

PHD DISSERTATION

Voices Unheard

A CORPUS-ASSISTED CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF
THE UK NEWSPAPER MEDIA'S REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE
VOTERS IN 2015-2017

THESIS SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE
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DEGREE OF DOCTOR IN PHILOSOPHY BY:

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¹I would like to shout out the 'Jodieverse' here as well. This thesis is now 'OK to go'.

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Abstract

Author: Lotte Verheijen

Title: **Voices Unheard: A corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis of the UK newspaper media's representation of female voters in 2015-2017**

This thesis examines the linguistic underrepresentation of female voters in the UK media. It does so by exploring how these voters are linguistically constructed and represented by UK newspapers in the lead-up to both the 2015 and the 2017 General Elections, and the 2016 EU Referendum. In particular, which types of female voters are included in or excluded from this group, and what linguistic features characterise their representations. Additionally, this thesis critically examines how these media representations contribute to the absence of women from the political sphere. I explore these questions by means of a diachronic and synchronic corpus-assisted Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis ((Fairclough, 2013; Lazar, 2007)) of specialised 2015, 2016 and 2017-based corpora of UK national newspaper articles that contain references to female voters. This analysis also draws from van Leeuwen's (1996) social actor representation, combining text-level linguistic analysis with context analysis. Additionally, sub-corpora divided by political orientation, referendum stance, publication type and author gender are analysed in order to investigate the impact of these categories on the representation of female voters. This combination of corpus and discourse analytic methods allows for more in-depth qual-

itative and extra-linguistic analyses, as well as engagement with intersectionality and queer theory (Levon, 2015; Motschenbacher & Stegu, 2013). I primarily focus on how both subtle and more overt normative language choices and discourses exclude British female voters who are perceived to be non-normative from political discourse and/or question their presence in said discourse. Overall, this research found that in general, female voters voices go unheard, as they are either backgrounded and ignored or belittled and classed as irrelevant. Even in a corpus focused on female voters, they are not 'key' to the narrative(s). Furthermore, only certain female voters are deemed worthy of being heard in a narrowly defined notion of the paradigmatic female voter. Women are homogenised, passivated, conflated with motherhood, and subordinated to men, and their linguistic representation is subject to a slew of normative and discriminatory conceptions (i.e. heteronormativity, cisnormativity, ableism, racism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, sexism and classism). This conceptualisation upholds and sustains institutionalised power asymmetries between (and among) groups of women and men in politics and in society at large. Consequently, it perpetuates the underrepresentation of women in the political sphere and contributes to the silencing of women, excluding them from the political arena and potential policy decision making. In conclusion, this study contributes to closing the gap in the literature regarding media portrayals of, and appeals to, female voters. Concurrently, it raises vital awareness regarding the specific characteristics of the dangerous underrepresentation and misrepresentation of these female voters.

Keywords: *politics, elections, Brexit, gender, (under)representation, backgrounding, normativity, heteronormativity, sexism, misogyny, xenophobia, (F)CDA, corpus linguistics, social actor representation, legitimisation*

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Contextualising this study: a state of permanent election and the political underrepresentation of women

The United Kingdom in recent years has been in an almost constant state of political upheaval, and from 2015 to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 it was in a state of permanent election, or 'permaelection'. In the last 8 years there have been three General Elections (i.e. 2015, 2017, 2019), in addition to a public referendum in 2016 to decide the future of the UK's membership of the European Union. These electoral events resulted in three general election victories for the Conservative Party, yet three different Prime Ministers (i.e. David Cameron, Theresa May & Boris Johnson), as well as the UK's departure from the European Union, also known colloquially as 'Brexit'. This significant, hectic and jam-packed period in British politics, and the polarising and somewhat unexpected outcome of the 'Brexit' vote in particular, have sparked a barrage of media studies and discourse analytic studies analysing the newspaper coverage of these general elections (e.g. Deacon et al., 2015a; Jackson & Thorsen, 2015; Cameron

& Shaw, 2016; Jackson et al., 2016; Lilleker & Pack, 2016; Deacon et al., 2017a; Thorsen et al., 2017; Johnston et al., 2018; Danisi, Dustin, & Ferreira, 2019; Jackson et al., 2019), the EU Referendum (e.g. Cap, 2017; Đurović & Silaški, 2018, Hobolt, 2018; Mellon et al., 2018; Charteris-Black, 2019; Koller, Kopf & Miglbauer, 2019; Buckledee, 2020), as well as studies interpreting the Brexit result (e.g. Henn & Sharpe, 2016; Prosser, 2018; Harrison, 2020). These studies address the language used by the media, the (political) discourses surrounding these political campaigns, representations of the politicians involved, as well as pro-Leave and pro-Remain argumentation in the Brexit debate. Furthermore, as the literature review in Chapter 3 will show, there are a fair few studies, including some of the ones mentioned above, that examine both the speech and (sexist) representations of female politicians during political campaigns in general (e.g. Ross & Sreberny, 2000), and during these permaelection campaigns in particular (e.g. Cameron & Shaw, 2016). However, there appears to be a greater volume of research on how women speak in the political arena, rather than on how they are perceived and portrayed. There is a greater focus on production than on perception, evaluation and representation (Cameron, 2018).

Moreover, aside from this more general gap in perception studies, there is also a gap in the literature regarding media representations of female voters. Topics such as female voting behaviour have been studied before (e.g. Lewis & Bierly, 1990), but there are only a handful studies focusing on media representations of female voters (e.g. Adcock, 2010). This begs the question how female voters are constructed and represented linguistically in the press, and in UK newspapers in particular. Who is in/excluded from the group of 'female voters' and what are their priorities perceived to be? These questions appear to be particularly pertinent in the current political climate since female voters have been put front and centre of the political debate in both the UK and other countries (see Cameron & Shaw, 2016; Harmer & Southern, 2018). For instance, the 'permaelection' period

saw the founding of the Women's Equality Party in 2015 in the UK, fielding candidates for the first time in 2016 in local or 'devolved' elections as well as the London mayoral elections (Evans & Kenny, 2017; Women's Equality Party, 2022), 'Women's Marches' happened across the world to protest against the election of President Trump in the US and for women's rights (Berry & Chenoweth, 2018; Just & Muhr, 2019; New York Times, 2017), and a 'pink bus' campaign was launched by the Labour party in 2015 to appeal to female voters (Mason & Perraudin, 2015).¹ Furthermore, this gap in representation studies exists despite the prevailing notion that women are less engaged with politics than men in the UK (H. Lewis, 2016), and because "the news is made by men, it is thought to reflect the interests and values of men too" (van Zoonen, 1998, p. 34). Moreover, studies have found that, as Chapters 2 and 3 will further explore, women are severely underrepresented in all aspects of the news and the media in general except for entertainment news (e.g. Len-Rios et al., 2005), they are also underrepresented as members of Parliament in the UK (Mitchell, 2015; Nyhagen, 2016) and in political news coverage in particular (Ross et al., 2013a). Furthermore, the coverage they do attract is primarily focused on their gender and the accompanying gendered stereotypes (Adcock, 2010; Ross, 2002). This underrepresentation conceals how women's voices in general and non-normative women's voices in particular are unheard and marginalised in the political debate, which in turn can prevent women from voting or being taken into account when it comes to policy decisions (Katwala et al., 2016; Savigny, 2015). The (linguistic) underrepresentation of female voters and their voices remains a rather under-researched topic and therefore merits being the main focus of the present study.

¹See Figure 13 in Appendix A.1 for an image of the bus.

1.2 Conceptualising this study: methods, content, and research questions

This study aims to contribute to the literature regarding media portrayals of and appeals to female voters, as well as to raise awareness regarding the specific characteristics of the under-representation discussed above of female voters. Raising awareness is a first and important step in tackling this under-representation and marginalisation. This study will do this by delineating how women are represented and how this contributes to their absence from and/or marginalisation within the political sphere by exploring how these voters are constructed linguistically and represented by the UK news media in the lead-up to both the 2015 and the 2017 UK General Elections (GEs), and the 2016 EU Referendum. In particular, which types of female voters are included in or excluded from this group, and what linguistic features characterise their representations?

I explore these questions, and the further research questions outlined in Section 1.2.1. below, via a corpus-assisted (feminist) Critical Discourse Analysis of specialised 2015, 2016 and 2017-based corpora of UK national newspaper articles that discuss the needs and voices of female voters and/or issues which are deemed important to female voters. In addition to this, analyses of sub-corpora divided by political orientation, referendum stance, publication type and author gender will also feature in order to investigate the impact of these categories on the representation of female voters (see Chapter 4 for a comprehensive clarification of the methods). A diachronic corpus study allows for the quantitative analysis of large amounts of data, similarities, trends and differences across several years and similar yet different political events (i.e. a scheduled election in 2015, a snap election in 2017 and a public referendum in 2016). Furthermore, a combination with CDA allows for more in-depth qualitative and extra-linguistic analyses, and engagement with intersectionality and queer the-

ory (Levon, 2015; Motschenbacher & Stegu,2013).

An important caveat needs to be addressed here, as the final of the three general elections mentioned above, the 2019 General Election, is not included in the current study for several reasons. The most straightforward one relates to the scope and time constraints of this project. I started this project in 2017, well before the advent of the 2019 campaign, and therefore I did not include it in my corpus. My decision to not include it at a later stage is twofold. Firstly, this election falls somewhat outside of the permaelection period, seeing that it follows a year without elections, an interbellum year if you will (i.e. 2018). Secondly, the 2015, 2016 and 2017 campaigns all represent different electoral events (i.e. a planned GE, a snap GE and a referendum) and thus a concise overview of UK electoral events, while the 2019 campaign represents another 'snap' election like the one in 2017. However, a 2019 corpus will be great source material for a follow-up study.

To conclude this introductory chapter, the following sections will introduce the research questions and the structure of this study. First, I will provide an overview of this study's research questions (1.2.1.), and signpost in which chapters these questions are discussed and answered. This will be followed by a brief overview of these chapters and the specific way they are structured to answer the research questions (1.2.2.).

1.2.1 Research questions

The main question posed in this study (RQ no. 1 below), as well as its sub-questions, will be addressed from different angles and discussed throughout the analytical chapters (ch. 5, 6 & 7). RQ number 2 will receive the same treatment, while its sub-questions will be specifically addressed in the quantitative Chapter 5, as well as in Chapter 6, which bridges the quantitative and qualitative analyses. RQ 3 and its sub-questions will be addressed in Chapters 5, 6 & 7, while all RQs will also be answered in full

in the concluding chapter (ch. 8).

1. How are female voters constructed linguistically in the lead-up to both the 2016 EU referendum, and the 2015 and 2017 UK General Elections? (ch. 5-7 & 8)
 - Who is included in this category of the 'female voter', and what are their priorities perceived to be?
 - Who is excluded from the category of 'the female voter', and does a normalising discourse exist which presents particular types of women as 'typical' (e.g. cisgender, white, heterosexual, able-bodied)?
 - How are institutionalised power asymmetries between (and among) groups of women and men sustained in UK press representations of female voters?
 - Who constructs and perpetuates the image of the female voter?
2. What are the frequent topics and discourses employed in representations of female voters in the UK national press: 2015–2017? (ch. 5-7 & 8)
 - What are the frequencies of articles per year, per month and per newspaper and how do these relate to the wider social context? (ch. 5)
 - What are the frequencies of the search terms concerning female voters? (ch. 5)
 - What are the keywords, i.e. words that signal what the corpus is about, per corpora per year? (ch. 5)
 - What are the words and verb processes associated with the most frequent and relevant terms for female voters per year? (ch. 6)

3. How do the above aspects of female voter representation develop between elections: 2015-2017? (ch. 5-7 & 8)
 - How do these aspects of female voter representation develop with regard to the political affiliation of the newspapers?
 - How do these aspects of female voter representation develop with regard to the publication type of the newspapers?
 - How do these aspects of female voter representation develop with regard to the author gender of the newspaper articles?

1.2.2 Thesis outline & overview: addressing the research questions

As mentioned, the eight chapters of this study are structured to address and answer the research questions posed above. The first four chapters, including the current one, are designed to lay the groundwork necessary to perform the analyses required to answer the RQs. They will review the current political landscape of the UK (ch. 2), and summarise previous research as well as outline the theoretical, methodological and analytical framework of this study (ch. 3-4) in preparation for the analytical chapters (ch. 5-7), and the conclusion (ch. 8). I will now discuss the content of these chapters in a more detailed manner.

The preparatory chapters: 2-4

In order to set the scene for the political character of this study, Chapter 2 will outline a brief history of the current political landscape of the UK. It will address who is and who is not allowed to vote in the 'first-past-the-post' voting system of the UK. Before discussing the context regarding the campaigns, the voters, and outcomes of the electoral events under analysis (i.e. 2015, 2016, 2017), it will also discuss the UK general elections

immediately preceding the permaelection period (i.e. 2000-2010), and their impact on women.

This will be followed by Chapter 3, in which I will first outline the theoretical framework and activist nature of this study, which shapes and frames the methods and analyses discussed in Chapter 4. I will do so by providing an overview of Critical Discourse Analysis in general and Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis in particular, the specific focus on the concept of normativity in this study and the triangulation of these approaches with corpus linguistics. To ground this study within existing literature, previous research related to the topics of women, politics and media will also be discussed through an FCDA lens (i.e. political discourse in the media, representations of gender and women in the media, gender and politics, and the influence of journalist gender).

To round off the preparatory chapters, Chapter 4 will delineate the methods of data collection and analysis. It will describe the corpus-building decisions and its process: the newspaper sources, the specific time periods of data collection, the search terms used to find relevant articles, and the construction of the sub-corpora. It will also outline the more quantitative methods (e.g. frequency, keyword and collocation analyses) used in Chapters 5 & 6, and the analytical framework of the qualitative and close reading analyses used in Chapters 6 & 7, which will draw on van Leeuwen's (1996) taxonomy of social actor representation, on appraisal theory and on legitimisation strategies.

The quantitative chapter: 5

Chapter 5 comprises the first step in answering the RQs, as it provides specific answers to the (sub-)questions of RQs 2 and 3. It does so by means of quantitative analyses concerning the frequencies of articles and search terms per campaign and per sub-corpus (i.e. political affiliation, publication type, author gender), as well analyses of the top keywords per polit-

ical campaign. Chapter 5 also provides overviews of how the frequencies and keywords developed throughout the permalection period into a normative portrayal of drowned out and marginalised women.

The bridging chapter: 6

Chapter 6 forms a 'bridge' between the quantitative and qualitative chapters by including and merging both types of analysis. This chapter will flesh out the (normative) discourses found among the frequency analyses of Chapter 5 and answer some of RQ 2 and 3's sub-questions. It does so by means of collocation analyses of the eight most frequent search terms and their immediate contexts (e.g. collocates grouped by discourse, verb processes, concordances) in the overarching corpus, as well as per term, per year and per sub-corpus.

The qualitative chapter & conclusion: 7-8

Chapter 7 will provide further qualitative analyses of the normative discourses in which female voters' voices go unheard, first addressed in Chapter 5 and fleshed out in Chapter 6, as well as their development and implications throughout the permalection period. This will be accomplished by close reading analyses, drawing on social actor representation, of seven prototypical articles and various headlines.²

To conclude, Chapter 8 will then compile the different perspectives of the discussions of, and answers to, the research questions, summarise the findings from Chapters 5-7 and subsequently answer RQ 1 in full. It will do so by means of answering the research questions and their sub-questions in full. Finally, it will address the impact of this study as well as the avenues for future research it has opened up.

²The prototypicality of the articles is based on their inclusion of the frequent search terms and discourses found in Chapters 5-6.

Chapter 2

The Current Political Landscape of the UK

This chapter will provide a brief description and overview of UK voters: who is included and excluded from this group and how they voted in General Elections of the recent past (i.e. 2000-2010), as well as the three electoral events under investigation in this study: the 2015 GE, the 2016 EU Referendum and the 2017 GE. Additionally, this chapter will provide an overview of important events and topics of the 2015, 2016 and 2017 campaigns, as well as their outcomes. In keeping with this study's intent, all of these overviews and descriptions will comprise an explicit focus on women: female politicians as well as female voters.

2.1 Who is eligible to vote in UK General Elections & Referendums?

In order to be eligible to vote in UK General Elections (GEs), one has to meet certain criteria; the rules for referendum voting eligibility are similar, but they can differ per referendum. First of all, one has to be registered to

vote and over 18 years old (gov.uk, 2018). The registration process can be completed at 17, but one is only allowed to start voting in general elections at the age of 18, despite campaigns to lower the minimum voting age to 16.¹

Furthermore, one has to be either a British, Irish or qualified Commonwealth citizen² who is a resident at an address in the UK, or a British citizen living abroad who has been registered to vote in the UK in the last 15 years (Your Vote Matters, 2018b).

People who do not have a fixed address but do reside in the UK (e.g. people who are experiencing homelessness, people living on a boat, or members of the travelling community), as well as members of the armed forces are also allowed to vote as long as they are registered (*Armed Forces*, 2018; *Matters*, 2018).

One also has to not be legally excluded from voting. This means that people who have been found guilty of corruption or other illegal practices within the last 5 years, and people who are either currently detained or convicted in pursuance of their sentence are not allowed to vote. However, civil prisoners, who are imprisoned for an offence that is not a crime, and unsentenced prisoners and remand prisoners, who are imprisoned awaiting trial, are in fact allowed to vote (Your Vote Matters, 2018a).

Conversely, there are a couple of other groups of citizens resident in the UK that are allowed to vote in local elections, but not allowed to vote in general elections. These include such politically marginalised groups as asylum seekers, refugees, people - usually women - on spousal and family visas, and immigrants who do not qualify as British, Irish or Commonwealth citizens (e.g. EU nationals post Brexit) (Your Vote Matters, 2018b).

¹Local election ages can vary. For example. the minimum voting age for elections to the Scottish Parliament is 16 (Your Vote Matters, 2018b).

²The definition of a 'Commonwealth' citizen also includes citizens of British Crown Dependencies as well as British Overseas Territories. Furthermore, a qualifying Commonwealth citizen is a person who has 'leave to enter or remain in the UK' or does not require such leave. (Your Vote Matters, 2018b).

Members of the House of Lords, who share the task of making laws and questioning the government with Members of Parliament (MPs) (UK Parliament, 2018b), have also been banned from voting in general elections, because they already have a voice in Parliament and therefore should not be allowed to also have their voice heard in the selection of MPs, or as Lord Norton puts it: there is “no case for the Lords to vote to elect representatives since they [are] able to sit in Parliament anyway” (Norton, 2009, n.p.).

Lastly, the Monarch, or Head of State, and other members of the Royal Family are also exempt from voting in general elections. Members of the Royal Family are not prohibited to vote by law, but Parliament considers it unconstitutional for them to vote in an election (UK Parliament, 2018a). Moreover, the Royal guidelines state that the Head of State “has to remain strictly neutral with respect to political matters, unable to vote or stand for election” (The Royal Household, 2018, n.p.). The Monarch does, however, have important ceremonial and formal roles in relation to Parliament proceedings, the right to appoint Prime Ministers and lending Royal assent to legislation.

2.2 Recent UK General Elections and the EU Referendum: 2000-2017

2.2.1 Women & the 2000-2010 General Elections

The General Election cycles of the 2000s saw a dramatic increase in the representation of women in the House of Commons as well as the devolved political institutions of Scotland and Wales. This trend had already started in the 1990s as the percentage of female MPs increased threefold from 6% in 1987 to 18% in 1997 to 22% in 2010 (Eagle & Lovenduski, 1998; UK Political Info, 2021). In Scotland and Wales on the other hand, these

percentages were much higher, standing at 39.5% and 50% respectively in 2003 (Mackay, 2003). Furthermore, these gains in terms of gender parity in political institutions can primarily be attributed to the Labour Party and its women MPs (Mackay, 2004). In addition to the gains of women MPs in general, the 2010 General Election saw the first Muslim women MPs, first BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) and first 'out' lesbian Conservative women MPs. The first Green party MP elected in 2010 was a woman, too (Campbell & Childs, 2010).

The 2010 General Election in particular saw a focus not only on women MPs, but also on female voters and specifically female voters as (middle income) mothers, thus disregarding other women such as non-mothers and elderly women, as it was dubbed the 'Mumsnet' Election (Campbell & Childs, 2010) after the biggest parenting forum established in 2000 which is aimed at all parents and not specifically at 'mums', but in reality male users only constitute a small minority (Mumsnet, 2018; Pedersen, 2015). The term 'Mumsnet' was ubiquitous in the campaign and the (male) leaders of all major political parties participated in web-chats on Mumsnet. All parties also explicitly pledged to deliver on women's health, education, and violence against women (Campbell & Childs, 2010).

Other trends which characterised the general elections of the 2000s are the fact that there was no gender gap in voter turnout (Campbell & Childs, 2010) and the decrease in voter turnout among young people (18-24 year-olds) from over 60% in the 1990s to approximately 40% for the 2001, 2005 and 2010 GEs. However, these figures are much lower than in the other 14 members of the pre-2004, EU-15, European Union (Sloam, 2015).

2.2.2 2015 General Election: campaign, voters & outcome

Campaigning for the General Election of 2015 commenced on March 30th and the election was held on May 7th (Jackson & Thorsen, 2015). During the campaign, polls predicted a 'hung parliament' in which no particu-

lar political party has an absolute majority (Cushion & Sambrook, 2015). Subsequently, there was a larger focus on smaller parties such as the Scottish National Party (SNP) and the UK Independence Party (Ukip) as possible coalition partners (I. Jones, 2015). The polls were wrong, however, as even though Labour's vote saw its first increase since 1997 (Fenton, 2015), the Conservative party gained a majority because of so-called 'shy Tories': people who hide the fact that they vote Conservative (Shephard, 2015). The Liberal Democrats were practically 'obliterated', whereas the SNP won almost all seats in Scotland (i.e. 56 out of 59), thereby taking over from the Liberal Democrats as the third party after the Conservatives and Labour (Gerodimos, 2015; Russell, 2016). This outcome also led to renewed calls for the UK's first-past-the-post electoral system to be reformed (Jackson & Thorsen, 2015).³ The 2000s trend of increasing numbers of female MPs, despite them still being massively underrepresented, also continued as this election saw the UK's highest number of female MPs be elected into office at 29% (Mitchell, 2015).

In terms of the (media) campaigns, the Conservatives ran their campaign against the leader of the Labour party Ed Miliband and warned people of a Labour/SNP coalition, which ultimately turned out to be victorious (Jackson & Thorsen, 2015). Overall, the campaign was personalised and masculinised in opposition to the 'Mumsnet' angle of 2010. The one main exception was Labour MP Harriet Harman's pink "Woman to Woman" bus, which toured the country focusing on five areas that Labour had determined to be key to women's interests: childcare, domestic violence, equal pay, political representation, and social care, to attract female voters and reach out to them 'at the kitchen table' (Mason & Per-

³The 'First Past The Post' system is one of the oldest and simplest electoral systems. It specifies that the candidate with the most votes in a constituency wins the parliamentary seat for that constituency. Subsequently, the party that wins the most seats will almost always form a government which will set out policies until the following election (Blais, 2008, p. 1).

raudin, 2015).⁴ Furthermore, the predictions of a hung parliament and the ‘horse-race’ coverage of Miliband (Labour) vs. Cameron (Conservatives) shaped the campaign narrative of traditional media outlets (i.e. newspapers). Newspapers still determine much of a campaign’s agenda and consequently, discussions of wider policy issues were marginalised (Cameron & Shaw, 2016; Harmer, 2015).

