has gained a more dominant role in society (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999; Couldry, 2011; Jones & Kucker, 2001). Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) provide a thorough grounding in changing communication systems, in defining the concept of "mediatization" and establishing a framework of political communication. The greatest strength of their work in regards to this research is providing definitions and foundations that other scholars explore in greater depth, and ideas that need more recent evidence to reinforce. Media technologies have changed society as a whole, increasing the speed of people's lifestyles and the information available on the internet has become central to everyday society (Duffett, 2013; Jones & Kucker, 2001). Blumler and Kavanagh (1999), offer a thorough overview of the evolution of political communication systems and how the role of the media has gained an increasingly dominant position in society, coined the term "mediatization":

> "Media moving towards centre of social process, elevating role of communication in institutions" (p. 210).

Blumler and Kavanagh's text (1999) offers an early exploration into the rise of communication systems and the internet. As their text was published just as wide-spread adoption of the internet and broadband services was occurring in the late 1990's (Duffett, 2013), they provide an early insight into the role of the internet, but do not encompass the full extent of the place of online technologies in contemporary society. The notion of mediatization in Blumler and Kavanagh's (1999) text is reinforced in more recent publications on communication from a sociological perspective: Couldry (2011) argues that the huge expansion of media outlets are opening ways to communicate and access an expanded media environment. Likewise, Danesi

(2015) suggests that electronic technology provides a new media for communicating to a larger mass of people, and all previous aspects of communication converge on the online stage. Both these texts do not offer a thorough examination that the early texts do, but take the power and influence of the volume of information as a given. The overall concept of mediatization has only been examined broadly in this literature review, but will be discussed below in greater detail in regards to British political communication.

A consistent argument and extension of scholarship on mediatization is that due to the elevated role of media and the abundance of media sources, politicians have increasingly turned to the marketing and public relations industry to "market" politics (Franklin, 2004; Mayhew, 1997; Scammell, 2016; Street, 1997). Mayhew (1997) argues that contemporary political consulting has resulted in a direct outgrowth of public relations and methods of influence developed in advertising and market research (p. 209). Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) link the claim more explicitly with mediatization: Media abundance of multiple channels, radio stations, and online platforms, as opposed to limited TV space, means that individuals may only have the opportunity to gain an understanding of fragments of issues, or they only see repetitive information, or are faced with selective exposure. Therefore, for politicians the media is hydra-headed, and politicians have to inform the media of what they're doing and promote policies often before they are informed themselves (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999, p. 213).

In a specific British context, Street (1997) and Franklin (1994; 2004) both offer thorough explorations of British political communication that are foundational to scholarship around the topic. Despite engaging in contrasting views and inter-textual debates on the implications of "marketing" politics – as discussed later – both Franklin (2004) and Street (1997) concur that there is a growing investment among local and central government, and politicians as a whole, in employing media consultants, public relations practitioners, advertising agencies, and spin doctors to sell politics. Scammell (2016), while removed from the inter-textual debate on the impacts of marketing politics, concurs with the stance that British politicians and the government are increasingly using media to market policies to the public. Furthermore, Scammell charts the development of this concept, claiming that commercial marketing had a grip on British politics by the 1980's with the marketing of Margaret Thatcher as the Iron Lady, when "advertising and public relations were fully entrenched in political campaigns even if there remained lingering suspicion" (Scammell, 2016, p. 4). All three texts are limited in focusing primarily on the British political arena and communication sphere, however, this in-depth focus on British politics is advantageous in providing more detailed context regarding the area of research around the Brexit referendum campaigns

Savigny (2005) and Wring (2005) concur with Street, Franklin and Scammell's claims that British politics has become more about marketing, and offer specific case studies in examining Blair's Labour campaigns. Recent case studies and analysis assist in gaining a full framework of the British political communication structure. Savigny (2005, p. 925) states that the 2005 election in the UK was notable for how exposed and obvious it was that Labour was using marketing tactics and individualised campaigns rather than mass media. Likewise, Wring (2005) argued that communication and image management have historically played a significant role for Labour, and the Blair campaign of 1992 signified a shift towards greater marketing of politics. While Savigny and Wring offer in-depth detail on Labour campaigns specifically, this specialisation means they lack an overview of British politics in general, although these gaps are filled by Franklin, Scammell and Street. However, as a whole, Savigny and Wring offer more case studies and examples than critical discourse.

Furthermore, Kavanagh (1995) offers a contextualisation of the marketing of British politics in comparing them with the United States' political campaigns. Kavanagh suggests that Britain has adopted the United States communication system which has greater dependency on media professionals and image-centricism. Kavanagh observed that although Britain still has a smaller number of political consultants than the US, political marketing strategies in the United Kingdom have been increasingly drawing upon American campaigns, evidenced in Thatcher's and Blair's campaigns relying on their personalities. This is concurrent with Savigny (2005), Scammell (2016) and Wring's (2005) stances that those two campaigns were when the first discernible shifts in the marketing of British politics occurred.

A specific point of discussion is how the marketing of politics has become entwined with the defining of a nation's identity and national character. Street (1997) argues that politics is used to define national identity and weave a narrative of national identity. Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) address more specifically in how political communication is tailored and marketed to particular identities within one nation, reducing the size of the mass audience. A weakness of this source is lacking in how politics defines identity on a national level. In contrast, Charteris-Black (2011) explores how politics characterises national identity and explores how imagery of Britain in particular has been used as a marketing tool to unite the country. However, the work is in the context of nostalgia studies as opposed to political communication, indicating a critical gap within political communication to explore this topic in greater depth.

3.2.1 Aestheticization or "Form over Content"

Elaborating on the concept of marketing politics, a consistent discussion is how the focus on marketing politics has meant that how the politics are packaged has been prioritised over the content of the politics themselves, or "form over content" (Corner & Pels, 2003; Franklin, 2004; Street, 1997; van Zoonen, 2005). Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) coined the term "aestheticization," defining it as official political sources and figures increasingly using style, image, and presentation to "sell politics". The source does not explore the relative positives and negatives of the concept, but a strength regarding my research is that the source provides a working definition for the concept of aestheticization.

Tay (2015) affirms the trends towards favouring form over content in offering analysis of online media coverage and reactions to US presidential campaigns; for example, by observing that the public fixate on pick up on aesthetic details that aren't necessarily relevant to politics, such as Biden smirking in an interview (p. 55). The strength of Tay's text in regards to this thesis is the deep analysis of how public perception of personalities and focus on details shaped election campaigns, with numerous case studies of American politicians including Obama, Romney, and Hillary Clinton (Tay, 2015). This is useful in establishing a framework of how "form over content" operates, and in building up evidence of the importance of personalities, which will be examined within the research question. However, a weakness is the heavy focus on American-centric case studies, which just provides examples rather than building on a theoretical framework on political communication, mediatization and aestheticization that can be applied across British political communication.

Regarding usefulness to the research question, Van Zoonen's (2005) text offers an analysis of the aestheticization of political communication in the context of entertainment; placing political communication in a wider context rather than treating it as a more independent sphere. Van Zoonen (2005) argues that as politics is "done" in leisure time, so it is treated as a competitive leisure activity, competing against other television shows, going to the gym, or bowling, and therefore turns to entertainment forms, like other cultural allies such as literature and the arts (p. 3). Furthermore, Van Zoonen (2005) reinforces the concept of aestheticization in claiming that as a result of politics competing with entertainment, political discourse is all about sound bite society, media torrents, and video malaise, and is no longer "purely rational, informational and deliberative" (p. 2). Van Zoonen's argument regarding entertainment is affirmed by Corner and Pels (2003), who specifically argue that coverage of political struggles is not enough, and the media needs a sense of drama, spectacular storylines, and flamboyant personalities to

engage the public rather than ideological standoffs. Likewise, Brants (1998) claims that politics is about entertainment combined with drama and excitement. Combs and Nimmo (1990) offer a sociological angle for why politics has become entertainment and why that approach attracts the public. They suggest that politics has been rendered as melodrama because it panders to the emotional or entertainment needs of the public in order to sell a product; people would prefer to rely on a mediated political fantasy with a dramatic plot, and heroes and villains to sooth their emotions, rather than face reality. The strength of Combs and Nimmo's source is providing an exploration of why politics as entertainment is effective, which will be relevant in analysing which messages, narratives, and dramas told in the Brexit campaign were effective. The text adds to the theoretical framework in contributing a focus on the public rather than just the content of political communication itself. The area of scholarship concerning aestheticization is significant to this research in examining how messages in the Brexit campaign were delivered, and the prominence of personalities, emotions, and imagery compared to the policies that were delivered.

Franklin (1994) and Street (1996; 1997) offer foundational texts in establishing scholarship regarding the impacts of the aestheticization of political communication on political discourse, and engage in inter-textual debate on the topic. On the one hand, Franklin is a central figure in advocating how the aestheticization of politics has had a negative impact on both the communication of political discourse and the public's understanding of politics. This text provides the foundational argument in outlining the weaknesses and dangers of packaging politics, which other writers build upon. As such, in adding the debate to the theoretical framework, Franklin is the seminal source. Franklin outlines several key arguments, one being that placing a premium on appearance and personalities rather than policies impoverishes political debate because it over-simplifies and trivialises political communications (Franklin, 1994, p. 11-12). Furthermore, packaging politics manipulates as well as informs, and citizens may get direct knowledge of politics through the media, but politicians use the media for outright propaganda purposes (Franklin, 2004, p. 13). Finally, as a result of the way media presents politics, the public have become increasingly cynical about politics, which poses a challenge to democracy (Franklin, 1994, p. 6). Accordingly, Franklin provides a foundation for the harmful impacts of the aestheticization of politics.

Franklin's (1994) first premise that aestheticization impoverishes political communications is concurrent with Danesi's (2015) work, when he suggests that imagery has become more powerful than politics, and politicians are being ruled by their image and pleasing the public rather than political decisions (p. 264). Danesi does not engage in the intertextual debate that

Franklin and Street do, and therefore does not add rebuttal to any of Street's points. However, his work is relevant in contextualizing aestheticization in the context of popular culture and a society-wide focus on aestheticization, therefore connecting the aestheticization of political communication to other areas of this academic framework. Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) also reinforce Franklin's first premise in suggesting that good policy making needs time for deliberation and analysis, but it's at odds with the media's "instant response" and focus on image in political communication. Consequently, aestheticization trivializes political decisions (p. 216). As covered above, a strength of Blumler and Kavanagh's work is providing an overview of political communication, although like Danesi, the source does not delve deep into the debate, but affirms Franklin's stance in the context of wider political communication.

Savigny's (2005) research reinforces Franklin's second argument that the aestheticization of politics has been used to spread propaganda and resulted in disillusionment among the public about politicians. Savigny links a widespread decline in the public's faith in their democratic system across Western Europe to the packaging of politics, and suggests that in Britain specifically, marketing informing political party behaviour, and the lack of political debate emanating from the formal arena of politics, has contributed to this increasing disaffection. The strength of Savigny's work is that it comes from a more political approach, rather than marketing and communication stand points. This is useful to my research in offering a perspective on how politics operates as a whole, which is needed to comprehend the Brexit campaigns. In contrast, Couldry (2011) approaches the issue from the opposite standpoint from Savigny by examining the evolution of communications as a whole and how politics fits into that. Couldry also suggests that the unfolding media tumult means there is uncertainty over the substance of today's political communication, which – intersected with specific political crises - has caused the public to question governments and traditional infrastructural forms of politics (Couldry, 2011, p. 488). Therefore, his stance is concurrent with Franklin and Savigny's, but provides more grounding in scholarship on communication.

In contrast, an area of scholarship – headlined by Street (1996; 1997) – argues the aestheticization of politics and form over content has improved political communication and public interest in the area. Street (1997) establishes an intertextual debate over the impacts of aestheticization in opposing Franklin's negative stance: "He is clearly disenchanted with what he sees as media manipulation, and is fearful of its consequences for democracy" (p. 52). Street's arguments in both *Politics and Popular Culture* (1997) and in *In Praise of Packaging* (1996) were written in direct response to Franklin on aestheticization. To include aestheticization in my research, this is a significant argument to include. Street (1996) presents several arguments in rebuttal to Franklin: form can provide as much information as content;

style and image are rich in meaning and message; and listening to an argument noting tone, silence, pauses, movement of eyes, body language and facial expressions are all meanings relevant to politics. Politics should not be written off but viewed in the context of appraising good versus bad packaging, looking at different ways politics is being packaged, and not focusing on the fact that they're being packaged (Street, 1997). Furthermore, Street (1996) argues that there are strong incentives for the public to remain ignorant and uninterested in what political representatives have to offer, which means detailed and costly research and political information are not counterbalanced by clear return on investment, however the aestheticization of politics is cheap and means politics is actually consumed.

Van Zoonen (2005) reinforces Street's argument that form and content cannot be separated, arguing that form and content do not exist in two separate spheres and politics is not based entirely on policy and therefore presentation is relevant. Like Street, van Zoonen offers evidence of the different ways in which the content of politics engages the public, and in an updated format, takes into account online culture which Street didn't address, which is relevant to this thesis as it includes the online Brexit campaigns. Scammell (2016) reinforces Street's argument that form over content can improve politics, arguing that in a British context, political marketing strategies have supported rather than damaged the political process because voters are more engaged with political communication and, by extension, politics is more attuned to the demands of the voters and willing to cater to them. Scammell builds on Street and van Zoonen's arguments and places them in a specific British context, providing greater insight into the relevance of this debate to this research.

3.2.2 Politicization of Popular Culture:

A specific form of marketing politics is politicians "selling" themselves and politicising by associating themselves with popular culture icons and content, and adopting popular culture techniques (Cloonan & Street, 1997; Franklin, 1994; Savigny, 2005; Street, 1997; Tay, 2015). As this thesis is focused on how popular culture and political discourse intersect, it is essential to examine scholarship on how politicians and politics use popular culture within this field of marketing politics.

Street (1997), as with the area discussed above, provides an overview in this field, suggesting that there are several ways that politicians can "politicize" popular culture, such as associating themselves with popular culture and its icons, and using techniques of popular culture to perform a political role. Cloonan and Street (1997) offer niche information for a domain covered by this literature review through an examination of how British political forces have used popular music specifically to improve their image. Traditionally, British politicians

favoured the 'high arts' over the low, popular culture, but starting in the 1960's, politicians began to reach out to pop stars, notably the Beatles, which has continued since then: "The use of pop as a marketing device was latched onto with renewed vigour" (1997, p. 228). Although Cloonan & Street invoke on wider ideas of Street's regarding the "marketing" of politics, a key weakness is that the source is largely restricted to British popular music. It must also be taken into account that as Street co-wrote the text with Cloonan, he would reinforce his original stance that politicians use popular culture to market themselves (Street, 1997) and therefore other works on the topic must be examined in order to provide greater depth of examples of politicians using popular culture to market themselves. Savigny (2005) argues that the Labour party and Tony Blair had a history of associating with celebrities and constructing a celebrity image. For example, Blair associated himself with popular culture figures, appearing with *Richard and Judy*, *the Wright Stuff, Little Ant*, and *T4 with June*, among others (Savigny, 2005, p.930). Tay (2015) offers extensive evidence of the marketing of politics involving memes and online culture. The strength of Tay's (2015) work is in the exploration of how such marketing works, particularly involving the internet, and discusses concepts that are applicable across the Western world. However, although Tay (2015) offers numerous case studies, they are primarily American-based, so do not build on the framework of British political communication, although similarities can be discussed. Tay (2015) argues that Obama was able to form his image as the 'cool' candidate in the 2008 and 2012 campaigns due to associating himself with popular culture: "2008 demonstrated the success of the Obama campaign's grassroots approach and use of digital platforms to bypass traditional media outlets" (p. 69). Likewise, Hilary Clinton engaged with the public by piggybacking on the already established "Texts with Hillary" meme to appear more "badass". Cohen and Kahne (2011) reinforce Tay's argument, stating that Obama and his supporters used social media to connect with and mobilize young voters.

Developing on discussions of politician's methods of associating with popular culture, is whether such attempts are consistently successful (Tay, 2015). In a British context, Cloonan and Street (1997) examine why some attempts to associate with popular music succeeded while others did not. Primarily, more overt exploitation was less effective; for example, the band Red Wedge travelling with the Labour party in 1986, came across as a blend between a political rally and pop concert and did not result in an increase in support for Labour (1997, p. 229). Cloonan and Street (1997) conclude that there is not a reliable formula for the politicization of popular culture that the public will invest in, and it can indeed make the public more cynical, rather than less. This is concurrent with cases from an American context - that there is not consistent or reliable success when politicians are trying to co-opt popular culture, such as memes, for their own political commentary. For example, in 2014, Republican representatives Steve Stockman

and Thomas Massie and Republican presidential candidates were ridiculed for using memes in their campaigns. (Tay, 2015).

Non-political, entertainment media, and popular cultural icons adopting a political bent has also been explored in literature on political communication (Burwell & Beler, 2008; Combs & Nimmo, 1990; Tay, 2015; Van Zoonen, 2005). This area of scholarship is crucial because this thesis examines multiple ways political discourse and popular culture overlapped in the Brexit campaign, and not just in the content generated by the political elites. Therefore, multiple theoretical frameworks should be constructed. Combs and Nimmo (1990) argue that political media does not just include journalism, but popular culture mass media can take deliberate political directions, such as Hollywood movies, sports telecasts, television shows, and religious movements. This is concurrent with van Zoonen's (2005) stance that it is not just politicians who use popular culture icons to help themselves; popular culture icons can use political leaders to impart their own political ideas - a prominent example being *U2* rock singer Bono meeting with world leaders about poverty. Burwell and Beler (2008, p. 5) argue that there is a "discursive integration" of media genres that lead to potentially innovative formats and approaches to politics, such as with late night comedy shows, prominently *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*. The comedy genre is one that has come to take on extensive political influence, with the Colbert Report known for galvanizing fans into political action both directly (inviting fans to create videos, change Wikipedia pages, enter online ballots) and indirectly (fans' organized protests through their own volition, and websites set up by fans) (Burwell & Beler, 2008). WhileBurwell and Beler (2008) are somewhat dependent on narrow case studies of the *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report,* nonetheless their wider arguments for the growing influence of entertainment media in political communication are reinforced by a range of scholars examining political communication. Tay (2015) and Van Zoonen (2005) concur that political satirists offer unofficial political commentary outside of the mainstream media system.

3.3 Participatory Culture

Participatory culture is defined as media producers and consumers creating "collective meaning" of popular culture, and deploying popular culture in both recreational and serious forms, including religion, education, and politics (Jenkins, 2006b, p. 4). Participatory culture is one with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, and there is strong support for creating and sharing creations with others. Additionally, there is an informal mentorship, members believe their contributions matter, and members feel a degree of social connection (Jenkins, 2006b). Scholarship around participatory culture is crucial to explore as

the concept is central to how the public interacts with political discourse and popular culture. This thesis will examine participatory culture around the Brexit referendum campaigns, and how the public responded to the political campaigns and the campaign's place in popular culture. Henry Jenkins (2006) and Mark Duffett (2013) will provide a foundation for the framework of participatory culture scholarship as prominent and foundational scholars in the participatory culture field (Couldry, 2011). Jenkins (2006b) provides an introductory overview for how participatory culture operates, which is central to the building of this theoretical framework. Duffett's (2013) research has a narrow focus, concentrating on fandom within participatory culture, while the focus of this thesis is on participatory culture as a whole, and specifically around news and politics. Broader scholarship on popular culture and its interaction with participatory culture will contribute to the literature review and build on Jenkin's and Duffett's foundations.

Duffet (2013) and Jenkins (2006b) place the internet as integral to the operation and power of participatory culture, as online platforms have increased the prominence, visibility, and ease of access of contemporary participatory culture. The online media environment makes visible the once-invisible work of media spectatorship (Jenkins, 2006b). New media technologies have expanded participatory culture in making it possible for average consumers to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content in powerful new ways, and prompted the development of a range of subcultures that promote Do-It-Yourself media production (Jenkins, 2006). Likewise, Duffett (2013) acknowledges how increased media technologies and the internet have empowered participatory culture in enabling greater production and dispersion of content, which touches on the concept of mediatization discussed above. Couldry (2011) provides an updated approach to Jenkins' analysis of the internet as a tool for increasing the power of participatory culture. Couldry (2011) endorses Jenkins' theory, acknowledging that on the technological level, all forms of media are undergoing crucial transformations, and suggests that a huge expansion of media outlets are opening up ways for the public to communicate with and access media (2011, p. 487). Couldry's (2011) weakness is that his work does not contribute many new ideas regarding participatory culture, but does provide inter-textual reinforcement for Jenkins' (2006) foundations.

Having established an overview of literature on participatory culture, examining scholarship around participatory politics in particular is also relevant to this thesis. Participatory politics offers a space for the public to engage and influence politics outside of traditional and elite forms of media (Brough & Shresthova, 2011; Cohen & Kahne, 2011; Couldry, 2011; Jenkins, 2006a). Cohen & Kahne (2011) and Brough and Shresthova (2011) are strong in providing theories and definitions of participatory politics to start my framework of the topic, but lack

data, evidence, and case studies of participatory politics in operation. In establishing a working definition, Cohen and Kahne (2011) define participatory politics as:

> "Interactive, peer-based acts through which individuals and groups seek to exert both voice and influence on issues of public concern," but is not guided by deference to elites or formal institutions (Cohen & Kahne, 2011, p. vi).

Cohen and Kahne (2011) argue that participatory politics is about reaching large audiences and networks – often online – which enable participants to exert greater agency through circulation of political information, gives them the independence to circumvent traditional gatekeepers of information; therefore, social media's creation of material does not come from elites. This reinforces Jenkins' (2006a) idea that online culture enables media producers and consumers to create "collective meaning" of popular culture and deploy popular culture in both recreational and serious forms, including religion, education, and politics (2006, p. 4). Cohen and Kahne (2011) did not outright frame their work in response to Jenkins (2006), but invoke the same idea of participatory culture opening up more free communication to influence change, just in a specific political context. Likewise, Brough and Shresthova (2011) present a case for how participatory politics has provided a way to resist the traditional, elite political narrative, and resist the dominant culture, referring to it as the popularisation of politics. The argument that participatory politics can provide space for politics separate from the official and elite field is reinforced by Tay (2015), whose work does not focus on participatory politics specifically, but in analysis of content around US presidential elections, cites evidence of how participatory culture online shaped the agenda for newsmakers: "Regular people can define a debate's big moments, competing with a role once reserved to the professional press" (p. 55). For example, the public and participatory politics gave Hillary Clinton a quintessentially "cool image" through the Texts with Hillary meme, while numerous blogs and memes spawned Mitt Romney's identity of awkwardness, lack of popularity with women, and inability to relate to the masses (Tay, 2015, p. 64-67).