2.2.3 2016 EU Referendum: campaign, voters & outcome

The EU Referendum was held to put the decision as to whether the UK would remain part of the European Union for the foreseeable future to a people’s vote. A referendum vote differs from the first-past-the-post system of general elections. Rather than the option to vote for MPs from different political parties which vary per constituency, voters from all constituencies are given the same voting options: yes or no. Campaigning commenced on April 15th 2016 with Vote Leave and Vote Remain sides primarily focusing their arguments on the main topics of ‘immigration’ and ‘the economy’, respectively (Cap, 2017; Jackson et al., 2016; Koller et al., 2019). The referendum culminated in a 51.9% to 48.1% Leave victory on June 23rd 2016. However, this result was not replicated in all countries of the UK, as both Scotland and Northern Ireland, which shares a border with Ireland and thus with the EU, voted to Remain (62% and 56% respectively). England and Wales, on the other hand, voted Leave by a slightly larger margin than the UK as a whole (Jackson et al., 2016, pp. 8–9). Leave/Remain ratios also differed vastly with regard to voter age, gender and level of education. The paradigmatic Remain voter was a “young female Scottish graduate and the archetypal Brexiteer a 50 plus Englishman with less formal education and limited means” (F. Smith, 2016, p. 64) and most likely a reader of either *The Sun*, *The Daily Mail*, or *The Express*, which

⁴See Figure 23 in Appendix A.1 for an image of the campaign bus.

all vocally supported Vote Leave. 'Left-behind' voters from former mining towns and (former) industrial areas in the North and Midlands of England and Wales also overwhelmingly voted to leave the EU (Goes, 2016). The support of these voters (i.e. the over 60s, less formally educated, and belonging to lower social classes) for Brexit has been highlighted as one of the key driving forces behind the Leave victory (Wring, 2016).⁵ Older voters were thus more likely to have voted in favour of Leave; they were also more likely to have voted at all, as voter turnout among older voters was higher than average (Levy et al., 2016a). Conversely, younger voters (18 to 24 year-olds) overwhelmingly voted Remain by 73%, with a high voter turn-out of 60%. This indicates a vast generational gap in the UK (Fox & Pearce, 2016; Sloam, 2017). Regarding the "gendered nature of Brexit" (O'Brien, 2016a, p. 110) and the fact that it has been called a 'feminist issue' (H. Lewis, 2016), women's voices and a focus on women's rights were notably silenced and/or absent from the debate. Women were also shown to be more undecided regarding their vote as they self-identified as less knowledgeable on the issue (H. Lewis, 2016; O'Brien, 2016b; Voxter, 2016). However, polls such as Lord Ashcroft's Referendum poll, based on 12,369 people, did not reflect this indecisive representation, as Leave/Remain splits were reported to be the same for female and male voters (Ashcroft, 2017). Polls did indicate large differences regarding Labour and Conservative voters, though the latter of which tend to be older and less likely to be working class than Labour voters. Among Labour supporters 63% voted Remain, whereas only 42% of Conservatives did so (Birks, 2016). In addition to stark divisions among voters, the media was also divided on the topic of Brexit, yet largely uninterested in the EU and its course (Bouko & Garcia, 2019). Most Conservative-supporting newspapers such as *The Sun*, *The Daily Mail*, and *The Express* supported Leave, whereas Labour-

⁵Also, see Koller, Kopf & Miglbauer (2019) for a comprehensive analysis of discursive drivers and consequences of Brexit.

supporting newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *The Mirror* supported Remain (Jackson et al., 2016).

The Leave victory was perceived as a shock result. Even though the polls had been consistently close, polling experts from for instance YouGov, ORB Ipsos-Mori, Survation, ComRes and Populus had incorrectly predicted a Remain victory. This mirrors the failure to accurately predict voter turn-out for the Referendum (Green, 2016) as well as previous failures of pollsters to predict General Election outcomes in 2010 and 2015. This new trend of political poll predictions being off (see also Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 US election) has been attributed to the increased digital nature of elections and the concurrent new level of difficulty in predicting their outcomes. Elections and referendums are taking on a more 'digital' form as political debates move more and more into online spaces and platforms (Bouko & Garcia, 2019; Mullen, 2016; Poesio et al., 2016; Zappavigna, 2019).

Lastly, another defining characteristic of the Referendum campaign was the shocking terrorist murder of pro-Remain Labour MP Jo Cox by a pro-Leave perpetrator in the penultimate week of campaigning. This led to a brief suspension of the campaign. A pro-Remain article written by her was republished and circulated widely (Lilleker, 2016).

2.2.4 2017 General Election: campaign, voters & outcome

Campaigning for the General Election of 2017 commenced on April 18th when Prime Minister Theresa May unexpectedly called a 'snap' election. The election itself was held on June 8th (Henn & Hart, 2017b; Thorsen, 2017). This differs from the 2015 GE, as this was an unexpected election. According to the regular five-year general election cycle, the next election would have been held in 2020. May, who had succeeded David Cameron

as the Conservative, or 'Tory',⁶ leader and Prime Minister after he had resigned following the EU Referendum (Worthy, 2016), had repeatedly denied that she would call an election. However, shortly after formally triggering Article 50 to start the process for the UK to extract itself from the EU, she called for a 'snap' election (Harmer, 2017; Hobolt, 2018). The unexpectedness and the public's shock and apprehension concerning this decision is perhaps best illustrated by a woman dubbed 'Brenda from Bristol' (Wheeler, 2017; Strong, 2018) expressing her dismay about having a snap general election so soon after the EU Referendum and the previous 2015 General Election. She was caught exclaiming "You're joking. Not another one [election]. For God's sake!" during an interview with the BBC's John Kay on the morning of May's announcement (Kay, 2017). The reason behind the decision to call a snap election relates to the belief that May and the Conservatives would "crush the Labour Party for a generation" and "secure her own mandate" to govern and execute Brexit (Thorsen et al., 2017, p. 8). Polls showed a Conservative lead over Labour that appeared to be unassailable (Henn & Hart, 2017a). May's personal ratings also appeared to be at least 40 points higher than those of her Labour counterpart Jeremy Corbyn (Thorsen et al., 2017). However, this plan backfired quite spectacularly and it ultimately resembled Cameron's failed EU Referendum gamble. Voters reacted with exasperation (Matthews, 2017) and despite the fact that the Conservatives again gained the most seats, they lost their majority. They had to form a minority government with the small right-wing DUP from Northern Ireland, and Labour finished close behind instead of being 'crushed'. In fact, Labour earned its biggest share of the vote since 2001 (D. Freedman, 2017). Such massive shifts in voter inten-

⁶The *Tories/Tory Party* became the colloquial name as well as an insult for the Conservative Party after it was founded in 1834 as a successor to the original 'Tory Party', which was founded in 1678. The word 'Tory' comes from the Irish words for 'outlaws' and 'pursuit' and therefore started out as a term of insult. It still carries negative connotations even though Conservatives themselves use the two terms interchangeably (Willman, 1974).

tion are rather unusual, indicating that the electorate has become more volatile (Mellon et al., 2018). Over the course of the campaign Theresa May had been portrayed as a 'strong and stable' leader who would deliver the best Brexit deal possible. However, she became increasingly seen as weak and Labour's anti-austerity message proved to be more popular than expected (Hobolt, 2018). In addition to the Labour upset, the SNP, Ukip, and the Liberal Democrats all saw a decrease in their votes (Koliastasis, 2017), weakening the 'multipartism' playing field of 2015 (Deacon et al., 2017a; Renwick, 2017). Furthermore, this election was viewed as the 'Brexit election' and a choice for a certain party or a certain MP was subsequently also a choice regarding Brexit negotiations, which greatly affected the outcome (Richards, 2017).

The percentage of women MPs rose again to 32%, ahead of the European average, but behind many other North-West European countries. The share of BME MPs and LGBTQ+ MPs also rose to 8.6% and 7.4%, a world-record share, respectively (Renwick, 2017). However, out of the 45 elected LGBTQ+ MPs 36 were white men and 9 white women, which is a worse gender and ethnicity imbalance than Parliament's overall ratio (Reynolds, 2017). The 2017 GE also saw the first trans candidate standing for election, Helen Belcher for the Liberal Democrats (henceforth the Lib Dems), who was not elected.

According to Thorsen et al. (2017), the main story regarding voters related to the high turnout. Even though voters appeared exasperated and jaded, the highest turnout since 1997 was achieved: 68.7%. The high turnout was mainly due to the mass mobilisation and engagement of young voters (18-24), who primarily voted Labour (i.e. 63%) (Chadwick, 2017). These young voters were continuously dismissed during the campaign as "snowflake voters" who would melt away before getting to the polling booth" (Henn & Hart, 2017a, p. 25). However, youth turnout went up from 44% in 2015 to 72% (Flinders, 2017). Another group whose turnout

was higher than the general population, and consistently so, yet is under-represented and dismissed, are UK Muslims (Citizens UK, 2017; Nyhagen, 2016). In particular, Muslim women are missing from the political debate, both as politicians and as voters, as Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crimes are on the rise (Nyhagen, 2016).

Lastly, akin to the EU Referendum campaign, this election campaign was also suspended not just once, but twice due to terrorist attacks. First, there was the Manchester Arena bombing on May 22nd that killed 23 and injured 119 people. The second suspension happened after the London terrorist attack of June 3rd that left 8 dead and 48 wounded (Thorsen et al., 2017). Consequently, and due to the WannaCry ransomware attack on the NHS in early May, (cyber-)security and surveillance circumvention featured heavily as campaign topics (Thorsen et al., 2017).

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the political landscape of the UK in the 2000s and the 2010s, as well as descriptions of who voted and how they voted, focusing in particular on the three electoral events under investigation in this study: the 2015 GE, the 2016 EU Referendum and the 2017 GE. In keeping with this study's intent, these descriptions comprised an explicit focus on female voters and female politicians. The next chapter will build on this overview regarding women and UK politics and this study's intent by explaining its theoretical framework as well as delving deeper into a literature review of studies related to gendered political discourse and media representations which will be presented through the lens of this study's chosen theoretical and methodological frameworks.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework & Literature Review

3.1 Theoretical framework

3.1.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

In order to analyse the representation of female voters in the UK news media, I will employ methods of analysis related to certain strands of research associated with Critical Discourse Analysis, henceforth CDA. CDA is a set of approaches, theories and associated methodologies which can be viewed as an overarching framework of reference, or a 'critical perspective' as van Dijk (2001) calls it, concerning the study of language use, discourses, and their wider social context. It is not a method or a theory in and of itself, and it does not specify particular data sets. Instead, it is a perspective that can be combined with any approach within the humanities and social sciences. This can seem too diffuse, but according to van Dijk (2001), there are certain main features and goals that all CDA approaches adhere to and/or have in common. Firstly, CDA views language as a 'social practice' (Fairclough, 2003; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997),

which is both “socially shaped and socially shaping” (Fairclough, 2009, p. 134) because it produces as well as reproduces or even transforms the social status quo and its social inequalities. Language itself is not powerful, rather “it gains power by the use people make of it and by the people who have access to [it]” (P. Baker et al., 2008, p. 280). Moreover, CDA is problem-oriented and focuses on “social problems, and especially on the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination” (van Dijk, 2001, p. 96). This ties in with Foucault’s (1972) notion of ‘discourse’, employed in the current study, as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p.49). Discourse can be defined as conventional ways of talking or writing which produce and are produced by conventional ways of thinking, which in turn constitute (power-based) ideologies in society and ways of seeing the world (Johnstone, 2008). This opposes how ‘discourse’ is often defined in traditional linguistics as “language above the sentence level”, “text”, “conversation” or “language in use” (Motschenbacher, 2016, p. 54). Additionally, CDA, wherever possible, must focus on social problems with the best interests of the dominated groups in mind, taking their opinions seriously, and it should therefore aim to be accessible and readable for the members of said social groups (Wodak & Meyer, 2009a). Thus, CDA is purposefully biased and acknowledges that research is not objective, which should also not be an aim unto itself. This is also a site of criticism for CDA, as it has been accused of being overtly political and “pre-assuming the relevance of certain, often power-related, social macro-issues” (Motschenbacher & Stegu, 2013, p. 528). However, CDA researchers see this as its strength, as it equips CDA to study all linguistic consequences of social macro-issues consisting of hegemonic power imbalances and normativities (e.g. heteronormativity, misogyny, racism), and how they affect numerous social contexts with varying degrees of salience (Koller, 2013; Motschenbacher & Stegu, 2013). It does so by scrutinising the formation of, often identity-

related, discourses and elucidating how language use represents and constructs social realities, as well as how it consequently reflects these realities and broader social processes of power. This is in line with Foucault's (1975) notion of power as a systemic and constitutive element of society. This implies that texts, pieces of language whether spoken or written, do not exist in a vacuum. Instead, they are in a dialectical relationship with their context, the "situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame [them]" (Wodak & Meyer, 2009b, p. 5). Furthermore, power is here not located in the hands of individual social actors but rather in the structures of hegemonic discourses which, as mentioned above, "systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972, p. 49), and both co-occur and compete with non-hegemonic discourses. CDA aims to *critically* investigate the discursive dimensions of how such relationships both construe and legitimise social inequalities, and critically analyse "opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (Wodak & Meyer, 2009b, p. 10) which may not be apparent in everyday life (van Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2009a). Additionally, it aims to examine how linguistic features can function as traces of certain discourses and simultaneously shape these discourses (Cameron, 2001, p. 123).

As a side note, this 'critical' aspect of CDA does not necessarily denote a 'negative' viewpoint. Critically appraising discourse(s) might also uncover discursive processes that challenge instead of uphold harmful hegemonic power structures and/or positive representations of oppressed groups (Wodak & Meyer, 2009b). In fact, the critical aspect of CDA purports that analyses "not simply describe existing realities but [seek] to explain them" by revealing them to be effects of humanly produced power structures in society (Fairclough, 2013, p. 10). In the case of this study, whether UK newspaper discourse reproduces or challenges hegemonic power structures that construe female voters, and their intersections with

other identity markers (e.g. sexuality, ethnicity), as a subordinate Other during election times, consequently legitimating prejudice. Additionally, this study aims to explore whether there are positive or negative representations of the subordinate group(s) and which properties of the discourse (e.g. lexical choice, discourse prosody, discursive strategies, and verb processes) effectuate the processes that are present.

CDA thus attempts to make obvious discursive violations of human rights by those in power which can, for example, be exemplified by exposing the harmful language used by the media in publishing biased stories about minorities (van Dijk, 2001, p. 119). Furthermore, and this is particularly pertinent to the present study, Choularaki and Fairclough (1999) claim that the language use of the mass media, which *appears* to be transparent, is a prime site for scrutinising power in language. Media institutions often project a sense of neutrality and objectivity, obfuscating their own biases, when in fact the media often constructs and mediates society's view and its power imbalances (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Consequently, a host of studies focus on right-wing media rhetoric, which is becoming more wide-spread and hegemonic across the world (e.g. Jowett, 2014; Kelsey, 2015; Wodak, 2015; Al-Azami, 2021; Lawless & Cole, 2021; Breazu & McGarry, 2023) and "its apt use of indirect strategies to address multiple audiences" (Wodak & Meyer, 2009a, p. 18).

Scrutinising these imbalances is in many ways subjective, and despite the fact that CDA does not employ one unified method, it does need to account for detailed linguistic categories and features including "grammatical, pragmatic, interactional, stylistic, rhetorical, semiotic, narrative or similar forms of verbal and paraverbal organisation of communicative events" (van Dijk, 2001, p. 97). It also particularly needs to account for indirect forms of language use and implicit meanings, such as presuppositions and allusions, which obscure the power structures under investigation. Additionally, van Dijk (2001) outlines a top-down order of

analysis where one first looks at overarching themes, or ‘semantic macro-structures’, followed by local meanings and the relevance of subtle formal structures. Such close analysis, of both fine-grained features and holistic themes and narratives, of *texts* takes an inordinate amount of time and therefore CDA analyses often do not include the whole range of features in every single analysis. However, this does mean that a ‘full’ analysis of all such features of larger bodies of *texts*, also called corpora, is virtually impossible. Strategies that apply CDA to corpora which underpin the methodology of the present study will be discussed in the section on the ‘triangulation’ of methods below.

As CDA requires analyses of the text itself as well as its societal context, another unified set of suggested approaches is needed for this study. These involve an integration of Norman Fairclough’s ‘three-dimensional model’, which consists of three levels of analysis (see Figure 1 below) and van Dijk’s (2001) similar idea of ‘actors’ in a social context. The three dimensions are as follows:

1. Text, the actual pieces of language under investigation.
2. Discursive practice, the production, distribution, and consumption of the text, the text is embedded.
3. Social practice, which encapsulates the previous two levels, simultaneously shaping them and being shaped by them (Fairclough, 1992, 2009).

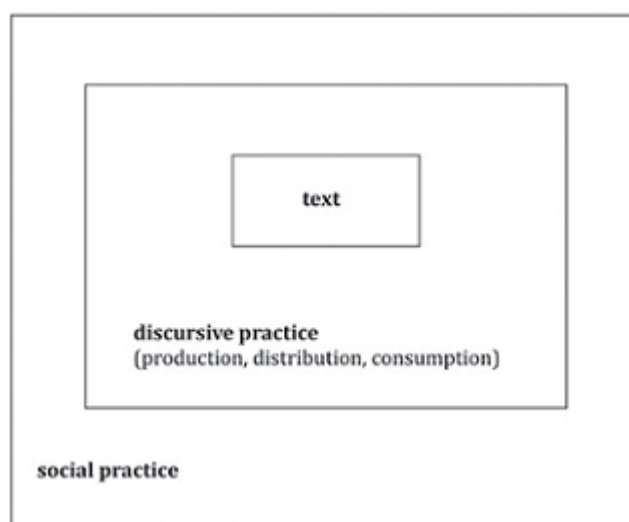


Figure 1: Fairclough's diagram of the 'social theory of discourse' (Fairclough, 1992, p. 73)

One can expand on and tease apart the 'discursive practice' second tier by referring separately to van Dijk's (2001) three social actors: 1. Producer; 2. Writer; 3. Recipient, when analysing and critically appraising a *text's* source/publisher (Producer), author and their identity (Writer) and intended audience (Recipient). However, CDA sometimes forgoes this 'discursive practice' second tier, as empirically establishing the consumption or recipients of a text is difficult, especially with the rise of online content. Therefore, directly linking a *text* to a social practice, or societal structure (van Dijk, 2001) seems easier to accomplish (Fairclough, 2009). However, one can, as this study will attempt, investigate both the intended audience, circulation, writers, and production/producer, which can then explain the producer and writer's "specific linguistic choices among several other options that a given language may provide . . . [taking] into account absences as well as presences in the data" (P. Baker et al., 2008, p. 281).

Furthermore, CDA researchers need to be continually critical of their own positions and subjectivity in doing research. Self-reflexivity is there-

fore an important aspect of CDA, as researchers themselves do not exist in a vacuum. They, myself included, may be complicit in the discourse(s) and power structures they attempt to analyse. In the case of the present study, my being a woman, and a queer woman at that, but being neither a British citizen nor having grown up within the UK or having voted in any of the 'permaelection' period elections and referendum is relevant to how I perform analyses of representations of a group to which I in some ways belong, but in many ways also do not belong.

Lastly, it is important to note that CDA like any other approach is imperfect and flawed, and to subsequently list some additional limitations and potential pitfalls of CDA. As mentioned above, assessing the precise influence of a *text* is quite difficult, as "a single important speech may have a vast impact, while other, more routine ones, repeated daily may hardly get noticed" (P. Baker et al., 2008, p. 283). Quantitative frequency analyses of particular terms might provide more insight into the impact of such routine language. One must also be aware of the limited scale of CDA (i.e. only a small number of texts can be analysed thoroughly) and the representativeness of the texts that are being studied (P. Baker et al., 2008; Koller & Mautner, 2004). A certain text may appear salient because it is an 'important speech' or involves an extreme opinion expressed in it, but often such texts are not typical of the larger discourse. One should then aim to find *texts* that are typical and avoid 'cherry-picking' examples that best illustrate and support preconceived ideologies and their own hypotheses (P. Baker & Levon, 2015; Koller & Mautner, 2004; Wodak & Meyer, 2009b). In Section 3.1.4 on the 'triangulation' of methods and approaches, I will explain how some of these pitfalls, cherry-picking in particular, can be counteracted by the use of large(r) corpora and a triangulation of methods.

3.1.2 Normativity-based approach

Another analytical concept which is important to both CDA in general and this study in particular, and therefore deserves further consideration, is the concept of normativity and how it is linked to the relationship between language and identity in general and gendered identities in particular. How the aforementioned hegemonic discourses and power imbalances in society play a role in the discursive negotiation and construction of what is perceived as normal, normative, or 'the norm'. In this sense, normativity can be thought of as a discursive formation in the Foucauldian sense (Motschenbacher, 2016, p. 57). Norms are defined as frequently displayed "shared patterns of thought, feeling, and behaviour" (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p. 8). Therefore, what people in groups "[directly and indirectly] do and say communicates information about norms and is itself configured by norms and by normative concerns" (p.8). These constricting configurations and concerns limit people's freedom of action and urge them to conform. They thereby threaten both one's negative face, the desire to live life unimpeded by others, and positive face, as one's acceptance in society directly correlates to how normative one's behaviour is (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Furthermore, the strength of norms also relates to their frequency, as for example the frequency with which certain identity-constructing linguistic behaviours are used (e.g. constructing politicians and voters as men) also increases or decreases their normativity. In the case of this study, language frequencies concerning norms vis-à-vis gender and politics will be the main focus (for discursive formations of gender and sexuality norms see Baker, 2013; Motschenbacher, 2014). Such a normativity-based approach must focus on the fundamental role language plays in these constructions of both normative and (often stigmatised) non-normative identities and behaviours. It must make both the noticed norms and the "unnoticed noticeable" (Motschenbacher, 2016, p. 62). The unnoticed oft relates to cases where social actors are stig-

matised due to their behaviour or identity not adhering to the presumed norm (T. J. Taylor, 1997, p. 156). Furthermore, this study will primarily deal with prescriptive norms rather than descriptive ones. Descriptive norms relate to what people commonly do and are generally valued to be neutral, whereas prescriptive norms delineate what people should do and thus have a stronger normative force (Motschenbacher, 2016, p. 58). Two final important characteristics of norms that should be taken into account are that they are never stable but bound to change in social interaction (Piippo, 2012), and that there can be a huge variation in which norms individuals within a community orient to or deem important (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011). All in all, the present study aims to elucidate how linguistic practices in UK newspaper coverage of election cycles are norm-making, or norm-affecting, in their contribution to the discursive construction of gendered voter and political normativities.

3.1.3 Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Supplementary to the CDA approach, a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) approach is useful to the present study in order to unveil the aforementioned normativities as well as how implicit discourse *traces* surrounding female voters externalise them and take them for granted. CDA, as discussed above, deals with gendered discourse as well as other discourses. However, not every CDA study with a gender focus is necessarily feminist in a critical sense (Lazar, 2007). Therefore it is necessary to specify that this study will attempt to study gender in discourse from a feminist critical perspective. Secondly, gender “operates in a more pervasive and complex way than other systems of oppression” (Lazar, 2007, p. 149), intersecting with other identity categories (e.g. social class, ethnicity, sexuality, age, (dis)ability), which in turn also intersect with each other, meriting its own particular focus.

According to Lazar (2007), FCDA offers a feminist critical perspective

on discursive representations of gender relating to the prevailing structural relations of power, and further aims at exacting social change in order to have “unrestricted possibilities for both women and men as human beings; a discursive critique of the prevailing restrictive structures is a step in that direction” (p. 153). In this feminist perspective, gender is “understood as an ideological structure that divides people into two classes: men and women, based on a hierarchical relation of domination and subordination, respectively” (Lazar, 2007, p. 146). The mapping of sexual difference onto social gender has imposed a social dichotomy, which has been criticised by many feminist scholars (Butler, 1996, 2011; Grant, 2013), but has also institutionalised gender equality in a wide range of institutions. Especially pertinent to this study, gender equality is discursively enacted in both the (news) media (Caldas-Coulthard, 1995; Talbot, 1998) and government (Lazar, 1993, 2000). Instead of mapping sexual differences, FCDA recognises difference and diversity among ‘women’ and ‘men’ and aims to analyse the subtle, yet pervasive, discursive workings of the oppression of women (e.g. production, sustainment, negotiation and challenging) and the concurrent workings of misogyny as well as the workings of sexism concerning both women and other genders in today’s societies. In addition, FCDA aims to analyse these concepts’ modern relations of dominance, or ‘hegemony’, which are largely hidden power structures, due to the fact that they are mostly cognitive and internalised. Gendered norms are internalised and enacted routinely in everyday talk and texts. This leads to such power relations being easily misrecognised and consequently legitimised as natural (Bourdieu, 1991; Lazar, 2007), which FCDA and this study aim to examine and challenge. It is also important within an FCDA approach to acknowledge the notion of ‘intersectionality’ (Crenshaw, 1990), as the differences among women (e.g. regarding the intersecting social identities mentioned above) engender different forms of oppression. FCDA studies, rather than have middle-class, heterosexual, white,

western women represent their partial experiences as being universally shared by all women (hooks, 1989, 2000b), thus need to be “inflected by the specificity of cultural, historical, and institutional frameworks, and contextualised in terms of women’s complexly constructed social identities” (Lazar, 2007, p. 149). This approach then also counters notions of ‘post-feminism’ in which feminism is seen to have outlived its purpose in the West (Lazar, 2004), despite the fact that women’s rights cannot be presumed a given (e.g. recent contestation of abortion laws in the USA (Jacobs, 2019), and even more recently, in 2022 the Supreme Court’s ruling to overturn *Roe v. Wade* (Paltrow et al., 2022)).

In terms of methodological features affecting this research, FCDA’s praxis is fivefold, according to Lazar (2007): 1. analytical activism, 2. understanding gender as an ideological structure, 3. acknowledging the complexity of gender and power relations, 4. investigating the role of discourse in the (de)construction of gender, 5. critical reflexivity as praxis. Regarding the methods involved in employing those praxes, the notions of ‘interdiscursivity’, the ways in which discourses are always inscribed with traces of other discourses, and ‘intertextuality’, the ways in which texts bear “traces of a series of preceding texts thus reinforcing historical presuppositions” (Baxter, 2010, p. 128), are key. Additionally, the notions of recontextualisation as well as ‘transitivity’ (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) are key, as the ways in which language users construe versions of reality in discourse through a wide range of syntactic structures and vocabulary choices ensures “information is arranged in a way that can indicate their ideological positioning” (Bartley & Hidalgo-Tenorio, 2015, p. 18). For example, verb processes in which female voters are engaged can be arranged to position them as being active or passive, as *agents* having autonomy over their actions, or as *patients* being subjected to certain actions. Furthermore, FCDA recognises the need for analyses of the multimodal dimensions of discourse, both its linguistic and visual representations (Kress

& van Leeuwen, 1996), which are generally missing from CDA approaches (Lazar, 2007). Consequently, all semiotic modalities such as the visual images that accompany the studied texts should be taken into account. This is also indicative of the post-disciplinary nature of FCDA, as its methodology employs frameworks from a variety of fields including pragmatics, semantics, systemic-functional linguistics, social semiotics, narrative theory, ethnomethodology, and conversation analysis (Lazar, 2007, p. 151).

Furthermore, regarding points 1 and 5: analytical activism and reflexivity, mentioned in Lazar's (2007) praxis, FCDA researchers must both aim to enact social change and challenge oppressive discourse through their research and reflect on their own positions and practices as academics, as well as make their positionality (e.g. my socio-cultural identity and political investment in the data analysed) explicit. Writing from a critical feminist perspective means having a critical distance on gender and on oneself (Grant, 2013). One should also avoid research from a completely external position of authority because, as Lazar (2007) puts "it is problematic when the research is undertaken not in collaboration with the locals or native scholars of the community" (p. 155). In the case of the current study, the discursive representation of female voters in the UK news media is of concern and warrants being challenged. Normative and consequently limiting or outright sexist, misogynist or otherwise discriminatory discourses (e.g. racist, homophobic, ableist) uphold existing patriarchal norms and hierarchies. These discourses guarantee "the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 1995, p. 77), and therefore should be uncovered and their discursive workings be examined and critiqued. Shedding light on female voter representation in the UK may then uncover possibly harmful linguistic practices and in turn contribute to diminishing such trends.

As a final point of consideration regarding self-reflexivity and my own socio-cultural position, and due to the activist nature of FCDA, the anal-

yses presented in the current study will in some ways be coloured by my own subjectivity as a female, queer, white, cisgender researcher; a left-wing EU citizen living in the UK. Although the studied representations primarily involve discourses surrounding UK female voters instead of discourse produced *by* voters, self-reflexivity regarding my not being from the UK as well as guiding my activist intent into productive linguistic analyses play a large role in these analyses.

3.1.4 Triangulation: corpus-assisted FCDA

The criticism regarding ‘cherry-picking’ within FCDA approaches, mentioned above, can be offset by the use of more quantitative corpus techniques to complement as well as serve as a basis for the more qualitative FCDA analyses. This means triangulating results by means of corpus-assisted discourse analysis (Partington, 2009). Frequency analyses of articles and/or certain terms and their linguistic environments by means of a corpus software can help elucidate the reach and possible impact of the linguistic phenomena under investigation. This is done by accounting for all of their instances and consequently facilitating quantitative comparisons between corpora (P. Baker et al., 2008). This can for example be done by comparing ‘keywords’, which indicate the ‘aboutness’ of a corpus, as these words are more frequent in the studied corpus than in comparative, representative corpora of the language of the studied corpus (Anthony & Baker, 2015; P. Baker, 2006a). Such frequency analyses may also provide an initial focus for analysis in the higher frequency terms and/or phenomena. Thus, lending credibility to generalisations, which might then also counteract the danger of cherry-picking interesting phenomena that support pre-conceived hypotheses, but may not be frequent or salient in the data (P. Baker & Levon, 2015; Mautner, 2009; Widdowson, 2008). Moreover, corpus-assisted studies which are based on larger data sets have in fact been shown to be more likely to produce reliable findings as well as

prevent the 'cherry-picking' of potentially atypical data to prove one's hypotheses (P. Baker & Levon, 2015).

A corpus, as used in this study, is not a random collection of texts. Instead it is a "collection of naturally occurring language texts, chosen to characterize a state or variety of a language" (Sinclair, 1991, p. 171). For example, the texts in this study are newspaper articles which are characteristic of UK media discourse. Corpora are designed and compiled with certain corpus design principles in mind, such as the fact that the samples of language enclosed in the corpora, whenever possible, consist of entire texts¹, information about the text(s) is stored separately from the plain text, the corpus design and composition are fully documented and justified, and aim to be consistent, representative and balanced (Sinclair, 2005, pp. 2–17). Using such (large-scale) corpora which include thousands of texts can then both assist FCDA and benefit from it. Small-scale FCDA benefits from the analysis of larger amounts of texts as a "single text on its own is quite insignificant: the effects of media power are cumulative, working through [...] repetition" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 54). The close reading of entire articles provides corpus studies with another plane for qualitative analyses which could flag up features that do not show up within the immediate co-text of search terms (e.g. legitimisation strategies spun out across an article) (P. Baker & Levon, 2015). Furthermore, without quantitative analyses, routine phenomena which may have a vast impact may go unnoticed (P. Baker et al., 2008). For example, by using frequency analyses one can argue that when certain words and phrases appear repeatedly in particular contexts recipients are primed to adopt these representations as the common way of looking at the world (P. Baker, 2014, p. 214). Meaning is therefore not created by words in isolation, but rather by the co-selection of words and their patterns (Cheng, 2011; Stubbs, 2001).

¹This counteracts the criticism that (F)CDA studies only tend to analyse a small number of texts and/or text fragments and short texts (Stubbs, 1996).

For instance, words and phrases can have a positive or negative ‘semantic prosody’, a concept similar to connotation, if they frequently co-occur with other units that have a positive or negative meaning (P. Baker & Egbert, 2016; P. Baker et al., 2008; Louw, 1993). On the other hand, FCDA enhances pure quantitative work by adding context to, and subsequently identifying themes in, abstract frequencies (P. Baker et al., 2013). All in all, employing a combination of corpus linguistic methods and FCDA, which has been dubbed ‘Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis’ by Partington (2009), aims to exploit the strong points of both approaches while counteracting their weaknesses.

This section has primarily focused on the theoretical framework and approaches employed in this study, as well as the practicalities of research (e.g. quantitative vs. qualitative) and dangers of cherry-picking in qualitative research. A more in-depth overview of the specific methods of analysis and how this study applies qualitatively corpus-assisted FCDA will be given in the ‘Framework of qualitative analyses’ section of the Methodology Chapter (Section 4.5). That section will outline how the approaches discussed here can be applied in specific frameworks of analysis and how to conduct such analyses. Specifically, it will delve extensively into the following frameworks and how to apply them to discourse analysis: van Leeuwen’s (1996) Social Actor Representation which combines text-level linguistic analysis with context analysis and can thus be linked to Fairclough’s three-tier model of embedded texts; appraisal theory, which directly links to the concept of normativity by evaluating social actors drawing on shared values and beliefs (J. R. Martin & White, 2003); legitimisation strategies which are highly prevalent in political discourse as legitimisation of political aims is a “principal discourse goal sought by political actors” (Cap, 2008, p. 39). However, before a comprehensive overview of the specific data collection and analytical methodologies applied in this study

can be provided, it is important to present an overview of the previous work that has been done related to the topic of the present study. This is to provide a basis and point of reference for both this study's method and analyses, and will be achieved by means of the literature review below in which studies related to gendered political discourse and media representations will be presented through the lens of FCDA and the frameworks discussed in this section.

3.2 Literature review

3.2.1 Political discourse and the media

The media can be viewed as the real public space in which politics take place and through which people understand politics and its processes (J. Lewis, 2013). These processes are often explained and supported by means of metaphoric narratives, as metaphors provide "cognitively accessible ways of communicating policy through drawing on ways of thinking by analogy" thereby supporting political arguments (Charteris-Black, 2011, p. 321). Consequently, metaphors enable both politicians and journalists to frame the way readers and thus voters understand political issues. They do so by both creating and reflecting in-group and out-group imagery as well as values, which can be defined as "shared mental objects of social cognition" located in the social memory (van Dijk, 1998, p. 74), and backgrounding alternative points of view (Charteris-Black, 2004, 2011; C. Hart, 2010). Even though traditional forms of media (e.g. television and print newspapers) are losing viewers and readers, they do not appear to be losing influence. In fact, these forms of media still play a central role in contemporary politics. This role is often neglected within feminist political scholarship (Adcock, 2010). Newspapers in general and broadsheets in particular, have adapted to their new online competition by means of a

process called 'tabloidisation'. This process refers to a shift, which has been observed since the late 1990's, among (British) newspapers toward publishing more 'soft' content (e.g. opinions, entertainment, 'human interest' stories) traditionally associated with the tabloid press, and less fact-based reporting (Holly, 2008; McLachlan & Golding, 2000; Ross, 2000), a move toward increased visualisation in news coverage and political journalism (Boomgaarden et al., 2016; Fahmy et al., 2014; Holly, 2008; Schill, 2012), as well as publishing (free) online versions to reach a wider audience (Cameron & Shaw, 2016; Conboy, 2010; McLachlan & Golding, 2000). Consequently, these newspapers still play a crucial role in the public representation of unequal social relations, and 'us' versus 'them' narratives. Newspaper articles not only inform their (intended) readers about events and issues but also provide "a particular perspective and evaluation" (Semino, 2009, p. 453). Such evaluations often include justifications or legitimisations of political discourses drawing on shared values and beliefs among the readership, and as such they are key in persuading the readership and by extension the voting public to lend their support to certain political parties or politicians and their plans (Beasley, 2011; R. P. Hart et al., 2004; van Dijk, 1992). In fact, legitimisation strategies – the concept of which will be discussed in more depth in Section 4.5.3 of the Methodology Chapter – influenced by the power and status of politicians are especially common in political discourse, as legitimisation is a "principal discourse goal sought by political actors" (Cap, 2008, p. 39) to elicit people's support (Chouliaraki, 2005). In this vein, political discourse and in turn media reports on political discourse also constitute an example of persuasive or even coercive speech, which is organised and conceived to legitimise political goals (Cap, 2008; Chouliaraki, 2005). Due to this goal-based approach to garner political support, news discourse also tends to focus on the political 'horse race' and the strategies of the participating parties rather than on the issues at stake in society and the election at hand

(Iyengar, 1994; Strömbäck & Shehata, 2007). This also often leads to more sporadic, 'event-based' or episodic patterns of reporting with articles reacting to moves made by politicians (Iyengar, 1994; Strömbäck & Shehata, 2007).

Moreover, journalists reflect both their own views and their perspectives of widely expected societal discourses. Accordingly, they often produce examples of xenophobia, sexism and racism (Cottle, 2000; Jaworska & Hunt, 2017). Media institutions purport to be objective and neutral in the political debate; however, they, for example, often do not merely delineate political parties' manifestos outlining their plans (White, 2016). Instead, they comment on them, evaluate and analyse them. In addition to articles written by journalists employed by the newspapers themselves, newspaper editors select letters submitted by their readership for publishing that best follow their own editorial line. These letters to the editor are not only chosen according to their newsworthiness, but also according to the perceived preferences of a newspaper's readers and to best reflect the newspaper's own identity and point of view (Richardson & Franklin, 2004). Due to this biased selection process, such letters to the editor should not be viewed as a fair representations of the views of the electorate. Furthermore, many, but not all, online articles also include Below The Line (BTL) comments, which are written by the public and appear immediately beneath an article. They have been branded 'participatory journalism' (Jewell, 2014) and act as a stimulus to generate discussion. These comments can be a useful resource to gauge public opinion on certain topics and wider debates, but they also tend to be moderated and comments are removed or highlighted according to a newspaper's guidelines (Paterson, 2020). Moreover, due to the presence of biased reporting and publishing processes, many scholars claim that the media and their implicit biases play a mediating and constructing role in the political process and in turn in society's views and power imbalances (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999;

Wodak & Meyer, 2009a).

Partisanship & the British media: 2015-2017

Even though many media institutions claim to be neutral, many are not and even explicitly state their political allegiances. The UK is particularly known for its partisan press, which is also the least trusted in Europe (Hardy, 2017; Ponsford, 2017a). British broadcasters are legally compelled to be impartial, yet British newspaper do not have to adhere to such tight regulations² (Starkey, 2017) and subsequently they are “(in)famously partisan” (Deacon et al., 2017b, p. 40). The British press is also “almost unique in large democracies in terms of its reach, ubiquity and one-sidedness” (Barnett, 2015, p. 91). Regardless of circulations having been halved over the last 20 years and both newspaper-specific and media-wide scepticism being on the rise (Wring, 2016), Conservative partisanship is the ‘most salient voice’ (Barnett, 2015; Firmstone, 2017). This also ties in with the alleged ‘death of multiparty Britain’ and falling by the wayside of voices outside of the Labour-Conservative binary (Deacon et al., 2017a; Prosser, 2018). The British newspaper landscape ranges from *The Mirror* and the *The Guardian*, which are perceived to be left-wing by their readers (M. Smith, 2017) and openly supported Labour in the most recent General Elections (i.e. 2015 & 2017) (McKee, 2017), to *The Times*, *The Telegraph*, *The Sun*, *The (Daily) Express* and *The Daily Mail* on the right. These papers are perceived to be right-wing and have supported the Conservatives in recent years (Newton & Brynin, 2001; M. Smith, 2017; Vliegenthart et al., 2011). Accordingly, based on a stereotypical view of right-wing media outlets, one might expect blatant prejudices and insensitivity from these newspapers and the British press in general (Al-Azami, 2021; Jowett, 2014;

²According to several scholars, however, Britain’s national newspapers play an important agenda-setting role for broadcasters, and newspaper headlines often appear on televised news programmes (Barnett, 2017).

Kelsey, 2015; van Dijk, 1995). It must be noted, however, that even though newspapers often explicitly state their allegiance(s), different views and approaches to representing and attributing speech to political actors and events might occur within a single newspaper. These differences might develop over time, or they might be present from the start due to differing opinions among their journalistic staff. Additionally, they might occur due to the fact that newspapers comprise a variety of different genres and sections (e.g. news reports, reviews, editorials, and politics, business, and entertainment sections).

Therefore, language use in newspapers cannot and must not be regarded as a "single, homogenous object of study" (Semino, 2009, p. 439). Consequently, the importance of contextualising newspaper data and carrying out fine-grained analyses must be emphasised (Lutzky & Kehoe, 2019). This need for fine-grained analysis also rings true in terms of how speech is reported on in newspapers. Journalists can choose to either directly attribute speech or quote politicians or members of the general public, or they can present speech in an indirect manner. The choice between these direct and indirect modes, as well as the selections of what to report, are of major interest to the analysis of newspaper coverage. The same words can be (re)told in vastly differing ways according to differing points of view. For example, direct quotations preceded by "[NAME] said that" present the reporter's apparent neutral perspective on what is being said, whereas if a quotation is preceded by the particular reporting verb "*claimed*", the reporter detaches themselves from agreeing with or being responsible for the words being said (Caldas-Coulthard, 1994). In addition to stating both implicit and explicit support or points of view, the British press appears to actively campaign for the political parties they support. Such campaigning can potentially affect election outcomes, as the national press still dominates national conversations surrounding politics in Britain (Barnett, 2015). For instance, the surprise Conservative win in 2015 might

have been affected by a barrage of anti-Labour headlines in the press, and ‘aggressive’ right-wing columnists having their pro-Conservative opinions magnified through social media and TV appearances (Barnett, 2015). Moreover, the newspapers’ views on Brexit and in particular their focus on immigration, ethnicity, (assumed) nationality and in particular national in-group solidarity and out-group exclusion within the Brexit debate (Cap, 2017; Jackson et al., 2016) also shaped the debate and possibly pushed the Leave side to victory. Almost all right-wing newspapers supported the Leave campaign, and Leave had an 82% circulation advantage over Vote Remain. Consequently, press coverage was profoundly skewed in favour of a Brexit outcome (Firmstone, 2016; D. Freedman, 2016; Levy et al., 2016a; Wring, 2016).

3.2.2 Normative media representations of gender in general and women in particular

This section deals with the representation of women in general and female voters in particular, both generally and in English-language media outlets in particular. Media images are often people’s predominant source of general knowledge about issues relating to underrepresented groups (e.g. women of colour, queer women). Therefore, the manner in which women are portrayed is significant to the formation of public opinions, as negative, uninformed and biased representations lead to stigmatisation.

In this study, akin to other studies of gender representations in the press, I take a social constructionist view of sex and gender. Furthermore, in accordance with Crenshaw’s (1990) notion of intersectionality, which is increasingly being adopted in linguistic research on language, gender and sexuality (Levon & Mendes, 2016; Milani, 2014), the sex and gender of the people being represented in the texts under analysis in this study are not assumed to be monolithic or homogeneous. Instead, they are

fluid, dynamic and contextually responsive (Levon, 2015). Gender constructions are thus multidimensional and are influenced by /intersect with different social categories (e.g. ethnicity, sexuality, age, (dis)ability). Moreover, these categories not only intersect, but they also mutually constitute one another (Crenshaw, 1990). I therefore aim to demonstrate how gender and its intersections with other categories are purposefully deployed in the context of election campaign reporting to create representations of female voters in support of certain hegemonic discourses. In fact, to analyse any type of representation, one has to be cognisant of who participates in the discourse at hand and what beliefs, values, emotions, norms, and implicit or 'common sense' hegemonic discourses they draw on (Koller, 2012, 2014).

As mentioned above, the news media are a prime site for the analysis of gender representations as they are ineradicably linked to gender and power (Williams, 2002). Additionally, women are often excluded from and/or severely underrepresented in the news. For instance, according to multiple studies, women tend to be underrepresented on newspaper front pages (Bell & Coche, 2022; Gibbons, 2000), in sports news (Biscomb & Matheson, 2019; Jaworska & Hunt, 2017; Rodgers & Thorson, 2000), news photographs (Jia et al., 2016; Rodgers & Thorson, 2000), and the news in general (D'Heer et al., 2020; Rodgers & Thorson, 2003; Shor et al., 2015), except for entertainment news (Len-Rios et al., 2005; Rao & Taboada, 2021). Furthermore, "because the news is made by men" it is also "thought to reflect the interests and values of men" (van Zoonen, 1998, p. 34). Consequently, the news media often reflect and reinforce patriarchal discourse(s) by perpetuating stereotypes regarding characteristics defined as womanly within hegemonic femininity. They also reflect and reinforce the role of such stereotypical characteristics in shaping women's place and role in society, and women's daily lives (Ross, 2000). These stereotypes being perpetuated in the representations of women in

the (news) media are also defined by Carter et al. (1998) as "standardi[s]ed mental pictures which provide sexist judgements about women such that their subordinate status within patriarchal society is symbolically reinforced" (p. 6) and they are used to legitimate and guarantee a subordinate hierarchical and complementary relationship to male dominance (Cameron & Shaw, 2016; Connell, 1987; Len-Rios et al., 2005; Schippers, 2007). Such gendered stereotypes often sexualise, objectify and commodify women by focusing on their physical appearance and bodies as sexual objects, rather than on their minds or professions (Ross, 1995; Holmes & Sigley, 2001; Caldas-Coulthard & Moon, 2010, Fardouly et al., 2015; Paasonen et al., 2020). More so than their male counterparts, women are judged within patriarchal and misogynistic parameters, and consequently they are meant to be attractive to the 'male gaze' (Mulvey, 1989). The objectification of women and subsequent lack of agency also concurs with a sense of male ownership of women often present in discourses involving women (Lampropoulou & Archakis, 2015).

Overall, representations of women also tend to be more negative than men and even demeaning and/or misogynist (Ajzenstadt & Steinberg, 1997). For instance, Jaworska and Hunt (2017) in their study of gender representations in sports reporting on the 2012 London Olympics found that the collocates of 'man/men' were much more strongly positive than the collocates of 'woman/women'. This also appears to relate to the notion that women are especially disliked and seen as unfeminine and even unnatural when they display stereotypically male behaviour, such as claims of authority, or sports prowess (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). Generally however, women are trivialised and portrayed as not having any authority, except perhaps over children and adults 'infantilised by illness' (Cameron & Shaw, 2016). For instance, several studies argue that women are much more likely than men to be referred to by their first name, which might be indicative of a trivialising sense of familiarity (e.g. Romaine,

2000; Atir & Ferguson, 2018). A vast literature also demonstrates that women tend to be viewed as more sensitive, emotional, warm and caring (i.e. communal), in contrast to the allegedly assertive and dominant nature of men (Fiske et al., 1999; Len-Rios et al., 2005). This conforms to the popular trope or archetype of women as nurturing mothers. The other most popular tropes identified by Ross and Carter (2011) in news discourse are women being portrayed as victims and "eye candy" (i.e. sexual objects). Notably, if not properly checked, such obsessions with objectifying women and women being seen as victims "may find expression in how women are treated" in everyday life (Diabah, 2020, p. 99).

Conversely, there are also archetypal representations of women linked to power rather than victimhood. According to management theorist Rosabeth Kanter (1987, 2008), the 'mother', along with the 'seductress' (who uses her sexuality to influence men), the nonthreatening 'pet' (whom men desire to protect) and the masculinised 'iron maiden', comprise the four main archetypes of female power. This power appears to consistently be linked to her gender rather than her individual abilities, and subordinate her to male power. Lastly, it is also a commonly used legitimisation strategy within media discourse to 'other' and demonise oppressed groups such as women (Rojo, 1995; S. Thompson & Yates, 2017; Wodak, 2002) specifically women whose identities intersect with other oppressed groups (Gabriel, 2017). For instance, several studies on UK press discourse found that Muslims, gay rights groups as well as feminists all have been portrayed as being 'militant' or 'radical' (P. Baker, 2006b; P. Baker et al., 2013; Jaworska & Krishnamurthy, 2012). These 'angry' groups are subsequently said to be undeserving of special treatment. Giving in, so to speak, to these groups is often classed as "political correctness gone too far" and ultimately this particular discourse is a negative one (P. Baker, 2014, p. 222).

The 'mother' and 'sexual object' stereotypes and their normative constructions of gender also tie in with the rather pervasive macro-social dis-

course of heteronormativity. This discourse produces (certain forms of) heterosexuality as natural, legitimate, unmarked, and the 'normal order of things' (Cameron, 2014, p. 461) and enjoys a high degree of power as it has evolved into the main, dominant identity discourse that structures society at large (Motschenbacher, 2016). Heteronormativity is highly prominent, albeit relatively recent from a historical point of view (Foucault, 1978), in both everyday communication and public media contexts in most (if not all) cultures (Cameron, 1997; Coates, 2007, 2013; Ericsson, 2011; Kiesling, 2002; Motschenbacher, 2016). It is so common in fact, that studies have found that heterosexual disambiguation such as references to wives/husbands, heterosexual marriage, divorce, and relationships, are often performed by means of 'parenthetical comments' which are not seen as noteworthy (Ericsson, 2008; Kitzinger, 2005; Rendle-Short, 2005). Furthermore, constructing one's heterosexual identity is not recognised as a form of sexuality construction (Motschenbacher, 2016). Moreover, heteronormative discourses adhere to gender-related discourses of binarism/difference and male dominance by primarily portraying women along the lines of 'proper femininity'. Women are portrayed as inherently different from and subordinate to men in general and their male partners in particular, and as attracted to men while in heterosexual roles in which they are assumed to be heterosexual. This oppositional construction and valuation of binary male and female genders in which gender and sexuality are inextricably linked within our heteronormative society is also known as the 'heterosexual matrix', a term coined by Butler (1990). Therefore, in order to reinforce these structures, the use of binary, oppositional, gendered personal nouns and pronouns such as woman/man, girl/boy, he/she and other linguistic features that can be used to construct gender in a binary fashion also feature heavily in heteronormative discourses (Morrish & Sauntson, 2007).

Concurrently, non-heteronormative gay and lesbian identities are ei-

ther stigmatised or at the very least portrayed in a clearly less positive manner than the heterosexual norm. See, for British examples in a political context, Baker (2005) on homophobic construction of non-heteronormative sexualities in parliamentary debates and tabloids, and Braun and Kitzinger (2001) or Morrish and Sauntson (2007) on stigmatising constructions of gay politicians in the British press. These stigmatising representations of non-heterosexual identities also perpetuate the norm of compulsory heterosexuality (Coates, 2013; Daddario, 1994; Kitzinger, 2005; Motschenbacher, 2011). Heteronormative discourses also disseminate specific types of heterosexual relationships and gender roles (Sokalska-Bennett, 2017; Sunderland, 2004), as it favours monogamous and reproductive heterosexuality, and more specifically the “middle-class nuclear family, involving a stable, monogamous (preferably marital) and reproducible [...] sexual relationship between two adults [...] whose social and sexual roles are differentiated along conventional lines” (Cameron & Kulick, 2003, pp. 9–10). Consequently, the heterosexual (marital) couple is continuously institutionalised by ‘state-sanctioned structures of kinship, marriage and family’ (R. Lakoff, 2004, p. 176), and normalised as “the basic unit for the reproduction of society, and the forms of gender we are socialised into are forms that will prepare us to become part of that unit” (Cameron, 2012, p. 177). Both the family and marital aspects ring especially true for women as they are seen through a filter of both old fashioned and hetero/cisnormative as well as ableist, traditional “‘family values’ vocabularies associated with social conservatism” (McRobbie, 2013, p. 121).