In contrast, there is the counter-argument that participatory politics cannot sustain itself as a network, and society ultimately ends up being controlled from top down (Kelty, 2013; Maxwell & Miller, 2012). In another direct response, inter-textual debate to Jenkins (2006a) Maxwell and Miller (2012) argue that even with new online media technology, participatory culture will be dominated by centralized and centralizing corporations, regardless of its multi-distributional potential. This is concurrent with Kelty's (2013) stance that acknowledges the growth of online participatory culture, but suggests political participatory culture is not sufficient or sustainable because hierarchal structures essential to the operation of "real life," and participatory culture would therefore not result in action (2013, p. 24). This area of debate is still ongoing, indicating

a critical gap in scholarship for further investigation and observation of the development of the impact participatory culture has on politics.

3.4 Iconography

3.4.1 Defining Iconography

Establishing the definition of an icon in and of itself is complex due to the variation in iconography and the context of its use (Parker, 2012). To define the concept, this literature review will draw on iconographic scholars who provide a holistic overview of icons and iconography – Ashworth (2006), Mitchell (2013), and Parker (2012) – as a foundation, and elaborate on the definitions in narrower subsects of iconography, with points of both consensus and dispute around the definition of icon identified. A common point of agreement is that icons are recognisable visuals (Ashworth, 2006; Mitchell, 2013; Parker, 2012). Ashworth (2006) defines icons as a "picture or symbol that is universally recognised" (p. 392), Parker (2012) argues icons are defined as "highly significant retained images" residing in the collective memory of large groups of people (p. 11), and Mitchell (2013) discusses icons in the context of recognisable imagery and motifs. In contrast, popular culturalists Browne (2005) and Danesi (2015), in discussing popular iconography, present a broader and more flexible definition of iconography, offering a variety of categories and examples which constitute 'popular icons': celebrities across music, film and sports, such as Elvis, Marilyn Monroe, and Michael Jordan; fictional characters such as Micky Mouse; food, for instance certain dishes or TV chefs; and objects and toys such as Slinkys (Browne, 2005; Danesi, 2015). However, the scholarship on popular icons under-explores critical definitions of what constitutes an icon, discussing the symbolism behind icons, but lacking in establishing a framework of the form of icons themselves.

Narrowing down iconographic scholarship to national icons, Hulsey (2005) reinforces Ashworth, Mitchell, and Parker's notion of what constitutes an icon, defining national icons as "highly visible" and "immediately recognisable." Likewise, Yanay (2008), another scholar discussing the subsect of national icons exclusively, refers to national icons as turning notions into concrete images. On the other hand, Tomaselli and Scott (2009), who provide a variety of case studies on different national icons while reinforcing the definition that icons must be known and recognisable, dispute the definition that icons are dependent on a visual signifier, citing the example that the 'idea' of Nelson Mandela was stronger than his visual, as images of him were banned in South Africa for two decades. However, the contrast of this argument against the wider scholarship and limited examples frames the cited case – Mandela – as an

exception rather than a basis for redefinition. Further reading and investigation into this argument is needed to establish its veracity in comparison to the more widely accepted argument that icons are widely-recognised visuals, which for the purposes of this research will be used as the definition of iconography.

A further key point of defining what constitutes an icon is that icons carry deeper meanings and connotations than the surface visual (Ashworth, 2006; Cassidy, 1995; Margolis & Pauwels, 2011; Mitchell, 2013; Parker, 2012; Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2004). Ashworth (2006) and Parker (2012) argue that icons communicate and symbolise deeper meanings and connotations. A strength of Ashworth's (2006) and Parker's (2012) perspective is the detailed critical framework of categorising icons. Cassidy (1995), Margolis and Pauwels (2011), and Mitchell (2013) provide a discussion on icons from the perspective of iconographic analysis and how icons fit into a theoretical study of material. Similar to Ashworth's (2006) and Parker's (2012) discussions of icons, Cassidy (1995), Margolis and Pauwels (2011) and Mitchell (2013) argue that icons are symbols with deeper connotations and meanings beyond the surface imagery. Cassidy (1995) establishes that icons have indirect meaning and deep significance, Margolis and Pauwels (2011) term icons as culturally-shared visual signs and connotations, and Mitchell (2013) refers to iconography as cataloguing particular symbolic motifs.

Scholars such as Hulsey (2005) and Yanay (2008) reinforce this definition of icons as images carrying deeper meanings and symbolism, in providing a narrower, critical exploration of national icons specifically from the field of nationalistic scholarship. Hulsey (2005) and Yanay (2008) argue that national icons crystallize feelings of belonging and identification, and define concepts and ideas of how people feel about their culture. Yanay (2008) suggests that national icons construct particular national identities, interests and views of the past. Hulsey (2005) reinforces this argument, suggesting that national icons – for example, the Statue of Liberty or Big Ben – are similar to religious sacred icons in fuelling nationalist beliefs and confidence. The echoing of this definition of icons within the wider field of nationalism extends the applicability of the definition.

Similarly, in the area of popular iconographic scholarship, Browne (2005) and Danesi (2015) reinforce this argument that icons are defined by carrying symbolic meaning. Browne and Danesi draw parallels between religious and secular icons, arguing both categories reflect what people hold important and valuable, suggesting celebrity icons, for example, have replaced gods and the church. The authors intersect in offering a framework of how popular icons emblematize societies' values in Western culture. Danesi elaborates on that framework by discussing how icons represent values of specific eras through analysing popular icons in relation to time periods and the impact that era had on forming icons. Nevertheless, in both the

scholarship on national icons and popular icons, the critical analysis of icons comes from within the respective field of nationalism and popular culture, as opposed to from iconographic scholars. Consequently, there is an opportunity for further critical exploration of the differing types of icons within the iconographic field itself.

3.4.2 Popular Iconography

Browne's (2005) and Danesi's (2015) discussions of popular icons carrying meaning is situated within a wider field of popular culture, emphasising the importance of how popular culture content, including icons, reflects and shapes the values of society (Browne, 2005; Danesi, 2015). Browne discusses how popular culture is the "system of attitudes, behaviour patterns, beliefs, customs and tastes that define the people of any society" and "shape a society's everyday world," and includes icons within that grouping (p. 3) as an example of a popular culture facet that forms society. Likewise, Danesi talks about how "culture manifests itself, through conceptual, material, performative and aesthetic channels," and includes icons as an example (p. 7). Both sources are useful is in providing an analysis and overview of how icons function in connection to the broader popular culture field.

Additionally, the breadth of time Browne (2005) and Danesi (2015) cover – a decade between them – provides a more holistic view of icons and how they operate in the media, and offer different examples from different eras. Both scholars discuss how icons develop through traditional media such as television and prints, however Danesi elaborates on this foundation by critically analysing the way in which icons develop and are spread online in the internet age, which Browne did not do. Margolis and Pauwels (2011) contribute to the framework of popular iconography by offering a foundation of visual research and analysis methods – particularly analysis methods for popular culture materials – as opposed to a popular culture background. Margolis and Pauwels (2011) suggest popular culture and mass media materials must be analysed to understand societal contexts. Margolis and Pauwels reinforce Danesi's and Browne's arguments about popular icons reflecting popular culture, stating popular culture manifests itself through conceptual, material, performative, and aesthetic channels, including constructing its own icons. Nevertheless, while Margolis and Pauwels provide a foundation for Browne and Danesi's work, they do not offer the deep exploration of popular culture icons specifically, a further indication of the need for critical scholarship on popular icons within the iconographic field. Meeting this critical gap in the scholarship would provide further discussion and interaction between the two fields of iconography and popular culture.

3.5 Personification

3.5.1 Personification Definition

Personification, as a visual device and technique, abounds in everyday discourse, literature, and imagery (Kovecses, 2010). Personification in the field of tropology is disputed in terms of importance and significance (Nishimura, 2014), and a range of scholars have discussed and examined personification in how it operates as a visual device, literary technique, and its use to create meaning. Broadly defined, personification is the attribution of human qualities or characteristics to an inanimate object or abstract concept (Dodson, 2008; Kovecses, 2010; Melion & Ramaker, 2016; Nemes, 2015; Nishmura, 2014; Paxson, 1994).

Paxson (1994), provides an analysis of personification grounded in a literary background, and defines personification as the transformation of a quantity – often conceptual or abstract – into another amount, usually a representing person. Nemes (2015) charts the development of personification as a device through literary and visual forms, and argues that personification has developed from a literary device into having an aesthetic role, which is explored in greater depth by Nemes and Berariu (2014). Kovecses (2010) reinforces this argument in defining personification as both a literary and visual device which imbues non-human entities with both physical and psychological human qualities. Melion and Ramaker (2016) develop Kovecses' discussion of the psychological aspect of personification in critically discussing how personification impacts a figure's cognitive form and function. As a whole, the existing scholarship on personification provides a consistent definition across differing fields of scholarship on the concept. Nonetheless, earlier scholarship on personification illustrates an emphasis on discussing literary personification and less exploration of visual personification, leaving room for further research into this sub-area.

Dodson (2008) elaborates on the process of personification in exploring and defining different levels of personification i.e., everyday personification versus personification for impact. Dodson introduces a scale of personification. 'Casual Personification': Personification used so commonly in speech and imagery that its use is barely registered; 'General Personification' which compares objects or concepts to a real person; and 'Representative Personification' which is when personification is used to represent someone or something else, standing in and highlighting an attribute, emotion, or part of that being. This scale of personification is incorporated into and elaborated on in work by Nemes and Berariu (2014) and Nemes (2015) in order to build a comprehensive framework of the different manifestations of personification and its role in society.

3.5.2 Personification as a metaphorical device

On a wider scale, Dodson (2008) and Nemes (2015) provide an analysis of personification grounded within the field of theory on visual metaphorical devices and tropes. Dodson offers an overview of rhetorical tropes, grouping together personification, allegory, and anthropomorphism under the common device of metaphor, as a trope which portrays one thing in a way that is suggestive of another. Nemes applies Dodson's framework in defining personification and anthropomorphism as a sub-species of metaphor, animating objects and concepts in specific forms. In contrast, Nishimura (2014) suggests that metaphor can have an effect of personification, but personification can also differ from metaphor. However, Nishimura neglected to critically explore the relationship in greater depth, in contrast to Dodson's more established framework. Nonetheless, Nishimura does concur with Dodson's and Nemes' claims that personification is a significant visual rhetorical device in the field of tropology. Nishimura identified a critical gap in scholarship in investigating the relationship between personification and other areas of tropology, and revealed a history of critics viewing personification as having little aesthetic or epistemological value. Accordingly, there is a lack of theoretical discussion on personification's position in the wider field of visual and rhetorical devices or tropes.

Dodson (2008) also explores how personification intersects with the visual metaphorical device of anthropomorphism in particular, as they adopt similar approaches to create meaning and symbolism, particularly in a visual form. Anthropomorphism is defined as the attribution of human characteristics, motivations, intentions, emotions, and real or imagined behaviours to nonhuman or animal-like agents (Hellén & Sääksjärvi, 2013; Hur & Hofmann, 2015; Jardim, 2013; May & Monga, 2014). Scholars within the anthropomorphism field, in defining the function of anthropomorphism, echo scholarship on the function and definition of personification: Wang (2017) and Kim, Peng and Zhang (2016) parallel the definitions of the function of personification as having both physiological and physical functions. These scholars specify that anthropomorphism goes beyond the attribution of physical features and attributes mental capacities unique to humans, including conscious awareness, intentions, and emotions such as pride and guilt. Nonetheless, there is a lack of critical engagement between scholars on anthropomorphism and personification, with anthropomorphic scholarship largely situated in technological and animation fields, with a deficit of analysis of anthropomorphism as a metaphorical device, thus indicating a gap for further investigation.

The scholarship on personification also extends to the purpose of employing personification to create meaning and reflect events or situations. Dodson (2008) also suggests personification is a form of allegory, as allegory is an extended metaphor that represents one thing by another, sustained for a longer length of time, often to deliver a message or point. Dodson states

personification animates inanimate objects or concepts and often delivers messages or weaves a narrative. Contributing to the purpose of personification and likewise situated in the wider tropology field, Nemes (2015) argues that image creation, metaphor, anthropomorphism, and personification are commonly employed to help make sense of a reality that is abstract, incomprehensible, or frightening. In providing a psychological approach to this discussion, Kovecses (2010) argues that the personification of events works because people want to comprehend events as deliberate actions, and make sense of situations by viewing them as the result of an active and wilful agent; personification provides that process. Berariu and Nemes (2014) responded to Kovecses' explanation, and elaborated on it, describing personification as an act of humanization and relating to one's self: Personification employs the "most trustworthy source-domains" humans have – themselves – and by personifying inanimate nouns, a degree of closeness is reached between man and a distant or abstract object, which leads to better understanding (p. 24). Nemes (2015) employed a framework, arguing that personification enables individuals to use knowledge of themselves to more deeply understand other aspects of the world, such as time, the forces of nature, or inanimate objects.

Expanding on scholarship on how personification is employed to reflect events, Shores (2016) provide an exploration into a subsect of personification: National personification, which uses human entities to represent countries, their citizens, or ideas of the national character. Countries and international events are personified to portray personalities. Shores' approach, from the perspective of countries' representation in fiction and the media, offers specific exploration into a branch of personification. However, this scholarship on national personification lacks a foundation of the theoretical framework of rhetorical devices discussed above, and refers to personification in laymen's terms and within the context of discussing portrayals and characterisations of countries in the media and imagery. Consequently, there is an opportunity for critical analysis into how national personification fits into the wider scholarship and framework of visual metaphors.

3.6 Nostalgia and Imperialism

3.6.1 Nostalgia

Scholarship on nostalgia has transitioned from defining nostalgia as an individual demand for a personal past to a condition of generalized longing, which is a defining characteristic of the postmodern age (Atia & Davies, 2010). Wilson (2014) categories the distinction as private versus collective nostalgia, and that nostalgia originated as a private phenomenon but transitioned to become more public, with collective nostalgia serving the purpose of forging

national identity and expressing patriotism. Tannock (2006) defines more collective nostalgia as a 'structure of feeling' invoking a positively-evaluated past world in response to a deficient present world (p. 454). Boym (2011) elaborates on categorising nostalgia, distinguishing between restorative versus reflective nostalgia, with restorative emphasising the reconstruction of a 'lost home' and associated with nationalist myths and revival or conspiracy theories, while reflective nostalgia acknowledges loss and trauma, with an awareness that the past cannot be restored because of the imperfect process of remembrance and time itself. Wilson (2014) and Zembylas (2011) apply Boym's framework in discussing how restorative nostalgia operated within their discussion of collective nostalgia. Although Boym's (2011) framework can be applied to both private and collective nostalgia, the transition of scholarship's emphasis on collective nostalgia (Wilson, 2014) means there is greater exploration of the framework concerning collective nostalgia

The intersection of restorative and collective nostalgia gets particular exploration in scholarship examining how nostalgia is used as a political or nationalistic tool (Atia & Davies, 2010; Wilson, 2014). Wilson (2014) argues nostalgia is political as it is "the site of conflict over what is valuable and what our [country] goals should be." Scholars generally explore the concept of nostalgia with a sceptical and negative approach, particularly among historians, as nostalgia is linked with distorting historical records (Atia & Davies, 2010; Tannock, 2006). Wilson (2014) and Zembylas (2011) have criticised nostalgia for misrepresenting and reinterpreting the past, so certain meanings and events are emphasised and highlighted, while others are excluded for a "convenient remembrance" of history, particularly national history. Atia and Davies (2010) elaborate on this discussion, offering a stronger criticism of nostalgia in arguing it is used as a political propaganda technique. Wilson (2014), associate nostalgia with conservativism and being conflated with enforcing an acceptance of the status quo, approved behaviour, and hierarchized society. However, Tannock (2006) criticises this approach, commenting that a basic function of nostalgia is unacknowledged, and any criticism of nostalgia operates "under the assumption it's pathological, regressive and delusional" (p. 455). In contrast, Tannock (2006) suggests that nostalgia has value both in identifying when societies or communities are unhappy in the present, and offers a system for building a positive future through retrieving – rather than retreating to – the past. Nonetheless, this argument does not contradict the other points, as Tannock acknowledges that the past is not always accurate. However, it offers an alternative discussion of how the idealisation of the past plays a role in contemporary society. The predominance of criticism regarding the concept of nostalgia is problematic in preventing nuanced and critical investigation of the role of nostalgia is constructing memories of national histories and needs to be explored further in scholarship.

A specific subsect of collective nostalgia significant to this thesis, is British nostalgia regarding British history and nationalism. Tannock (2006), in discussing collective nostalgia and its role in forming national history, discusses Britain as a specific example, noting there is widespread nostalgic invocation of England's heritage as an empire. Kumar (2003) elaborates on the notion, arguing the English rely upon a highly selective, nostalgic, and "backward looking version of cultural Englishness" (p. 269), echoing Atia and Davies' (2010) and Wilson's (2014) arguments that nostalgia distorts and reinterprets history. Charteris-Black (2011) discusses the concept in relation to nostalgia as a political tool, citing how Conservative governments and figures in particular, for example Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher and John Major, presented empire as a contemporary facet of British identity. Kumar (2003) also mirrors arguments that nostalgia is associated with conservatism, arguing that conservatism favours nostalgia for the glories of England's past empire, with notions of continuity, deference, and hierarchy. Likewise, Goulbourne (1991), situated in the field of scholarship on British nationalism, argues nostalgia for British imperialism is used to promote traditional society and questions the legitimacy of non-white immigrants. Nevertheless, the previously discussed perspective of widespread scepticism of nostalgia within nostalgia studies (Tannock, 2006) suggests that the perspective of nostalgia regarding the British Empire will be posited to have a negative approach, impacting the existing scholarship on the topic.

3.6.2 British Empire

British history scholars such as Ferguson (2012), Go (2011), Greer (2011), Kumar (2003), and Levine (2013) discuss how the British Empire shaped Britain's identity historically. The scholarship exhibits wide agreement that the British Empire, defined as the country being a preeminent and military power in the world, accelerated in size in the 18th century and was at its height in the 19th century (Ferguson, 2012; Go, 2011; Kumar, 2003, Levine, 2012). Go (2011) provides greater detail of the period of the empire, breaking it down into hegemonic phases: Long Ascent - 1688-1815, Short Ascent: 1873-1915, Maturity: 1816-1872 and Decline: 1873-1939. Greer (2014) reinforces Go's (2011) argument that the British empire had declined by 1939, suggesting that the British Empire was already brittle and depending on America prior to World War II. In contrast, Kumar (2003) and Levine (2013) posit that the empire finally wound up post World War II, suggesting there was gradual decolonisation prior, but it was the post-1945 period when Britain lost most of its global power. The inconsistency may be attributed to the complexity of defining the concept of empire and how revisionist history and historical amnesia can alter perceptions of history and events (Go, 2011). Overall, a strength of Go's (2011) analysis is providing an in-depth exploration and foundation of the timeline of the British Empire, as opposed to Kumar (2003) and Levine (2012) who primarily focus on British

perceptions of empire and its role in British identity, with the timeframe as a background facet. There is a point of unity in that all the sources identify the period between World War I and World II as the most significant shift in British power (Go, 2011; Greer, 2014; Kumar, 2003; Levine, 2012). Nonetheless, the ambiguity around the timeframe of the empire illustrates the recurring problem scholarship faces in responding to the fluidity of history when constructing national identity.

Historically, scholarship concerning the role the British Empire played in forming Britain's past identity has suggested that ordinary British citizens were indifferent to the concept of the British Empire during the era of British imperialism and colonisation (Kumar, 2003). However, Kumar (2003) argues that while ordinary English and British people might know and say little about the empire, the empire still penetrated the culture at deep levels and was viewed as a force for good among the general population. Likewise, Gould (2011) is critical of scholarship that suggests that the glorification of the British Empire was wholly the responsibility of an unrepresentative government, arguing that the British government and aristocracy couldn't have sustained external power without popular acquiescence and support at home. Go (2011) also acknowledges the tensions among scholarship on empire in the twentieth century, suggesting there was a trend of empire denial among historians, but recent scholarship has acknowledged the British Empire as cognizant to British societal consciousness. Kumar (2003) elaborates on arguments of the concept of empire being cognizant with British society in exploring how the British Empire permeated both popular and high culture. Kumar (2003) builds on Burton's (1998) exploration of the British Empire in popular culture artefacts, for example the boy scouts, Bovril adverts, biscuit tins, and music halls. Nevertheless, scholarship on the influence and centrality of the British Empire in British consciousness and identity during previous eras is limited in comparison to analysis of the present-day British identity, indicating a gap in scholarship to explore.

3.7 Conclusions

This literature review has explored themes and areas of scholarship to construct the comprehensive theoretical framework necessary for this research. Specifically, the literature review has discussed works on popular culture, political communication, participatory culture, iconography, personification, and nostalgia.

To begin with, a framework on popular culture was discussed to illustrate the breadth of how cultural expression manifests itself and the range of definitions of popular culture among scholars. Secondly, the literature review examined works on political communication,

establishing the impact the rise of online media and mediatization has had in expanding the marketing of politics, and the development of aestheticization or "form over content" and the politicization of popular culture. Scholars in this area have had the tendency to focus on case studies and there has been a lack of a critical framework. The field has an inconclusive debate over the positive or negative impacts of marketing politics. Thirdly, the literature review considered concepts of participatory culture and the rise of participatory politics, particularly in online culture, and identified competing theories on the influence and growth of participatory politics. Next the chapter explored scholarship on iconography, differentiating between the classifications of popular and national icons, and identifying the fluid and inter-textual definition across different scholars of what constitutes an icon. Following on from that, the literature review built a theoretical framework on the concept of personification, establishing its role as a metaphorical device and place in the field of scholarship on visual devices. Finally, the literature review discussed scholarship on nostalgia and notions of British Empire, concluding that nostalgia works to retain concepts of the British Empire as a central part of British identity, and noting the widespread scepticism towards the concept of nostalgia among nostalgia studies. This thesis intends to encompass these fields of scholarship in investigating how popular culture content of the Brexit campaign was impacted by the rise of participatory politics and marketing of political communication, and how the examined popular culture content communicated meaning about Brexit through iconography, personification, and nostalgia.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

The methodology chapter will begin by discussing why thematic and textual analysis are the most suitable research methods for this study. The chapter will then explore a framework of theoretical scholarship to ground the analysis of the data items. Finally, the thesis's research design and how it will impact the data collection process will be discussed.

4.1 Research Method

Methodology encompasses research techniques acknowledged by social scientists that enable the creating, coding and analysing data (Bellamy, 2012). This thesis's research will analyse a limited number of selected data items in-depth to uncover recurring political narratives and popular culture content. The analytic methods of thematic and textual analysis will be employed, as the inter-disciplinary framework of incorporating both types of analysis reflects the inter-disciplinary focus of popular culture and political discourse in the project. Bellamy (2012) observes that multi-disciplinary methodological approaches enable researches to gain understanding of complexity across differing fields. Thematic analysis will be employed to discern the overall patterns of the data corpus, and textual analysis will provide in-depth analysis of individual data items.