Furthermore, women have been found to be more strongly associated with marital status, a heteronormative staple, than men (Pearce, 2008), while Jaworska and Hunt (2017) found that female referential terms collocate more strongly with the term ‘married’ than male ones. Consequently, heteronormative discourses also overlap with other gender-related discourses discussed in this chapter such as cisnormativity, male dominance

over women and male agency versus female passivity (Motschenbacher, 2016). Men are often portrayed as the breadwinners in the heterosexual relationship unit and heterosexual marriage is built on a sense of ownership of husband over wife.

The notion of cisnormativity, apart from assuming that all women can have children, adhering to the aforementioned traditional values and assuming only women can birth children, relates to the normalisation of 'cisgendering'. That is, the idea that the 'natural' and binary gender assigned to an individual at birth is coherent with the gender identity experienced by the individual, and remains coherent and constant throughout the individual's life (Ericsson, 2018; Hornscheidt, 2015). This also relates to "the oppressive logic that our bodies have some purported biological gendered truth in them" (Spade, 2011, pp. 61–62). Accordingly, binary sex and gender is presupposed, and transgender as well as intersex and non-binary identities are marginalised and pathologised as they lie outside the cisnormative norm. Using the term 'cisgender' names this normative position and renders the norm visible and therefore problematisable, but it also runs the risk of portraying gender as something that is stable and normative (Enke, 2012). It could in fact essentialise and reify the categories of 'woman' and 'man' "rendering any variance invisible or impossible" (Ericsson, 2018, p. 142). According to Zimman (2015), rather than the too narrow sex/(cis)gender distinction, a distinction between gender assignment, role, expression and identity should be made in order to render variance visible and possible. Furthermore, cisnormativity is an ideology which is less explicitly communicated than heteronormativity, partially due to it overlapping yet being subordinate to heteronormativity (Ericsson, 2018). Instead, it is "predominantly tacitly held and communicated", "difficult to recognise", and therefore it is "hard to understand its effects" (Kennedy, 2013, p. 6). Consequently, it is necessary for studies, including the present study, to recognise, analyse and problematise the underresearched dis-

courses of cisnormativity they discover in such areas as everyday spoken interactions (Ericsson, 2018), sex education curricula (Tordoff et al., 2021), and psychological literature (Ansara & Hegarty, 2012).

Moreover, as a consequence of heteronormative and cisnormative discourses, identities that do not fit the cisgender, heterosexual normative mould are othered, and overt forms of discrimination in the forms of 'heterosexism' (McLoughlin, 2008) and homophobia have become entrenched in society at large (Peterson, 2011), and the UK in particular (van der Bom et al., 2015). It is also important to note here that even though Britain declares itself to be a champion of LGBTQ+ rights (Ayoub, 2016; Guerrina & Masselot, 2018; Pudzianowska & Smiszek, 2015) and it used to be a member of the EU which proclaims to be 'the best place in the world' for the queer community (Drucker, 2016), Britain has a long anti-LGBTQ+ history. Both the UK and the EU purport their tolerance and acceptance of queer people as a sign of their benevolence and even superiority over less queer-friendly and therefore 'less developed' nations (Ferguson & Hong, 2012; Haritaworn et al., 2008; Hubbard & Wilkinson, 2015). This celebration of their own alleged national tolerance toward sexual (and gender) minorities, also called 'homonationalism' or 'pinkwashing' of a national identity, can then be used to obscure discriminatory societal realities on the national level in these countries (Gluhovic, 2013; Motschenbacher, 2016; Puar, 2006). While it also plays into colonial rescue fantasies of dominating other less 'developed' countries by means of claims to 'save the gays' (Bracke, 2012; Sabsay, 2012), and xenophobic and Islamophobic anti-immigration stances which position (Western) gay rights as "conflicting with the religious rights and values embraced by certain Muslims" (Hubbard & Wilkinson, 2015, p. 603). In fact, Britain has a long history of discriminatory practices against queer people by means of persecutions, anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, anti-LGBTQ+ organisations with connections to the church, political parties, think tanks and the government (Browne & Nash,

2014), and (a recent spike in) anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes (Galop, 2016). For example, male homosexuality was only decriminalised in 1967 (Twomey, 2003), while female homosexuality was overlooked and disregarded as not being 'real' and therefore stigmatised but never criminalised. Furthermore, the infamous 'Section 28' series of laws introduced by then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in 1988 prohibited councils and schools from promoting the 'acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family' relationship until the year 2000 (Macnair, 1989; Sauntson, 2020; Waites, 2003). An instance of present-day othering and demonising of queer people in the media, which primarily focuses on trans identities, can be found in Baker (2014), who states that trans women were demonised and represented as victims as well as aggressors in the British press (see also Shon Faye's (2021) book "The Transgender Issue: An Argument for Justice" for a comprehensive discussion of (transphobic) representations of trans people in the British press and discriminatory laws regarding trans identities in Britain).

Browne and Nash (2014) also show how trans people and other non-normative queer people are excluded and even demonised in the UK press, more so than their 'homonormative' counterparts whose cisgender lesbian and gay identities are constructed along normative heterosexual lines. Such homonormativity, which is heavily influenced by neoliberal ideals of personal responsibility (Weiss, 2008), also entails the reduction of queer culture to a restrictive and commercially viable gay 'ideal' of usually white, western, affluent, able-bodied gay people who do not "contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions" but uphold and sustain them (Duggan, 2002, p. 179) by reifying and assimilating with traditional hetero-and-cisnormative notions of identity and family such as same-sex marriage and adoption (Tilsen & Nylund, 2010). Consequently, these homonormative identities are consistently privileged over less normative bisexual and trans identities (Milani, 2013; Motschenbacher, 2012, 2016). More-

over, homonormativity results in similar notions of stigmatisation and exclusion as heteronormativity does and requires similar scrutiny to uncover its mechanisms (Motschenbacher, 2016). For such scrutiny see, for example, studies by Koller (2013) on lesbian texts from 1970 and 2010 and Jones (2011, 2014) on lesbian communities of practice, which show that lesbian identities are required to relate to both external heteronormative discourses and in-group normative mechanisms. See also Milani (2013) on how 'acting straight' rather than overtly gay or effeminate, and thus performing one's identity within both hetero-and-homonormative structures, carries prestige in a South African gay male online dating community.

Another intersection that leads to more discrimination and compounded 'Othering' is the intersection of ableism and sexism through which women with disabilities are more underrepresented and discriminated against than men as the focus once again lies on their marital status. In addition to this, disabled people are generally portrayed patronisingly, regarded with pity or fear (Clare, 2015; Gold & Auslander, 1999; B. A. Haller, 2010). At times either as weak, helpless victims, or as overly strong superheroes (Thomas & Smith, 2003). However, recently representations of people with disabilities appear to be taking a positive turn as portrayals of disability are now more commonly framed through a disability rights lens (B. Haller et al., 2012). Lastly, age is another intersecting identity which connects to the aforementioned trivialisation and perhaps even infantilisation of women. For example, previous research has indicated that the terms 'woman' and 'girl' tend to be used synonymously, while this is not the case for 'man' and 'boy' (Jaworska & Hunt, 2017; C. Taylor, 2013). In fact, according to a 2019 YouGov poll, a majority of Britons (58%) think it is always or usually acceptable for men and women to refer to women as 'girls'. This rises to 70% for just women referring to other women as 'girls'. Conversely, calling men 'boys' received a larger 72% overall approval rate, as it seems that 'boy' carries fewer negative connotations. Interestingly, there is a large

generational gap, as 70% of people aged over 60 think it is acceptable to refer to women as 'girls', as opposed to only 48% of people aged between 18-24 (M. Smith, 2019). Times might be changing, it seems. Moreover, studies have shown that men who ranked 'lower in modern sexism' use fewer trivialising, gender-biased terms such as 'girl' than men ranking 'higher in modern sexism' (Cralley & Ruscher, 2005; Swim et al., 2004) and the latter group also do not perceive gender-biased language as sexist (Swim et al., 2004). This infantilising use of 'girl', especially by older generations and (sexist) men, also echoes Bolinger's (2014) suggestion that women tend to be represented as never growing up, as never reaching adult status, and as always remaining subordinate to adult men.

3.2.3 Gender & politics

In this section I will link the gendered stereotypes, norms and patriarchal structures discussed above to the arena of politics in general and UK politics in particular, as "now more than ever, the personal is political" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2015, p. 24).

Gender bias in UK politics: male dominance & masculinised discourse

Contemporary politics is singularly gendered and biased in nature. Female politicians such as former UK Prime Minister Theresa May evoke rather powerful emotions in both the media and the public (Savigny & Warner, 2015; Sreberny & van Zoonen, 2000), while high politics is still seen as the realm of men (Campbell & Childs, 2010). According to Meeks (2012), masculinity is still the preferred mode for higher office, men's interests are viewed as neutral and more important, and male leadership remains the default against which women are judged to be lacking (O'Brien, 2016b; S. Thompson & Yates, 2017). Furthermore, women appear to pose a threat to the fraternal culture of both male politicians and journalists

(Adcock, 2010). Concurrently, androcentric and sexist coverage, and militaristic masculinised language dominates in the male-dominated world of politics coverage (Harmer, 2015; Savigny, 2015). Multiple studies have shown that political media discourse in general and in the UK in particular is very much focused on male politicians and male political leaders disadvantaging female politicians' status (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Bystrom, 2006; Deacon et al., 2015 & van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020; Thesen & Yildirim, 2023) as well as constructed in a masculine manner (Gabrielatos et al., 2012; Herrnson et al., 2003; Morrison, 2017; Ross, 2016; Savigny, 2017). For instance, Deacon et al. (2015) showed that during the 2015 UK General Election campaign women only accounted for 15.4% of all sources and 14.9% of politicians included in the press. Women are also much more likely to be portrayed as ordinary citizens than as experts (Harmer, 2015), and almost solely only asked about so-called 'women's issues' (Guerrina & Masselot, 2018), as will be discussed in more detail in the following section. Aside from being underrepresented in politics, women are also viewed differently than men in the political arena. For instance, the 'different voice' ideology in politics claims that women's presence will automatically change the language of politics (Cameron & Shaw, 2016; Tannen et al., 1990). Women are viewed as being better at dealing with social issues, whereas men are seen as better suited at dealing with 'men's' issues such as crime, public safety, foreign policy, the economy and national security, which are also perceived to be more important and decide elections, according to a 2008 Pew Research Center survey (Gabrielatos et al., 2012).

Even though there is a growing influence of women in politics, - see the aforementioned rise in female MPs in the UK (Mitchell, 2015) - they are still underrepresented and marginalised, and such skewed and sexist coverage and perspectives result in politicians having difficulties to reach female voters. This can even put women off voting (Katwala et al., 2016; Savigny, 2015). Moreover, it conceals the ways in which women's issues

are marginalised and how female voters' voices and interests are drowned out in the political debate, which remains a rather under-researched topic and therefore merits being the main focus of the present study.

Gender bias in UK politics: the notion of 'women's issues'

As mentioned above, women are only considered experts on women's issues. Such women's issues are viewed as less important than men's issues, as well as specific to women, whereas 'men's issues' are seen as universal and consequently as neutral. Therefore, men's issues are given more coverage in the press both in a numerical sense and in terms of salience, as 'feminised' news topics rarely make the front-page. Through this the issue agenda is biased toward men and masculine values (Gabrielatos et al., 2012). Furthermore, previous research suggests that women's issues align with stereotypes of femininity. For instance, women's issues relate to women's compassion and family-oriented roles (Rudman & Kilianski, 2000) and accordingly, women's issues are considered to include education, environmental and climate issues, health care, social welfare, and women's rights (Han, 2007; Heldman et al., 2005; Herrnson et al., 2003; Major & Coleman, 2008). Conversely, the 'neutral' and more 'important' men's issues have been shown to include crime, the economy, foreign policy, and the military (Han, 2007; Heldman et al., 2005; Herrnson et al., 2003; Major & Coleman, 2008), aligning with masculine stereotypes regarding men as protectors and providers (Rudman & Kilianski, 2000).

Female politicians in the media

Gender bias within politics is well documented, as discussed above, and so is the gender bias and use of gender stereotypes in the media representations of politicians (Semetko & Boomgaarden, 2007; Valenzuela & Correa, 2009). A vast literature suggests that female politicians remain

underrepresented, articles featuring more than one female politician are rare (Ross et al., 2013a), and the coverage they do attract is primarily focused on their gender and the accompanying gendered stereotypes (Adcock, 2010; Banwart et al., 2003; Bystrom et al., 2001; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Ross, 2002; Thesen & Yildirim, 2023). Women in politics are treated as a novelty or even an oddity or ‘aberration’ as it is not what *real* women do (Ross, 2000; Schreiber & Falk, 2009). Consequently, Ross (2013) suggests that UK national politics is still a ‘man’s game’. Many of the representations that are present show clear overlaps with media representations of women in general and draw on Kanter’s (1987, 2008) archetypes like the ‘Iron Maiden’. In the coverage of the 2017 UK General Election, Theresa May was portrayed as a ‘mummy’, ‘Maybot’, and a ‘bloody difficult woman’ (S. Thompson & Yates, 2017). These portrayals explicitly focus on her gender and how her stubbornness and lack of compassion are seen as un-feminine (Ross, 2017; Savigny, 2017). Female politicians are also trivialised, sexualised and objectified, as their personal lives, physical appearance (i.e. age, looks, fashion sense) and character traits such as sincerity tend to be the focus, whereas coverage of male politicians focuses more on their experience, policy positions and professional accomplishments (Bystrom, 2006; Cameron & Shaw, 2016; Davis, 1982; Dunaway et al., 2013; Heldman et al., 2005; Hooghe et al., 2015; Jamieson et al., 1995; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Meeks, 2012; Thesen & Yildirim, 2023; Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020). This is not to say that men are not judged on these aspects at all, Boris Johnson was for example also judged and finally ousted as PM in 2022 because of his lack of sincerity. Women are judged more harshly on these aspects, however. Furthermore, female politicians are associated with domestic life, whereas the media portrays male politicians as associated with neutral, rational politics, normalising them as the ones who ‘do’ politics (Cameron & Shaw, 2016; Ross et al., 2013a; Sreberny & van Zoonen, 2000). Furthermore, minoritised fe-

male politicians³ and particularly female politicians of colour are subjected to more intense, disproportionate scrutiny than white women (Gabriel, 2017). Whiteness in general is backgrounded, or even suppressed, yet understood to be ever-present (Ahmed, 2007). Whiteness is in fact reified as a fixed, universal category of experience and treated as a monolith (p. 149). Therefore, while white women are oppressed by sexism and misogyny, racist structures allow them to also act as oppressors of women of colour (hooks, 2000a). Moreover, the habitualness of whiteness in the UK implies that Britishness, and taking part in the British political debate, be it as a politician or a voter, inherently entails a (non-immigrant) white identity. This communal 'British' identity stresses intra-group sameness while it obscures individual differences between group members for nationalist purposes. This national identity of an 'imagined community', which consider themselves to possess substantial commonalities, is a matter of a shared belief and stressing of sameness and downplaying of individual differences to strengthen the bond between people who have never met yet consider themselves to possess significant commonalities (Anderson, 1991). In turn, xenophobic and often Islamophobic notions of fear and anger concerning immigration are cultivated, nurtured and legitimised in the political debate (Al-Azami, 2021; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). Such in-group solidarity and out-group exclusion often surfaces in nationalist pronominal choices in 'us vs. them' rhetoric (Wodak et al., 1998).

Furthermore, an instance of the aforementioned disproportionate and racially charged scrutiny of female politicians of colour and the reification of white political identities in the UK is the negative, othering media treatment by both men and women of Labour MP Diane Abbot, who is a Black woman. The media's judgement and outrage over any and all of her (minor) faux pas is a clear example of 'misogynoir': the intersection and

³The literature is severely lacking in this area, partially due to the fact that minoritised and marginalised women are critically underrepresented in UK and Western politics.

interaction of misogyny and racism (Bailey & Trudy, 2018). Perhaps the most well-known example of this outrage was the media's mocking and hostile treatment of Abbott when she was seen drinking alcohol on public transport in London. This is prohibited by a bylaw even though alcohol consumption on trains across the UK is legal and even encouraged by the sale of such beverages on board (Buckledee, 2020).

In addition to the lack of coverage female politicians receive regarding their policy positions, these women also tend to be portrayed as primarily and at times solely focused and knowledgeable on the 'women's issues' discussed above (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Witt et al., 1995). This ties in with the theory of gender issue ownership (Herrnson et al., 2003), which argues that voters tend to perceive female politicians as more competent when it comes to traditional 'women's issues' than male politicians (Shapiro & Mahajan, 1986). The biased and lacking coverage does not bode well for female politicians due to the notion that the voting public rely on news coverage to learn about politicians and tend to base their voting behaviour on the information provided by the news (Chaffee & Kanihan, 1997; Gunther, Mughan, et al., 2000; Kahn, 1992; Kahn & Kenney, 2002). Additionally, young women in the UK are aware of sexist portrayals of female politicians and it discourages them from engaging with politics, as shown by a study by Girlguiding UK (Cameron & Shaw, 2016). Therefore, as argued by Adcock (2010), journalists may have the means to improve women's political representation.

Representations of, and appeals to, female voters in the media

The literature on media representations of, and appeals to, female voters is rather lacking in breadth as well as depth. As previously established, the underrepresentation of women in politics as well as negative, sexist portrayals of female politicians may put women off standing for office and/or voting. But what about representations of the female-identifying part of

the electorate who appear to be courted more and more, if the founding of the Women's Equality Party⁴ in the UK is anything to go by? There is some research on appeals to female voters and the aforementioned women's issues, yet the focus tends to lie on female politicians or the electorate as a monolithic yet ambiguous whole, a 'people',⁵ so to speak (Zappettini & Krzyżanowski, 2019), who are either collectivised by the press or by voters themselves in vox pop-style interviews on the streets (Miglbauer & Koller, 2019). See, for example, Koller, Kopf & Miglbauer (2019) for analyses of representations of the British electorate online, in newspapers, and vox pops in the context of the 2016 EU Referendum. Scullion (2015) also found that the electorate as a whole was portrayed with reverence, infantilisation, patronising help, as a pliable audience for a beauty contest, and in mediated dialogue (p. 33), but no word on whether women were more or less revered, or more or less infantilised, as women in general tend to be. This infantilisation of the electorate was also present in Farrell's (2016) study of Brexit coverage. However, there are several studies on media representations of suffragettes (Gupta, 2013), how the voting behaviour of women tends to reflect a preference for female candidates (Dolan, 1998, 2012; McElroy & Marsh, 2010), or male and female voting behaviour in general (Heilman & Saruwatari, 1979; Helmreich et al., 1982; K. E. Lewis & Bierly, 1990; McElroy & Marsh, 2010; Sanbonmatsu, 2002). Recent studies have also looked into the political engagement of women on Twitter (Mitchell, 2015; Parry, 2015), or (heterosexual) women as members of wider male-focused political fandoms in the UK (e.g. Jeremy Corbyn fans or 'Corbynistas', and the 'Milifandom' of female, often teenage, Ed Miliband fans) (Cameron & Shaw, 2016; Dean, 2017; Hills, 2017; Norris,

⁴The WEP's seven core policy issues align with traditional women's issues: equality in healthcare, representation, pay, parenting, education, media treatment and an end to violence against women (Evans & Kenny, 2017; Women's Equality Party, 2022).

⁵According to Canovan (2005), the semantic ambiguity of this term lies at the heart of its appeal.

2017).

Among the previous studies on the actual media representation of female voters in the UK, Adcock's (2010) appears to be the most salient and exhaustive. Adcock (2010) found that 'ordinary women', or voters, featured more heavily in news sources than expected, but their opinions were generally restricted to selective, fragmented sentences in tabloids, or used for comic contextual effect in broadsheets. In general, these women were portrayed as "uninformed, irrational, confused or apathetic mothers, housewives, shoppers, workers, and patients" (p. 148). They are 'reluctant participants' or 'comic spectators' and their views were judged as inappropriate in the masculine arena of politics. In addition to 'laughable' spectators, women were framed as irrational, 'adoring' fans of male politicians who are easily charmed and cannot be reasoned with (see also Cameron & Shaw, 2016; Hills, 2017; Norris, 2017). However, like the Adcock (2010) study, most previous research is rather narrowly focused on one election or referendum (e.g. O'Brien (2016a), Harmer (2015) and Ross (2016) on the EU Referendum, or Harmer and Southern (2017) on GE17) or they compare 'ordinary women' whose voices tend to be drowned out or constrained (Savigny & Warner, 2015; Shaw, 2006) to female politicians (Harmer & Southern, 2017). These studies suggest that female voters tend to be ignored (O'Brien, 2016a), or if they are 'heard' they are more often portrayed as citizens than as experts (Deacon et al., 2016; Harmer, 2015) and addressed as 'women' in a rather general sense (Ross, 2016). Women appear to be viewed as a homogeneous group, but further research is necessary on this topic. Moreover, large-scale, intersectional and diachronic studies that compare several election/ referendum campaigns also appear to be lacking from the literature. For instance, heterosexuality has featured in a minor way in previous research, but heteronormativity has not explicitly been identified, nor have queer voters' representations been looked at. Class, religion, ethnicity, (dis)abilities (e.g. both physical and mental

health-related), age, education, national identity have also barely featured. Are minority women 'micro-targeted', for instance, as Anstead (2015) tentatively suggests. Regarding the studies on political media appeals to women, foci have comprised gendered appeals by politicians identifying as mothers (Quirk, 2015), 'gendered stunts' such as Labour MP Harriet Harman's pink bus (Savigny & Warner, 2015) instead of serious appeals, which begs the question whether appeals to women are more personal, less jargon-heavy, and perhaps less combative? Several smaller UK studies have also shown that the costs of war for women are underrepresented (Savigny, 2017), that women are hit harder by austerity measures (Norris, 2017), and that politicians might find it difficult to appeal to women (Katawala et al., 2016). However, journalists may have the means to improve women's political representation (Adcock, 2010), as the next section will discuss.

3.2.4 The influence of journalist gender

The last topic of previous research that will be discussed in this section relates to whether the gender of a journalist on average affects their reporting style and whether there is a difference between male and female reporting.⁶ Previous studies are quite conflicting as they point toward there both being a difference and no difference concerning journalist gender. According to van Zoonen (1998), "the gender of journalists is relatively unimportant for the way news looks" (p. 35), and several other studies have shown that there is no great difference between the ways in which male and female journalists practice journalism in general (Hanitzsch & Hanusch, 2012; Lavie & Lehman-Wilzig, 2003), in the UK (Thurman et al., 2016), or in UK political campaign coverage (Chambers et al., 2004; Rehkopf & Reinstadler, 2011; Ross et al., 2013a). A relationship between

⁶To my knowledge there are no comparative studies on the language of journalists that identify outside of the gender binary.

journalist gender and gendered news has not been found either (Meeks, 2013). All journalists tend to report more on men in general (Kian et al., 2011) and particularly in the highly masculinised and intertwined domains of journalism and politics where the majority of articles are written by men about other men running for political office (Meeks, 2013). However, other scholars claim that there is in fact a difference and that female journalists differ in the types of stories they write. For instance, stories pertaining to such stereotypically female domains as consumer news, culture, education, entertainment, 'human interest' and social policy rather than crime or politics (van Zoonen, 1998). Some studies have also indicated that there is a relationship between journalist gender and both story framing and source selection, as female journalists have been shown to cite more female sources than their male counterparts (Armstrong, 2004; E. Freedman et al., 2010; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Lavie & Lehman-Wilzig, 2003; Schmidt, 2018; Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020). However, as mentioned above, journalists in general tend to prioritise male sources (Ross et al., 2013b; Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020). Kian et al. (2011) for example, showed that female journalists largely reinforced hegemonic masculinity in sports coverage through the use of sexist language and stereotypical descriptors devaluing the athleticism of female athletes, whereas male journalists were more likely to challenge such stereotypes and praise the female athletes instead. The higher presence of gendered stereotypes in the writing of female journalists was also reported by Kahn and Goldenberg (1991), as their study showed that female journalists discussed more stereotypically female traits (e.g. "compassionate", "gentle", "passive") when covering women running for office in the US, perhaps acting within patriarchal constraints of what women 'should' cover and find important. Similar results were found by Meeks (2013) and Kian et al. (2011). The consequences of such gendered reporting can be rather far-reaching and insidious. Meeks (2013) also argues that voters tend to rely on news

coverage for information on politicians and vote choices and therefore journalists need to recognise and challenge how their gendered reporting “contributes to the gendering of political offices, and the potential gender boundaries such coverage may present for women seeking to run for and win executive offices” (p. 69).