Thematic analysis was selected because of its degree of flexibility concerning theory and enabling the researcher to be involved and interpret the data (Guest et al, 2012). The reflexive nature of thematic analysis means it progresses according to the requirements of the research, nature of the research question and participation of and the researcher (Gavin, 2008). Thematic analysis' flexibility will allow the researcher to pull upon a variety of academic areas, popular culture and political discourse theorists. According to Guest et al (2012), thematic analysis "is still the most useful in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set" (p.14) and remains the most common research method used in qualitative research (Guest et al, 2012). Thematic analysis can be used to identity themes and patterns in data and gather information about how people feel and think about a topic (Gavin, 2008, p. 279). Thematic analysis is particularly suited to the beginning of the research process to establish initial themes in the data corpus and enable the researcher gather information about perspectives on the Brexit decision.

Textual analysis will be employed because it is used to focus on and analyse the media texts themselves (Bainbridge, 2011). Textual analysis is suited to analysing this thesis's data corpus

of popular culture texts, because according to Bainbridge (2011) textual analysis is used to decode popular culture products through reading the 'signs' within the text and is one of the primary tools media researchers use to understand how meaning is made from media texts. According to McKee (2003) textual analysis is an educated guess about some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text. Performing textual analysis is an attempt to gather information about sense-making practices, in both different cultures and within our own nations (McKee, 2003). Textual analysis will enable an examination of the popular culture content and how it relates to the political discourse and debates around the Brexit campaign. Furthermore, textual analysis is suited for in-depth analysis of individual data items in the later stages of the research project, as textual analysis applies narrow focus to the content, copy and images of media texts (Bainbridge, 2011).

4.2 Theoretical Framework

Having explored the above research methods, textual and thematic analysis, a theoretical framework of scholarship on iconography, personification, nostalgia and British imperial identity will be employed to analyse the data. These broad and varied areas of literature and theory will provide a foundation for the differing aspects of the data analysis. The theoretical approaches will be synthesised to enable a critical evaluation of how political discourse and popular culture merged in content of the Brexit campaigns.

Establishing a theoretical framework of iconography – specifically British national and popular iconography – will enable the identification of British symbols and connections to British identity in the data corpus. It is essential to analyse a nation's popular and national icons to fully understand a society's political and cultural contexts (Margolis & Pauwels, 2011). Therefore, in order to critically evaluate the depiction of the Brexit decision in the data corpus, this thesis will examine scholarship on British icons in particular. Icons carry deeper and wider meanings than the basic visual and represent imposed beliefs (Browne, 2005; Danesi, 2015 and Hulsey, 2005). A grounding in studies on British iconography will ground an analysis of the deeper meanings and connotations of the British icons present in the data items. National icons construct meanings regarding national identity (Hulsey, 2005; Yanay, 2008). Attention will be given to the portrayal of British national identity in the iconographic content of the data items.

The analysis of the data corpus will be rooted in the academic fields of personification and anthropomorphism. According to scholarship in these fields, personification and anthropomorphism are used to make sense of events (Nemes, 2015) and portray events as deliberate human action (Tam, 2015; Kovecses, 2010). Personification can be used to deliver a message or point (Dodson, 2008). This scholarship will be discussed in terms of how personification and anthropomorphism are employed to portray the Brexit decision in the data

items. Applying a specific sub-area of personification scholarship on national personification (Shores, 2016) provides grounding for analysis of how countries were portrayed.

The analysis chapters will also analyse the data in relation to scholarship on nostalgia and British imperial history. The researcher will examine a theoretical framework on nostalgia and its role in forging national identity and communal longing for past glory (Wilson, 2005). This scholarship connects with theoretical discussions on British imperialism, how it contributes to contemporary British identity and permeates current popular culture (Kumar, 2003). This framework will provide a grounding for the researcher for analysis of content of the data corpus. Specifically, this study will examine studies on the role British imperialism in political discourse in the EU referendum (Calhoun, 2016; Olusoga, 2017).

4.3 Research Design

A data corpus of 30 social media texts have been selected. This range was selected because a larger number would exceed the capacity to apply textual analysis to each item of text, nonetheless the scope is large enough to apply thematic analysis to the texts. 10 social media texts have been selected from the day directly prior to the Brexit referendum, the 22nd June 2016 and 20 social media texts have been taken from the day directly following the Brexit referendum, the 24th June 2016, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the themes, patterns and viewpoints of the Brexit events and political discourse. The limited time frame was applied due to the high volume of data available and to fulfil the aim to accurately decipher the opinions and depictions of the referendum. Greater weight has been given to the post referendum data items due to the greater quantity of material after the referendum compared to before.

In selecting the post-referendum data items, the data corpus has been filtered through a multi-step process. The "Brexit" tag on the social media site Imgur was searched, the results were narrowed down to items posted on 24/5/16 andt the results sorted by highest scoring (the most "up votes" by users). The results were sorted by highest in order to select a sample that best represented the perspective and views of the highest number of people. The short time frame was chosen due to the high volume of content following the referendum results. The researcher selected the top 20, highest scoring "Brexit" texts posted on 24/5/16 that fulfilled the specific criteria discussed in the data results chapter.

The 10 social media items from prior to the referendum were taken from a yahoo article posted on 22/05/16 compiling the "funniest" Brexit memes and posts from social media sites: https://uk.style.yahoo.com/18-brexit-memes-ll-crack-095838394/photo-photo-facebook-photo-095838189.html The first 10 posts were taken from the total collection of 20 due to the

restrictions on the size of data corpus and limitations of the thesis. Initial strategies, planned to draw the pre-referendum data from Imgur to ensure the entire data corpus had the same source. However, there were an insufficient number of posts prior the referendum result date on Imgur to apply thematic analysis.

4.4 Conclusion

In summary, the research method will employ a combination of thematic and textual analysis to analyse the selected data, as fitting for the interdisciplinary nature of the thesis. A theoretical framework of a variety of areas of scholarship – iconography, personification and anthropomorphism, British imperialism and nostalgia – will provide a grounding for the analysis of the content.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.0 Introduction

The results chapter will explain how the data was sorted, and provide a summary of the study's key findings. This chapter will describe the process and justification for selecting this data corpus, explain how the data corpus was divided into data sets, outline the method of analysis employed in coding the data sets, and discuss the data findings. Thematic coding has been applied to the selected data corpus of social media posts and used to generate coding units and sub-themes for analysis. This chapter looks at the data coding results, while textual analysis will be applied in the analytical chapters. Material that was excluded from the selected data corpus is included in Appendix I, while the focus of this chapter is on the data items that were included in the data corpus, analysis, and coding process.

5.1 Data Selection

The 30 social media posts were divided into two data sets for separate thematic analysis: Pre-Referendum and Post-Referendum. 10 social media texts were taken from the day directly prior to the Brexit referendum, June 22 2016. 20 social media texts were taken from the day directly following the Brexit referendum, on June 24 2016. Data was taken from before and after the Brexit referendum in order to apply a comprehensive analysis of the themes, patterns, and viewpoints concerning the referendum. The data was selected from a short time frame – one day before and after – due to the high volume of data available and to fulfil the aim of accurately deciphering the opinions and depictions of the referendum. Greater weight was given to the Post-Referendum data set due to the greater quantity of material after the referendum compared to before.

5.1.1 Post-Referendum Data Selection:

In selecting the post-referendum data, the researcher filtered the data items through a multi-step process. The researcher narrowed the selection down to posts within the "Brexit" tag on the social media site Imgur, then sorted the results by highest scoring, and finally narrowed the results down to posts posted on June 24 2016. The results were sorted by highest scoring (the most "up votes" by users) in order to select a sample that best represented the perspectives and views of the highest number of people. The time frame was chosen – and restricted – to a short period due to the high volume of texts and responses following the referendum results.

The researcher selected the top 20 highest-scoring "Brexit" texts posted on June 24 2016 but laid out further criteria to determine which would be suitable for analysis.

The criteria was as follows:

- Data items had to include imagery, not just text. (13 texts excluded)
- Data items had to be related to Brexit. (five texts excluded)
- Data items could not be focused on other countries' reactions to Brexit or their own politics. (seven texts excluded)
- Data items had to be able to be analysed as independent posts, not dependent on writing from the poster for context; for example, unaltered reaction gifs or posted with focus on text. (14 texts excluded)
- No repetition of data items, either within the Post-Referendum or with the Pre-Referendum data set. (two texts excluded)

The 20 highest-rated posts that fit the criteria and did not contain any of the exclusionary clauses were selected and analysed. All 20 texts fulfilled all of the requirements: They had imagery, not just text; were focused on the topic of Brexit; were not focused on other countries' reactions; were not dependent on text from the poster; and they did not repeat.

A full discussion and justification for the excluded social media texts on Imgur is presented in Appendix I.

5.1.2 Pre-Referendum Data Selection

The 10 social media posts from prior to the referendum were taken from a Yahoo News article posted on 22 June 2016 compiling the "funniest" Brexit memes and posts from social media sites: https://uk.style.yahoo.com/18-brexit-memes-ll-crack-095838394/photo-photo-facebook-photo-095838189.html

The first 10 posts were taken from the total collection of 20 due to the restrictions on the size of the data corpus and the limitations of this thesis. Initially, the pre-referendum data set was also going to be taken from Imgur to ensure the two data sets had the same source. However, there was an insufficient number of posts prior the referendum result date to make up the Pre-Referendum data set of 10 and apply thematic analysis. The posts in the Yahoo article selection fulfilled the criteria outlined in the Post-Referendum Data Selection, so all the data could be analysed collectively as alike texts and data items.

Figure 5.1: Pre-Brexit Data [Adapted from] 20 Brexit Memes That Will Crack You Up, by Jones, J. 2016, June 22. Retrieved from: https://uk.style.yahoo.com

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Figure 5.2: Post-Brexit Data [Adapted from] *Brexit.* 2016, June 24. Retrieved from: http://imgur.com

5.2 Results

The researcher applied thematic analysis and coding to the entire data corpus. Separate analysis and coding were performed for the copy versus visual components of the data items. The researcher analysed every individual data item and identified sub-themes in each. These sub-themes were grouped into coding patterns for each data set, which represented recurring primary patterns across copy and visual elements of the data set. The intent of coding the patterns across the data was to identify the prominent themes in the data sets. The themes were identified in order to a) detect common and popular views of the Brexit referendum events depicted in the social media content and b) determine predominant reflections of the referendum discourse and figures involved.

5.3.1 Visual Data Set

Table 5.1: British Icons Pattern

Coding Pattern	**Sub-Themes**
British Icons	British gentleman x 2, Churchill, Big Ben x2, Monty Python, Bad Weather x2

Table 5.2: British Icons Sub-Patterns

Coding Pattern	**Sub Themes**
Historical British Icons	British Gentleman x2, Churchill, Big Ben x2
Comedic British Icons	Monty Python
Bad Weather	Bad Weather x2

Table 5.3: British Icons Pattern Statistics

Coding Pattern	**Present in # of Data Items**	**# of Total Data Items**	**Percentage in # of Data Items**
British Icons	7	30	23%
Historical British Icons	5	30	6%
Comedic British Icons	1	30	0.3%
Bad Weather	2	30	0.6%

Table 5.4: British Icons Sub-Patterns Statistics

Coding Pattern	**Present in # of British Icons Data Items**	**# of British Icons Data Items**	**Percentage in # of British Icons Data Items**
Historical British Icons	5	7	71%
Comedic British Icons	1	7	14%
Bad Weather	2	7	28%

As presented in Table 5.3, seven out of the 30 (23%) data items contain the pattern British Icons. The prominence of the British Icons pattern as the second highest visual pattern indicates the centrality of British Icons in the data and in constructing a narrative around Brexit. As Table 5.2 presents, the pattern of British Icons can be broken into three sub-patterns: Historical British Icons, Comedic British Icons, and Bad Weather. The sub-patterns were not separate or exclusionary, allowing intersection between the sub-patterns with one data item containing both the Historical British Icons and Bad Weather sub-patterns. The predominance of the Historical British Icons sub-pattern, with 71% of the total British Icons data, in comparison to the Comedic British Icons (14%) and Bad Weather (28%) patterns, reflects the type of British culture emphasised and presented in the content. Nevertheless, despite the more limited scope, the Comedic British Icons and Bad Weather patterns are noted as a point of contrast and to highlight the prominence of the Historical British Icon pattern.

Table 5.5: Personification Pattern

Coding Pattern	**Sub Themes**
Personification	Bender, Cartman, Dobby, Old Man Figure, Bike Rider, "What is going on here" Figure, Countryballs x2

Table 5.6 Personification Sub-Patterns

Coding Pattern	**Sub Themes**
Personification of Britain	Bender, Cartman, Dobby, Old Man Figure, Bike Rider, Countryballs x2
Personification of Other Nations	"What is going on here" Figure, Countryballs x2,
Personification of Britain Through Prominent Media Character	Bender, Cartman, Dobby, Old Man Figure, Bike Rider, Countryballs x2
Personification of Britain Through Non-prominent Media Figure	Old Man figure, Bike Rider, Countryballs x2

Table 5.7 Personification Patterns Statistics

Coding Units	**Present in # of Data Items**	**# of Total Data Items**	**Percentage in # of Data Items**
Personification	8	30	26%
Personification of Britain	7	30	23%
Personification of Other Nations	3	30	1%

Table 5.8 Personification Sub-Patterns Statistics 1

Coding Units	**Present in # of Personification Data Items**	**# of Personification Data Items**	**Percentage in # of Personification Data Items**
Personification of Britain	7	8	87.5%
Personification of Other Nations	3	8	37.5%

Table 5.9 Personification Sub-Patterns Statistics 2

Coding Units	**Present in # of Britain Personified Data Items**	**# of Britain Personified Data Items**	**Percentage in # of Britain Personified Data Items**
Personification of Britain Through Prominent Media Characters	3	7	42%
Personification of Britain Through Non-prominent Media Figure	4	7	37.5%

As Table 5.7 presents, 26% of the data items contain sub-themes within the coding unit Personification, making it the most prominent visual pattern in the data. Personification is defined as when imagery of the countries is personified and given human characteristics.

The pattern of Personification is divided into sub-patterns, as illustrated in Table 5.6. As shown in Tables 5.7 and 5.8 seven of the eight data items (87.5%) within the pattern of Personification come under the sub-pattern Personification of Britain, while three of the eight data items (37.5%) come under the sub-pattern Personification of Other Countries. The countries depicted within the sub-pattern are Europe and Scotland.

The prominence of the Personification pattern, and the Personification of Britain sub-pattern within it, indicates a widespread theme of Britain being depicted and characterised as an individual and humanoid figure in the data, and a popular culture narrative of Brexit was constructed through this approach. By extension, the Personification of Other Countries sub-pattern illustrates a theme of the data set depicting the events of Brexit as an interpersonal dynamic between countries.

As shown in Table 5.9, the sub-pattern of the Personification of Britain can be further divided into the sub-patterns of the Personification of Britain Through Prominent Media Characters (present in 42% of the Personification of Britain items) and the Personification of Britain Through Non-prominent Media Figure, present in 37.5% of the Personification of Britain items. The distinction suggests there is range of popular culture content featured in the data.

Table 5.10 Visual Consequences Pattern

Coding Patterns	**Sub-Themes**
Consequences	Worry (bears expression), loss (of passports), harm (falling off bike), weakened, bad weather x2, good weather

Table 5.11 Visual Consequences Sub-Patterns

Consequences Sub-Patterns	**Sub-Themes**
Negative Consequences	Worry (bear's expression), loss (of passports), harm (falling off bike), weakened, bad weather x2
Positive Consequences	Good weather

Table 5.12 Visual Consequences Pattern Statistics

Coding Patterns	**Present in # of Data Items**	**# of Personification Data Items**	**Percentage in # of Personification Data Items**
Consequences	7	30	23%

Table 5.13 Visual Consequences Sub-Patterns Statistics

Coding Sub-Patterns	**Present in # of Consequences Data Items**	**# of Consequences Data Items**	**Percentage in # of Consequences Data Items**
Negative Consequences	6	7	85.7%
Positive Consequences	1	7	14%

As Table 5.10 and 5.12 shows, seven out of the 30 (23%) data items contained sub-themes within the coding pattern of Consequences. As illustrated in 5.11, the Consequences pattern contains two sub-pattern Negative Consequences and Positive Consequences.

The coding pattern Consequences is employed to depict the consequences of leaving the EU and the impact Brexit will have on Britain. The predominance of the sub-pattern of Negative Consequences (85.7% of the Consequences pattern) in comparison to the sub-pattern of Positive Consequences (14% of the Consequences pattern) can be hypothesised to reflect wide-

spread worry and fear of the result of Brexit and Britain's future. Despite the small size of the Positive Consequences sub-pattern, it is significant to include it as it contrasts with the dominance of the negative messaging, and highlights the lack of positive or optimistic messaging around the result of Brexit, thus its inclusion provides a comprehensive picture of the depictions of Brexit.

Table 5.14 Stupidity/Foolish Figure Patterns

Coding Patterns	**Sub-Themes**
Stupidity/Foolish Figure	Foolish figure (Monty Python), mentally deficient, simple-minded (Hobbits), Stupidity (tripping self-up), naïve figure (Dobby)
Britain as Foolish Figure	Figure tripping self-up, Dobby

Table 5.15 Stupidity/Foolish Figure Patterns Statistics

Coding Units	**Present in # of Data Items**	**# of Total Data Items**	**Percentage in # of Data Items**
Stupidity/Foolish Figure	5	30	16%

Table 5.16 Stupidity/Foolish Figure Sub-Pattern Statistics

Coding Units	**Present in # of Data Items**	**# of Total Data Items**	**Percentage in # of Data Items**
Britain as Foolish Figure	2	5	40%

As presented in Tables 5.14, 5.15 and 5.16 five of the 30 (16%) total data items contain sub-themes within the coding pattern Stupidity/Foolish Figure. Within that coding pattern, two of the five data items come under the sub-pattern Britain as Foolish Figure. The sub-pattern Britain as Foolish Figure is constructed via interaction with the pattern of Personification of Britain, in that Britain is portrayed as a foolish figure through personification, illustrating the interconnectedness of the patterns and how Britain is characterised through the data. The intersection can be hypothesised as establishing a message of linking foolishness and Britain and Britain's decision to leave the EU.

Table 5.17 Campaign Imagery Patterns

Consequences Sub-Patterns	**Sub-Themes**
Leave Campaign Imagery	Nigel Farage x3, leave campaign politicians, honouring past (Churchill), traditionalism (British gentleman)
Remain Campaign Imagery	David Cameron

Table 5.18 Campaign Imagery Patterns Statistics

Coding Units	**Present in # of Data Items**	**# of Total Data Items**	**Percentage in # of Data Items**
Leave Campaign Imagery	6	30	2%
Remain Campaign Imagery	1	30	0.3%

The Leave Campaign Imagery and Remain Campaign Imagery coding patterns do not exclusively code explicit support or encouragement for voters to vote to leave or remain in the EU, but identifies imagery associated with the two campaigns. The material coded is primarily imagery of the two campaign's respective politicians. However, the Leave Campaign Imagery pattern also encompassed images glorifying the past or traditionalism, in connection to the Leave campaign's nostalgia for past Britain (Calhoun, 2016). Due to the historical imagery, the Leave Campaign Imagery pattern intersected with both the Historical British Icons sub-pattern and British Empire pattern through imagery of Churchill and British gentleman, suggesting this imagery was central to the Leave campaign messaging.

As presented in Tables 5.17 and 5.18, the dominance of the Leave Campaign Imagery (2%) in comparison to the Remain Campaign Imagery (0.3%) could indicate a dominance of the Leave campaign and Leave campaign politicians in popular culture. The Remain Campaign Imagery pattern was included, despite its small size, to highlight this contrast.

Table 5.19 British Imagery Patterns

Consequences Sub-Patterns	**Sub-Themes**
British Empire	Churchill, British gentleman x2
British Brands	Weetabix

Table 5.20 British Imagery Patterns Statistics

Coding Patterns	**Present in # of Data Items**	**# of Total Data Items**	**Percentage in # of Data Items**
British Empire	3	30	1%
British Brands	1	30	0.3%

As illustrated in Tables 5.19 and 5.20 above, three of the total 30 (1%) data items contain sub-themes within the coding pattern British Empire and one (0.3%) within British Brand.

The size of both patterns, although limited in scope within the visual data coding, expand in size and scope in the copy data coding in the following section, which also identifies sub-themes within the British Empire and British Brand patterns.

Furthermore, both patterns depict British cultural imagery that does not fit in the British Icons coding pattern, indicating the range of British popular culture narratives and connotations used to construct meaning and messaging about Brexit and Britain's decision. The pattern of British Empire illustrates particular intersection with the sub-pattern of Historical British Icons, with all three British Empire data items encompassed by the seven items in the Historical British Icons patterns (Churchill and two British Gentlemen). It is also reflective of how the campaign discourse and the popular culture content constructed Britain's identity through similar popular British narratives and content.

Table 5.21 Weather Pattern

Coding Pattern	**Sub-Themes**
Weather	Rain, overcast, sun

Table 5.22 Weather Sub-Patterns

Coding Sub-Patterns	**Sub-Themes**
Bad Weather	Rain, overcast
Good Weather	Sun

Table 5.23 Weather Pattern Statistics

Coding Patterns	**Present in # of Data Items**	**# of Data Items**	**Percentage in # of Data Items**
Weather	3	30	1%

Weather 5.24 Weather Sub-Patterns Statistics

Coding Sub-Patterns	**Present in # of Weather Data Items**	**# of Weather Data Items**	**Percentage in # of Weather Data Items**
Bad Weather	2	3	66%
Good Weather	1	3	33%

Weather, despite being identified as a small pattern – present in 1% of the total data items – is significant to analyse due to its intersection with a number of other patterns. The most prominent intersection is with the Consequences pattern, with the data items coded Bad Weather coming under the Negative Consequences sub-pattern, and the data item coded Good Weather coming under the Positive Consequences sub-pattern, with imagery of rain or sun respectively being related to the state of Britain post-Brexit. Furthermore, the Bad Weather sub-

pattern intersects with the British Icons pattern, as bad weather is a British icon, illustrating multiple facets of how Britain was portrayed through popular culture.

5.2.2 Text Data Set

Table 5.25 Text Consequences Pattern

Coding Patterns	**Sub Themes**
Consequences	Lost pounds, mourning ("now I'm sad"), power fall ("used to rule the world"), trapped ("stuck on island"), suicide ("kill self"), freedom, loss (of sun), poorer ("10,000 pounds"), oncoming danger ("British memes coming"), fall (big player)

Table 5.26 Text Consequences Sub-Patterns

Coding Sub-Patterns	**Sub-Themes**
Negative Consequences	Lost pounds, mourning ("now I'm sad"), power fall ("used to rule the world"), trapped (stuck on island), suicide ("kill self"), loss of sun, poorer ("10,000 pounds"), oncoming danger ("British memes coming"), fall (big player)
Positive Consequences	Freedom

Table 5.27 Text Consequences Pattern Statistics

Coding Patterns	**Present in # of Data Items**	**# of Total Data Items**	**Percentage in # of Data Items**
Consequences	10	30	33%
Negative Consequences	9	30	30%
Positive Consequences	1	30	0.3%

Table 5.28 Text Consequences Sub-Patterns Statistics

Coding Patterns	**Present in # of Consequences Data Items**	**# of Consequences Data Items**	**Percentage in # of Consequences Data Items**
Negative Consequences	9	10	90%
Positive Consequences	1	10	10%

As illustrated in Table 5.27, the study found that the Consequences pattern was present in 33% of the total data items. The Consequences sub-themes identified included a variety of text associated with negative or positive consequences, primarily loss (of sun, money), negative sentiment (such as wanting to kill yourself or feeling sad), fall of power, and hopeful connotations (freedom).

The researcher sub-divided the Consequences pattern into two sub-patterns, Positive Consequences and Negative Consequences, illustrated in Table 5.26 and 5.28. The dominance of the Negative Consequences sub-pattern in comparison to the Positive Consequences sub-pattern – 90% of the Consequences data items versus 10% - suggests a predominantly negative portrayal and narrative of Britain leaving the EU. This was a depiction which surprised the researcher, as it contrasts with the outcome of the referendum in which more voters voted to leave the EU (Withnall, 2016), although it could be indicative of the demographic of the people posting on social media. The Positive Consequences sub-pattern was included despite its limited size in order to highlight that, while negative portrayal of the outcome were not universal, it was dominant.

Table 5.29 Stupidity Pattern

Coding Patterns	**Sub Themes**
Stupidity	Contradicting self ("what has the EU ever done for us?"), reckless ("blackjack and hookers"), incapable, stupidity, stating the obvious x2, ignorance, twat, being tricked x2, didn't think

Table 5.30 Stupidity Pattern Statistics

Coding Patterns	**Present in # of Data Items**	**# of Total Data Items**	**Percentage in # of Data Items**
Stupidity	11	30	36%

As shown in Table 5.29, a total of 11 data items (36%) included sub-themes within the pattern of Stupidity/Foolish Figure. The prominence of the pattern implies a certain depiction of the choice to leave the EU, suggesting a recurring message of Brexit being a foolish or stupid decision.

Table 5.31 Campaign Messaging Patterns

Consequences Sub-Patterns	**Sub-Themes**
Leave Campaign Messaging	Anti EU, "make our own EU", "screw EU", "I'm leaving you", anti-Europeans, "fucking EU", "filthy Eurocrats", freedom from EU, vote to leave, NHS, "straight outta Europe", "non-EU wheat", complaints about immigrants
Remain Campaign Messaging	Remain big player, "be inside EU", "EU stay", voting IN, 'Stronger, Safer, Better Off', anti-Brexit ("does exactly what it says on the tin"), loss if you Brexit

Table 5.32 Campaign Messaging Patterns Statistics

Coding Units	**Present in # of Data Items**	**# of Total Data Items**	**Percentage in # of Data Items**
Leave Campaign Messaging	13	30	43%
Remain Campaign Messaging	7	30	23%

The sub-themes within the Remain Campaign and Leave Campaign patterns are not explicitly supporting or encouraging voters to vote to remain with or leave the EU, but cover the inclusion of messaging used by the two respective campaigns. As illustrated in Table 5.31, the patterns allude to and reflect language of the campaigns and decisions. The Remain campaign: Pro-EU ("be inside EU", "won't EU stay"), remain language ("Vote In", "Remain"), advantages of staying in ("Stronger, Safer, Better Off" and "remain a big player") and dangers of leaving ("Brexit. Does exactly what it says on the tin", loss of sun). Leave campaign: anti-EU and Europeans ("screw EU"), independence from the EU (freedom), lack of funding for the NHS, and complaints about immigrants; the latter two of which were major focuses of the campaign (Meyer, 2016). The Remain Campaign Messaging intersects with the sub-pattern of Negative Consequences in four of the seven data items, which did not surprise the researcher as it is reflective of the anti-Brexit discourse and warnings of the dangers of leaving the EU present in the Remain campaign (Crines, 2016).

The predominance of the Leave Campaign Messaging over the Remain Campaign Messaging – which is mirrored in the visual patterns Leave Campaign Imagery and Remain Campaign Imagery – could indicate the greater dominance of the Leave campaign in popular culture and online, and may be reflective of the fact that the Leave campaign "won" the referendum outcome, with Britain voting to leave the EU (Withnall, 2016), and therefore the Leave campaign messaging was more prominent. This may also be influenced by the greater weight of post- instead of pre-referendum data, in that Britain's reasons for voting Leave – and therefore the Leave campaign messaging – were more significant.

Table 5.33 British Culture Patterns

British Culture Patterns	**Sub-Themes**
British Empire	Colonisation, British invasion, defending Britain, "rule the world", world power
British Brands	"Does Exactly What It Says on The Tin"

Table 5.34 British Culture Patterns Statistics

Coding Units	Present in # of Data Items	# of Total Data Items	Percentage in # of Data Items
British Empire	5	30	16%
British Brands	1	30	0.3%

As presented in Tables 5.33 and 5.34 the *British Empire* pattern is present in 16% of the total data items, and the *British Brands* pattern is present in 0.3% of the total data items. The pattern of *British Empire* intersects with the pattern of *Leave Campaign Messaging* in four of the five data items, mirroring the same intersection between the visual *British Empire* and *Leave Campaign Imagery* patterns. This indicates how the popular culture content recurrently reflected this aspect of the Leave campaign, and the prominence of *British Empire* in particular in building Britain's identity regarding Brexit.

5.2.3 Image and Text

The researcher found that the central patterns intersected across both the visual and copy elements of the data items. Table 5.35 presents the number of data items that contained the following coding pattern in either visual or copy form.

Table 5.35 Total Pattern Statistics

Coding Pattern	Present in # of Data Items	# of Total Data Items	Percentage in # of Data Items
British Icons	8	30	26%
Personification	8	30	26%
Consequences	14	30	46%
Stupidity	12	30	40%
Leave Campaign Discourse	18	30	60%
Remain Campaign Discourse	7	30	23%
British Empire	6	30	2%
British Brands	2	30	0.6%

The collation of all the patterns across both visual and textual elements reveals the Leave Campaign pattern – which encompasses both the Leave Campaign Imagery pattern and Leave Campaign Messaging pattern – as the most prominent pattern across all the data, indicating the main source of messaging reflected in the popular culture content. The patterns of Consequences (which were primarily negative) and Stupidity suggests there is widespread unfavourable sentiment concerning Brexit and Britain itself in choosing to leave the EU. The patterns of British Icons and Personification suggest that these two patterns are central in defining Britain's character in regards to Brexit.

5.3 Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to present and explain the data gathered and analysed in this thesis. This chapter explained how the data corpus and separate data sets were collected and selected. Following this, the chapter provided a descriptive narrative for the data sets, established sub-themes for the data items, and categorised the coding patterns.

Several common themes regarding the merging of popular culture and politics emerged across the range of identified patterns in the examined content. A theme of constructing a popular culture narrative of Brexit emerges, reflecting scholarship on how online media uses popular culture to reflect social and political events, constructing independent interpretations outside of official or mainstream narratives (Danesi, 2015; Margolis & Pauwels, 2011). The pattern of British Icons, British Empire and British Brands depicts how the events of Brexit fit into the British culture, while the Personification pattern depicts the events of Brexit and Britain's decision to leave on an interpersonal and individual scale. The patterns of Consequences and Stupidity imply a predominantly negative sentiment concerning Brexit and the decision made to leave the EU, illustrating how the popular culture content passes judgement on the political event of Brexit. The popular culture narrative interplays with and reflects official referendum discourse, as exemplified in the patterns of Leave Campaign Discourse and Remain Campaign Discourse, but nevertheless communicates independent and separate messaging concerning Brexit. Within the depicted narrative of Brexit, a theme of constructing Britain's identity and character in regards to the events of Brexit emerges. The patterns of British Icons, British Empire and British Brands depict how Britain's culture motivated the Brexit decision and the state of Britain post-Brexit, the Personification of Britain construct Britain's character in depicting the nation's actions in deciding to leave the EU. The pattern of Consequences is employed to depict what is significant to Britain in regards to the outcome of Brexit and the status of Britain post-Brexit. The pattern of Stupidity and sub-pattern of Britain as Foolish Figure, depict Britain's character as foolish. as exemplified in the patterns of Leave Campaign Discourse and Remain Campaign Discourse. The following discussion chapters will explore the different ways in which these patterns manifest and construct the overall Brexit narrative, Britain's identity and reflect the campaign discourse.

Chapter 6: Popular British Iconography

6.0 Introduction

A pattern of British Icons was identified in the popular culture content of the present study. This chapter will discuss how British iconography ties into the central themes of the material: building a popular culture version of the Brexit narrative, interplaying with the EU referendum campaign discourse and constructing Britain's identity and character. This chapter will discuss a theoretical framework of iconography in order to analyse how these central themes manifest through the British Icons pattern and its sub-patterns.

Icons are images which carry shared meanings and symbolism, and come in different forms (Mitchell, 2013; Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2004, 2004). National or cultural icons are highly visible and overdetermined images (Hulsey, 2005) which are distinct, durable, and reproducible, reside in the collective memory of large groups of people, and take many forms including objects, fictional characters, historical figures, cartoons, and buildings (Parker, 2012). There is intersection between popular and cultural icons (Parker, 2012; Tomaselli & Scott, 2009); for example, the Eiffel Tower is an icon in both popular media and as a nationalistic icon (Tomaselli & Scott, 2009). Furthermore, communities help form cultural icons in an integrative relationship without constructed involvement (Parker, 2012), in the same way popular icons are developed. The pattern of British Icons examined in the data of this present study includes popular and cultural icons and intersections of both variations. The pattern of British Icons encompasses several sub-patterns identified within the popular culture content of this data. The Historical British Icons sub-pattern encompasses former Prime Minister Winston Churchill (Rojek, 2007), the British Gentleman archetype (Cook, 2006), and national monument Big Ben (Hulsey, 2005). The Comedic British Icons sub-pattern features the British comedy troupe Monty Python (Parker, 2012), and the Bad Weather sub-pattern encompasses two images in this data, the weather map and "Does Exactly What It Says on The Tin" image depicting cloud and rain. The role of Bad Weather as a British icon will be discussed in further detail. This chapter will analyse the range of icons and the different ways in which the sub-patterns of icons collectively tie in with the central themes to construct Britain's identity, weave a popular culture narrative of Brexit, and reflect the campaign discourse. Specific images within the sub-patterns, which are particularly resonant in reflecting these themes and provide depth for analysis, will be discussed in detail.

Icons define and disseminate national identity through their presence in popular media, cinema, and television (Richards, 1997). Popular cultural icons are formed, are given meaning, are used to create social values, and are used by communities and online media (Parker, 2012). The

pattern of British Icons in the examined popular culture materials in this data demonstrates a specific manifestation of this dissemination and formation: Icons being spread through online media to define Britain's national identity in regards to Brexit, illustrating the central theme of popular culture defining Britain's character. Icons have deeper, wider meanings beyond their basic imagery, as popular icons represent what people and communities want to believe (Browne, 2005; Danesi, 2015). National icons in particular are communal shared symbols which communicate certain national positions and character, and transform shadowy notions of identity and belonging into concrete imagery (Yanay, 2008). This chapter will analyse how the different sub-patterns of British Icons – Historical British Icons, Comedic British Icons and Bad Weather – communicate different aspects of Britain's national character to build a multifaceted version of British identity, explicitly linked to the Brexit decision. In conjunction with the icons' role in forming national identity, icons are also used to construct their own narratives of social and political discourse outside of the traditional media channels and sources (Parker, 2012). This connects with the central themes of the popular culture materials constructing an independent version of the Brexit narrative and reflecting the campaign discourse. This chapter will analyse how this popular culture narrative is constructed and how the iconography reflects and engages with the campaign discourse. The meaning behind the examined icons ties into two recurring patterns, in addition to the British Icons pattern: Stupidity, and Leave Campaign discourse. This chapter will examine how these patterns manifest through iconography and the material's overall themes.

6.1 Historical British Icons

Figure 6.1 Historical British Icons. Data from *Brexit.* (2016, June 24). Retrieved from http://imgur.com and *20 Brexit Memes That Will Crack You Up,* from Jones, J. (2016, June 22). Retrieved from: https://uk.style.yahoo.com

The pattern of British Icons encompasses the sub-pattern of Historical British Icons, which construct Britain's identity through the historical meaning they represent and their connection to Britain's past. The collection of Historical British Icons present in this present study's content – Winston Churchill, the British Gentleman, and Big Ben – carry connotations of Britain's past identity, which are used to weave meaning into the popular culture narrative of Brexit and define Britain's character in deciding to Brexit. Historical icons are particularly significant in characterising a nation's identity, as they define a country's ideological vision of the past and the people's collective memory (Parker, 2012; Tomaselli & Scott, 2009; Yanay, 2008). Therefore, the way in which the historical icons manufacture Britain's Brexit-related identity offers a particularly rich opportunity for analysis.

All the historical icons presented represent connotations of both Britain's past power and positive aspects of British identity. Churchill was prime minister of Britain during World War II, and Richards (1997) states he is a national and cultural icon of Britain's historical power and strength. Rojek (2007) reinforces this in stating that Churchill stands for the past British Empire and glory. Wider scholarship establishes that Churchill as an icon symbolizes positive aspects of British character: moral bravery, greatness, strength, and patriotism (Ashworth, 2006; Global Politics, 2016) and is associated with the bulldog, another British icon symbolizing determination and pluck (Rincon, 2016). Similarly, Big Ben, a British national landmark, carries

deeper connotations as an icon of Britain's national pride, the country's history and past strength (Hulsey, 2005). Likewise, the British Gentleman is linked to an era of past British power, originating during the height of Britain's imperialism and colonial expansion in the second half of the 18th Century (Richards, 1997; Rojek, 2007). The British Gentleman carries positive connotations of Britain's past, as the icon is associated with ideas of British dignity, order, and fair play (Berberich, 2016; Rojek, 2007). Throughout the Historical British Icons pattern, Britain's identity is defined through being compared against the nation's past identity represented by the historical icons. Popular icons, myths, and heroes reflect people aiming for what they consider an improved or ideal individual or society (Browne, 2005). National icons, such as Churchill and Big Ben, can inspire faith in nationalistic ideals and promote patriotism (Hulsey, 2005). The discussed icon's positive connotations are used to highlight and define a negative characterisation of contemporary British identity and employed to construct a popular culture narrative of Britain leaving the EU as damaging its past character and identity.

The sub-pattern of Historical British Icons is particularly resonant in the overall theme of popular culture content reflecting and interplaying with the referendum campaign discourse. Specifically, the pattern of Leave Campaign Discourse intersects with the Historical British Icons pattern, due to the historical focus of the leave campaign (Enright, 2016; Powers, 2016). The Leave campaign promoted a nationalistic discourse which romanticised Britain's past as a sovereign nation (Lamb, 2017). The campaign was driven by nostalgia and a push to return to Britain's past empire and sovereignty (Enright, 2016; Hoyle, 2017; Powers, 2016; Shandil, 2016). Hoyle (2017) comments that, as a whole, the Leave campaign glorified Britain's past and historical identity, and it criticised the present. The Historical British Icons pattern in the popular culture content is reflective of the historical focus of the leave campaign. British historical icons were used to construct a popular culture Brexit narrative outside of the official political discourse by invoking similar connotations of the leave campaign, but depicting an independent, popular culture version of events, which also illustrates the pattern of Leave Campaign Discourse. The intersecting of popular culture and politics enabled social media content – specifically iconographic – content to adopt the nationalistic sentiment of the leave campaign through the nationalistic connotations carried by Churchill, the British Gentleman, and Big Ben (Hulsey, 2005; Richards, 1997). The icons and their connotations were used to present a different version of Brexit and redefine Britain's Brexit-related identity. Specifically, it was suggesting that abandoning Britain's membership of the EU Brexit was a corruption of British nationalism and the past, rather than honouring it, as will be discussed shortly in greater depth.

The Churchill and the British Gentleman icons are particularly evocative examples of the Historical British Icons pattern in the central theme of constructing Britain's identity, and thus will be discussed in detail. Churchill, as a historical icon, is specifically symbolic of the World War II era and Britain standing against the Nazis (Richards, 1997), representing an explicit form of past patriotic British identity. Churchill's explicit connections to a specific era – in contrast to the British Gentleman and Big Ben's iconicity of more generalised British history (Hulsey, 2005; Richards, 1997), offers particular opportunity for analysis of how Britain's identity was constructed through Historical British Icons. In addition, Churchill intersects with the pattern of Leave Campaign Discourse, as the leave campaign's historical messaging focused on the 'golden era' of World War II in particular, with pro-Brexit discourse idealising the world wars and distorting memories of the conflicts (Enright, 2016). Therefore, Churchill offers a nuanced example of how the Historical British icons are used to reinterpret a specific aspect of the leave campaign.

Churchill's connotations as a British historical icon, symbolizing positive aspects of Britain's historical identity, moral bravery, greatness, strength, and patriotism (Ashworth, 2006; Global Politics, 2016), are used to characterise Britain as foolish for leaving the EU, through an interaction with the pattern of Stupidity. The Churchill image in the content depicts the quote: "The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter." The quote is widely credited to Churchill (Deacon, 2012), so although the original source is unverified (The International Churchill Society, 2008), it reflects the popular public perception of Churchill. In interacting with the political context of the EU referendum, the majority of British voters – 52% – voted Leave and made the decision to Brexit ("EU Referendum Results," 2016), therefore the phrase "average voters" is implied to refer to this group. Consequently, the copy and corresponding photo of Churchill implies that he doesn't think the "average voters" – the leave voters – are capable or intelligent enough to vote, and the decision to leave the EU is foolish, illustrating the pattern of Stupidity.

The pattern of Stupidity and portrayal of Britain as foolish for voting for Brexit carries deeper meaning due to Churchill's role as a historical icon, specifically tying into the collective use of Historical British Icons when constructing a nuanced popular culture Brexit narrative through the deeper symbolism they carry. Churchill's connotations as an icon of Britain's former patriotism and glory (Ashworth, 2006) means his implied criticism of Brexit, leave voters, and Britain's decision, carries more impact than if the criticism came from another source. Churchill is used as a moral measuring scale for Britain's behaviour because he represents patriotic aspects of Britain in popular culture (Ashworth, 2006). The condemnation of the leave vote comes from a popular and national icon with the authority to judge Britain's decision.

Additionally, portraying Churchill as criticising the Brexit vote ties into the overall theme of defining Britain's identity, and the Historical British Icons pattern in particular is used to characterise Britain in relation to Brexit. Hulsey (2005) comments that cultural icons can represent nationalistic ideals of a country, citing Churchill as an example. Richards (1997) argues that Churchill's longevity as a British icon is due to the tendency for cultural icons to develop out of emotionally-charged and patriotic times, as Churchill emerged as a nationalistic symbol during Britain's struggles during World War II. In using an icon of nationalistic British identity as a mouthpiece to criticise Brexit, the implication is that the Brexit decision is contrary to who Britain truly should be. A contrast is drawn between the patriotic Britain of the Churchill's time (Hulsey, 2005) and the foolish Britain of the present. The implication is that Brexit is damaging Britain's past character, a recurrent portrayal of British identity within the Historical British Icons pattern. Churchill offers an example of how the British Historical Icons pattern defines Britain's contemporary Brexit-related identity in the popular culture narrative in contrast to its past identity. Connotations of Britain's historical identity are consequently used to define present Britain.

The British Gentleman icon offers another particularly rich example of the Historical British Icons pattern. Two images of the British Gentleman icon appear throughout the present study's material, indicating the icon's prominence and importance in building Britain's identity and Brexit narrative. The British Gentleman icon is also a particularly evocative example, due to its prominence in popular media, as it appears as a character archetype across popular culture in film, television, literature, and fiction (Cook, 2006; Richards, 1997); for instance, featuring in popular media such as John Watson in the *Sherlock Holmes* series, Colonel Pickering *in My Fair Lady*, and Robert Crawley in *Downton Abbey* (Cook, 2006). Parker (2012) suggests that cultural icons are particularly influential in society when spanning different areas of iconography, both serving as national icons and operating as icons in popular media. Due to this multi-faceted nature of the British Gentleman, the icon offers layers of meaning in its construction of Britain's identity, and the icon's prominence in popular media offers a multi-faceted version of the Brexit popular culture narrative and reflection of the Brexit political discourse.

The British Gentleman icon contributes to the Historical British Icons' collective message of depicting the Brexit decision as contrary to Britain's past identity. The British Gentleman icon communicates this message through contrasting the popular culture connotations of the British Gentleman icon with its portrayal presented in the two cartoons included in the material. The British Gentleman is a recognised representation of British character internationally, characterised as reserved, polite, and traditional with a stiff-upper lip, and relied upon to do the decent thing (Richards, 1997). An archetype of this character carries through in popular media

(Cook; 2006; Richards, 1997). In the two cartoons featuring a British icon, the depiction of the British Gentleman icon undermines the established characterisation of the icon in popular media and its representation of British identity. In both examples, the icon is not dignified or polite in insulting the EU: "Fuck you!" and "I'M LEAVING YOU!" demonstrate the opposite of doing the decent thing and fair play by treating the EU and Scotland hypocritically. These portrayals of the British Gentleman imply Britain is behaving poorly, and present the behaviour as a betrayal of the British Gentleman's expected positive character – decent, fair, polite, and dignified (Richards, 1997). Paralleling Churchill, the British Gentleman's version of British identity is used to suggest Brexit undermines how Britain should behave and its proper character, and is a corruption of Britain's identity.