This chapter has provided an overview of CDA in general and FCDA in particular, the specific focus on the concept of normativity in this study and the triangulation of these approaches with corpus linguistics as well as overviews of previous research related to the topics of women, politics and media discussed through an FCDA lens. The following chapter will now outline this study’s methods, corpus-building processes and analyses which are shaped and framed by the theoretical framework and activist nature of this study discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4

Methodology

In order to analyse the linguistic representation of female voters by the UK news media during the 2015-2017 permaelection period in the UK, a set of (sub-)corpora was constructed. The following sections detail the processes and data involved in the building of these corpora and the subsequent analyses.

4.1 Sources & materials: Nexis UK

The female voter representation corpus requires the compiling of a representative sample of the written news media landscape in the UK during the 'permaelection' period of 2015-2017. I used the online database Nexis UK to search for and collect relevant articles from the UK newspapers listed in Table 1 below. Nexis is an online database which provides access to regional and national UK as well as international newspapers, newswires, and business information for over 100 countries worldwide. Nexis coverage includes articles from the 1980s onward and is updated daily. One can also search for specific groups of sources, UK tabloids for example, or individual publications (e.g. *The Guardian*), and specific time periods, as I will discuss below. Lastly, one can also have Nexis exclude

duplicate articles and articles with a length of 500 words or fewer from the search (*Library Guides: Newspapers*, 2019; NEXIS, 2019).

4.1.1 Newspapers

Among the UK sources listed on Nexis one can tick a box to only search for national newspaper articles. This was chosen to be the most relevant option for this study, as such newspapers have the broadest readerships and generally the largest influence on public discourse. Local or regional newspapers may have a larger circulation than some national newspapers. For example, *The London Evening Standard* has a larger circulation than *The Guardian* (Ponsford, 2017b) while the latter has a larger online presence. However, both the content and readership of regional papers are related to and concentrated in specific regional areas which limits their influence on the larger public discourse.

The newspapers that were collected for this study, based on Nexis's list of UK national newspapers and other media representation studies (P. Baker, 2014), comprise *Daily Mail*, *Daily Star*, *The Express*, *The Guardian* and its sister newspaper *The Observer* which are treated separately by Nexis and therefore also by this study, *The I*,¹ *The Independent*, *The Mirror*, *The People*, *The Sun*, *The Telegraph* and *The Times*. Some of these newspapers are also divided by their separate publication versions, daily versions as well as online versions (e.g. *MailOnline* for the *Daily Mail* and Sunday versions (e.g. *The Sunday Telegraph* for *The Telegraph*) (see Table 1 below).

Even though all included newspapers are circulated nationally, their readerships vary vastly, as shown by the 2017 circulation numbers listed in Table 1 below (Ponsford, 2017b).

¹*The I* newspaper was launched as a sister paper to the *The Independent* in 2010 (Sweeney, 2010) but split from its sister publication when it was sold off after *The Independent* ceased its print edition and continued as an online platform in 2016 (Stuart-Turner, 2016). Therefore, as well as to ensure category continuity *The I* is treated separately in this study.

Table 1: Newspaper edition characteristics and 2017 circulation

Newspaper	Online ed.	Sunday ed.	Daily circ.	Sunday circ.
Daily Mail	✓	✓	1,511,357	1,257,984
Daily Star	-	✓	443,452	256,801
The Express	✓	✓	392,526	335,772
The Guardian	-	(The Observer)	156,756	-
The I	-	-	266,768	-
The Independent	(Digital only)*	-	-	-
The Mirror	✓	✓	724,888	629,277
The Observer	-	(Sunday only)	-	185,752
The People	-	(Sunday only)	-	240,846
The Sun	-	✓	1,666,715	1,375,539
The Telegraph	✓	✓	472,258	359,400
The Times	-	✓	451,261	792,324

**The Independent* ceased its print editions and switched to an online-only publication format on 26 March 2016 during the EU Referendum campaign (Rajan, 2016). For the sake of corpus continuity and to keep both the broadsheet and digital only sub-corpora consistent, this newspaper was treated as an online-only platform for all three campaigning periods.

Table 2 below catalogues the newspapers' publication type (e.g. broadsheet),² and political orientation/party support during the 2017 General Election as well as a newspaper's stance on Brexit (e.g. Leave or Remain).

These categories, as shown in Table 2,³ are based both on media research studies and newspaper articles stating the political affiliation or stance of the newspaper in question. The newspapers' political affiliations overlap entirely with their 2017 backing of a particular party (i.e. left-wing = Labour; right-wing = Conservatives), and almost entirely with their stance on Brexit (i.e. left-wing = Remain; right-wing = Leave). The

²The broadsheet category comprises broadsheet publications, as well as papers published on 'berliner' and 'compact' formats. Although compact newspapers are published in tabloid-format, they are considered to be of broadsheet quality and therefore they are included in the broadsheet category (Franklin, 2008; Keeble & Reeves, 2005).

³These categories will be important for the compilation and analysis of the different sub-corpora (see Section 4.3.1 'Tagging & sub-corpora').

one exception is *The Times*, which is right-leaning and backed Vote Remain, whereas its Sunday publication *The Sunday Times* backed Vote Leave (Jackson et al., 2016; Levy et al., 2016b; Newton & Brynin, 2001).

According to a 2017 YouGov survey which polled “Britons’ view on where mainstream national newspapers sit on the left-right political spectrum” (M. Smith, 2017, n.p.), *The Mirror* and *The Guardian* are perceived to be left-wing, which is corroborated by them backing Labour during the 2017 General Election (McKee, 2017). *The Times*, *The Telegraph*, *The Sun*, *The (Daily) Express* and *The Daily Mail* on the other hand, are perceived to be right-wing, with *The Daily Mail* being seen as the most right-wing paper (Newton & Brynin, 2001; M. Smith, 2017; Vliegenthart et al., 2011). Furthermore, *The Independent*, which no longer has a physical edition, is seen as a ‘centrist’ newspaper. It did not back any political party or campaign during the 2015 and 2017 General Elections and the EU Referendum (Independent Voices, 2017; Levy et al., 2016b). The remaining newspapers: *The I*, *The Daily Star* and *The People*, also did not declare their support for any party or side in the referendum debate (Duff, 2017; Ponsford, 2017a; Voice of the People, 2017).⁴

⁴The ‘Voice of the People’ is an opinion piece segment in *The Mirror*.

Table 2: Newspaper type and political orientation

Newspaper	Type	Orientation	2017 Party support	EU stance
Daily Mail	Tabloid	Right-wing	Conservative	Leave
Daily Star	Tabloid	Largely non-political	N/A	Leave
The Express	Tabloid	Right-wing	Conservative*	Leave
The Guardian	Berliner**	Centre-left	Labour	Remain
The I	Compact	Liberal centrist	N/A	N/A
The Independent	Digital only	N/A	N/A	N/A
The Mirror	Tabloid	Centre-left populist	Labour	Remain
The Observer	Berliner**	Centre-left	Labour	Remain
The People	Tabloid	Centre-left populist	N/A	N/A
The Sun	Tabloid	Right-wing	Conservative	Leave
The Telegraph	Broadsheet	Centre-right	Conservative	Leave
The Times	Compact*** / Broadsheet**	Centre-right	Conservative	Leave

**The Express* supported Ukip in the 2015 General Election (EXPRESS COMMENT, 2015), making it the only newspaper to switch their allegiance between elections.

**These newspapers have since launched a new tabloid format (GNM Press Office, 2018).

***The daily edition is published in compact format, whereas the Sunday edition is published as a broadsheet (Snoddy, 2003).

4.1.2 Time periods

The articles from the newspapers discussed above were collected from the three distinct campaigning periods within the 2015-2017 period. The starting point for each of these was set at the official start of each campaign and the endpoints coincide with the election dates in 2015 and 2017 and the referendum date in 2016, as shown in Table 3 below. These specific dates are based on the dates used in previous studies on these electoral events (Deacon et al., 2015b; Henn & Sharpe, 2016; Moore & Ramsay, 2017).

Table 3: UK campaign periods: 2015-2017

Year	Start campaign	End campaign	Length
2015 Gen. Election	30 March 2015	07 May 2015	39 Days
2016 EU Referendum	15 April 2016	23 June 2016	70 Days
2017 Gen. Election	18 April 2017	08 June 2017	52 Days

In order to limit the size of the corpus and the breadth of the analyses, while still maintaining the longitudinal aspect of this study and providing an overview of the ‘permaelection’ period, these sub-corpora do not span the immediate aftermath of the elections and referendum. However, the periods of campaigning were deemed both a feasible and comprehensive sample with a clear start and end by myself as well as previous studies (Jackson et al., 2016).

Furthermore, a longitudinal corpus spanning campaigning periods from three consecutive years allows for diachronic analyses, which to my knowledge has not been done before with regard to the representation of female voters by the (UK) news media.

4.1.3 Article length

To reduce the amount of irrelevant data, all articles with fewer than 500 words were excluded. Such articles are often mere references or introductions to longer versions of the relevant article (Baroni et al., 2009; Shaoul & Westbury, 2013).

4.2 Search terms

Nexis also allows for term-specific article searches. One can retrieve all articles from a certain period containing the term *woman*, for instance. One does not need to use wildcard characters to search for plurals (i.e.

wom*n), as Nexis will automatically include them in the singular search (e.g. *woman* will yield *women* and *lady* will also yield *ladies*).

Furthermore, considering both noun and adjectival compounding in English often involve two constituents (N/N or Adj/N) which remain spelled separately when compounded (Jespersen, 2013). Adjectival compounds spelled as one word are quite rare (De Jong et al., 2002). Therefore, if one wishes to search for ethnicity or sexuality related compound nouns involving the unit *women* (e.g. 'black women', 'gay women'), one only needs to search for the right-hand element. Thus, a search for *women* will include most relevant compounds. It will, however, not yield instances of words such as *businesswoman* or *spokeswoman*, but such terms were not included as they have a low frequency in the corpus at hand (e.g. *businesswoman* has a combined frequency of 30 throughout the 2015-2017 period) and did not yield any additional articles when included in the search query.

The final set of search terms, which can be found below, was chosen on the basis of other gender-focused media research and pilot studies involving my own corpora. The majority of media studies on female representation only look at neutral terms such as *women*, *female* (Cf. Cameron & Shaw, 2016; Jaworska & Krishnamurthy, 2012), which are included in the list. However, I also wished to include potentially gender-biased terms carrying stronger connotations, such as *lady*, *girl* (Cralley & Ruscher, 2005), as I aimed for a broad and representative perspective on female voter presentation. Therefore, I included a host of other nouns that are used to describe women or that are often used as hyponyms of 'woman' such as the lexically gendered kinship terms *mother* and *daughter* as well as terms more specific to British English such as *mum*.

The neutral vs. potentially gender-biased distinction is based on the notion that words such as 'woman/women' and 'female' tend to be viewed as 'neutral', as not carrying any distinctly negative nor positive conno-

tations. Conversely, terms such as 'girl', when in reference to an adult woman, and 'lady' can constitute gender-biased language. As discussed in the previous chapter, they reflect certain stereotypes of femininity such as low dominance/submissiveness, high warmth, and non-competitiveness (Fiske et al., 1999). Since they connote such stereotypes, their use has the potential to reflect gender-bias. The hedging and the use of 'potentially' denote the fact that these words do not always constitute (gender) bias. However, they can denote bias depending on their context and therefore they differ from the more 'neutral' terms which are not completely devoid of any connotations as no term can be, but they do carry a lesser rate of bias. For example, studies have shown that men 'lower in modern sexism' use fewer gender-biased terms such as 'girl' and 'lady' that trivialise women than men ranking 'higher in modern sexism' (Cralley & Ruscher, 2005) and the latter group also do not perceive gender-biased language as sexist (Swim et al., 2004). Due to these biased and even sexist connotations, organisations such as the American Psychological Association (2020) note in their discussion of gender-biased language in the 7th edition of their publication manual that the use of 'girl' is only appropriate in reference to a female person of high school age or younger. On the other hand, these potentially gender-biased terms are widespread and often not consciously meant to show bias. The use of 'girlfriend', a lexically gendered noun denoting romantic partnership, is a common way of referring to an adult female partner, for example. Furthermore, as the previous chapter and several YouGov polls have shown, the bias of their use is also linked to the gender identity of their users as well as other identity markers and cultural connotations. The reflected gender-bias is highly context specific, yet the potential for such bias is much more present among the use of 'girl' and 'lady' than among the use of 'woman' and 'female'. For example, the use of 'lady' has been contested since the 1960s but is widely accepted today by 85% of Britons as inoffensive (M. Smith, 2019). However, Britons,

and especially British women, think it is less and less acceptable to refer to women as 'girls', whereas the use of 'boys' for men does not receive the same amount of criticism (M. Smith, 2019).

Additionally, akin to Baker (2014), I used a mixture of introspection and "trial and error (e.g. reading articles produced by an initial search term in order to identify terms I had not thought of)" (p. 215). I constructed three 200 article corpora for each of the separate time periods by searching for the following set of initial, case insensitive search terms: *female, woman, lady, girl, lesbian, mother, mum, mummy, mama, daughter, wife, grandma, grandmother* occurring in the same paragraph as election-based terms (i.e. *vot(!), election, brexit, referendum*) and the same article as some UK-based geographical terms (i.e. *UK, England, Great Britain, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland*). I then based additional terms on the findings these pilot corpora produced. For instance, *Mumsnet* was included, as 'mumsnet user' was sometimes used as a synonym for 'woman'. However, a term that appears to be relevant, but does not show up in the search terms, is *feminist*. The pilot corpora showed that including this term only yielded additional articles in which *feminist* was used as an adjective, not a noun. Despite this ambiguity, *feminist* can be located in the corpus and it will feature in the analyses, as it is a relevant synonym for a woman/female voter. I also made word frequency lists of these pilot corpora in order to find new words. However, these lists did not yield any new search terms. This process produced the list of terms below:

Gendered terms:

(female) OR (woman) OR (lady) OR (girl) OR (lesbian) OR (mother) OR (mum) OR (mummy) OR (mamma) OR (daughter) OR (wife) OR (grandma) OR (grandmother) OR (grandmum) OR (matron) OR (aunt) OR (niece) OR (girlfriend) OR (sister) OR (mumsnet) OR (nan) OR (gran) OR (stepmother) OR (stepmum) OR (stepsister) OR (stepdaughter) OR (nan) OR (gal) OR (lass) OR (granddaughter) OR (great(-)granddaughter) OR (great(-)grandmother) OR (godmother) OR (goddaughter)

In addition to these singular terms,⁵ one can also direct Nexis to search for specific combinations of terms, as well as have it exclude articles deemed to be irrelevant by means of exclusion terms. The following list of terms related to elections and voting in combination with the search constituent 'w/p', meaning 'within the same paragraph', ensures that the lexically gendered terms appear within the same paragraph as these election terms. This excludes articles with separate unrelated paragraphs (e.g. a paragraph on women and another paragraph on voting) yet includes the combination of the two sets of terms within a sentence as well as articles on female voting where the gendered term and the election term are separated by a few lines. This list does not include terms related to political parties (e.g. *labour*, *conservative*), as inspections of the pilot corpora showed that such terms only yield additional articles on female politicians instead of voters.

Election-related terms:

W/p (vot!) OR (election!) OR (brexit) OR (referendum)

⁵Shorter wildcard searches for kinship terms such as *!daughter*, *!mother* and *!sister*, which theoretically should include these roots in addition to all words ending in these roots (e.g. *mother*, *grandmother*, *godmother*, *stepmother*), yielded fewer articles than a search including all fully spelled out versions of those words. Therefore, I opted for the latter to ensure I included all relevant articles in my corpora.

These combinations yield irrelevant articles (see Section 4.3.2. 'Discards'). However, since I aimed to cast as wide a net as possible, I decided to go through the corpus manually discarding irrelevant articles, which is a common strategy with corpus linguistics (Motschenbacher, 2017). I did include a few terms to attempt to limit the geographical scope of the corpora. The following list of terms aims to only include articles mentioning female voters within the UK.

Geographical restriction terms:

AND (UK) OR (England) OR (Great Britain) OR (Wales) OR (Scotland) OR (Northern Ireland)

Lastly, Nexis will include the regional editions of national newspapers in a search for national editions. Therefore, the following list of exclusion terms was applied in order to exclude those regional editions.

Regional edition exclusion terms:

AND NOT (edition 1: scotland) OR (edition 1: northern ireland) OR (edition 1: wales) OR (edition 1; Ireland) OR (edition 2; Scotland)

Instead of opting for the 'trial & error' approach, I could have also taken the route of a Query Term Relevance (QTR) strategy (Gabrielatos, 2007). A QTR approach involves "establishing the ratio of the number of texts returned by the query 'core query AND candidate term' . . . to the number of texts returned by a query containing only the candidate term" (Gabrielatos, 2007, p. 14). Even though this is perhaps a strictly more objective strategy for finding new search terms, I decided against using it. Firstly, Nexis could not handle compiling all texts from 2015–2017 at once which prevented me from being able to establish QTRs for the entire period. Moreover, frequency, albeit an objective factor, is not the only factor involved in

the decision to include a term. Relevance (e.g. does it provide new inroads for analyses) is equally, if not more, important, especially since irrelevant articles, also known as ‘noise’, can be discarded after the search. Therefore, terms with relatively low QTRs still bear relevance to the overall corpus and analysis.

Lastly, it has to be noted that due to using introspection instead of a QTR approach, manually building the corpus and discarding articles, and due to my positionality as a researcher (such as not being British, and not being able to be a ‘female voter’ in the UK), my subjectivity and possible political and socio-cultural biases may have affected the construction of the corpora. To counteract this I have tried to adopt a reflexive mindset by means of discussing any findings with a wide range of people from varied backgrounds.

4.3 Corpus building procedure

4.3.1 Tagging & sub-corpora

After developing the search terms, sources and time periods discussed above, I collated the overarching corpus and its relevant sub-corpora. I first downloaded the articles yielded by the search terms one year at a time, and manually discarded all duplicates and irrelevant articles (see Section 4.3.2. ‘Discards’). Next, I annotated each article with a ‘date & source’ tag (e.g. <Date: 15/04/2016; Source: The Guardian>), in order for the articles to be sorted into the three separate *time period sub-corpora* (i.e. 2015, 2016 and 2017) and sub-corpora *per newspaper*. Furthermore, I added the following types of tags to the articles to enable sorting them into the corresponding synchronic sub-corpora, which were partially based on the categories listed in Table 2, and facilitate synchronic as well as diachronic CL and CDA analyses:

Newspaper type, political orientation & EU Referendum support

The articles received either a tabloid (e.g. *The Daily Mail*), broadsheet (e.g. *The Guardian*), or digital only (e.g. *The Independent*) tag. They also received both a left-wing, right-wing, or no support, as well as a political party (i.e. labour, conservative, no support) tag to index political affiliation in 2015 and 2017. The 2016 articles, on the other hand, received referendum support tags (i.e. leave, remain, no support), instead of political party support tags. For instance, *The Guardian* would receive this tag in 2017: <Left/Broad/Lab>, and this tag in 2016: <Left/Broad/Rem>.

Author gender

This tag type is less straightforward than the others. One cannot simply tag all articles from the same newspaper similarly, as this tag intersects with all other tags and each article has a different author whose gender is not always stated in the article. Therefore, I manually looked up each author and researched how they identified. I based my gender categorisation on the pronouns they or their employer(s) used to describe them. If no such information was available, I labelled their gender as unknown. I acknowledge, however, that this may not be a foolproof method. Articles that were written by multiple authors of different genders, or were a collection of letters from readers, received a 'mixed' tag and were sorted into the same sub-corpus as the unknown articles. This resulted in four author gender sub-corpora: 1) male 2) female 3) non-binary 4) mixed/unknown.

Additional Tagging: Headline, Author name, Section, Graphic & Article Length

Furthermore, all articles that were accompanied by graphics⁶ were tagged accordingly and sorted into graphics sub-corpora in order to be able to analyse the graphics' captions if needed and retrieve online versions of the

⁶Nexis does not provide the graphics itself, but it provides an annotation that identifies whether an article was originally accompanied by a graphic as well as list the captions.

original article with the graphic attached to it. Further tagging included *headline* tags to enable a headline only corpus search, and *author name*, *article length* and *newspaper section*. All of these tags will feature sparingly in the analyses, but are easily searchable in the corpus. The tags discussed above, resulted in the following annotation format:

Table 4: Tagging example

```

<Date: 31/05/2016; Source: The Observer>
<Left/Broad/Rem>
<Length: 3045 words>
<Author: Helen Lewis>
<Author gender: female>
<Section: POLITICS>
<head> Brexit is a feminist issue </head>

```

4.3.2 Discards

In addition to relevant articles discussing female voters and/or attempting to appeal to (potential) female voters in the UK, the Nexis search yielded a vast selection of irrelevant articles which had to be discarded manually. These discarded articles can be grouped by their common themes and reasons for discarding.

One of the three main reasons for articles to be excluded involved an article only discussing female politicians instead of female voters. For instance, 2015 articles how SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon is "the most dangerous woman in Britain" (Morgan, 2015, n.p.), 2016 articles mentioning the late Jo Cox MP, 2017 articles on Theresa May being a 'bloody difficult woman', or a 'vicar's daughter', or any article which discusses the sexual identities of UK, mainly Scottish, female politicians who identify as lesbians (e.g. Ruth Davidson, Kezia Dugdale), without also discussing (queer) female voters.

The other two main reasons for exclusion revolve around the type of election that makes up the context for an article. Even though I included the UK-specific search terms, articles concerning foreign elections were still quite prominent. In particular, discussions of the 2016 US Election and the manner in which Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton appealed to or treated women appeared rather often. Additionally, other types of elections, such as National Union of Students (NUS), London mayoral, or 'sexiest woman alive' elections, were also quite prevalent.

4.3.3 Reference corpus

A reference corpus (RC) is required to compare (search) term frequencies within the above-mentioned (sub-)corpora and identify their keywords. Keywords indicate the 'aboutness' of a corpus, as these words are more frequent in the studied corpus than in other corpora that are representative of the language of the studied corpus (Anthony & Baker, 2015; P. Baker, 2006a). For an RC to be comparable, it should comprise roughly the same time period as the studied corpus as well as be representative of the language variety of said corpus (Gabrielatos, 2007). The RC can either be a general corpus containing a variety of sources from a particular language, or a specialised corpus akin to the ones built for this study, containing, for example, only newspaper articles (P. Baker et al., 2008).

According to multiple scholars the size of an RC is relatively insignificant (Berber-Sardinha, 2000; McEnery et al., 2006), as keyword calculation is often quite robust regardless of the size of the RC. Goh (2011) argues that even though RC's are generally larger in size than the corpus, their 'genre' and 'diachrony' are more important factors than their size (Goh, 2011, p. 1). To account for these factors, the RC employed in this study was derived from the BE06 Corpus of British English (BE06), as this corpus comprises one million words of general written (genre) British English language texts (language variety) from 15 genres of writing. Regarding its

time period, 82% of its texts were published between 2005 and 2007; the other 18% were published in 2003 and 2004, and early 2008.⁷

The time period covered by the BE06 is then the major factor as to why I decided to use this RC as opposed to the perhaps most well-known British English RC: The British National Corpus (BNC). This corpus is much larger, consisting of a 100 million words "designed to represent a wide cross-section of British English *from the later part of the 20th century, both spoken and written*" (BNC, 2018, n.p.) [emphasis my own]. All documents contained in the BNC were published before 1994. (BNC, 2018), making it unsuitable for comparison with the 2015-2017 corpora used in this study.

4.4 Methods of analysis

Since CDA requires analyses of the text itself as well as its societal context, I will apply an integration of Fairclough's three-tier context model (Fairclough, 1992) and van Dijk's notion of 'actors' within the social context (van Dijk, 2001), and refer to the production/producers, writers and consumption/recipients of the texts as well as the surrounding social practice/societal structures in the qualitative analysis of the newspaper articles included in the (sub-)corpora. For instance, I will account for newspapers' political affiliation and publication type which are indicative of both the realms of production/producers and the *intended* consumption/recipients in my analyses. This is important as there are more right-wing newspaper sources included in the corpora and these newspapers also tend to have a larger print and online readership (Majid, 2023). I will also account for a particular article's authors' gender which is indicative of the notion of 'writers' as social actors, as well as the influence of author gender within

⁷This explains the BE06 (British English 2006) title, as it places the median sampling point in 2006 (P. Baker, 2009).

the larger corpus as a whole. Furthermore, as discussed in Section 3.1.4 on the triangulation of approaches, this study also involves more quantitative corpus-assisted analyses of newspaper discourse in order to triangulate the findings. Such analyses, which are based on larger data sets, have been shown to be more likely to produce reliable findings as well as prevent the 'cherry-picking' of potentially atypical data to prove one's hypotheses (P. Baker & Levon, 2015). The following section lists and elaborates upon both the quantitative and qualitative methods used to carry out these analyses.