Both the British Gentleman icon and Churchill intersect with the pattern of Leave Campaign Discourse, and illustrates how the Historical British Icons pattern reinterpret the campaign's historical focus and glorification of past Britain specifically (Enright, 2016; Hoyle, 2017; Policy Forum, 2016). As established above, Churchill reflects this collective message in being depicted as implying Britain was foolish to leave the EU. Churchill's role as a historical icon in reinterpreting the leave campaign's glorification of Britain's past is particularly evocative due to emerging as an icon of Britain's strength in World War II, and emblematic of Britain "standing alone" against the Nazis and the struggles of that time (Richards, 1997). Within the leave campaign's messaging, there was focus on the 'golden era' of World War II specifically, with pro-Brexit discourse idealising the world wars and distorting memories of the conflicts (Enright, 2016), and the Leave campaign continually vilified the EU and pitted Britain against Europe (Powers, 2016; Travis, 2016). Depicting an icon specifically symbolic of the World War II era as criticising the leave campaign and supporting remaining in the EU reinterprets the leave campaign's discourse in a precise, direct way, undermining both the campaign's glorification of World War II and vilifying of the EU. The connotations Churchill carries regarding the cost and pain of World War II could suggest a reminder of the dangers of dividing Europe, as the EU emerged post-World War II as part of a movement to prevent such conflicts like World War II from taking place again (European Union, 2016). The connotations could imply the Leave campaign is dishonouring the heritage Churchill represents through undoing Britain's achievements in World War II. Although the reinterpreting the leave campaign's idealisation of Britain's past is a recurring message within the Historical British Icons, Churchill's message wields particular impact due to his specific connections with particular historical eras compared to other historical imagery employed.

Likewise, the British Gentleman icon is rooted in past Britain, its empire, and its imperial legacy, and was an identity of the pre-World Wars sovereign Britain (Richards, 1997; Rojek, 2007). One

of the British Gentleman cartoons in particular portrays the British Gentleman citing historical rhetoric as its motivation for leaving the EU, quoting "fighting on the beaches" from Winston Churchill's World War II speech (Cawthorne, 2002): "*Britain is for Britons. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds…*" Employing a historically-rooted icon, depicted as referencing the past, to portray Britain leaving the EU, implies that nostalgia drove the Brexit vote and reflects the leave campaign's political discourse. As discussed, the British Gentleman cartoons portrayed leaving the EU as Britain treating the EU poorly, for example swearing at it: "Fuck you, we don't need filthy Eurocrats." Therefore, attributing the decision to Brexit to nostalgia implies a criticism of nostalgic discourse of the leave campaign. This message exemplifies the overall theme of the popular culture content of this present study which is reinterpreting the mainstream political discourse to construct its own narrative (of Britain mistreating the EU). In this case, the historical British Gentleman icon reflected the nostalgic discourse and portrayed it as misguiding Britain. The reference to World War II connects with the Churchill icon example and demonstrates a repeated critique of the romanticising of the World Wars eras specifically. Nonetheless, there is a contrast with the Churchill icon, as he represents that past era as judging present mistakes (critiquing the Brexit vote), while in the British Gentleman example, the past era is only portrayed in the context of misguided attachment by present day Britain which in turn was driving the Brexit vote.

6.2 Comedic British Icons

Figure 6.2 Comedic British Icons. Data from *Brexit.* (2016, June 24). Retrieved from http://imgur.com and *20 Brexit Memes That Will Crack You Up,* from Jones, J. (2016, June 22). Retrieved from: https://uk.style.yahoo.com

The pattern of British Icons encompasses another sub-pattern, Comedic British Icons, specifically in the form of the British comedy troupe Monty Python (Parker, 2007) from their film *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (Goldstone & Jones, 1979). The limited use of Comedic British Icons in the present study's material (with only one example) stands in contrast to the larger sub-pattern of Historical British Icons. Nevertheless, it is significant to analyse the use of Comedic British Icons in order to achieve a comprehensive discussion of the pattern of British

Icons and the pattern's construction of British identity and reflection of the campaign discourse. In discussing these central themes, the exceptions in addition to the rule must be considered. The contrast between the types of British icons – Historical in comparison to the Comedic – reflects the nuanced construction of Britain's identity, as British Comedic Icons carry contrasting connotations of Britain's culture and national identity in comparison to British Historical Icons. British Comedic Icons provide a layer of meaning in the central theme of building the popular culture Brexit narrative, as the pattern ties into a specific facet of popular culture: British comedy entertainment. Popular media icons take the form of celebrities and fictional characters. (Danesi, 2015) and Browne (2005) note that popular culture, including icons, help shape the behaviours, beliefs, and identity of people in any society. Monty Python are particularly evocative as an example of British Comedic Icons due to Monty Python's prominence in popular culture (Parker, 2007). Monty Python were among the most famous celebrities in the Western world during the 1970's, and their popularity and fame has "proved durable on an international scale" (Parker, 2007, p. 514). Therefore, Monty Python's eminence offers a particularly resonant opportunity to analyse British Comedic Icons and the implications of that aspect of British popular culture in constructing Britain's identity and the Brexit narrative.

Monty Python serves as both British popular icons and comedy icons. Cook (2006) observes that Monty Python as a popular British icon represents Britain to other countries in popular media, employing fictional English archetypes, and playing up staples of British culture. Specifically, Cook (2006) argues that Monty Python are English icons because they are iconic for mocking and "lampooning" English culture and foolishness (Cook, 2006). Anico and Peralta (2008) echo this view, referring to Monty Python as icons of British eccentricity, amusement, and idiocy. Both Anico and Peralta's (2008) and Cook's (2006) research cite Monty Python's placement in *The Icons of England* project, which selected a series of English icons through public submission, committee selection, and analysis by iconographic scholars. Parker (2007) refers to Monty Python as comedy icons due to their role in shaping comedy and their longevity, having "retained an importance within our national consciousness that has, very importantly, transcended a generation" (p. 516). Monty Python's longevity is significant, as durability over time is a key point in distinguishing between short-term celebrities and genuine icons (Browne, 2005; Danesi, 2015; Parker 2007). Monty Python illustrates how British comedic tradition ties into the overall theme of popular culture constructing Britain's identity and a popular culture Brexit narrative. Monty Python's connotations as a comedy icon (Parker, 2007) and icon of British eccentricity and foolishness (Anico & Peralta, 2008; Cook, 2006) represent different facets of British identity in contrast to the connotations of glory and power present in the

British Historical Icons pattern. Nevertheless, as this section will discuss, Monty Python constructs a similar version of the Brexit narrative and reflection of political discourse as the British Historical Icons pattern does, in particular tying into the central theme of engaging with the campaign discourse and intersecting with the pattern of Leave Campaign Discourse. This illustrates how two icons with differing implications of British identity can construct the same message, working as two sides of the same coin in the overall construction of the popular culture Brexit narrative.

In parallel to the messaging of the British Historical Icons, Monty Python constructs the pattern of Stupidity through the connotations it carries regarding British identity. Using the photoset from *Monty Python's the Life of Brian*, which originally featured the Monty Python characters, Monty Python were framed to represent the leave voters as an extremist rebel group, the "People's Front of Judea" protesting Roman oppression (Goldstone & Jones, 1979; Von Tunzelmann 2008). In the photo set, the dialogue has been adapted to complain about the EU's oppression of Britain as "what have the EU ever done for us" instead. As discussed, the leave campaign and leave supporters campaigned extensively on the EU's mistreatment and oppression of Britain and stirred resentment against them (Powers, 2016; Travis, 2016). The leader in the original scene, referred to as 'Reg' (Goldstone & Jones, 1979), has been changed to 'Nigel', implying he represents Nigel Farage, one of the prominent figures in the Leave campaign (Bennett, 2016, Cushion, 2016), intersecting with the pattern of Leave Campaign Discourse. Placing anti-EU messaging in the mouths of the Monty Python characters' frames Monty Python as representing leave supporters. Representing leave voters as the *Life of Brian*, Monty Python characters portray the voters as foolish due to Monty Python's role as an icon of British eccentricity and foolishness (Anico & Peralta, 2008; Cook, 2006), thereby demonstrating the pattern of Stupidity. The portrayal of leave supporters as stupid also ties into the central theme of reflecting political discourse, as demographically leave voters were less educated than Remain voters. There was also debate over whether the Leave campaign and Farage "duped" the working class - an accusation made by the remain campaign (Farage, 2017; "Farage Shoots Down Claim He Duped Working Class Voters", 2017; Farron, 2016; Mason, 2016). This illustrates the overall theme of building a popular culture Brexit narrative, and reflects scholarship on how popular culture and media can invoke their own narratives and content to characterise and reflect events (Danesi, 2015).

The portrayal of Brexit as a foolish decision mirrors Churchill's depiction of leave voters and Britain as foolish for leaving the EU. However, the contrasting aspects of British character represented by Monty Python in comparison to Churchill, portray the foolishness in a different context regarding Britain's identity. Churchill's representation of British courage and

patriotism (Richards, 1997) was used to suggest that Britain and Leave voters were foolish in voting for Brexit, through contrasting the decision with Churchill's positive attributes. Monty Python, as an icon embodying British foolishness (Anico & Peralta, 2008), portrayed British Leave voters as the comedy group themselves in order to communicate the pattern of Stupidity. In regards to the overall theme of constructing British identity, the Monty Python example does not depict the foolishness of voting Leave as a betrayal of British identity, but congruent with the facets of British identity represented by Monty Python as icons of British foolishness (Cook, 2006). The connotations reflect a different version of British identity in comparison to Churchill, in implying Britain is inherently tied to the eccentricity and lack of dignity Monty Python represents (Cook, 2006).

Monty Python's status as a comedy icon – in addition to a British icon – is also employed to construct the pattern of Leave Campaign Discourse and reflecting the central theme of interplaying with referendum discourse. Specifically, Monty Python's comedy iconicity is used to reflect and reinterpret the leave campaign's focus on emotion over evidence-based arguments and dismissal of facts, and accusations of pedalling inaccurate promises and arguments (Banducci & Stevens, 2016; Deacon, 2016; Gibbons-Plowright, 2016; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2016; Worley, 2016). They also represent the leave campaign's anti-EU rhetoric, as the leave campaigners were accused of scapegoating the EU for Britain's issues (Foster, 2016; Powers, 2016). Monty Python's humour is iconic for inverting familiar, reliable concepts or premises and then subverting them with comedy: for example, dignified office professionals who were turned into the 'Ministry of Silly Walks,' which subsequent comedians, particularly in Britain, attempted to replicate (Parker, 2007). The original *Monty Python's Life of Brian* scene featured in the screenshot employed this tactic, depicting a group of freedom fighters with no justification to fight, as the characters acknowledge within the scene all the advantages – sanitation, roads, medicine, baths – Rome contributed (Goldstone & Jones, 1979; Von Tunzelmann 2008). In the adapted screenshot, similar dialogue depicts leave supporters following "Nigel" in dismissing the evidence of the benefits the EU has provided, such as trade, clean beaches, and human rights. This portrayal suggests that the Leave campaign opposed the EU with no basis and the supporters are ignoring facts, reflecting the criticisms of the leave campaign's dismissal of facts (Deacon, 2016; Gibbons-Plowright, 2016). The political discourse of the Brexit referendums is placed in the context of a fictional, cinematic scene in order to reinterpret and undermine the Leave campaign. The depiction also undermines the leave campaign's anti-EU rhetoric in portraying the leave voters as Monty-Python-like, continuing to complain about the EU despite its clear advantages, echoing accusations of the leave campaign vilifying the EU (Foster, 2016; Powers, 2016). The political criticisms are depicted in an

exaggerated form through the Monty Python scene, and Monty Python's renown for subverting expected foundations (Parker, 2007), in this case the leave campaign's central arguments, illustrating how Monty Python's centrality in British comedic tradition is used to undermine Leave campaign discourse. This portrayal of the leave campaign is reinforced through the eminence of the scene in popular culture, as "What Have the Romans Ever Done for Us" scene is iconic in popular culture for representing unfounded resistance against benign rulers (Barker & Cox, 2002), and as a sketch mocking Britain's attitude towards the EU based on the scene was produced by the BBC in April 2016 several months before this image was posted (Susman, Gormley, Wyse, Silverstone & Riddell, 2016), illustrating the predominance of Monty Python in particular in undermining Leave campaign discourse. Monty Python epitomises the central theme of popular culture used to reflect referendum discourse, but as an example that is part of a wider trend and a component of British comedy.

6.3 Bad Weather Icons

Figure 6.3 Bad Weather Icons. Data from *Brexit.* (2016, June 24). Retrieved from http://imgur.com and *20 Brexit Memes That Will Crack You Up,* from Jones, J. (2016, June 22). Retrieved from: https://uk.style.yahoo.com

A sub-pattern of Bad Weather emerges at the convergence of the pattern of British Icons and the Weather. Weather appears in three images throughout the content, and two examples, the Weather Map and "Brexit Does Exactly What It Says on the Tin", both depict Bad Weather, which, as discussed below, is an icon of British culture and character (Parker, 2012). The weather's position at the intersection of several key patterns and the recurrence of weather imagery offers a rich source of analysis. Bad Weather provides a different type of British icon, carrying alternative connotations and a variation of how it constructs British identity, in contrast to historical icons Churchill and the British Gentleman, and purely filmic and fictional Monty Python. Parker (2012) defines Bad Weather as an icon of Britain, British culture, and climate. Geddes (2015) reinforces this stance, arguing that Britain has an international reputation for bad weather and for the British people complaining about the weather, which is

reflected in popular media portrayals and has become iconic of British people (Geddes, 2015). Watson (2015) found that this perception of British culture holds true within Britain, as 82% of British individuals interviewed thought the stereotype of the British being fixated with the weather was accurate, and 48% thought the British needed to just embrace the high levels of rain and bad weather in Britain. In terms of different national icons representing different aspects of British identity (Hulsey, 2005; Parker, 2012), Bad Weather represents certain British values, bad climate, and a national temperament prone to complaining.

The Bad Weather pattern is used to depict the fallen status of Britain post-Brexit, tying into the central theme of constructing Britain's identity in regards to the events of Brexit. In both images in the Bad Weather pattern, bad weather is linked to the state of Britain after Brexit and explicitly depicts Britain in a fallen state due to Brexit. The weather is commonly used in popular media to reflect moods, situations, or character's states (McKim, 2013). In particular, McKim (2013) comments that rain is used to depict serious or morose settings. Both examples in the Bad Weather pattern frame post-Brexit Britain as suffering bad weather and explicitly link the conditions to the Brexit decision through text – "If You Brexit, Europe Will Steal All the Sun" and "Brexit Does Exactly What It Says On The Tin" – reflecting this popular media technique. Furthermore, the negative implications are reinforced and emphasised due to the iconicity of Bad Weather and its significance to the British psyche. Yanay (2008) notes that icons are linked to the concept of collective or national memory, communicating particular national interests and values. The connotations Bad Weather carries regarding Britain's national identity are used to emphasise the poor state of Britain post-Brexit.

The weather map is a particularly resonant example of the use of the Bad Weather icon in building Britain's identity, as the focus on weather is brought to the forefront of the image. The image itself is a weather map and the copy refers to the images of the sun on the map: "If you Brexit Europe will steal all the sun." The weather map connects the weather and the Brexit decision to depict Britain's character as having skewed priorities. The text "If you Brexit Europe will steal all the sun" implies that the Brexit decision is based on how much sun Britain will get, rather than on other more practical factors –economic, social, or political. This implication invokes Bad Weather's significance as a British icon and Britons' reputation as being fixated on their weather. Yanay (2008) suggests that icons often serve as shortcuts to knowledge or generalized opinions of particular groups or countries. As the image invokes the connotations of the Britons' fixation with bad weather, it portrays the country as having skewed priorities, particularly in relation to the Brexit vote. This provides an insight into how iconography is used to construct British identity and why the majority chose to vote for Brexit, in addition to portraying how British identity would be shaped because of Brexit. The portrayal contributes to

the central theme of constructing Britain's identity, and how different aspects of British character are depicted as motivating Brexit. The Historical British Icons sub-pattern portrays Britain's history and nostalgia as motivating the Brexit vote, while in this example, Britain's reputation for fixating on the weather drives the decision, illustrating the multi-faceted nature of British character in popular culture.

Bad Weather's iconicity contributes another aspect to Britain's identity as portraying Britain as inferior to Europe. Britain's iconic rainy climate contrasts with continental Europe's reputation for sunnier climates (Geddes, 2015), and the contrast is a point of complaint that Britons have about their rain (Watson, 2015; "Why Brits always talk about the weather," 2009). These connotations are employed to portray Britain as disadvantaged and inferior compared to Europe, with the imagery contrasting Europe as filled with sun and Britain's map covered with rain. Using Bad Weather to depict Britain as dependent on the EU illustrates two different narratives emerging in the sample of British icons. The weather map carries more negative connotations of British identity - specifically poor climate and foolishness – and depicts Britain as needing the EU. In contrast, the Churchill and British Gentleman icons – which represent the positive and powerful aspects of Britain – portray Brexit as a betrayal of Britain's moral character and heritage rather than of Britain needing the EU.

6.4 Conclusion

British iconography is employed to invoke existing connotations of British popular culture and identity, to construct a narrative of Brexit and reinterpret the campaign discourse. This illustrates the significance of icons in popular culture in representing deeper meanings and representations of societal values and national identity (Ashworth, 2006; Parker, 2012). The different connotations represented by the range of sub-patterns within the pattern of British Icons, construct contrasting versions of the Brexit narrative and variations of the interplay with the referendum discourse. The Historical British Icons pattern brings forward connotations of Churchill, the British Gentleman and Big Ben, as icons of positive aspects of Britain's past, to critique leaving the EU and imply that leaving the EU contradicts Britain's glorified historical character as opposed to returning to it. The historical nature of the icons reflects the Leave campaign's glorification of the past (Enright, 2016) and undermines it, in implying that Brexit is a betrayal of the past. In contrast, the Comedic British icons pattern suggests the same message of critiquing Brexit, but through portraying the decision as in keeping with the connotations of foolishness Monty Python epitomises as a British icon. The Leave campaign discourse is likewise undermined, but through associating and paralleling it with Monty Python. Finally, the Bad Weather pattern is employed to portray Brexit as weakening Britain and the severity is emphasised through the importance of weather in British culture.

Chapter 7: Personification

7.0 Introduction

Personification was another pattern identified throughout the popular culture content of the present study. Selected examples within the pattern of Personification construct a popular culture narrative and Britain's identity particularly through the sub-pattern of Personification of Britain. The pattern is constructed through a variety of humanoid figures and entities representing Britain and instilling the country with human qualities: Britain as Dobby from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (Heymen & Columbus, 2002), Bender from *Futurama* (Bailey, 2002), Cartman from *South Park* (Hatley, 2010; Rovner, 2008), the British Countryball in the Countryballs cartoons (Procházka, 2016), the figure in the *Baton Roue* bike rider comic (Know Your Meme, 2016), and the old man in the "I Used To Rule The World" image. Personification is defined as the attribution of human qualities or characteristics to an inanimate object, abstract concept, or impersonal human being (Dodson, 2008; Nemes, 2015; Nishmura, 2014; Paxson, 1994). National personification specifically uses humanoid entities to represent countries, their citizens, or ideas of the national character (Shores, 2016). The overall pattern of Personification also encompasses the sub-pattern of the Personification of Other Nations - for example, EU is personified in the "What is going on here" meme (Know Your Meme, 2015). Nevertheless, this chapter examines the content within the sub-pattern the sub-pattern of Personification of Britain exclusively, due to its significance in the overall theme of constructing Britain's identity, although several images intersect with the Personification of Other Nations sub-pattern. Theoretical scholarship on personification will be discussed as a foundation for the analysis of the pattern and sub-patterns.

This chapter will discuss how the Personification of Britain sub-pattern connects with the overall themes of the present study's content: Building a popular culture version of the Brexit narrative, popular culture constructing British identity, and reflecting on the EU campaign discourse. The intentions behind personification and its use in popular culture impacts how these themes develop. Image creation, metaphor, anthropomorphism, and personification are commonly employed to help make sense of a reality that is abstract, incomprehensible, or frightening (Nemes, 2015). Kovecses (2010) suggests that that the personification of events occurs because people want to comprehend events as deliberate, and make sense of situations by viewing them as the result of an active and wilful agent. These uses of personification are used to construct Britain's identity and character through portraying the nation as a humanoid agent, building the Brexit narrative on an interpersonal scale, and reflecting campaign discourse

as the motivations of an understandable individual. This chapter aims to analyse this interweaving of central themes and Personification of Britain pattern in greater depth.

The sub-pattern of the Personification of Britain further divides into two sub-patterns which offer two different approaches to how popular culture constructs Britain's character and the Brexit narrative. A sub-pattern is the Personification Of Britain Through Prominent Media Characters: Dobby from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, (Heymen & Columbus, 2002), Cartman from *South Park* (Hatley, 2010; Rovner, 2008), and Bender from *Futurama* (Bailey, 2002). Brough and Shresthova (2011) and Van Zoonen (2005) both observe that a key point of the merging of politics and popular culture is using popular, fictional narratives and storytelling to engage with political discourse and inspire civic participation. In contrast, the other sub-pattern is the Personification of Britain Through Non-Prominent Media Figures. This sub-pattern personifies Britain as figures in memes, comics, and cartoons constructed outside of official media authorities and sources, for example the British Countryballs cartoon (Procházka, 2016), the figure in the *Baton Roue* bike rider comic (Know Your Meme, 2016), and the old man in the "I Used to Rule the World" image. Cohen and Kahne (2011) discuss the concept of participatory politics as large networks – often online – which enable participants to exert greater agency through circulation of political information, and give them the independence to circumvent traditional gatekeepers of information; it is social media's creation of material that does not come from elites. This chapter will examine both sub-patterns of personification in analysing how Britain's identity is constructed. The association of Britain with well-known and popular media characters parallels the approach of the Iconographic material, in which the connotations of British culture carried by British icons were linked to Britain's motivation to Brexit and its post-Brexit position. Iconography and personification employ merging popular culture and politics in a similar form to construct Britain's character and the Brexit narrative. This chapter will also aim to discuss how Personification intersects with several other recurring patterns of the content of this present study: the Leave Campaign Discourse and Stupidity, and discuss how these patterns tie into the content's major themes.

7.1 Personification through the appropriation of prominent popular media characters

Figure 7.1 Personified popular media characters. Data from *Brexit.* (2016, June 24). Retrieved from http://imgur.com and *20 Brexit Memes That Will Crack You Up,* from Jones, J. (2016, June 22). Retrieved from: https://uk.style.yahoo.com

The sub-pattern of personifying Britain through appropriating and reconstructing popular media characters is used to project a range of connotations onto Britain's national character, and build a particular popular culture Brexit narrative. There are several examples of Britain being personified through reworking popular media characters: Dobby from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets,* (Heymen & Columbus, 2002) and Cartman from *South Park* (Hatley, 2010; Rovner, 2008). Brough and Shresthova (2011) establish that meaning and criticism around politics are constructed through the use of fictional narratives and popular culture. Likewise, Tay (2015) notes that politicians or political parties are often characterised through comparisons to popular media characters**.** This approach interconnects with the use of personification, which can be used as a metaphor to deliver messages or meaning (Nemes, 2015). Nevertheless, while the approach and technique of merging popular culture and political discourse is the same – the appropriation of popular media figures – throughout the sub pattern, the variation in popular media characters and their differing connotations constructs different versions of the Brexit narrative. The examples conceptually fall under the same umbrella, but create different meanings within the same area, primarily exhibited in the connotations Dobby carries compared to Bender and Cartman.

The Personification of Britain as Dobby is evocative due to the prominence of the *Harry Potter* franchise in popular culture as a British film and books series, as the second highest grossing

movie franchise in history, the bestselling book series of all the time, and its renown on a global scale (Blake, 2002). In contrast, Cartman and Bender offer resonant examples of the Personification pattern as non-British popular media content used to construct Britain's identity, as *South Park* and *Futurama* are American television series (Bailey, 2002; Hatley, 2010; Rovner, 2008). The use of American popular media contrasts with *Harry Potter's* English setting and connotations (Blake, 2002), and with previous examples of the exclusively-British popular media content in the iconography chapter. The variation demonstrates the intercultural nature of popular culture and social media, and Brexit's global prominence beyond Britain. Additionally, the characterisation of Cartman and Bender in contrast to Dobby builds different versions of Britain's identity, and intersects with the pattern of the Leave Campaign discourse. The images of Cartman and Bender project similar meanings and connotations onto Britain's identity, primarily in framing Britain in a negative role, and reflect accusations of the Leave campaign's xenophobic discourse (Oriel, 2016; Pells, 2016), as will be discussed in greater depth. In contrast, Dobby is used to construct Britain's character as a victim and reflect the Leave campaign's arguments of the EU oppressing Britain (Martin, 2016; Rowinski, 2016). The differing messages and popular media implications present two different versions of Britain's character and reflections of the Leave campaign discourse.

In order to analyse how the examples within the sub-pattern construct Britain's character through personification, the way in which the nation of Britain is personified must be justified. All three characters are designed to intersect with the pattern of the Personification of Britain. In the "Dobby Is a Free Elf" meme, Dobby is depicted as referring to himself as Britain – "Britain has no master, Britain is a free elf"; in the "I'm going home" meme, the human cartoon figure of Cartman is labelled "The UK", and in the "We'll make our own EU" cartoon, the humanoid robot Bender is depicted stating, "**We'll** make our own EU" which, combined with the post being tagged Brexit on Imgur and posted the day after the referendum results, implies Bender is representing the UK. Therefore, they all illustrate national personification in representing a country (Shores, 2016). Additionally, the collective group of Dobby, Cartman, and Bender are portrayed with human behaviours, such as the power of speech and decision-making – announcing respectively that they will are 'free,' will 'go home' and 'make our own EU' – demonstrating personification in the attribution of human qualities or characteristics to an inanimate object, abstract concept, or impersonal human being (Dodson, 2008; Nemes, 2015; Paxson, 1994; Nishmura, 2014). A point of divergence is that Dobby also intersects with the parallel visual technique of anthropomorphism, as Britain as the character is not fully human, but a house elf with human-like actions and qualities (Doyle, 2003; Heymen & Columbus, 2002), fulfilling anthropomorphism's definition of animal-like agents taking on human characteristics

and behaviours (Hellén & Sääksjärvi, 2013; Hur & Hofmann, 2015; Jardim, 2013; May & Monga, 2014). The implications of Dobby's anthropomorphism will be considered. Having established how Britain is personified within these examples, the version of British identity and the Brexit popular culture narrative created through the intersection of personification and the character's popular media implications can be discussed.

The personification of Britain as Bender and Cartman constructs a similar version of British identity and character due to the characters carrying similar negative connotations: The *South Park* creators portray Cartman as "the dark side of everyone" with his young age enabling him to get away with offensive behaviour (Rovner, 2008), and characterised as classist, sadistic, racist, and sexist (Hatley, 2010). Bender is characterised as a criminal anti-hero and not politically correct, as he swears incessantly, gambles, is insensitive to others, and sexist, referring to 'fembots' (female robots) as bimbos and floosies (Pullen & Rhodes, 2012). The recurrence of personifying Britain as this type of character projects these negative connotations of Cartman and Bender's character onto Britain and its motivations for leaving the EU. In these examples, Cartman and Bender's unsavoury traits are associated with Britain. In contrast, the connotations of Dobby's character are employed to portray Britain as a victim. The "Dobby is a Free Elf" meme is taken from a scene in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* where Dobby – who has been enslaved and abused for the duration of the film – is freed from his masters by the hero, as emphasised through the text "Dobby is a **free** elf" (Heymen & Columbus, 2002). Personifying "Britain" as Dobby parallels the events of Brexit with the narrative of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* and Dobby's role as the victim. Dodson (2008) explores the concept of "representative personification" using personification to highlight a particular attribute or aspect of the article they're representing, which is used with Dobby to emphasise Britain's vulnerability. In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Dobby's anthropomorphic design was animated to emphasise his vulnerability and enslaved status. For example, he had a bowed posture (Doyle, 2003) and he possessed anthropomorphic attributes that particularly trigger sympathy from audiences: small stature, big eyes, and similar to humans (Connell, 2013; Jardim, 2013; Keen, 2011). In personifying and anthropomorphising Britain as Dobby, these attributes are associated with Britain. This ties in with the overall themes of using popular culture to construct Britain's identity, build a Brexit narrative, and reflect the campaign discourse, as Dobby portrays Britain as a victim, thereby simplifying a political decision (the EU referendum) into a narrative of oppression in reflection of the Leave campaign's discourse. Overall, the sub-pattern constructs two versions of Britain's character and the Brexit narrative, with Britain characterised as offensive and unsavoury through the connotations of the Cartman and Bender characters, but framed as a victim via the Dobby role. The contrast demonstrates how well-

known popular characters' specific connotations can portray Britain differently, and the complexity of the popular culture content in constructing conflicting – rather than universal – narratives of Brexit.

Bender and Cartman intersect with the pattern of the Leave Campaign Discourse, specifically the images reflect accusations that the Leave campaign and voters were driven by racism, xenophobia, and hate for minorities, and that the campaign focused on stoking fears around immigration (Oriel, 2016; Pells, 2016). As discussed, Bender and Cartman carry connotations as politically incorrect and bigoted characters (Hatley, 2010; Pullen & Rhodes, 2012), with Cartman in particular labelled in-universe as manipulative, bigoted, and intolerant (Parker, 2005). These connotations of bigotry attached to the characters could be reproducing a popular culture variation of the Leave campaign's discourse, and using Cartman and Bender to reflect the accusations that the Leave vote was driven by prejudice. This message reflects the central theme of popular culture interplaying with referendum discourse and invokes 'personification allegory': communicating messages or principles through personification (Melion & Ramakers, 2016). Personification softens the gravity of these accusations as personification provides psychological distance from issues and events that people are not comfortable addressing directly, and can shift the focus and responsibility in order to challenge behaviour and concepts (Jardim, 2013; Nishmura, 2014). Using Cartman and Bender's bigoted characters to personify Britain leaving the EU criticises the Leave decision, but from a removed viewpoint rather than directly. The pattern of the Leave Campaign Discourse is present, but personification and the associations of their characters in popular media are used to offer subtle critique of the campaign content and Brexit decision, illustrating a central way in which popular culture and political discourse merge.

Alternatively, the parallels between Cartman, Bender and the Leave campaign may be highlighting a different aspect of the political discourse – the attraction of the Leave campaign's aversion to political correctness – rather than solely criticising it. Oriel (2016) argues that the Brexit vote succeeded because it offered people an escape from politically correct "fanaticism." Rovner (2008) suggests that Cartman's popularity and iconicity in popular culture are because of how his offensive he is, and that his politically incorrect behaviour delights viewers. *South Park* itself is iconic in popular culture for being lowbrow, crude, dark, and 'punkishly rude' (Lim, 1998). Likewise, Bender has repeatedly been singled out for praise for his lack of boundaries (Pullen & Rhodes, 2012). Therefore, Cartman and Bender's connotations of rudeness and not being politically correct may not be critiquing the Leave campaign, but connecting the appeal of the Leave campaign discourse with the appeal of the characters. The connotations of the

characters reflect and interact with multiple aspects of the referendum discourse, and so this is a case of popular culture being used to explain and illustrate why Britain voted to Leave.

Dobby also intersects with the Leave campaign discourse pattern, but reflects a different aspect by highlighting the message of needing to 'take' the country back from the EU (Martin, 2016; Rowinski, 2016). The Leave campaign – particularly leading figures Michael Gove, Boris Johnson, and Nigel Farage – promoted a narrative of EU tyranny, invoking imagery of the EU as kidnapping and holding the UK hostage, paralleling the EU's geopolitical ambitions to Nazism and migrants "invading" Britain from Europe (Martin, 2016). The narrative was echoed in right wing news coverage which built a discourse around regaining control and depicting the EU as undemocratic, forcing immigrants on the country and destroying Britain's jobs and public services (Rowinski, 2016). Dobby reflects this Leave campaign's discourse of EU oppression in invoking the quote "Britain is a *free* elf" which was adapted from the original scene depicting the enslaved Dobby being released from his abusive masters (Carey, 2003; Heymen & Columbus, 2002). Therefore, Dobby – representing Britain – is used as a mouthpiece for this Leave campaign discourse. The narrative of oppression and slavery in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (Carey, 2003; Heymen & Columbus, 2002) is paralleled with the discourse of oppression in the Leave campaign (Martin, 2016; Rowinski, 2016). This connects into the overarching theme of the popular culture content interplaying with the official referendum messaging, and indicates how different examples within the same sub-pattern reflect contrasting aspects of the campaign. Additionally, the previously discussed approach of using Dobby to characterise Britain as a victim is reinforced by the Leave campaign context.

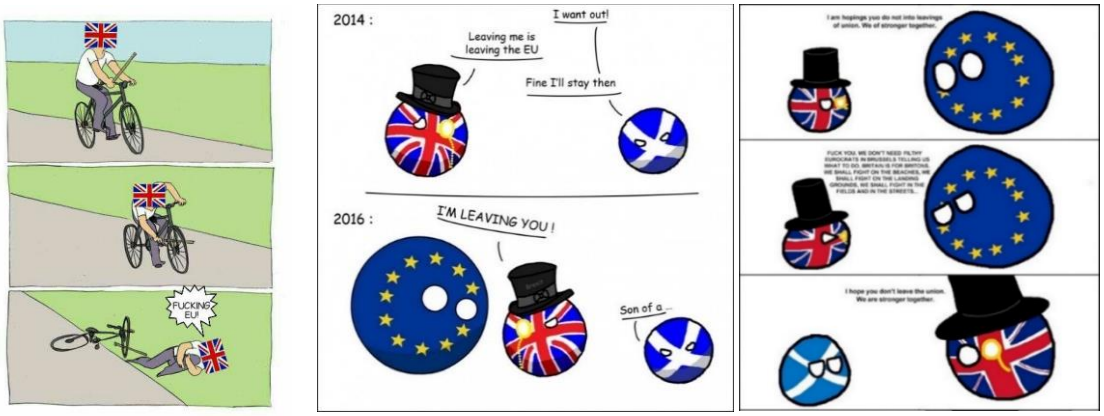
Dobby and *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*' version of British identity also intersects with the recurring pattern of Stupidity. In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets,* Dobby – despite being an ally of the titular hero – was characterised as misguided and simple-minded, with his efforts to save the hero almost getting him killed (Heymen & Columbus, 2002). Throughout the film and book series, House Elves, including Dobby, are characterised as less intellectually or emotionally able, struggle to take care of themselves, cannot dress properly, lack self-control (Carey, 2003), and are taken advantage of by the more capable humans (Rowling, 1998). As with the case of Bender and Cartman, personifying Britain as the character of Dobby portrays Britain in the character's role. The portrayal of Dobby as both foolish and vulnerable in this example illustrates the complex nature of the construction of Britain's Brexit-related identity through popular culture. Additionally, the portrayal of Britain as a foolish figure illustrates another example of the Leave Campaign discourse. The Leave campaign's narrative of an oppressive EU – echoed by Dobby – was criticised for misleading voters (Foster, 2016; Powers, 2016), and a popular perception after the referendum was that the Leave campaign and

political operators 'duped' ignorant and uneducated Leave voters with misinformation (Farage, 2017; "Farage Shoots Down Claim He Duped Working Class Voters", 2017; Farron, 2016; Skey, 2016). The portrayal of Dobby, a simple-minded figure, as believing this discourse reflects this political context and debate, again illustrating how popular media is used to construct a Brexit narrative contrary to official political sources.

Overall, Cartman, Bender, and Dobby employ the same techniques of constructing Britain's identity through personifying Britain as a well-known popular character. Nevertheless, while coming under the same sub-pattern, they construct contrasting versions of Britain's identity and reflect differing aspects of the Leave campaign discourse. Bender and Cartman's connotations as bigoted and xenophobic characters in popular culture (Hatley, 2010; Pullen & Rhodes, 2012) portray Britain's character as unsavoury and in the wrong, and reflects the accusations of racial discourse levelled at the Leave campaign (Oriel, 2016; Pells, 2016) with both positive and negative judgements. In contrast, Dobby's abuse in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (Heymen & Columbus, 2002) characterises both Britain as a victim in the narrative and reflects the Leave campaign's argument that the EU has oppressed Britain (Martin, 2016). On the other hand, Dobby's characterisation as naïve and misguided also reinterprets accusations of the Leave campaign misleading voters (Foster, 2016; Powers, 2016), demonstrating the layers of meaning. The sub-pattern collectively illustrates the overarching theme of popular culture and political discourse becoming one, in projecting popular media connotations and narratives onto the political Brexit events, as demonstrated in the iconographic content.

7.2 Personification through the editing and reproduction of content

Figure 7.2 Non-popular media characters personified. Data from *Brexit.* (2016, June 24). Retrieved from http://imgur.com and *20 Brexit Memes That Will Crack You Up,* from Jones, J. (2016, June 22). Retrieved from: https://uk.style.yahoo.com



The pattern of personifying Britain includes a sub-pattern of Personifying Britain Through Non-Prominent Media Figure, which personifies Britain through content created, reproduced, and edited outside of official media sources and authorities. The examples identified in this sub-pattern are the Baton Roue comic (Know Your Meme, 2016), Countryball cartoons (Procházka, 2016), and the image of Britain as an old man. The sub-pattern uses personification to build Britain's identity and construct a popular culture Brexit narrative in a unique form, specific to the edited content and the Brexit context. Jenkins (2006b) observes that new media technologies have expanded participatory culture in making it possible for average consumers to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content, and develop Do-It-Yourself media production. Tay (2015) notes that participatory culture online has shaped politics, particularly political campaigns, through content created online via blogs, memes, and videos. The examples within this sub-pattern reflect this scholarship, as the images all originated online and were reproduced outside of the official media sources. The Baton Roue comic originated as a photo shop edit from a webcomic and was reproduced extensively across social media to reflect a variety of world events (Know Your Meme, 2016). The Countryball cartoons are a global internet phenomenon, with a wide range of popular websites dedicated to portraying this type of internet meme to depict international events (Procházka, 2016), and the image of the old man has been edited and reproduced as a meme in different forms across a range of sites and social media domains (Favourite Memes, 2015). Collectively, the examples reflect and interplay with the EU campaign discourse through the use of personification in independent media creations, as opposed to creating meaning through reinterpreting well-known media characters from official media, as discussed in the previous sub-pattern.

In order to discuss how Britain's identity is constructed through personification within this sub-pattern, the way in which Britain is personified throughout the examples must be established as a foundation. The Baton Roue cartoon figure's face is replaced with the British flag, and likewise the old man image depicts three figures whose faces are replaced with the British, American, and Canadian flags respectively (Shores, 2016). This illustrates physical personification in a non-human entity taking on a human face or self (Melion & Ramakers, 2016). The Countryballs are identified with the British, Scottish, and EU flags (Europa, 2016), indicating they represent the respective countries and organisation. The Baton Roue figure, old man, and Countryballs are

all depicted with human-like qualities: emotions, the power of speech, and decision-making abilities. For example, the Countryballs and Baton Roue figure portray Britain as insulting the EU in text - "Fucking EU", "Fuck you, we don't need filthy Eurocrats", and "I'm leaving you" - while the old man figures are depicted as dwelling on memories: "I used to rule the world you know". The portrayal demonstrates the definition of personification in giving human behavioural qualities and mental processes to a non-human entity (Melion & Ramakers, 2016; Paxson, 1994; Nemes & Berariu, 2014). The Baton Roue comic and Countryball cartoons are particularly evocative examples of this sub-pattern, as both have a history of being used and reproduced to create meaning around current events. The Baton Roue comic has been used to criticise countries and political figures (Know Your Meme, 2016), and Countryball cartoons were repeatedly used to depict national and cultural stereotypes as individuals and provide a unique platform for expressing views on international relations and events (Procházka, 2016). As such, this section will discuss them in greater detail individually.

The Personifying Britain Through Non-Prominent Media Figure sub-pattern collectively employs personification and the reproduction of media to portray the Brexit narrative on a human and interpersonal level. The Baton Roue cartoon figure depicts a mundane situation of falling off a bike, and the Countryballs refer to each other on an individual level and talk in first person rather than acknowledging each other as countries; for example, "I am hopings [sic]…" The old man image depicts the international relations as a familial relationship, with the personified America referring to Britain as "Dad." The depiction simplifies the long-term consequences on an international scale of the decision voted on by a significant proportion of the adult population of Britain (Calamur, 2016; Withnall, 2016), and a forty-year relationship between Britain and the EU (Daddow, 2016; Grant, 2008; Helm, 2016; Mason, 2016) to individual conflicts and actions. This simplification relates to discussions of the use of personification, as personification is used to make sense of the world by bringing events and concepts down to human motivations and actions (Kovecses, 2010; Nemes, 2015). Additionally, portraying the events of Brexit on an interpersonal level relates to Tay's (2015) discussion of how media created outside of the dominant culture changes the nature of political discourse and can focus on seemingly inconsequential details and personality traits as opposed to official discourse.

The Baton Roue and Countryball cartoons depict the motivations for Brexit via interaction with the Leave Campaign Discourse pattern in reflecting the anti-EU sentiment of the Leave campaign (Rowinski, 2016). The Leave campaign was driven by vehement and aggressive anti-EU sentiment and heated discourse that Britain needed to rescue itself from EU oppression (Martin, 2016; Rowinski, 2016). The campaign pinned blame for the UK's slow recovery from

the recession and disappearing public services on the EU and migrants (Powers, 2016). As discussed in the context chapter, the campaign built on years of negative sentiment and on politicians using the EU as a scapegoat ("Politicians used the EU as a scapegoat for forty years", 2017) and the Leave campaign was criticised for this approach with accusations they were unfairly scapegoating the EU for Britain's problems (Foster, 2016; Powers, 2016). Stacy (2016) notes the Leave campaign repeatedly blamed Britain's economic problems and lack of public services on the EU and immigrants, which were in fact due to British government policies. This argument was echoed by Labour party leader Jeremy Corbyn (Cordon, 2017). Both the Baton Roue and Countryball cartoons reflect and reinterpret this discourse in using Britain's personified human behaviour to portray Britain as unjustifiably criticising the EU. In the Baton Roue comic, the British figure is portrayed as blaming the EU when the figure tripped itself up, communicated through "Britain" swearing "Fucking EU". The comic was tagged 'Brexit 'on Imgur and posted the day after the EU referendum result, linking Britain's portrayal of swearing at the EU with Britain's motivation for Brexit. In the Countryball cartoons, the British Countryball is portrayed as insulting the EU with no provocation, with dialogue such as: "I'M LEAVING YOU!" and "FUCK YOU, WE DON'T NEED FILTHY EUOCRATS IN BRUSSELS TELLING US WHAT TO DO." This repeated depiction of the personified Britain mistreating the EU, reflects and reinterprets the Leave campaign's anti-EU discourse. Personification and Britain's human behavioural qualities are used to depict and exaggerate the anti-EU sentiment that existed in official political discourse, demonstrating how personification can be used as a form of allegory to create extended metaphors to deliver certain messages, points of view, or arguments (Dodson, 2008; Nemes, 2015). The reinterpretation of the anti-EU political discourse present throughout all three cartoons ties into the central theme of building a popular culture Brexit narrative and Britain's character in relation to Brexit. The meaning behind the collective depiction of Britain in the cartoons implies that the Leave vote was driven by Britain's baseless dislike of the EU, and characterises Britain's character as mistreating the EU. In all three examples, the portrayal of Britain as unjustifiably insulting the EU – in a reinterpretation of the Leave campaign discourse – characterises Britain as rude and in the wrong. This mirrors the version of Britain's character portrayed through Bender and Cartman in the previous section, demonstrating the connected meaning and construction of British identity across the whole Personification pattern.

The background of the Baton Roue comic and Countryballs cartoons, and how they have been reproduced in the past, contributes to the construction of Britain's identity. The Baton Roue comic has been edited and reproduced across social media to imply certain groups or people – particularly in politics – are hypocritical and projecting blame for their own actions onto

innocent parties (Know Your Meme, 2016). For example, the cartoon has at times inserted Donald Trump or the Greek flag in the place of the main cartoon figure, blaming Mexicans (Trump)and the EU (Greece) for tripping them up, in reference to criticisms of Mexicans and the EU (Know Your Meme, 2016). Countryballs offers commentary on geopolitical events removed from proper diplomacy and appropriateness (Procházka, 2016). Procházka (2016) observes that Countryballs are an antithesis to political correctness and derive their humour from the absence of decorum, avoiding linguistic appropriateness, and whose content disregards the notions of diplomacy. The social media background and use of the cartoons on social media reinforces the implication that Brexit was driven by Britain's vilification of the EU and the characterisation of Britain as mistreating the EU. Baton Roue's use of portraying groups pinning the blame on innocent parties, reinforces the implication that Brexit was driven by Britain's vilification and scapegoating of the EU. The anti-pc nature of the Countryballs cartoons is employed to depict Britain as particularly insulting and aggressive towards the EU; for instance, the repeated swearing at the EU throughout all the examples. This connects with the central theme of popular culture and political discourse merging, and using popular culture to depict the Brexit narrative. The portrayal of Britain as maltreating the EU builds on the cartoon's popular media background and offers an alternative construction of Britain's identity. Overall, the overlap of popular culture and politics illustrates Jenkins' (2006b) argument that the internet enables consumers to create "collective meaning" of popular culture, and deploy it in serious forms, defining religion, education, and politics (p.4). The cartoons reinterpret the Leave campaign discourse and depict a popular culture version of the Brexit events. The cartoons become the criticisms and political discourse itself, merging politics and popular culture.