4.4.1 Quantitative methods

The quantitative side of the corpus-assisted discourse analysis methods employed in this study primarily involves frequency analyses conducted by means of the corpus tool AntConc (Anthony, 2019). Such frequency analyses help elucidate the reach or impact of the linguistic constructions of female voters in UK newspapers by accounting for all of its instances. Consequently, they facilitate quantitative comparisons between (sub-)corpora. Furthermore, frequency analyses provide an initial focus on higher frequency terms and/or phenomena, which offsets the risks of 'cherry-picking' interesting, yet atypical phenomena (Mautner, 2009).

Article (type) frequency

First of all, the article frequencies per day/couple of days of the time period corpora as well as the frequencies within the other sub-corpora were calculated and compared in order to analyse both the longitudinal development of the different media and societal contexts and their linguistic representation of female voters, as well as the synchronic differences within these contexts.

Search term frequency

Additionally, the absolute and normalised frequencies, per 100,000 words (Gries, 2010), were established for all search terms and ranked per (sub-)corpus. I used Paul Rayson's online Log-Likelihood Score Calculator (Rayson, 2019) to compare the sub-corpora's top terms, as well as compare the sub-corpora term by term to see which (sub-)corpus displays significant overuse of a certain term. Such (potential) overuse was then analysed.

Keywords

To study the most prevalent topics per election/referendum period, I used AntConc to calculate keywords. These words occur significantly more frequently in the studied corpora than in the BE06 reference corpus, based on their log-likelihood or 'keyness' statistic which has become the standard statistical test to determine keyness within corpus research (Anthony & Baker, 2015). This statistic consequently indicates the 'aboutness' of these corpora (P. Baker, 2006a). Furthermore, these keywords can be used to indicate ideologies within the texts of the corpora as well as be the subject of further quantitative and/or more qualitative analyses of their collocates and concordance lines (Anthony & Baker, 2015; P. Baker, 2004).

Collocates

In addition to the frequencies of the search terms themselves, their top 10 collocates were also computed by means of AntConc. Collocates are words that "are more likely to occur in combination with other words in certain contexts" (P. Baker, 2006a, p. 36) and as such are measured to display strong co-occurrence within a corpus. If a less frequent search term did not yield 10 collocates, or only grammatical words such as articles and prepositions, the terms' concordance lines, their context, were scrutinised. Furthermore, singular and plural identities and their search terms were considered separately (e.g. collocates of both singular *woman* and

plural *women* were elicited separately). These collocates also facilitate the qualitative analysis of the semantic and discourse prosodies of the search terms (P. Baker et al., 2008; Louw, 1993). Collocates which contribute toward similar representations of female voters were grouped together in order to “indicate discourse prosodies where a group is frequently associated with a set of words that reference the same discourse” (P. Baker & Levon, 2015, p. 226). One also has to consider the measures and boundaries for collocation. The current study employs similar measures to Paul Baker’s (2014) study on UK newspaper representations of transgender people. This means that boundaries were set at 3 words either side of the search term, collocates had to have a frequency of occurrence of at least 5, and the Mutual Information (MI) technique was used with an MI score of 3 or above as evidence for collocation.

4.4.2 Qualitative methods

In addition to the quantitative methods, the current study also employs qualitative analyses in line with FCDA. This allows for explorations of the common discourses present in the representation of female voters and dissections of the “operations of gender ideology and institutionalized power asymmetries between (and among) groups of women [voters] and men” (Lazar, 2007, p. 141). These analyses are corpus-based (i.e. pre-established notions of the representation of women are tested) as well as corpus-driven (i.e. the analysis is based on quantitative saliences in the data) (P. Baker et al., 2013).

Concordance lines and discursive themes

One of the ways to further explore and explain the quantitative patterns flagged up by the aforementioned frequency and collocation analyses involves the analysis of the immediate context, or concordances, of the search terms. This also illuminates pre-established notions of hegemonic dis-

courses surrounding women in general, and female voters in particular. Frequencies, and collocations in particular, might appear to be used in a certain sense or have a particular function, while they might in fact carry unexpected connotations when read in context. To achieve this wider reading, the concordance lines including 100 tokens on either side of all occurrences of these terms were studied (P. Baker & Levon, 2015).⁸ The terms' typical contexts, topics of discourse or 'semantic macrostructures' (van Dijk, 1993, 2001), which signified similar discourses, stances and contributed to similar types of representations were then grouped together (P. Baker, 2014). According to van Dijk (2001), listing and analysing semantic macrostructures is a good starting point for any CDA study as such structures provide a "first, overall, idea of what a discourse or corpus of texts is all about" and control "many other aspects of discourse and its analysis" (p. 102). The emerging discourses could then be compared in terms of 'interdiscursivity', "the ways in which one discourse is always inscribed and inflected with traces of other discourses" and 'intertextuality', the ways in which texts bear "traces of a series of preceding texts thus reinforcing historical presuppositions" (Baxter, 2010, p. 128).

Furthermore, the grammatical structures prevalent in the terms' contexts were also analysed to uncover how they serve to 'boost' a discourse's influence and epistemic force (P. Baker & Levon, 2015; Holmes, 1984). One particular set of structures worth considering is outlined below: agent and patient verb processes.

Verb processes

The concordance lines surrounding the search terms were also analysed regarding the verb processes occurring around said terms. A verb process relates to the verbs co-occurring with a specific noun, synonyms for

⁸At times the 100 token boundaries needed to be expanded in order to gain a full view of a term's context. This sometimes involved reading the entire article.

women/female voters in this case, and the way in which these verbs posit this noun. Either in the binary terms of grammatical action, where someone is either grammatically active or passive, an agent or a patient (P. Baker, 2014), or in terms of semantic agency which is a graded rather than a binary category in that agents can be more or less agentive. The latter also specifies that “effecting material change in world – even if metaphorically” is more agentive than merely being or becoming something (Darics & Koller, 2019, p. 219). For instance, the verbs co-occurring with *women* might either portray women in a grammatically active or a passive manner. As people who perform actions and are being agentive (e.g. women who vote and/or take charge) or less agentive (e.g. women merely being present in the campaign), or as people who are subjected to these actions (e.g. politicians telling women to vote). In summary, analyses of verb processes explore whether and how female voters are portrayed as being active or passive and having or lacking agency within the context of the permaelection period. These analyses will also be discussed in relation to the quantitative analyses, as well as the wider social context and hegemonic gender ideologies.

Prototypical articles: FCDA close reading

In addition to examining the concordances of search terms for grammatical and semantic features of interest, the close reading of entire articles provides another plane for qualitative analyses. This might flag up non-patterned features that do not show up within the immediate context of the search terms (e.g. legitimisation strategies spun out across an article) (P. Baker & Levon, 2015). Furthermore, taking entire articles into account also allows for further explorations and subsequently possible explanations of the sometimes rather abstract quantitative findings.

The articles chosen for such closer analysis should preferably be articles that are prototypical, and thus representative of the “key attributes or features that best represent instances of a given category” (G. Lakoff, 2007, p. 13). In this case, prototypical of the discourses of the corpus as a whole in order to a) scale down the scope of the analysis and b) avoid being accused of ‘cherry-picking’ texts that best illustrate one’s hypotheses (Koller & Mautner, 2004; Wodak & Meyer, 2009b). However, carefully selecting prototypical texts is a complicated process to conduct manually as well as prone to researcher bias. One could randomly select texts, but that may not expose all key features identified earlier on in the analysis. One could also employ an ‘opportunistic selection’ procedure which involves “making an arbitrary yet hopefully informed choice of texts to analyse” (Anthony & Baker, 2015, p. 274). This approach is, again, negatively affected by researcher bias, unprincipled, and calls into question the replicability of the study (Anthony & Baker, 2015). Instead, one could take a more objective ‘selective downsizing’ approach in which sets of articles from salient periods in the corpus are selected. See for example Baker et al.’s 2008 study on linguistic representations of immigration in the UK news media in which periods of peak coverage were identified and analysed in more detail. This last approach forms a partial basis for the selection procedure employed in this study, as seven prototypical articles will be analysed as a whole. The prototypicality of these articles is based on and informed by a bottom-up approach in which search term frequencies as well as the frequencies of common discourses present in the corpus play a key role. Articles containing both high frequencies of search terms and high frequencies of collocates/verb processes linked to the most frequent and salient discourses present in this corpus, which were calculated with the help of the software ProtAnt (Anthony & Baker, 2017), will be analysed in full. This hybrid approach provides a more principled and objective way of selecting prototypical texts, as one could argue that, simi-

larly to the presence of keywords (Anthony & Baker, 2015), the greater the number of search terms and discourses contained in a text, the more typical it is.⁹ This approach flagged up seven prototypical articles on which I then performed an FCDA close reading in order to explore social actor representation, appraisal theory, notions of interdiscursivity, transitivity, intertextuality (Lazar, 2007), and legitimisation strategies regarding the linguistic representations of female voters and the gendered power asymmetries (re)produced within these discourses and representations.

Multi-modality: visual imagery

FCDA analyses also acknowledge the multi-modal dimensions of discourse, both its linguistic and visual representations (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Lazar, 2007), and consequently other semiotic modalities such as the visual images that accompany the studied texts would preferably also be taken into account. A multi-modal approach both enriches the analysis by providing a more holistic perspective and prevents the favouring of one modality (i.e. text) over another (i.e. images). The meanings construed “by any mode are always interwoven with the meanings made with those other modes co-present and co-operating in the communicative event” (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010, p. 184), particularly considering the move toward increased visualisation in news coverage and political journalism (Boomgaarden et al., 2016; Fahmy et al., 2014; Holly, 2008; Schill, 2012).

Therefore, when images were either directly or indirectly referenced in-text, the choice of images accompanying the newspaper articles in this study’s corpora were taken into account and analysed, drawing on social

⁹I opted against only using software such as ProtAnt (Anthony & Baker, 2017) to identify prototypical articles, as even though it helped me find articles with high search term/collocate frequencies, it also flagged up long ‘live-blog’ articles which mainly included unrelated ‘noise’ rather than examples of the discourses uncovered by the other analyses.

semiotic approaches (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Sunderland & McGlashan, 2012), to elucidate the representations and gendered discourses of female voters these images (re)produce through the combination of visual and linguistic semiosis. Visual imagery is however not the main focus, or a structured mode of analysis throughout this study, as the vast majority of articles were not accompanied by any visual imagery.

4.5 Framework of qualitative analyses: social actors, appraisal theory & legitimisation strategies

4.5.1 Social actor representation

To analyse any type of representation, one has to be cognisant of who participates in the discourse at hand and what beliefs, values, emotions, norms, and implicit or 'common sense' hegemonic discourses they draw on (Koller, 2012, 2014). One also has to consider the specific linguistic resources they use to achieve certain goals. One of the analytical frameworks that is especially useful for identifying and unearthing representational choices is van Leeuwen's (1996) Social Actor Representation. Grounded in linguistics, this approach combines text-level linguistic analysis with context analysis. In this sense, it is linked to Fairclough's three-tier model of texts being embedded in their production, distribution, and reception, as well as in wider socio-cultural contexts (Fairclough, 2003; Koller, 2009). It sheds light on the relationships between authors, audiences, and any shared knowledge they might have, whilst it explores who is being referred to in a text and how (e.g. genericised or specified, activated or passivated), and who is either explicitly or implicitly excluded. An im-

portant feature within such analyses is the notion of agency. The ways in which semantic agency or a lack of agency, both human and textual agents and actions, or “a transformation of state operated by a [grammatically active] agent” (Cooren, 2004, p. 376), are encoded linguistically allows one to trace the ideologies that inform a text. Van Leeuwen (1996) refers to the participants, and possible agents, of a text as ‘social actors’ to allow for the analysis of both grammatical action which is binary (i.e. someone or something is either active or passive), and semantic agency which, as mentioned above, is a graded category, as ‘actors’ can be more or less agentive (Darics & Koller, 2019).

In order to study the actors’ actions and levels of agency, van Leeuwen (1996) stipulated a network of categories and linguistic features. I will discuss the main categories that are salient to this study here (see Figure 2 below for the full network). As mentioned before, in and exclusion of certain social actors is highly salient in matters of representation. Inclusion strategies are more varied as shown in Figure 2, but this does not mean that exclusion strategies are less significant in any way, as absences are as significant in (F)CDA as presences (van Leeuwen, 1996). Some exclusions are innocent in the sense that they are assumed knowledge among the audience, but often exclusions can be insidious and tied to propaganda and/or oppressive strategies. Van Leeuwen (1996, 2008) defines two main categories of exclusion: *suppression* and *backgrounding*. Suppressed actors are radically obscured, and excluded completely from a text, while backgrounded actors are more de-emphasised than excluded. They are referenced at some point in the text, or they can be assumed to be known and inferred from background knowledge, but they are not referenced throughout.

Included actors on the other hand, are more explicitly present in a text. They can either be *activated* and represented as performing an action, or *passivated* by being represented as undergoing an action. The other cat-

egories that will be discussed are not as rigid as *activation*, as they have the capacity to intersect and overlap. In fact, “boundaries can be blurred deliberately, for the purpose of achieving specific representational effects” (van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 67). Another important representational factor is the choice between *specific* and *generic* references, whether actors are represented as identifiable individuals or as classes of people. This links directly to several other strategies such as *individualisation*, and *assimilation* which refers to actors being referred to as groups and can be further broken down into sub-categories. These strategies often differ per genre and publication type. For example, it has been found that middle-class and broadsheet newspapers often assimilate the public in comparison to working-class and tabloid newspapers which tend to individualise the public (van Leeuwen, 1996). Personal pronouns, “indexical markers that anchor language in the real world” (Verschueren & Verschueren, 1999, p. 18), are of central importance to these choices. A pronoun’s referents can be highly ambiguous and context-dependent. This is particularly true for the use of the first-person plural ‘we’ (Billig, 1995). For example, ‘we’ is one of the most complex words to explore by means of social actor analyses, as it can refer to any combination of the author, the intended audience, and third parties and it often does so in non-obvious ways (Darics & Koller, 2019). Furthermore, because it can represent both one or more in-text groups, or an ambiguous number of social actors, its use and who it identifies as the intended audience are central in ‘us vs. them’ discourses (Bull & Fetzer, 2006).

The two main assimilation sub-categories are *aggregation* which quantifies groups of actors and treats them as statistics, and *collectivisation* which does not treat social actors as mere data. Other categories which deal with the specificity of social actors’ identities are *determination vs. indetermination*. The former specifies identities either by referring to actors by name (*nomination*) or by identifying the function they share with others (*categori-*

sation), while the latter represents social actors as anonymous individuals or groups (e.g. as 'someone', 'some people'). Categorisation is an oft-used strategy to obscure or lessen an actor's agency, either by means of *functionalisation* where social actors are identified by what they 'do' (i.e. their occupation or role), or by means of *identification*, which identifies social actors by who they 'are' or are perceived to be. It is important to note that these two categories can overlap, as they are culturally and historically variable and it can be difficult to draw a line between a role and an identity. For example, being a 'mother' can both be functionalised as a role or care-giving occupation, or labelled an identity. Therefore, the way this distinction is made in texts is of critical importance to the analysis of representation. The last sets of categories I want to discuss here are *personalisation* vs. *impersonalisation*, and *overdetermination*. Social actors are impersonalised when they are abstracted and objectified by the use of abstract nouns or non-human referents, which once again tends to lessen their agency. Overdetermination refers to actors being represented as simultaneously participating in multiple social practices which does not necessarily negatively affect their level of agency (van Leeuwen, 1995, 1996, 2008).

Despite the fact that this set of categories is rather comprehensive, one approach can never account for all conceptual structures that form said representations. Thus, in addition to the overlapping and intersecting categories, Social Actor Representation can be harmoniously employed in combination with other approaches that strengthen and deepen the aspects of representation that have been identified. In the case of this study, links will be drawn to both strategies of legitimisation and appraisal theory, which will both be outlined below.

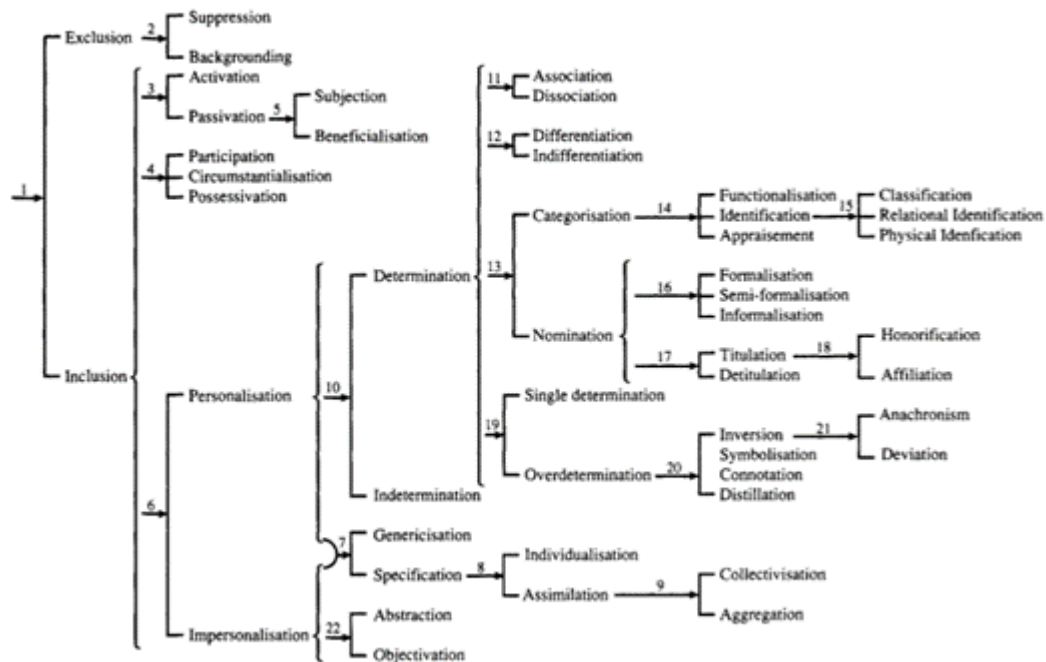


Figure 2: Van Leeuwen's system network of social actor representation in discourse (van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 60)

4.5.2 Appraisal theory

The representation of social actors also relies on appraisement and notions of evaluation which are developed further by, among others, appraisal theory (J. R. Martin & White, 2003). Appraisal theory will not be applied as the primary framework of analysis, but rather as a secondary, additional approach. It will be used in addition and a complement to social actor representation.

Appraisal theory is, in essence, a more fine-grained way of analysing evaluation by going beyond just negative vs. positive evaluation, and implicit vs. explicit evaluation. Evaluation relates to the ways in which certain qualities are associated with or assigned to both individuals and groups and how they are evaluated. Appraisal theory also takes the afore-

mentioned production and consumption of a text into account. It analyses an author's stance toward social actors, as well as the ways in which authors position their readers to supply their own assessments and/or take an evaluative stance by constructing shared values and feelings (J. R. Martin & White, 2003). One of the linguistic features that is important to this type of analysis is fronting structures. Moving social actors into textually marked positions affects their appraisal. Moreover, appraisal theory outlines three main interacting domains: *attitude*, *engagement* and *graduation*, of which the first two provide a straightforward accompaniment to social actor theory's notion of appraisal. Therefore, they are most relevant to this study's analytical framework. Attitude deals with feelings, our emotional reactions (i.e. *affect*), assessments of socially esteemed or socially sanctioned behaviour in accordance with socio-culturally-dependent normative principles (i.e. *judgement*) and constructions of the value of things (i.e. *appreciation*). Engagement on the other hand, is concerned with the sources of the attitudes that have been put forward. In other words, who is 'engaged' as a social actor and in the context of this study, who is 'engaged' and thus sourced and quoted as a voter, expert, or politician. Graduation concentrates on the grading of phenomena which vary the force or intensity of evaluation, as well as its focus which functions to enhance or weaken the degree of positivity or negativity (Lam & Crosthwaite, 2018). Lastly, it is important to note that each of these domains can be realised directly as well as indirectly and emotions and judgements can be invoked "even in the absence of attitudinal lexis that tells us directly how to feel" (J. R. Martin & White, 2003, p. 62).

4.5.3 Legitimation strategies

Another complementary approach to both Social Actor Representation and Appraisal Theory, which emphasises the role of language as an 'instrument of control' (Hodge & Kress, 1993, p. 6), manifesting symbolic

power (Bourdieu, 1991) is the notion of (de)legitimation. Social actor representation already touches on (de)legitimations of social actors by means of such categories as backgrounding, activation, collectivisation, and van Leeuwen expands on it in several studies (van Leeuwen, 2007, 2008; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). Moreover, legitimation strategies are especially common in political discourse, as legitimation is a “principal discourse goal sought by political actors” (Cap, 2008, p. 39). It justifies behaviour by providing arguments that explain our actions, thoughts, and ideas. This justification, or legitimation, is key in persuading the voting public to lend their support for politicians and their plans (van Dijk, 1992). Reyes (2011) outlines five main categories of legitimation, which are indebted to Van Leeuwen’s (2007) four main categories. These categories are 1) emotions, particularly indexing fear, linking it directly to appraisal theory; 2) a hypothetical future, often a threat to our future that requires imminent action in the present (Dunmire, 2007); 3) culturally-specific shared values; 4) voices of expertise, or authorisation (van Leeuwen, 2007), and (5) altruism (Reyes, 2011, p. 804). These last three categories warrant further explanation at this point. Firstly, culture-specific shared values, which can also be called moral evaluation and can be linked to appraisal theory’s judgement, relate to a what is right and what is wrong within a certain context and community (Beasley, 2011; R. P. Hart et al., 2004). For example, in the context of this study, studies have found that referring to shared patriotic values is a frequent legitimation strategy in pro-Brexit discourses, as Remainers were framed as unpatriotic (Bennett, 2019). Hypothetical assumptions regarding values were thus presented as factual reality (G. Thompson, 2013), as well as positive self and negative other representation or ‘us vs. them’ narratives which permeate political discourse (Fairclough, 2003; Rojo, 1995; Wodak, 2002). Secondly, authorisation which can be attained through objective information, (proximity to) personal experience and involvement is also highly salient in both political and media

discourse and therefore to this study (Reyes, 2011; Tusting et al., 2002). Who is sourced, mentioned, quoted (or engaged in appraisal terms) and who is not, as well as 'evidentiality' (i.e. whether sources are named, see Garretson & Ädel, 2008), significantly affects social actors' representation and agency. Lastly, altruism is once again especially prevalent in the realm of politics, as politicians need to ensure their audience of the fact that their proposals are not only driven by personal interests.

Chapter 5

Quantitative Analyses: 2015-2017

This chapter will provide the first (quantitative) step in answering the research questions posed in this study. It will lay the quantitative groundwork to answer the main question: “How are female voters constructed linguistically in the lead-up to both the 2016 EU referendum, and the 2015 and 2017 UK General Elections?”, and its sub-questions (see Section 1.2.1). It will provide the frequency analyses per campaign and per sub-corpora of these campaigns as well as diachronic overviews, on the basis of which the following chapters will build their more qualitative analyses and perspectives. This chapter will also specifically address the RQ “who constructs and perpetuates the image of the female voter” by means of political orientation, publication type, and author gender analyses. Furthermore, by means of search term and keyword analyses, it will start to address the second main RQ: “What are the frequent topics and discourses employed in representations of female voters in the UK national press: 2015–2017?”, as well as its frequency-based sub-questions (see Section 1.2.1). The structure of this chapter is as follows: first the newspaper article frequencies over the course of the three campaigns will be discussed, followed by analyses of article type distributions per sub-corpus (i.e. political orientation and referendum stance followed by publication type), author

gender distributions, search term frequencies and potential term overuse, and finally analyses of the keywords per year will be provided. All sections will also include diachronic overviews of the development of their frequencies and distributions. These diachronic overviews will also comprise the first step in answering the final main RQ: “How do these aspects of female voter representation develop between elections: 2015-2017?”.

5.1 Newspaper article frequency: 2015-2017

This section will discuss the development of newspaper coverage throughout the three campaigning periods in order to distinguish trends among the data and the specific electoral events which lead to increased general coverage and increased coverage which focuses on women. These yearly reviews will be followed by an overview of the similarities and differences between the three campaigns.