Overall, the sub-pattern of personifying Britain through content created outside of official media sources constructs an interpersonal version of the Brexit narrative and Britain's relationship with other nations. Britain's character is constructed primarily through the content itself, as opposed to invoking the connotations of well-known popular characters as discussed in the previous section, or British iconographic implications as discussed in the previous chapter. The Baton Roue comic and Countryballs reflect the Leave campaign's vilification of the EU (Martin, 2016; Rowinski, 2016), and depict Britain as mistreating the EU. Thus, they are offering a specific version of the Brexit narrative constructed through a sub-pattern of personification via the editing and reproduction of content.

7.3 Conclusion

The pattern of Personification constructs a popular culture narrative of Brexit on an interpersonal and individual scale, invoking how personification is used to portray simplified events on a personal level (Kovecses, 2010; Nemes, 2015). Personification is used to portray of

Britain as mistreating the EU, message that is reinforced through a range of popular culture connotations of both prominent popular media characters and reproduced content of non-popular media characters. The pattern of Leave Campaign Discourse is depicted through a variety of popular culture content – *South Park, Futurama, Harry Potter,* the Baton Roue comic and Countryballs – to predominantly highlight the negative attributes and aspects of the campaign. For example, accusations of bigotry (Oriel, 2016; Pells, 2016) and misleading voters (Farron, 2016; Skey, 2016), and these aspects are attributed to Britain's character specifically. The variety of popular culture content contrasts with the British-centric popular culture content present in the iconographic materials. Nevertheless, the pattern of Personification echoes the British Icons pattern in constructing a popular culture Brexit narrative in which Brexit is depicted as being motivated by negative aspects of Britain's character and which undermines the Leave campaign discourse. This illustrates how the differing aspects of popular culture examined are essentially two sides of the same coin in constructing the Brexit narrative.

CHAPTER 8: CONSEQUENCES

8.0 Introduction

The pattern of Consequences was a dominant pattern identified in the popular culture materials of the present study, making it an evocative pattern to analyse in the construction of the Brexit narrative and Britain's identity. The pattern of Consequences encompasses two sub-patterns: Negative Consequences and Positive Consequences. Negative Consequences encompassed a wide range of imagery: loss in a financial form, for example 50 Cent and the British flag which "lost pounds fast"; loss of possessions, illustrated by the image of cats losing their EU pet passports; expressing negative reactions or sentiment, such as "I'll kill myself" and "Now I'm sad Britain is leaving the EU"; depictions of oncoming danger, for example the "British memes are coming" image; depictions of loss of power, such as "I *used* to rule the world"; physical harm, such as falling off a bike; and Brexit resulting in bad weather. Positive Consequences is a more limited sub-pattern, communicated through imagery of good weather and Britain gaining freedom. This chapter will analyse how the pattern of Consequences ties into the overall theme of constructing a popular culture narrative in portraying the outcome of the Brexit decision, and constructs Britain's identity through depicting the impact leaving the EU will have on Britain's character, status, and position.

The pattern of Consequences is communicated through intersection with the patterns of British Empire, Weather, and British Brands. A framework of scholarship on British imperialism and nostalgia will be covered in order to frame this discussion and how the patterns tie into the central themes. The British Empire pattern is used to construct Britain's identity through associating the Consequences pattern with the nation's imperial identity and power, and ties into the central theme of reflecting campaign discourse through popular culture. The pattern of British Empire is linked to the pattern of Leave Campaign Discourse, in echoing the Leave campaign's imperialistic discourse of British sovereignty (Enright, 2016). A contextual framework of this imperialistic discourse will be established in order to discuss how it was reflected through the popular culture content. Scholarship on nostalgia – collective or communal longing for the past and better times (Atia & Davies, 2010; Wilson, 2005) – provides a foundation to analyse the patterns of British Empire and Leave Campaign Discourse.

The Weather pattern uses the weather as a popular media technique to depict the negative or positive state of Britain as a consequence of Brexit. The approach reflects Danesi's (2015) observation that the 'online stage' now encompasses everything and transforms everything, particularly religion and politics, into entertainment. British brands are an example of another

type of popular culture content with connotations of British identity being projected onto the events of Brexit to construct a narrative of the Brexit campaign. This tactic illustrates Jenkins' (2006) discussion of how convergence across media platforms is creating collective meaning-making and changing the way politics operates and Tay's (2015) observation that through the internet, individuals often come up with their own interpretations of politics, news, and current events.

8.1 Consequences and British Empire

Figure 8.1 Consequences and British Empire images. Data from *Brexit.* (2016, June 24). Retrieved from http://imgur.com and *20 Brexit Memes That Will Crack You Up,* from Jones, J. (2016, June 22). Retrieved from: https://uk.style.yahoo.com

The pattern of Consequences constructs the Brexit narrative and Britain's character via an interaction with the pattern of the British Empire in several examples in the present study's content. The examples that construct this messaging are the Mystery Box meme, the image of Britain as an old man, and the "British Memes are Coming" meme. This section will discuss how this collection of images depicts the pattern of British Empire through a variety of different visuals, copy, and popular culture connotations, and interweaves the Consequences pattern with the connotation of British Empire. On a wider scale, the pattern of British Empire is present in four other images in the overall content: Churchill, the two British Gentleman Countryball cartoons, and the Union Jack "Colonizes Half the World" image. These three images do not intersect with the pattern of the Consequences, nonetheless the examples are representative of the construction of Britain's identity in relation to its past imperialism. Therefore, they are mentioned to provide context for the analysis of the selected content.

British power and imperialism dominated British national identity during the days of the British Empire – spanning from the late 17th century to mid-20th century – forming a shared consciousness throughout the British population (Go, 2011; Gould, 2011). Imperialism penetrated the British people's everyday life and outlook in both high and low culture (Kumar, 2003). Kumar (2003) argues that the British Empire and superiority are still key facets of contemporary British identity, and characterises the way the English conceive their position and influence in the world. Likewise, Olusoga (2017) notes that Britain has a long, vague notion that the country might one day reassemble the remains of their former empire. Therefore, due to imperialism's place as a key facet of British culture and public consciousness, the British Empire is a particularly resonant pattern to examine in its influence on the central theme of constructing Britain's identity in relation to Brexit, and the pattern of Consequences in constructing the Brexit narrative.

The British Empire pattern manifests in a range of different forms and popular culture connotations. The Mystery box meme, the image of Britain as an old man, and the "Colonizes Half the World" flag reflect the pattern of British Empire through the copy itself: "Well UK you can remain a *big player* in Europe and the world", "I used to *rule the world* you know" and "*Colonizes half the world*, complains about immigrants" respectively. In contrast, the other examples communicate the pattern of British Empire through imagery with connotations of British imperialism: Churchill is tied to a period of British Empire and glory in World War II (Richards, 1997), and the British Gentleman archetype is representative of past, pre-World Wars sovereign Britain and its imperial legacy (Richards, 1997; Rojek, 2007). The "British Memes are Coming" meme is a variation of "The British are Coming" meme, with connotations connected to Britain's actions to retain control of their empire during the American Revolutionary War (Miller, 2010). Churchill and the British Gentleman intersect with the British Icon pattern discussed in the iconographic chapter, in which Britain's identity was defined through the implications they carried as British Icons. The merging between the British Icons pattern and British Empire pattern illustrates the interconnectedness of the content in constructing Britain's identity. The predominance of the British Empire pattern as a whole throughout the content illustrates the centrality of imperialism in the overall theme of constructing Britain's identity. Specifically, the discussed examples which portray both the Consequences and British Empire patterns hinge on connotations of Britain's imperial identity to depict the state of Britain as a result of leaving the EU. This illustrates the importance of the British Empire in depicting Britain's identity post-Brexit.

The pattern of British Empire and its connection with the Consequences pattern connects to the central theme of reflecting political discourse. The pattern intersects with the pattern of Leave

Campaign Discourse through mirroring the Leave campaign's imperialistic messaging of British sovereignty (Enright, 2016). The Leave campaign was driven by messages of British Empire, sovereignty, and Britain's superiority to mainland Europe (Calhoun, 2016; Enright; 2016; Hoyle, 2017; Rodriguez & Nakagawa, 2016). Andrews (2017) argues that Brexit voters still view Britain as an empire, while Calhoun (2016) and Lamb (2016) suggest the vote was driven by the belief Brexit would return the country to its former empire without needing to depend on the EU. The Leave campaign was criticised for being driven by idealised nostalgia of Britain's past imperialism, and separated from the reality of what the empire truly entailed (Andrews, 2017; Hoyle, 2017; Lamb, 2017). Wilson (2005) establishes that nostalgia is politicised, as it is a site of conflict in defining what is of value to a nation and therefore what its goals should be. Brexit voters romanticised the days of imperialism when Britain ruled supreme and, in reality, were voting to salvage the British Empire (Critical Legal Thinking, 2016; Hoyle, 2017; Olusoga, 2017). The pattern of British Empire intersects with the pattern of Leave Campaign Discourse in portraying the Leave campaign's imperialistic and nostalgic discourse (Andrews, 2017) through popular culture content, thus illustrating the central theme of how popular culture reflects and interplays with the official campaign discourse.

Of the collective British Empire images, which intersect with the Consequences pattern, the Mystery Box meme and "I Used to Rule the World" image are particularly evocative and construct a shared narrative of Brexit being connected to the fall of the British Empire, tying significantly into the central theme of building Britain's identity and the Brexit narrative. The two are particularly evocative for several reasons. Both examples are resonant in bringing the British Empire pattern and fall of the British Empire message to the forefront through the texts "…remain a Big Player in Europe" and "I Used to Rule the World." The pair also provides a range of examples of the two different ways in which political culture and popular culture merge, as discussed in the Personification chapter: On one hand the approach of creating meaning through reproducing of content created outside of official media sources and on the other hand creating meaning through prominent popular media characters. The Old Man is an image generated outside of mainstream, official popular media sources, illustrating an example of the first approach. The Mystery Box meme is an example of both approaches: It reproduces edited content outside of official media source, as the "Mystery Box" meme has been edited and shared (Meme Generator, 2016; We Know Memes, 2014) and uses both a prominent popular media character of Mr Burns from *The Simpsons* (Turner, 2012). *The Simpsons* also offers particularly significant meaning due to its prominence in popular culture as the longest-running American sitcom and animated series (Turner, 2012). It is also credited as a pop phenomenon; opened new avenues for comedy and animation; and characters, idioms, and catchphrases from the

show have become central to popular culture (Ortved, 2007). Analysing a range of popular culture approaches provides a comprehensive analysis of the different ways in which popular culture reflects the official political discourse, and specifically portrays the Consequences of Brexit in relation to Britain's imperial identity. This echoes the two different approaches discussed in the Personification chapter.

The Old Man image depicts Britain as a fallen empire in connection to Brexit. Britain is characterised as an elderly man, identified by the Union Jack being supported by figures representing the United States and Canada, identified by the countries' respective flags (Shores, 2016). Britain, as the old man, is depicted as elderly and weak and needing assistance from Canada and America. The portrayal of Britain suggests Britain is past its prime and lacking strength and power, and reliant on Canada and America. The image associates Britain's fallen state specifically with leaving the EU, as the post was tagged 'Brexit' on Imgur and posted on June 24th 2016, the day after the EU referendum result. Significantly, the image links the portrayal of Britain as an old man needing assistance with the fall of Britain's empire through the text "I used to rule the world you know," alluding to the era of British colonialism when Britain governed a quarter of the world's population and a quarter of the Earth's land surface (Ferguson, 2012), and was the world's preeminent military and economic power (Go, 2011). Therefore, the negative state of Britain portrayed through the old man is not only depicted in the context of Brexit and its consequences, but explicitly as a fall from Britain's former status as a world empire.

The Mystery Box meme interconnects with the patterns of Consequences and British Empire in suggesting that Britain is still a major world power and Brexit risks losing that power. The text "Well UK, you can *remain* a big player in Europe and the world" frames Britain as a major authority with something to lose. The meme characterises Britain's identity through implying Britain currently has power, empire, and influence in the world, and that Brexit would risk losing it rather than strengthening their position. The implication that Britain could lose its imperial power due to Brexit is communicated through the popular culture context and background of Mr Burns and *The Simpsons.* The offer to leave the EU is framed as an offer by Mr Burns in episode 3x05 of *The Simpsons* in which the character uses his "mystery box" offer to trick some nuclear inspectors (Reardon, 1993). The mystery box has become a meme used to present an obvious choice between a good option versus the unknown, which is implied to be the foolish choice (Meme Generator, 2016; We Know Memes, 2014). Therefore, the popular culture background implies Brexit will certainly have negative consequences for Britain and will lose their empire and status as "a big player in Europe and the world." The implications that Britain will definitely lose its empire and status as a world power are communicated through

the popular culture context. The "Mystery Box" illustrates that Brexit is trading off a stable deal for the unknown offered by an unreliable source, and therefore Brexit will have negative Consequences on Britain. Overall, both the Old Man image and the Mystery Box meme use the patterns of British Empire and Consequences to portray Britain as a former empire, and the events of Brexit as the fall of British imperialism, tying into the wider societal connections of Britain's imperialistic identity (Kumar, 2003). The negative consequences are connected to the loss of British imperial identity and damaging what Britain has achieved in the past.

The Mystery Box meme and the Old Man image portray the Consequences pattern in conjunction with the pattern of the Leave Campaign Discourse, in echoing the Leave Campaign's message that Brexit will reclaim the British empire (Enright, 2016) through notions of nostalgia for British imperialism (Andrews, 2017; Hoyle, 2017; Lamb, 2017). In the Mystery Box meme, Mr Burns is portrayed as offering the "Leave the EU" mystery box; in the original scene of *The Simpsons*, Mr Burns is depicted as wanting the mystery box to be selected (Reardon, 1993; Meme Generator, 2016; We Know Memes, 2014). Therefore, Mr Burns is implied to represent the Leave campaign and its politicians who campaigned for Britain to leave the EU. However, as established above, the Mystery Box implies that leaving the EU will cause Britain to lose what power it does hold - "Well UK you can *remain* a big player in Europe and the World" - through the context of the original meme and episode, which depicted the mystery box offer as trickery (Meme Generator, 2016; Reardon, 1993; We Know Memes, 2014). Therefore, the Mystery Box meme undermines the Leave campaign in framing their aims as harming what power Britain does hold. There is an implied irony that the side that is driven by nostalgia for past power and re-establishing imperial British identity (Leave) will damage what power and reputation Britain does have on the international stage. The irony continues with the implication that the Brexit voter's focus on Britain's glorious past is what will destroy Britain's legacy.

The imagery of the Old Man reinterprets the Leave campaign's nostalgic discourse and desire to return to Britain's past empire by depicting Britain as having a distorted view of its position in the world. The image portrays Britain's fixation on its past power – "I used to the rule the world" – and contrasts it with the depiction of the reality of Britain's situation: an old man needing to be assisted in moving around. Through this portrayal, the image implies that Britain has a distorted view of its current situation, and is consumed by nostalgia for its past glory rather than acknowledging its present weakness. The portrayal ties in the criticisms of the Leave campaign having a distorted perception of their current power in the world (Rachman, 2017) with connotations of Britain's collective nostalgia for past imperial power and superiority (Andrews, 2017; Kumar, 2003; Tannock, 2006). This illustrates the central theme of reflecting the political context through popular culture content, and popular culture content becoming

political discourse of its own. Britain's status as a former empire and the negative Consequences of a fall from glory are emphasised through being portrayed as fixated on its past glory, as communicated through the American figure replying to Britain's "I used to the rule the world you know" comment with "Ok Dad", indicating pity and the humouring of Britain's claims. Overall, both images' reflection of the Leave campaign's nostalgia is used to highlight the negative consequences of Brexit. Popular culture is used to portray the events of Brexit as a narrative of Brexit resulting in the fall of the British Empire, and characterising Britain's identity as a fallen empire which undermines the Leave campaign's discourse of Brexit returning British sovereignty (Hoyle, 2017; Rodriguez & Nakagawa, 2016). This approach ties into the central theme of popular culture content merging with political sources, and thus it becoming one and the same with political discourse.

8.2 Consequences and Weather

Figure 8.2 Consequences and Weather images. Data from *Brexit.* (2016, June 24). Retrieved from http://imgur.com and *20 Brexit Memes That Will Crack You Up,* from Jones, J. (2016, June 22). Retrieved from: https://uk.style.yahoo.com

A select collection of images within the Consequences pattern intersects with the pattern of Weather: the weather map, Big Ben's "Does Exactly What It Says on the Tin" image, and the Brexit Weetabix brand (Moore-Gilbert & Seed, 2005). Notably, throughout the content, all three images which feature weather imagery are also present within the Consequences pattern, demonstrating how the weather is repeatedly used to depict the Consequences of Brexit on Britain. The prominence of the weather within the Consequences pattern reflects a specific aspect of how the Consequences of Brexit are portrayed, and thus will be discussed in detail. This section will analyse the Weather sub-sect of the Consequences pattern, and discuss how the use of Weather in popular media influences the depiction of the consequences of Brexit. The contribution of this sub-sect of images to the overarching theme of constructing Britain's identity and the Brexit narrative will also be discussed, specifically in regards to how the

weather is used to portray Britain's status – positive and negative – as a consequence of Brexit. Due to the small size of the Weather pattern, all three images will be discussed in-depth. The weather imagery also intersects with the Bad Weather sub-pattern discussed in the iconography chapter. However, in the context of the Consequences pattern, Weather is used as a popular media technique to reflect the state of situations used to communicate Britain's identity, whereas in the iconography chapter, the implications of "Bad Weather" as a British icon are discussed. This illustrates the range of approaches in constructing Britain's identity and the multi-faceted nature of the popular culture content of the present study.

A framework of how weather is used in popular media will be established in order to analyse the use of Weather to portray the consequences of Brexit for Britain. McKim (2013) establishes that the weather is commonly used in popular media to reflect the mood of situations and settings; for example, dramatic situations in wind or storms. Weather in the media is used to reflect a character's emotional state and feelings, which changes in accordance to their mood (McKim, 2013). McKim emphasises the importance of "the connectedness between film and the world through atmospheric conditions; to appreciate how film weather can meaningfully impact narrative, style and audience" (p. 9). This tactic is used in multiple examples in the media, including in the television series *Downton Abbey,* and in literature classics such as *The Great Gatsby* and Jane Austen's works (McKim, 2002). This popular media approach has been used to depict the state of Britain in relation to, and as a consequence of Brexit, which parallels the pattern of Personification discussed in the previous chapter where the media technique of personification (d'Astous & Boujbel, 2007) was used to construct Britain's identity. The recurrence of popular media techniques being used to construct an independent Brexit narrative, separate from official political sources, illustrates the central theme of popular culture merging with political discourse.

The three examples employ different types of weather to depict a range of consequences for Britain: The Big Ben example features London in a rainy and overcast setting, reflecting how rain is used in popular media to establish a morose or depressed mood (McKim, 2013), and indicating Brexit will have negative consequences for Britain. This message is emphasised through the text: "Brexit does exactly what it says on the tin", thereby associating the bad weather – and implied negative connotations – with Brexit itself. Similarly, the weather map uses imagery of both the sun and rain to communicate the negative consequences of Brexit for Britain, in depicting Britain covered in rain and Europe in sun. The copy highlights the message of the rain, implying Brexit will have negative consequences for Britain: "If you Brexit Europe will steal all the sun." The use of sunny weather in the media reflecting positive situations (McKim, 2013) is explicitly referred to, emphasising the intentionality of this media approach in

the material. In contrast, the Brexit Weetabix brand employs imagery of good weather and sun in conjunction with the tagline "Brexit" and a photo of Nigel Farage, a prominent figure in the Leave campaign (Bennett, 2016). Sunny weather is specifically used across multi-media to reflect positivity or uplifting situations (McKim, 2013). Portraying Brexit and a Leave campaign figure in association with good weather implies Brexit will have positive consequences for Britain. The portrayal of Brexit having positive consequences for Britain contrasts with the negative consequences communicated through the bad weather in the previous two examples. The contrast of the negative consequences of Brexit communicated by the rain in the Big Ben and weather map images, compared to the positive consequences communicated by the sunny weather in the Weetabix example, demonstrate the differing narratives of Brexit constructed through the Consequences pattern and, the different versions of Britain's identity. The Big Ben and weather map images, in depicting Brexit as having negative consequences for Britain, portray Britain's character at a disadvantage without the EU. In contrast, the Weetabix Brexit imagery, in portraying positive consequences, constructs Britain's character as benefiting from separating from Europe, and therefore portrays a stronger version of Britain. The Consequences pattern therefore constructs Britain's identity in portraying the impact Brexit has on the nation's position and status.

The weather map intersects with the pattern of Remain Campaign Discourse, deviating from the predominance of the Leave campaign discourse pattern. The Remain campaign was dominated by the message of 'Risk', warning of the dangers leaving the EU posed to the economy, services, and pensions (Crines, 2016; Keaveney, 2016). The campaign was labelled "Project Fear" as a criticism for focusing disproportionately on the dangers of leaving the EU and "scaremongering" the public instead of providing a debate (Irsyadillah, 2016). In the context of the Remain campaign, the weather's map implication that Brexit is bad enough for Britain to lose the sun forever – "If you Brexit Europe will steal all the sun" – could be read as an exaggeration of the Remain campaign's danger-centric discourse. The content mocks the levels of risk concerning Brexit by playing up the dangers to an absurd and unrealistic degree (as on a practical level, a political referendum outcome would not banish the sun!) The rarity of the Remain Campaign Discourse pattern in comparison to the larger Leave Campaign Discourse pattern and mockery of said discourse, constructs a recurring pattern of criticism regarding Britain's decision to Brexit. This illustrates how popular culture and social media can construct a differing and reactive narrative to that of the mainstream referendum, as the Leave campaign had more supporters in the voting outcome ("EU Referendum Results," 2016).

8.3 Consequences and British Branding

Figure 8.3 Consequences and British Branding images. Data from *Brexit.* (2016, June 24). Retrieved from http://imgur.com and *20 Brexit Memes That Will Crack You Up,* from Jones, J. (2016, June 22). Retrieved from: https://uk.style.yahoo.com

The pattern of Consequences intersects with the pattern of British Branding to depict the consequences of Brexit - a specific niche of popular culture merging with political discourse. This contrasts with British iconography, as the brands may not reach the level of British icons, but nevertheless are prominent in British popular culture, and their connotations regarding British identity are used to construct a narrative of the Brexit campaign. Danesi (2015) notes the significance of popular brands and slogans in reflecting and shaping the values and lifestyle of society. The two examples are the cereal brand *Weetabix* (Moore-Gilbert & Seed, 2005) adapted as "Brexit", and Ronseal wood stain manufacturer's slogan "Does Exactly What It Says on The Tin" (Blythe, 2008). Both examples intersect with the pattern of British Branding, portraying the Consequences through British Branding, and carry implications of British culture and identity, but nonetheless communicate contrasting positive and negative Consequences of Brexit, illustrating the multi-faceted nature of the Brexit popular culture narrative.

The Weetabix imagery communicates the positive consequences of Brexit through Weetabix's reputation in British popular culture and society. Weetabix – established in the 1930s – is considered a quintessentially British cereal (Moore-Gilbert & Seed, 2005) and has become lodged in the British national psyche with a place at the heart of British life (Hickman, 2006). In scholarship on national culture, Danesi (2015) notes that food or dishes can relate to or carry connotations of national icons and identity. In terms of Weetabix's connotation in Britain, it consistently has a reputation for British goodness and health ("Great British Brands," 2002). Weetabix has branded itself as filling people up and setting them up for the day, with Weetabix slogans including, "Whatever job you do, Weetabix is definitely Unbeatabix" ("Great British Brands," 2002). Associating Brexit with Weetabix connects those positive connotations and messages with the Consequences of Brexit. The brand, with connotations of Britain's identity, is therefore used to construct and imply Positive Consequences of Brexit. The Brexit narrative is presented in connection to British brands' popular culture, psyche, and branding. The Weetabix

imagery presenting positive consequences of Brexit stands out as an exception among the predominantly negative Consequences communicated in the previously discussed examples: Big Ben, the Weather Map, the Old Man image and the Mystery Box meme, illustrating the diversity in the Consequences pattern.

On the other hand, the connotations of the "Does Exactly What It Says on The Tin" advertising slogan (Blythe, 2008) are used to suggest Brexit will have negative consequences for Britain. The slogan originated in television adverts for the wood stain and paint manufacturer Ronseal to emphasise the product would fulfil its description and promises (Stamp, 2006). The phrase has become a common idiomatic phrase in the UK, used to express the obvious and that something lives up to its reputation or does what it says (Blythe, 2008), paralleling Brexit as a brand that became part of British culture with wider implications than the original product. Danesi (2015) notes that brands are a staple of popular culture and reflect eras or periods of society. As with the Weetabix brand, the connotations are used to suggest consequences for Brexit: The slogan's connotations in popular culture, as a phrase being used to suggest the obvious (Blythe, 2008), is used to imply that the Consequences of Brexit will be obvious and exactly what was promised. The implications of the slogan intersect with other popular culture connotations to imply that the "obvious" consequences of Brexit will be negative, as the image featuring the slogan is a screenshot from the post-apocalyptic horror film *28 Days Later*, depicting the fall of Britain to a zombie virus (Macdonald & Boyle, 2002), thus carrying connotations of negative implications for Britain in popular culture. The slogan intersects with the *28 Days Later* narrative to imply that the slogan "Does Exactly What It Says on The Tin" refers to the context of *28 Day Later,* with its negative connotations and implications regarding Britain – Britain falling – therefore implying negative consequences for Britain as a result of Brexit. The brand's connotations for stating that something lives up to its description and stating the obvious (Blythe, 2008) are employed to imply that the "obvious" is negative Consequences for Britain. The brand mirrors the use of Weetabix in invoking its wider implications in popular culture to depict the Consequences pattern.

The positive consequences in the Weetabix image intersect with the pattern of Leave Campaign Discourse as the imagery is portrayed in conjunction with Nigel Farage, a dominant figure in the Leave campaign (Bennett, 2016). Placing Nigel Farage as part of the presented Brexit outcome implies that the positive imagery is associated with Farage and the Leave campaign's discourse. The positive Consequences of Brexit are linked with Farage rather than presented as standing as themselves. The Leave campaign discourse and messaging was built on rebuilding the idealised British Empire (Hoyle, 2017; Lamb, 2017, Olusoga, 2017), and the campaign was accused of misrepresenting the consequences of leaving the EU (Andrews, 2017; Rachman,

2017). The imagery of Britain in this image – the sun and wheat fields – is idealised and exaggerated as it is imagery from Weetabix branding, marketed to attract customers and sales ("Great British Brands", 2002). The connotations of positive consequences are reinforced through the overall imagery of the Weetabix brand and the advertising copy – "low fat & sugar", "high fibre" – which is common advertising language for good health and products (Quinn, 2015). The idealised imagery echoes the Leave campaign's messaging of returning to Britain's romanticised past (Calhoun, 2016; Critical Legal Thinking, 2016). This reinforces the implication that the positive consequences depicted are Farage and the Leave campaign's vision of Britain, rather than a certain outcome of Brexit. The depiction of Farage's version of Britain also ties into the overall theme of popular culture defining Britain's identity: A version of Britain's identity – nostalgic, idealised Britain of the past (Hoyle, 2017; Lamb, 2017, Olusoga, 2017) – is depicted in relation to Brexit, however it is framed as a constructed version of Britain, built by the Leave campaign, rather than as a reality. This reflects how both the political discourse and the popular culture content constructs different versions of Britain's identity to communicate different implications concerning Brexit.

The connection between the Weetabix brand and the Leave campaign discourse implies certain meanings about the Leave campaign. In the EU referendum, the Leave side was criticised for relying on imagery and emotion rather than facts (Gibbons-Plowright, 2016; Worley, 2016), and questions arose around the reliability of their promises of the Brexit outcomes (Eskander, 2016). As discussed extensively in the literature review, politics has become increasingly dependent and focused on branding and imagery rather than policy (Franklin, 1994; Street, 1997; Corner and Pels, 2003; van Zoonen, 2005). The Weetabix example portrays Farage and the Leave campaigns as a literal brand, "Weetabix" (Brand Channel, 2012; "Great British Brands," 2002; Hickman, 2006), with content and imagery designed for advertising and sales ("Great British Brands", 2002). The depiction reinterprets the Leave campaign and 'Brexit' as a brand in itself, reflecting and reinterpreting the criticisms of the Leave campaign's focus on imagery, tying in with the central theme of popular culture reflecting the political discourse. This reinforces the approaches discussed in the Personification chapter, in which the events of Brexit and the Leave campaign became the content itself: the Countryball cartoon, the Baton Roue comic, and the *Futurama* and *South Park* narratives.

The Ronseal slogan ties into the central theme of reflecting and interplaying with campaign discourse, however it intersects with the pattern of the Remain campaign discourse in contrast to Weetabix's Reinterpretation of the Leave Campaign. The Remain campaign was noted for promoting the theme of 'Risk'; in emphasising the danger Brexit posed to Britain's economy, services, and pensions (Crines, 2016; Keaveney, 2016), and relying on logic and fact-based

arguments to reinforce their stance in contrast to the Leave campaign who openly stated the people "had enough of experts" (Crines, 2016). The fact-based approach was echoed by external voices, with the majority of economists and academics arguing Britain leaving the EU could damage the British economy (Green, 2016). The "Does Exactly What It Says On The Tin" connotation in popular culture for saying that something lives up to its reputation or does what it says (Blythe, 2008), and the implication that Brexit will have negative Consequences for Britain, reflect this aspect of the Remain campaign in implying that the negative consequences of Brexit were obvious and inevitable. The implication is that the Remain campaign's facts and warnings were accurate and exactly what they said Brexit was going to be. The slogan ties in with the central themes of constructing a popular culture narrative and interacting with the campaign discourse, but in this example, popular culture is employed to mirror and reinforce the Remain campaign. The negative consequences messaging reflects the content of the campaign discourse itself. The reflection of the Remain campaign messaging, as opposed to the Leave campaign, stands out as an exception, as the Leave campaign messaging is a more dominant pattern throughout the material, as illustrated in previous chapters. Nevertheless, its presence illustrates the multi-faceted and nuanced nature of the popular culture narrative of Brexit and reinterpretation of campaign discourse.

8.4 Conclusions

Overall, the Consequences patterns contribute the construction of a popular culture narrative of Britain in depicting the aftermath and the results of Brexit. A range of British popular culture imagery is employed to construct this narrative, as illustrated in the patterns of British Empire, Weather and British Branding. These patterns associate the consequences of Britain with differing aspects of British identity in popular culture: Britain former empire is depicted as a key factor in the consequences of Brexit, British brands and Britain's reputation for bad weather is used to imply the obviousness of the negative consequences of Brexit. The predominance of the Leave Campaign Discourse pattern is largely present in undermining the Leave campaign's rhetoric of the hopeful outcome of Brexit and portraying the result in a more negative context. In particular, the nationalistic discourse of returning to Britain's world empire (Enright, 2016) is reinterpreted in portraying Brexit as the fall of the empire. This echoes the undermining of the Leave campaign present in the personification and iconography content. Furthermore, the Consequences pattern mirrors the iconographic content, in employing British popular culture connotations and connections to British identity to communicate the outcome of Brexit and shape the popular culture narrative, illustrating the interconnectedness of the overall materials.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.0 Introduction

This chapter concludes the primary findings and themes of this research. The thesis aimed to examine the relationship between political discourse and popular culture in the construction of the Brexit campaign. Brexit was a monumental decision for Britain, with widespread political ramifications and extensive media coverage (Calamur, 2016) and the popular culture content reflected the gravity of this decision. A data corpus of social media texts was selected in order to gain insight into how popular culture content reflected the nature of this decision. To analyse the data, both thematic and textual analysis was employed. During the analysis, key patterns were identified throughout the data and subsequently the data was organised into three key areas – Iconography, Personification and Consequences – for further discussion. This conclusion chapter will discuss the major findings of this thesis, the limitations of the study and areas for future potential research.

9.1 Significant Findings

This thesis has been directed by the primary research question "What is the relationship between political discourse, entertainment, and popular culture in the construction of the Brexit campaign?" and the secondary research question "How was the official referendum discourse of the Brexit campaign reflected in the popular culture narrative?" The two questions have been investigated and discussed in detail throughout the thesis. The researcher observed the popular culture content was employed to construct a popular culture-focused narrative of Brexit which reflected the referendum discourse, while constructing an independent version of events through different forms of popular culture. In both political discourse and popular culture, the Brexit decision became a space in which to define Britain's national character, with the popular culture narrative depicting what motivated Britain to vote for Brexit and the implications Brexit had on Britain's identity post-Brexit. The thesis discussed the construction of the popular culture narrative in relation to Danesi's (2015) definition of popular culture forming of cultural expression of the "common people" in day-to-day life, Cohen and Kahne's (2011), Jenkin's (2006) theory of participatory politics in circumventing traditional political discourse through social media and Browne's (2005) theory of popular culture being used to define and reflect the identity of societies in order to critically discuss these central themes and messages. These approaches and scholarship enabled the researcher to analyse how the popular culture content interplayed with the referendum discourse, and employed differing forms and facets of popular culture to depict a popular culture version of events.

The discussion chapters explored how differing forms and facets of popular culture were employed to depict a popular culture focused version of the Brexit events and construct Britain's identity within the narrative. The content discussed in Chapter 6 employed British iconography and icons to depict Brexit: the deeper meaning and connotations icons carry (Ashworth, 2006; Parker, 2012) and the role of national icon's in crystalizing feelings of national identity (Hulsey, 2005; Yanay, 2008) were invoked to project meaning onto the Brexit events and portray Brexit in conjunction with established connotations of British identity. A consistent message of criticising Brexit and portraying the decision as British foolishness in leaving the EU emerged. However, the narrative was contrastingly communicated as either a betrayal of good British character or in keeping with negative aspects of British character, through the differing meanings carried by the range of British icons. In particular, historical British icons were employed to portray Brexit as undermining Britain's history and glorified past character.

The content discussed in Chapter 7 contributed to the overall construction of a popular culture Brexit narrative through the technique of personification. As opposed to a Brexit narrative rooted in connotations of British culture and society, as with the iconographic material, the popular culture narrative was constructed through portraying events on an interpersonal and individual level, highlighting Kovecses (2010) and Nemes' (2015) arguments that personification is used to make sense of complex situations through portraying events on an individual scale and actions of a wilful agent. Nevertheless, there was intersection with the iconographic content, as associations from wider popular culture and media were projected onto the events of Brexit in conjunction with personification, with connotations of popular media characters linked with personified versions of Britain. This approach mirrors how iconography was employed to project connotations of British culture onto the Brexit events. Personification and the popular media connotations were employed to portray the events of the EU referendum as Britain behaving in a bigoted or foolish manner, or mistreating the EU. This echoes the Brexit narrative constructed through British iconography, in portraying Brexit as driven by Britain's foolishness.

Finally, Chapter 8 explored the thematic pattern of consequences, which contributes another facet to the popular culture narrative of Brexit, in centring on depictions of the aftermath of Brexit and impact on British identity. Mirroring the use of British iconography, the consequences pattern featured a range of aspects of British popular culture, primarily imagery of British Empire, British branding and weather, to construct Britain's identity within the popular culture narrative. This illustrates both the inter-connectedness of the examined content and the diversity nature of popular culture (Browne, 2005; Danesi, 2015). The consequences pattern and featured British popular culture, builds a predominant narrative of Brexit resulting

in negative consequences for Britain and causing Britain to lose status in the world. This mirrors the narrative of Brexit being a foolish decision for Britain that is presented in the iconographic and personification content.

In all three chapters, the popular culture focused narrative discussed, reflected the Brexit referendum political discourse, through undermining and reinterpreting the messages of the campaign. A reinterpretation and undermining of Leave campaign content was more prominent, reflecting the higher prominence of the Leave campaign in the political discourse (Berry, 2016). In particular, the Leave campaign's anti-EU stance was repeatedly undermined throughout the discussion chapters through the differing approaches: Iconography was employed to portray negative aspects of British character motivating Brexit and personification was used to depict Britain as mistreating the EU on an interpersonal level. The Leave campaign's nostalgic sentiment for returning to the past was undermined through portrayals of historical British icons judging the decision and British empire imagery depicting Brexit as the fall of British empire as opposed to regaining it. The undermining of the successful Leave campaign and leave vote, echoes theories of how popular culture can become a site of resisting politics (Street, 1997) and how participatory politics offers a space for the public to engage with politics outside of traditional and elite forms of media and portray contrary views from the official discourse (Brough & Shresthova, 2011; Cohen & Kahne, 2011).

Overall, all three chapters employed differing aspects of popular culture with associations of British identity – iconography, personification, imagery of British empire and branding – to construct a multi-faceted narrative of Brexit. The content demonstrates how diverse areas of popular culture constructed a popular culture narrative of Brexit, independent of and even in conflict with, the political discourse.

9.2 Limitations of Study and Areas for Future Research

Further research into the relationship between political discourse and popular culture would be to expand the scope of popular content examined and analyse a wider field of data to gain a more comprehensive analysis of the overall popular culture narrative. Investigation into popular culture material from other social media sources would be beneficial, for example directly from Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or Reddit. The research would offer an opportunity to compare and contrast portrayals of Brexit across different social media sites and gain a more nuanced perspective of the popular culture narrative of Brexit. Finally, it would be beneficial to pursue additional research into popular culture and social media content over a longer wider period, as opposed to the day before and after the vote. An analysis of the whole campaign period or in the month following the referendum would provide an opportunity to examine how popular culture perceptions and depictions of Brexit evolved.

9.3 Afterword

The research process has been an enlightening and therapeutic process in gaining a deeper understanding of the Brexit decision and public perception of it. This thesis has deepened my knowledge of the differing aspects of British culture and identity, and how they contributed to perceptions of Brexit and what it meant to people. Through discerning the popular culture narrative of Brexit and reinterpretation of the campaign discourse I feel I can appreciate the nuances of the decision and how a political decision can become so central to every day life and society.

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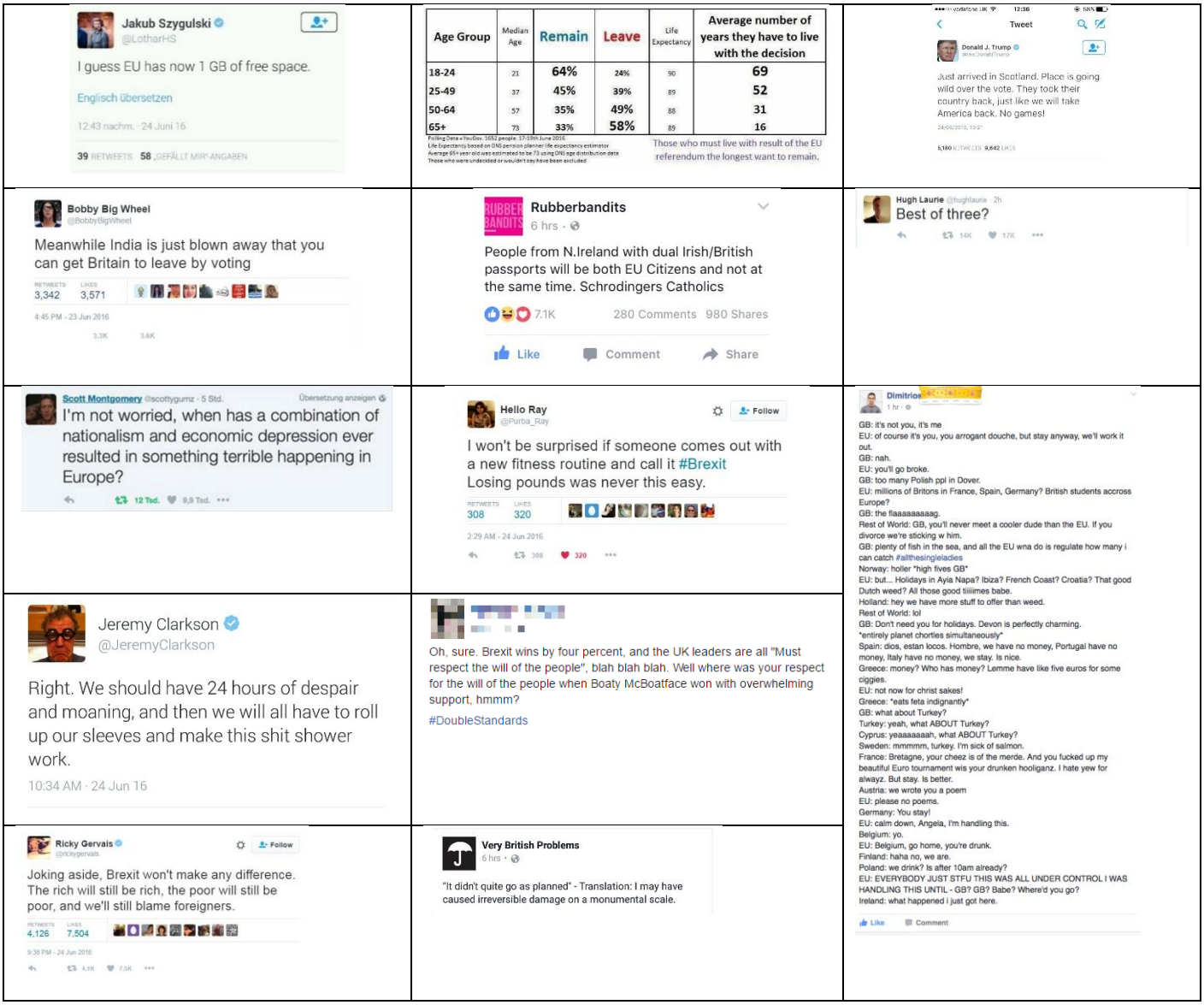
Appendix I:

This appendix presents the social media data that were excluded from the post Brexit Data Corpus selection sourced from Imgur due to not fulfilling the set criteria.

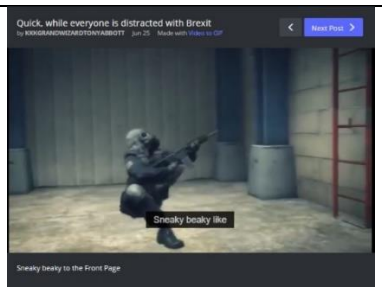
Imagery:

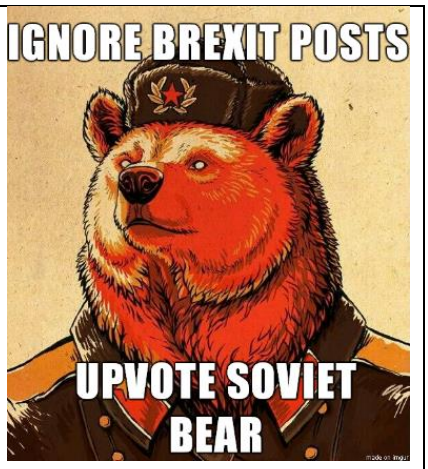
All selected texts had to have imagery and could not just have words, as imagery is required for textual analysis. On the basis of this clause, the following 13 posts were excluded:

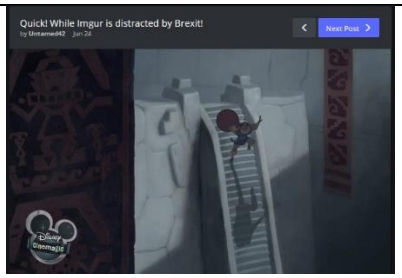


Unrelated Posts:

The selected data had to meet the criteria that it was related to Brexit and not on other topics or issues. On the criteria, the following posts were eliminated as being unsuitable for analysis:

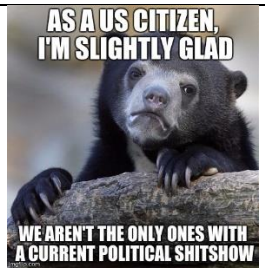


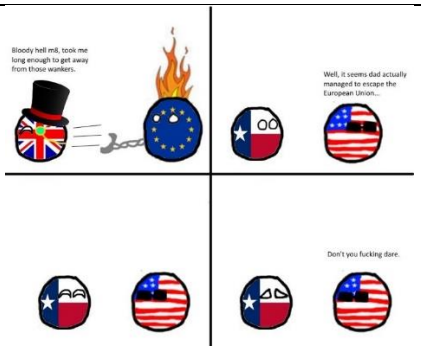




Brexit Focus:

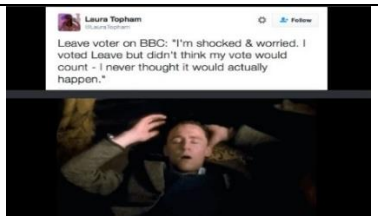
Further criteria for selected data was that the posts should be focused on Brexit itself, not non-British or non-EU countries reaction or own politics.





Unaltered Gifs:

The post content in and of itself has to stand alone for analysis – not dependent on additional comments from the poster. Unaltered gifs are eliminated due to lack of context and direct relation to Brexit.

Furthermore, two posts were excluded based on being more focused on text written by the contributor on Imgur rather than the image and text within the post itself, meaning the intended thematic and textual analysis would not be analysing what made the post highly rated.

http://imgur.com/topic/Brexit/l3XPx	http://imgur.com/topic/Brexit/KKQQG3z

Posts from Pre-Brexit Data Selection:

Posts that were present in the pre-Brexit selection of data (posted on the 22nd June before the referendum) were excluded, as this selection was focused on the reaction after Brexit.

A further post was excluded for having multiple images in one post, biasing the sample of why it was highly scoring.

Post with multiple images**:** http://imgur.com/topic/Brexit/AAtd6