5.1.1 2015 General Election: episodic and women-focused

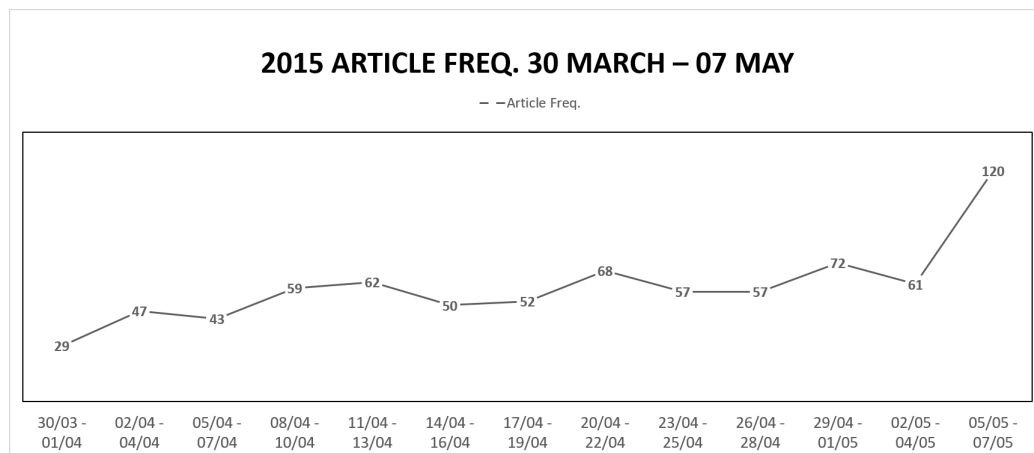


Figure 3: Number of articles published per 3 days of the 2015 General Election campaign

The figure above shows the number of articles related to female voters published per 3 days of the 2015 General Election campaign, a period of 39 days between 30/03/2015 and 07/05/2015. Intervals of 3 days were chosen to provide a more detailed view of the period as a whole and allow for salient sub-periods of either increased or decreased coverage to emerge from the data. Such 3-day intervals might allow for skew in the data, as the inclusion of weekend editions might skew the frequencies. Therefore, all peaks and troughs have been analysed for such possible data bias, which did not seem to be present, as weekend and Sunday editions run the gamut of phases: peaks, troughs, and steady phases/increases.

Overall, 777 articles from this period were included in the corpus, which is an average of 19.9 articles per day, and 59.8 articles per 3 days of the election campaign. The highest article rate per 3 days of 120 was observed during the last couple of days of the campaign between May 5-7 and the lowest rate per 3 days comprising of 29 articles was observed at the start of the campaign between March 30 and April 1st. Even though there is a steady increase visible across the entire period, in the form of 5 distinct peaks, 4 of which are rather sharp, these peaks are not random and can be explained by more general (election) coverage trends as well as events specific to this campaign. One would, for example, expect a steady or even sharp increase in coverage as an election draws near (Jackson et al., 2016), and one might also expect election coverage to be structurally biased in the sense that it is often 'episodic', or based around specific campaign-related events (Iyengar, 1994; Strömbäck & Shehata, 2007). The first peak occurs at the April 2-4 interval and can be attributed to the televised ITV Party Leaders debate on April 2nd (Emes & Keith, 2017) which inspired several think-pieces on the leaders' performances and plans (for women).

The second peak spans a slightly longer period of two intervals, April 8-13, which encompasses the following both general and women-focused election events which contributed to increased newspaper coverage. On

April 8th the following events all took place: the publication of the political parties' election posters (Heritage, 2015), reviews of an April 7 ITV special on PM David Cameron's wife, family and home life away from politics (Wollaston, 2015), as well as Tony Blair's much-maligned election 'intervention' in which he supported Labour leader Ed Miliband's disavowal of a possible EU membership vote (Schnapper, 2015). All the while, on April 9th the second Scottish Leaders debate was broadcast on the BBC (Schnapper, 2015), and on April 10th Conservative MP George Osborne was pictured with a "convicted woman beater on the Tory campaign trail" (Fricker, 2015, n.p.). This period also saw the publication of the party manifestos on April 13 (White, 2016), as well as two events focused on women, not as voters, but as the wives and girlfriends of male politicians: right-wing, tabloid articles on Ed Miliband's past relationships (Pierce, 2015), and a MailOnline poll by Populus which showed that people would vote primarily for Samantha Cameron, David Cameron's wife, if the leaders' wives were to become party leaders (Chorley, 2015).

The third peak again relates to women's relationships to men, as it can be linked to Miriam González Durántez, wife of Lib Dems leader Nick Clegg, being 'outed' as a food blogger (Wright, 2015) and discussion of teenage, female Ed Miliband supporters, or the #milifandom (Dean, 2017; Hills, 2015). The fourth peak relates to comedian Russell Brand's interview with Ed Miliband in a bid to appeal to younger voters on April 29 (Arthurs & Shaw, 2016) and the BBC Question Time leaders debate on April 30 (Wring & Ward, 2015). The fifth and final peak which occurs during the final days of the campaign, May 5-7, is as expected the highest peak and can mainly be linked to general last ditch predictions, (exit) polls, voting advice and overviews of the campaign. Aside from these more general election stories two specific events stand out: a Labour rally in Birmingham on May 5th where Muslim voters were 'segregated' by gender which sparked outrage and was labelled as "sexist" (D. Martin & Robinson, 2015); and Ed

Miliband's struggle to eat a bacon sandwich which inspired the #JeSuisEd [I am Ed] solidarity hashtag (Lilleker & Pack, 2016) and again referenced the 'Milifandom'.

Lastly, even though Labour MP, and longest-ever continuously serving female MP, Harriet Harman's infamous 'pink bus' campaign is mentioned throughout the corpus, it did not lead to any distinct peaks in the coverage. It appears to have been more of a steady focal point and through-line, rather than a one-off event.

5.1.2 2016 EU Referendum: steady phases and a late rush

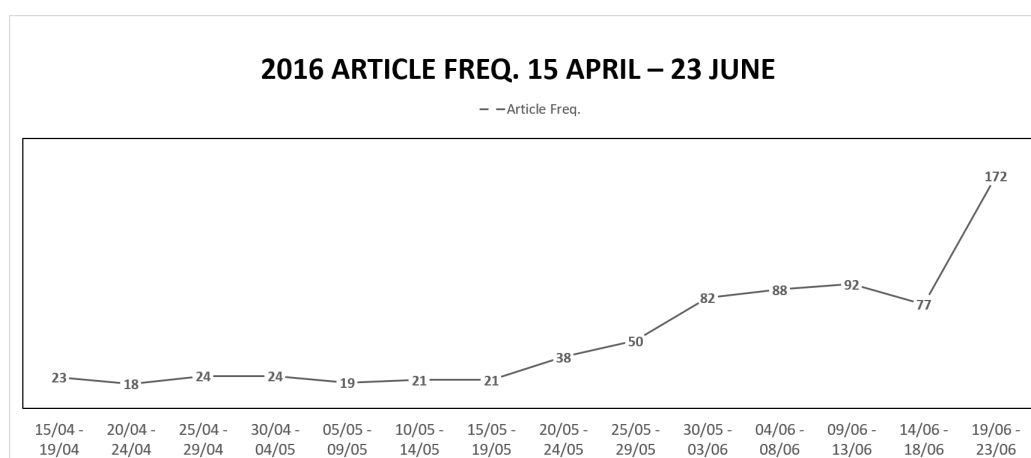


Figure 4: Number of articles published per 5 days of the 2016 EU Referendum campaign

The figure above shows the number of articles related to female voters published per 5 days of the 2016 EU Referendum campaign, a period of 70 days between 15/04/2016 and 23/06/2016. Intervals of 5 days, contrasted with the 3 day intervals of the 2015 corpus, were chosen as the period of 70 days of this campaign is both considerably longer than the 39 day period of 2015 and not divisible by 3. Overall, 749 articles from this period were included in the corpus, which is an average of 10.7 articles per day, and

53.5 articles per 5 days of the referendum campaign. The highest article rate per 5 days of 172 was observed during the last week of the campaign between June 19-23 and the lowest rate per 5 days, comprising of 18 articles was observed between April 20-24. The number of articles included appears to have undergone five distinct phases, which primarily follow expected coverage trends: a) a steady flow at the beginning stages of the campaigning period between the first day of the campaign: April 15 and May 19; b) a somewhat steady increase, coinciding with the start of the final month of campaigning, between May 20 and June 3; c) a renewed steady flow, or plateau, of coverage between June 4-13; d) a small decline in coverage between June 14-18, and e) a stark increase up to 172 articles in the last week of campaigning between June 19 and the day of the referendum, June 23.

In general, one would expect a steady increase in coverage as an election, or in this case referendum, draws near (Jackson et al., 2016). This is why period d) or the dip in coverage toward the end stands out as unexpected. Possible explanations might lie in a general oversaturation of 'Brexit' coverage. However, the main reason relates to campaigning being suspended for several days after the murder of Jo Cox MP (Cooper, 2016). Consequently, the stark increase in included articles from June 19 onward, after the end of the suspension, is both in line with the expected increased coverage as an election or referendum draws near and related to even more heightened interest in the campaign after Cox's murder.

Moreover, the lack of other campaign-specific events focused on women could possibly relate to coverage focusing more on the impact of a possible 'Brexit' vote, and broad topics such as 'immigration', 'national sovereignty' and 'the economy', which were the main topics within EU Referendum discourse (Cap, 2017, 2019; Jackson et al., 2016), on society as a whole, rather than on female voters' specific interests.

5.1.3 2017 General Election: episodic exasperation

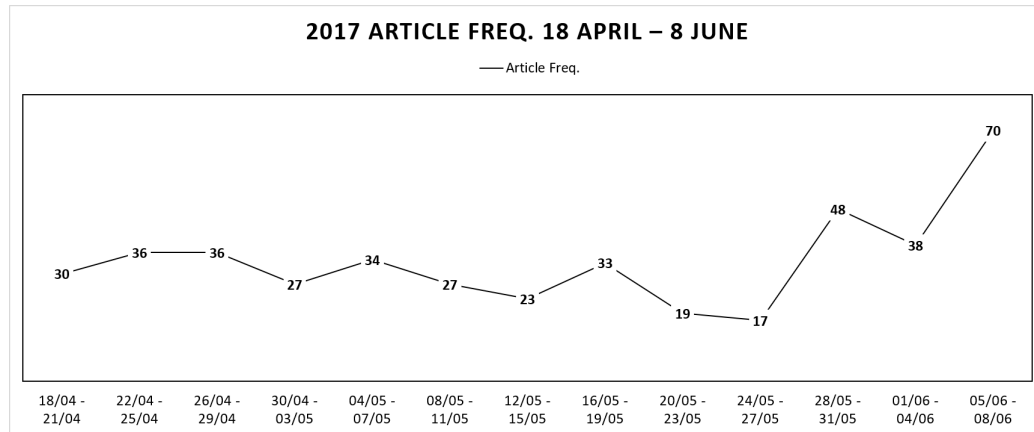


Figure 5: Number of articles published per 4 days of the 2017 General Election campaign

Figure 5 above shows the number of articles related to female voters published per 4 days of the 2017 General Election campaign, a period of 52 days between 18/04/2017 and 08/06/2017. Intervals of 4 days, as opposed to the 3 or 5 day intervals of the 2015 and 2016 corpora, as the period of 52 days of this campaign is both shorter than the 70 day period of 2016 and longer than the 39 day period of 2015 and thus intermediate intervals of 4 were chosen, as well as not being divisible by 3 or 5. In this period as a whole, 438 articles were included in the corpus, which is an average of 8.4 articles per day, and 33.7 articles per 4 days of the referendum campaign. The highest article rate per 4 days of 70 was observed during the last 4 days of the campaign between June 5-8 and the lowest rate per 4 days comprising of 17 articles was observed between May 24-27. The fewer overall number of articles included appears to be rather unstable and primarily ‘event-based’ or episodic, which is similar to the patterns observed in previous election coverage studies (Iyengar, 1994; Strömbäck & Shehata, 2007). Five distinct peaks can be identified. These peaks are not random and can all be explained by salient occurrences in the campaign.

First, there is the peak spanning two bouts of 36 articles between April 22-29. This peak is linked to the snap General Election being called on April 18, 2017 by then Prime Minister Theresa May and the unexpectedness of this election (Henn & Hart, 2017b). This unexpectedness and the public's shock and apprehension concerning this decision is perhaps best illustrated by a woman dubbed 'Brenda from Bristol' (Strong, 2018; Wheeler, 2017) expressing her dismay about having a snap general election so soon after the EU Referendum and the previous 2015 General Election by exclaiming "You're joking. Not another one [election]. For God's sake!" during an interview with the BBC's John Kay on the morning of May's announcement (Kay, 2017) [see Figure 14 in Appendix A.2]. The second peak of 34 articles occurs between May 4-7 and can be linked to increased coverage due to local elections in the UK and what these elections and their outcomes might mean for May and female voters in the general election (Gavazza et al., 2018). Peak number 3 of 33 articles occurs between May 16-19 and coincides with the release of the political parties' manifestos outlining their plans (Johnston et al., 2018).

The fourth peak of 48 articles per 4 days transpires between May 28-31. This peak can be linked to two salient campaign-specific events occurring at once. Both the publication of new poll results predicting significant Labour gains and Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's so-called "car-crash" interview on the Woman's Hour radio show and the Mumsnet online forum (Malnick & Rayner, 2017) contributed to this increase in coverage. In these interviews he is stumped on the costs of childcare, a cause closely associated with female voters. The fifth and highest peak of 70 articles is situated during the last 4 days of the campaign between May 5-8. This peak can once again be explained by the more general trend of a steady increase in coverage as an election draws near (Jackson et al., 2016).

5.1.4 Diachronic overview: episodic and event-based

The three separate corpora are of varying sizes (i.e. 778, 749 and 438 articles) which is partially due to the different lengths of the campaigning period: the planned election campaign of 2015 is the shortest at 39 days, while the snap election campaign of 2017 lasted 52 days, and the referendum campaign of 2016 is the longest at 70 days. However, the shortest campaign unexpectedly produced the largest corpus with the highest average rate of 19.9 articles per day. Yet, the longest campaign period did not have the lowest average daily rate, as the 70-day period of 2016 yielded a rate of 10.7, while the 52 days of 2017 only yielded a rate of 8.4. This could potentially be due to the fact that the 2017 GE was called at a point in time when UK public discourse might have already been saturated and the UK public was perhaps slightly fed up with election coverage. This saturation and exasperation, which one might dub 'Brenda-from-Bristol' syndrome after the figurehead of said exasperation, was due to the rather polarising 2016 campaign and the manifold opportunities to vote during the permaelection period. Moreover, the lower average number of articles per day and lower total number of articles in the 2017 corpus also correlate with the gender of the then incumbent PM. Both before and after the 2015 GE, and during the 2016 EU Referendum campaign, leader of the Conservatives David Cameron served as PM. By 2017 Theresa May had taken over as both the leader of the Conservatives and PM, and she went on to win the subsequent election. During each campaign, the main opposition party's leader was a man: Ed Miliband and Jeremy Corbyn for the Labour party in 2015 and 2017, and Nigel Farage for Vote Leave in 2016 vs. David Cameron for Vote Remain. Having the main players be men, as opposed to both male and female in 2017, resulted especially in 2015 in a barrage of articles, and accompanying peaks in article frequency, related to the female partners, wives and fans of these male politicians (e.g. the #milifandom (Dean, 2017)) which were less prevalent with May in charge

in 2017.

The average interval rate, despite the intervals differing in length, generates the same ranking of the corpora. This can partially be explained by the higher frequency of salient 'election events' relating to female voters in 2015 discussed above (e.g. a focus on online, female fandom). As the more in-depth qualitative analyses in Chapters 6 and 7 will show, female voters and their supposed needs were placed more at the forefront in this campaign (e.g. Harriet Harman's 'pink bus' campaign). This was perhaps due to it being a 'simpler' pre-Brexit-vote time. The impending EU vote already loomed over this election (Schnapper, 2015), but it did not dominate public debate yet in the way it did during both the 2016 and also the 2017 campaigns with *Brexit* being the no. 4 keyword of 2017 as will be discussed later (see Table 17 in Section 5.5.3). Furthermore, the highest interval rate, in accordance with previous election coverage research (Jackson et al., 2016), consistently transpires during the last intervals of the corpora and thus the final days leading up the elections/referendum. However, the sharpest late campaign increase or rush relates to a specific horrific event, as it occurs in 2016 after the murder of Jo Cox MP.

Moreover, other patterns that are visible throughout the years relate to the flow of the number of articles. All years display an overall rise in the article frequency, yet these instances of upward momentum take on different forms. In 2015 and 2017 distinct episodic peaks and troughs are evident in the data which are common in election coverage (Strömbäck & Shehata, 2007). In 2016 on the other hand, the flow of articles can be best described in terms of phases and a steadier flow. Interestingly, both the phases and peaks appear to come in fives for all years. This can partially be explained by certain events specific to political campaigns that will transpire during each campaigning period in the UK. For instance, televised debates, a relatively new phenomenon which really took off during the 2010 General Election campaign (Ross et al., 2013a), the publication of

the parties' election posters and manifestos, (exit) polls, voting advice and overviews of the campaign in the news. Lastly, other peaks link to more singular events. For instance, (exasperated) reactions to the snap election being called in 2017 as well as the occurrence of local elections during said campaign, or 'scandals' happening throughout each campaign (e.g. the aforementioned 'car-crash' interviews). The following section will break down these yearly article frequencies by political orientation and publication type, and delve deeper into the campaigns' coverage trends.

5.2 Article type: 2015-2017

In order to further explore the article frequencies and elucidate which types of newspapers feature most in this study's corpus, this section will discuss the development of the political orientation and publication type of the articles over the three campaigning periods. Yearly reviews will be followed by an overview of the similarities and differences between the three campaigns.

5.2.1 2015 General Election: right-wing and broadsheets

Political orientation

During the 2015 campaign the majority of articles included in the corpus come from right-wing publications (see Table 5 below). The 2015 corpus comprises 424 articles from right-wing newspapers (e.g. *The Daily Mail*) which amounts to 54.6% of all articles, 203 articles from left-wing newspapers (e.g. *The Guardian*) which is 26.1% of all articles, and 150 articles from papers that do not openly subscribe to a particular political ideology or support a particular political party (e.g. *The Independent*) which is 19.3%

of all articles.¹ This is in line with the fact that there are more national newspapers in the UK that subscribe to a more right-wing political ideology and tend to support the Conservative party (i.e. the right-wing sub-corpus comprises 13 separate newspapers, while the left-wing sub-corpus consists of only 6 separate newspapers). Despite this difference, right-wing and left-wing publications on average publish a similar amount of female voter related articles, while they both publish more than newspapers without a political affiliation (34 vs. 33 and 25 per newspaper). Moreover, left-wing newspapers appear to publish longer articles, as the absolute number of tokens is only marginally lower in the left-wing sub-corpus than in the right-wing one that has twice as many articles (i.e. 516,610 vs. 545,906). The left-wing sub-corpus therefore also has a significantly higher average number of tokens per article than both the right-wing sub-corpus and the 'other' sub-corpus (2,545 vs. 1,288 and 1,045). One has to consider, however, that such longer articles may not always indicate a higher concentration of female voter related content, as longer articles in this corpus tend to be articles that cover a wide(r) range of topics and may only briefly mention female voters. This rings especially true for the long 'live-blog' articles which list every small event transpiring on the campaign trail on a specific day and are quite frequent among *The Guardian* articles.

Table 5: Number of articles and tokens per political orientation (and averages per newspaper) in 2015

Political Affiliation	No. of articles	No. of tokens
Left-wing	203 (34)	516,610 (2,545)
Right-wing	424 (33)	545,906 (1,288)
Other (no affiliation)	150 (25)	156,868 (1,045)

¹See Table 54 in Appendix C.1 for the number of articles per separate newspaper publication in 2015.

Publication type

Figure 6 below shows that during the 2015 campaign broadsheet publications prevail in terms of the absolute number of included articles. The 2015 corpus comprises 388 articles from broadsheet publications (e.g. *The Guardian*, *The Times*) which amounts to 49.9% of all articles, and 264 articles from tabloid publications (e.g. *The Daily Mail*) which amounts to 34% of all articles. There are 125 articles, 16.1% of all articles, from the ‘digital only’ *The Independent* which, as explained in Section 4.1.1, ceased its print editions during the 2016 EU Referendum campaign (Rajan, 2016) and which for the sake of corpus continuity was treated as an online-only platform for all three campaigning periods. The higher number of broadsheet articles runs counter to the ratio of broadsheet and tabloid publications found in the UK national newspaper landscape (see Table 2), but is in line with broadsheets’ traditional aim to inform the public as well as earlier studies on campaign reporting (e.g. Ross et al., 2013).

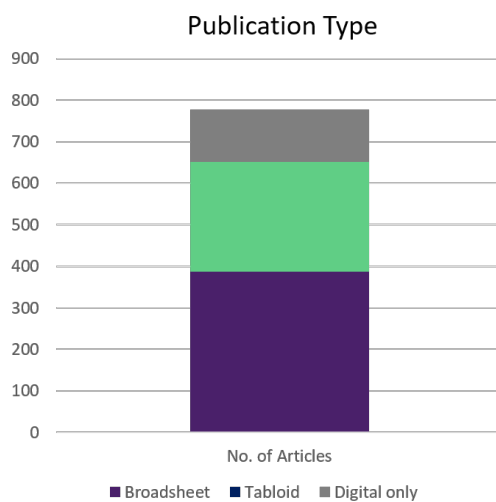


Figure 6: Number of articles published by publication type during the 2015 General Election

5.2.2 2016 EU Referendum: Vote Leave and tabloids, while broadsheets still prevail

Political orientation & referendum stance

During the 2016 campaign the majority of articles included in the corpus again come from right-wing publications (see Table 6 below). The 2016 corpus comprises 408 articles from right-wing newspapers which amounts to 54.5% of all articles, 224 articles from left-wing newspapers which is 29.9% of all articles, and 117 articles from no affiliation papers which is 15.6% of all articles.² Furthermore, this time the right-wing sub-corpus has a higher average number of tokens per article than both the left-wing sub-corpus and the no affiliation sub-corpus (1,688 vs. 1,387 and 1,049). However, left-wing newspapers on average publish more female voter related articles than both right-wing newspapers and no-affiliation newspapers (37 vs. 31 and 29 per newspaper). Therefore, even though left-wing newspapers appear to write about female voters more often, right-wing newspapers appear to have published longer articles. However, as mentioned before, one must consider that longer articles may not always indicate a higher concentration of female voter related content, as longer articles in this corpus often cover a whole range of topics and may only briefly mention female voters.

Table 6: Number of articles and tokens per political orientation (and averages per newspaper) in 2016

Political Affiliation	No. of articles	No. of tokens
Left-wing	224 (37)	310,771 (1,387)
Right-wing	408 (31)	688,840 (1,688)
Other (no affiliation)	117 (29)	122,767 (1,049)

²See Table 55 in Appendix C.1 for the number of articles per separate newspaper publication in 2016.

The prevalence of right-wing articles also means that during the 2016 campaign the majority of articles included in the corpus come from publications that support Vote Leave (see Figure 7 below). These overlap with right-wing newspapers bar *The Times*, which supported Vote Remain. The 2016 sub-corpus consists of 385 articles from Vote Leave supporting newspapers: 51.4% of all articles, 247 articles (33%) from Vote Remain newspapers, and 117 articles (15.6%) from papers that did not declare their stance (e.g. *The Independent*).

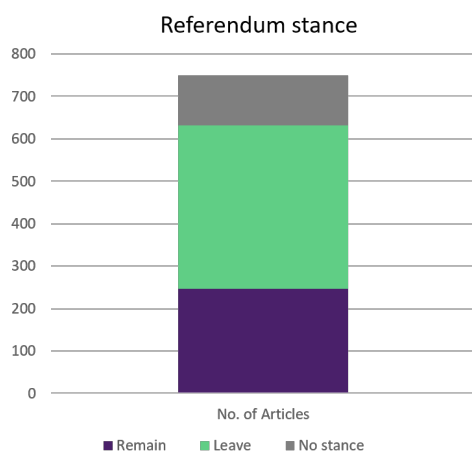


Figure 7: Number of articles published by newspaper referendum stance during the 2016 EU Referendum campaign

Publication type

Figure 8 below shows that during the 2016 campaign broadsheet publications again prevail in terms of the absolute number of included articles. The 2016 corpus comprises 351 articles from broadsheet publications which amounts to 46.9% of all articles, 309 articles from tabloid publications which amounts to 41.2% of all articles (which is up from 34% in 2015), and 89 articles (11.9%) from the 'digital only' *The Independent*.

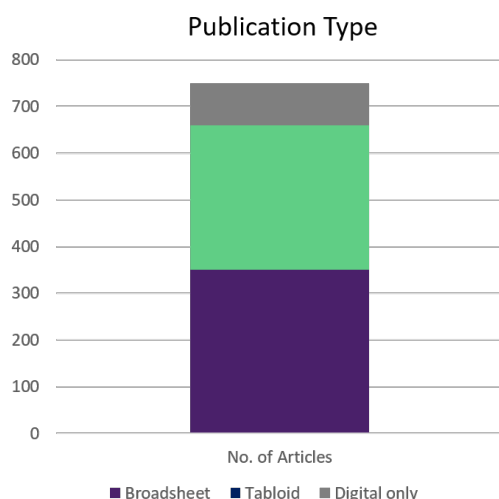


Figure 8: Number of articles published by publication type during the 2016 EU Referendum campaign

5.2.3 2017 General Election: still right-wing and broadsheet

Political orientation

Similarly to the other campaigns, during the 2017 GE campaign the majority of articles included in the corpus come from right-wing publications (see Table 7 below). The 2017 corpus comprises 229 articles from right-wing newspapers which amounts to 52.3% of all articles (the lowest percentage so far), 94 articles from left-wing newspapers, which is 21.5% of all articles, and 115 articles from no-affiliation papers, which is 26.3% of all articles.³ Furthermore, the right-wing sub-corpus again has a higher average number of tokens per article than both the left-wing sub-corpus and the 'no affiliation' sub-corpus (1,213 vs. 1,118 and 906). However, the 'no-affiliation' newspapers outperform both the left-wing and right-wing newspapers in this campaign in terms of the average number of articles

³See Table 56 in Appendix C.1 for the number of articles per separate newspaper publication in 2017.

per newspaper (38 vs. 17 and 16 per newspaper). This can be explained by the fact that, as opposed to 2015 and 2016, *The Independent* has been fully digitised and all articles are now published on one single online platform (Rajan, 2016), whereas *The Independent* comprised 4 different publications in 2015 and 2 in 2016. Consequently, the average number of articles per newspaper has risen significantly.

Table 7: Number of articles and tokens per political orientation (and averages per newspaper) in 2017

Political Affiliation	No. of articles	No. of tokens
Left-wing	94 (16)	105,118 (1,118)
Right-wing	224 (17)	271,756 (1,213)
Other	115 (38)	104,177 (906)

Publication type

As in 2015 and 2016, during the 2017 campaign broadsheet publications prevail in terms of the absolute number of included articles (see Figure 9 below). The 2017 corpus comprises 226 articles from broadsheet publications, which amounts to 51.6% of all articles (the highest percentage so far), 132 articles from tabloid publications, which amounts to 30.1% of all articles, and 80 articles, 18.3% of all articles, from the 'digital only' *The Independent*.

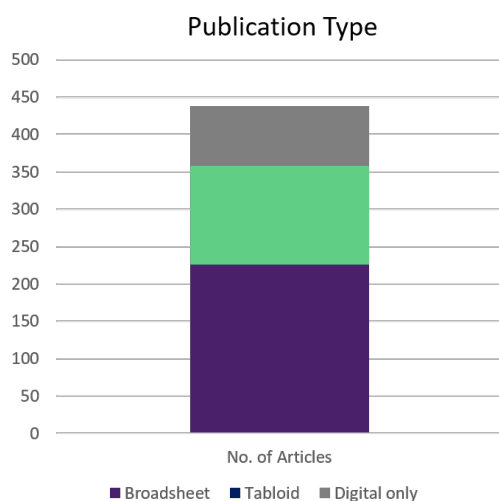


Figure 9: Number of articles published by publication type during the 2017 General Election

5.2.4 Diachronic overview: a shift to the right and broadly broadsheet

Political orientation

For all three campaigns the right-wing sub-corpora are substantially larger, both in terms of the percentage and absolute number of articles, than both the left-wing and no-affiliation sub-corpora. Right-wing newspaper articles constitute over 50% of the corresponding corpus for all campaigns (54.6%, 54.5% and 52.3%). As mentioned above, even though the parameters of this study favour specific types of articles concerning women, this right-wing prevalence is in accordance with the general skew toward a right-wing political ideology in the national newspaper landscape of the UK (Newton & Brynin, 2001). Due to the consistent right-wing/Vote Leave overlap, bar *The Times*, this also means that the Vote Leave sub-corpus is larger than the Vote Remain and 'no stance' sub-corpora. Meanwhile, the left-wing articles constitute 26.1%, 29.9% and 21.5% of the yearly

corpora, and the no-affiliation articles 19.3%, 15.6% and 26.3% of the yearly corpora. Thus, the latter two swap places in the ranking behind the right-wing articles between the 2016 Referendum and the 2017 GE. This appears to be due to the fact that the no-affiliation papers appear to be the only ones unaffected by the potential existence of the 'Brenda-from-Bristol' syndrome. Even though the 2017 corpus is much smaller in terms of its total number of articles, the no-affiliation sub-corpus appears to be almost unaffected and clocks in a similar number of articles for each year (i.e. 150 in 2015, 117 in 2016 and 115 in 2017). The left-wing and right-wing sub-corpora on the other hand, appear to be only half the size of their 2015 and 2016 equivalents.

Regarding the average number of articles per publication, the left-wing newspapers display the highest averages in both 2015 and 2016, followed by right-wing newspapers and the no-affiliation newspapers. In 2017 however, this ranking is reversed entirely, as the no-affiliation newspapers exhibit the highest average number of articles per newspaper due to their switch to an online-only publication format, followed by the right-wing newspapers. With regard to the average article length, illustrated by the average number of tokens per article, right-wing newspapers displayed the highest average article length during the latter stages of the permaelection period in both 2016 and 2017. However, during the first GE of the permaelection period in 2015, left-wing newspapers displayed a significantly higher average article length than their right-wing and no-affiliation counterparts (i.e. almost double the right-wing article length and more than double the no-affiliation article length).

Overall, within the right-wing prevalence, there is a subtle shift further right present, as the percentage of left-wing articles drops off in 2017 and left-wing articles, on average, become shorter over the years (i.e. 2,545 tokens per article to 1,387 and 1,118), while right-wing articles remain a similar length between GEs and become longer during the EU Referen-

dum campaign (i.e. 1,288 tokens per article to 1,688 and 1,213). Are right-wing newspapers perhaps (becoming) more interested in female voters, or is there perhaps an overarching shift toward the right present in election coverage? This will be further explored in Chapters 6 and 7.

Publication type

For all three campaigns the broadsheet sub-corpora are larger, in terms of both the percentage and absolute number of articles, than the tabloid and digital only sub-corpora. For all campaigns, broadsheet newspaper articles constitute close to or more than 50% (i.e. 49.9, 46.9 and 51.6%) of the corresponding corpus. As mentioned above, this is not in accordance with the ratio of broadsheet and tabloid publications found in the UK national newspaper landscape, but it is in line with broadsheets' focus on politics and informing the public, and earlier studies on campaign reporting (e.g. Ross et al., 2013).

It might also be illustrative of the overall purported 'tabloidisation' of said landscape at large and election coverage in particular, which has been observed since the late 1990's. To reiterate, tabloidisation refers to a shift among (British) newspapers toward more 'soft' content (e.g. 'human interest' stories), traditionally associated with the tabloid press, and less fact-based reporting (Holly, 2008; McLachlan & Golding, 2000; Ross, 2000). The overall prevalence and slight rise in broadsheet articles in combination with the lower percentage of tabloid articles between the GEs (i.e. 34% in 2015 to 30.1% in 2017) could indicate that broadsheet newspapers, alongside fact-based political reporting, are also publishing 'soft' content political articles to entertain the public in the tabloid vein (e.g. the articles regarding the #milifandom, party leaders' private lives discussed in the newspaper article frequency section above).

There is some variety evident in the gap between the percentages of broadsheet and tabloid articles included in the corpora, however. While

during the two GE campaigns in 2015 and 2017, the gap between broadsheet and tabloid is 15.8% and 21.5% respectively, during the 2016 EU Referendum campaign this gap decreases to a considerably smaller 5.7%. Thus, the EU Referendum corpus is the odd one out not only in terms of the type of voting event, but also in terms of the inclusion of tabloid articles. Explanations for this might lie in the aforementioned distinction between soft or 'feminine' and hard or 'masculine' content in the news, as well as the deeply polarising nature of the referendum. Firstly, during the 2016 campaign stereotypically masculine topics such as 'immigration' and 'the economy' (Heldman et al., 2005; Major & Coleman, 2008) dominated the debate (Jackson et al., 2016), rather than feminine topics such as education and climate issues (Han, 2007; Herrnson et al., 2003). Consequently, fewer 'feminised' content might have been published in broadsheet newspapers. Secondly, regarding the polarising nature of the EU Referendum, only two choices were available as opposed to the greater number of choices during a GE, and the seeming finality of a possible decision either way due to the fact that the results of a referendum last much longer than the outcome of a GE, might have upped the stakes not only for the vote itself, but also in terms of newspaper coverage. Higher stakes paired with increased polarisation are a perfect feeding ground for the sensationalist tabloid media (van Dijk, 1995). Perhaps, the tabloid media is prone to publish less when the stakes are lower (i.e. during a GE) and there are fewer avenues for sensationalism. Yet, the lowest observed percentage for tabloid articles occurred in 2017, when the stakes appeared to have been higher than in 2015. The outcome of the 2017 vote could have had major repercussions for future Brexit proceedings. However, the tabloids tend to be right-wing and pro-Leave and therefore they might have felt confident the Conservatives would win the 2017 GE and Brexit would happen in a timely fashion. This might have made them less inclined to publish. This also begs the question whether general elections in

general could be more suited to broadsheet reporting and referendums to tabloid reporting.

The following section will expand on the political orientation and publication type trends discussed in this section by exploring the yearly article frequencies by author gender, as gender is both a further complicating factor within the make-up of the corpus and of importance to the gendered focus of this corpus. As discussed in Section 3.2.4, previous studies are quite conflicting regarding the influence of journalist gender, as they point toward there both being no influence and a marked influence of gender on newspaper coverage. Therefore, the next section will lay the groundwork for further explorations of the influence of (author) gender in this study.

5.3 Author gender: 2015-2017

This section will further explore both the general article frequencies and their political orientation and publication type categorisations discussed above by means of analysing the gender distributions of the articles' authors per year as well as their development over the years.

5.3.1 2015 General Election: a majority of male authors

The author gender categorisations present in Figure 10 below are based on the pronouns provided by the authors' bios on their employer's website and/or the pronouns they use to describe themselves online (e.g. on Twitter). The figure shows that during the 2015 campaign articles written by male journalists prevail in terms of the absolute number of included articles. The 2015 General Election corpus comprises 423 articles from male authors which amounts to 54.4% of all articles, 274 articles from female authors which amounts to 35.3% of all articles, 54 articles from a mixed-gender group of authors (6.9% of all authors), 25 articles from unknown

authors (3.2% of all articles) and 1 article from an author whose gender identity does not fit either of these categories which is 0.1% of all articles. The higher percentage of articles from male authors is in accordance with the male/female distribution observed in the British press. In fact, it almost perfectly matches the percentage level of 55% male authors found in a study of national publications in the UK by Thurman, Cornia and Kunert (2016). Yet, it is a substantially lower percentage than the 80% found by a study of 2010 UK General Election newspaper coverage (Ross et al., 2013a), which reflected other studies which examined the variable of author gender in campaign coverage (Chambers et al., 2004; Rehkopf & Reinstadler, 2011). This appears to suggest that there might indeed be a link between author gender and topic, i.e. that female authors produce higher quantities of articles concerning and representing women in relation to their male counterparts. Either because such topics might interest and galvanise them more, or perhaps because of a more insidious option that female journalists are primarily asked to publish on 'feminine' issues, while they are blocked from writing about 'general' election topics (which intersect with often overlooked notions of gender) in the male-dominated fields of election coverage and journalism in general.

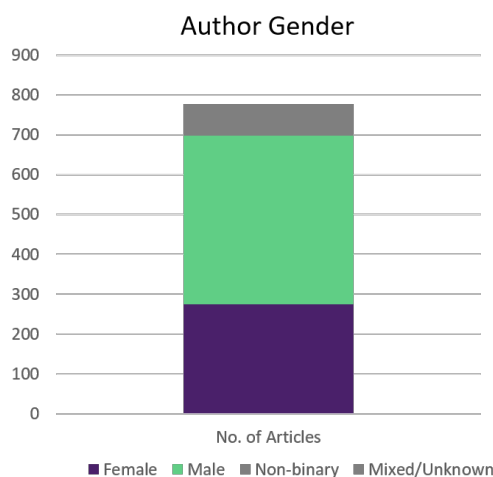


Figure 10: Number of articles published by author gender during the 2015 General Election

5.3.2 2016 EU Referendum: a smaller majority of men

Figure 11 below shows that during the 2016 campaign the majority, albeit a slightly smaller one than in 2015, of included articles were again written by male journalists. The 2016 corpus comprises 387 articles from male authors, which amounts to 51.6% of all articles, 261 articles from female authors, which is 34.8% of all articles, no articles from non-binary authors, 72 articles from a mixed-gender group of authors (9.6% of all authors), 29 articles from unknown authors (3.9% of all articles).

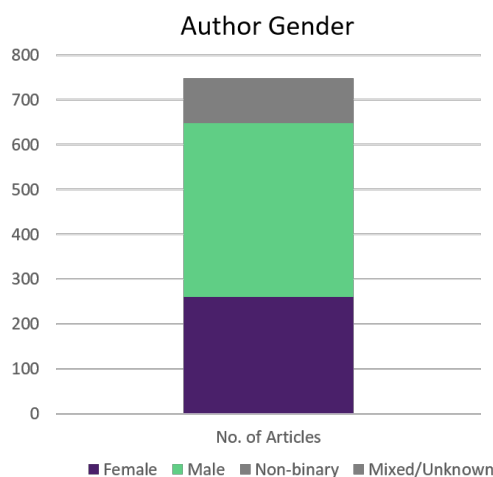


Figure 11: Number of articles published by author gender during the 2016 EU Referendum campaign

5.3.3 2017 General Election: a rise in female authors

Figure 12 below shows that in 2017 once again campaign articles written by male journalists prevail in terms of the absolute number of included articles. However, as opposed to the other two campaigns, they no longer make up more than 50% of the corpus's authors. The 2017 corpus comprises 202 articles from male authors, which amounts to 46.1% of all articles, but female authors are closing in, as 181 articles from female authors, which is 41.3% of all articles (the highest percentage of all three campaigns) were included. The corpus also included 2 articles from non-binary authors, which is 0.5% of all articles, 20 articles from a mixed-gender group of authors (4.5% of all authors) and 33 articles from unknown authors (7.8% of all articles).

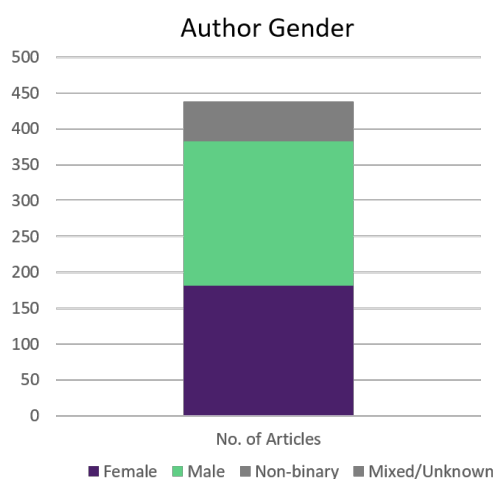


Figure 12: Number of articles published by author gender during the 2017 General Election

5.3.4 Diachronic overview: a shift toward more women, but men still prevail

For all three corpora the sub-corpora comprising articles written by journalists who identify as male are larger, both in terms of the percentage and absolute number of articles, than both the female, non-binary, mixed-group authors and unknown author sub-corpora. For all campaigns, newspaper articles written by men constitute close to or more than 50% (i.e. 54.5, 51.6 and 46.1%) of the corresponding corpus. The fact that articles written by men are prevalent each year is in line with previous studies on both journalist gender in the wider UK national newspaper landscape (i.e. Thurman et al., 2016) as well as more specific general election coverage (e.g. Chambers, Steiner & Fleming, 2004; Rehkopf & Reinstadler, 2011; Ross et al., 2013). As mentioned above, the 2015 distribution also complies with the numbers and percentages observed by the Thurman, Cornia and Kunert (2016) study. However, the way in which the distribution in this study diverges from these previous studies is twofold: 1)

the distribution for all three years is rather different than the one observed for the 2010 GE, and 2) the distribution changes over time as the percentage of female authors increases (from 35.3% and 34.8% in 2015 and 2016 to 41.3% in 2017) and, in doing so, drifts further and further away from the previously observed distributions. One caveat must be considered, however, which is that none of these studies operated within the same gendered parameters as the present study. They either looked at general news coverage (Chambers et al., 2004; Thurman et al., 2016), or general campaign coverage without a specific focus on female voters or 'feminine' issues (Rehkopf & Reinstadler, 2011). Consequently, comparisons can be drawn but must be assessed critically, keeping the different parameters in mind. Thus, the fact that the percentage of men decreases over time whilst the percentage of women increases, and the gap between the two starts to close, could be indicative of several factors. Firstly, the increasing number of female authors could be indicative of a change in the gender distribution of UK journalists, or the gender distribution of campaign coverage in particular. Moreover, it could in fact be primarily due to the gendered parameters of this study as women are perhaps more likely to write about (other) women, which would suggest, that there is indeed a link between author gender and topic, a notion which was reflected in Ross et al. (2013). Notwithstanding the probability of skewed results, the distribution displays a link between gender and topic as well as a clear trend toward a closure of the gender gap within female-focused campaign coverage. This could potentially have been affected by the presence of a female PM, or the slight rise in broadsheet reporting over the years, as Ross et al. (2013) showed that women were more likely to be writing for broadsheet publications and *The Guardian* in particular. Yet, this study also demonstrates a shift toward more right-wing reporting which, according to Ross et al. (2013), tends to house more male journalists. These nuances and the influence of the publication type and political orientation of the included

newspaper articles over the years on these gender distributions will be discussed in more depth below.

Firstly, regarding the publication type sub-corpora, the closing gender gap and continuing increase in the presence of female authors over the permaelection period, can mainly be attributed to the broadsheet and to a lesser extent the digital only newspapers. Broadsheet newspaper reporting during the permaelection period shifts from comprising a majority of articles written by men in 2015 to an almost completely equal gender distribution in 2016 (40.7% men vs. 40.2% women) to more articles written by women than men in 2017.⁴ Therefore, the fact that the overall 2017 gender distribution discussed above lists a higher percentage of men than women (46.1% vs. 41.3%, see Figure 12) is especially striking. Both broadsheet, the most frequent category, and digital only newspapers had higher percentage levels of women than men in 2017, which were not reflected in the overall distribution. The skewed gender distribution of tabloids in that year (58.3% men vs. 31.9% women, see Figure 18 in Appendix C.2.1) thus partly obscures the shift toward more female authors in broadsheet and digital only newspapers. Based on the 2010 UK GE study by Ross et al. (2013) these higher percentages of female authors in broadsheets are to be expected, although not to such elevated levels. Furthermore, tabloid newspapers in this study still exhibit more equal gender distributions than the distribution observed in Ross et al. (2013), which again appears to underscore a possible link between author gender and topic, and thus one could argue that the rise in the number of female authors in campaign coverage from 2010 to 2015-2017 can also partially be attributed to a female-led shift in tabloid reporting.

Secondly, regarding the political orientation sub-corpora, the rise in female authors cannot be attributed to a single political orientation's re-

⁴See Figures 16-18 in Appendix C.2.1 for the gender distributions per publication type per year.

porting over the years. The fact that right-wing reporting is continuously more male-heavy mirrors Ross et al. (2013). However, in 2015, all political orientation sub-corpora seem to have contributed to the higher frequency of female authors in comparison to Ross et al.'s (2013) study on the 2010 General Election [see Figure 19 in Appendix C.2.2]. This is especially significant, as Ross et al. (2013) reported a severe lack of female authors in *The Independent* for the 2010 GE, which does not state a specific political affiliation. This is not corroborated by this study, as all sub-corpora demonstrate more even distributions than the lopsided one found in Ross et al. (2013). While the more equal distribution in 2015 can be attributed to all three political categories, in 2016 and 2017 separate categories can be credited with this trend. In 2016 the left-wing sub-corpus displays a substantially higher number of female authors, a majority even (50.2%), than both the general gender distribution in 2016 discussed above (34.8%) and the right-wing and no-affiliation sub-corpora (29.3% and 24.8%).⁵ Therefore, the higher overall frequency of female authors in 2016 can primarily be attributed to a change in left-wing reporting [see Figure 20 in Appendix C.2.2]. In 2017 left-wing reporting undergoes a shift in the opposite direction, as the left-wing newspapers once again display a majority of articles written by men. This is contrary to the female majority in 2016 as well as contrary to the shift toward more female authors. The gap between the male and female percentages is smaller than in 2015 however, for both the right-wing and left-wing sub-corpora. Moreover, the pervasive shift toward gender equality in political reporting and especially the type of female-focused reporting examined in this study appears to be happening across all three sub-corpora. Nonetheless, in 2017 the no-affiliation sub-corpus appears to be the predominant driving force behind this trend, as it exhibits a majority of articles written by women [see Figure 22 in Appendix C.2.2].

⁵For the 2016 campaign the referendum stance sub-corpora demonstrate an almost identical gender distribution to the political orientation sub-corpora.

Lastly, after having discussed the frequencies as well as the political orientation, publication type and author gender distributions of the articles in this study's corpus over the years, the following section will begin to explore the content of the included articles by means of analyses of the search terms used to build the corpus.

5.4 Search terms: 2015-2017

This section on the study's search terms, their frequencies and occurrences across both the yearly corpora and sub-corpora, will comprise the first step in exploring the corpus's content by means of frequency analyses and comparisons across (sub-)corpora. It will first explore the development of the frequencies of the top 10 search terms per yearly corpora, which will be followed by overviews of the development of search term frequencies per sub-corpus as well as the potential overuse of terms across the sub-corpora over the years.

5.4.1 2015 General Election: identification, normativity and youth

The frequency of search terms, calculated by means of the corpus tool AntConc (Anthony, 2019), both in terms of its article yield and its number of overall occurrences, reveals certain discourses present in and salient to the corpus at hand, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 6 & 7 and the concluding Chapter 8. The top 10 most frequent search terms with regard to article yield and term frequency, which are also sufficiently frequent for analysis,⁶ as shown in Table 8 below, show that the two different rankings are almost entirely identical. This is with the exception of terms no. 10 & 11 *lesbian(s)* and *girlfriend(s)*, which swap places

⁶See Table 57 in Appendix C.3.1 for the complete ranking of the 2015 search terms.

depending on which ranking you look at. As expected, the most frequent terms are the rather general or neutral singular and plural forms of *woman/women* (i.e. *wom*n*). The 'neutral' (e.g. *wom*n/female*) vs. 'potentially gender-biased' (e.g. *girl/lady*) distinction is made. Even though the reflected gender-bias is highly context-specific, the potential for such bias is much more present among the use of 'girl' and 'lady' than among the use of 'woman' and 'female' (see Section 4.2: 'Search terms' for the full breakdown of this distinction).

Interestingly, *wom*n* is much more frequent than *female(s)* (i.e. 419 articles and 2672 occurrences vs. 119 articles and 455 occurrences). This can partially be explained by the fact that 'woman' and 'women' are much more frequent in the English language than 'female' and 'females' (P. Baker, 2009). However, it is also illustrative of the fact that female voters are much more often identified and referred to as 'women' than as 'female voters'. The media discuss or appeal to women in relation to who they are as a group and how they identify (i.e. *women*), instead of as what their purpose might be during an election (i.e. *voters*). Thereby newspapers might possibly obscure their real reasons for mentioning women in election discourse.

Moreover, *wife/wives* also appear above *female(s)* in both rankings. This, in combination with the high rank/frequencies of *mother(s)* (i.e. higher than *daughter(s)/sister(s)*) and the presence of *girlfriend(s)*, albeit at the outer edge of the top 10, could be seen as indicative of a propensity for a heteronormative and cisnormative use of traditional, heterosexual, reproductive 'nuclear family' terms (Cameron & Kulick, 2003). Cisnormativity, defined by Ericsson (2018) as the assumption that the gender identity (linked to sex category) assigned to a child at birth is the same as the gender identity experienced by the individual, is also often intertwined with heteronormativity. In fact, female voters are often talked about or interviewed in relation to the men in their family (e.g. "talk to his wife", "his mother",

“mother of [MALE NAME]”), or a family in general (“mother-of-two”) while *lesbian(s)* barely makes it into the top 10 and other mentions of queer women are rather infrequent.

Furthermore, the ranking of the potentially gender-biased terms *girl(s)* at no. 5 and *lady/ ladies* at no. 7 are marked. The higher rank of *girl(s)*, in combination with the inclusion of *daughter* above *lady/ladies* which are used primarily to describe female politicians, as a honorific for (older) female voters of nobility and older/middle-aged female voters in general, could be indicative of a corpus and thus a campaign which appears to be geared more toward younger rather than older women.

Table 8: Top 10 search terms in 2015 by number of articles, raw and normalised frequencies (per 100,000 words)

Article rank	Term	No. of articles	Raw freq.	Norm. freq. 1,219,384	Freq. rank
1	Woma/en	419	2672	219.13	1
2	Wife/ves	158	613	50.27	2
3	Female(s)	119	455	37.31	3
4	Mother(s)*	98	431	35.35	4
5	Girl(s)	65	378	31	5
6	Daughter(s)**	64	220	18.04	6
7	Lady/ies	59	219	17.96	7
8	Mum(s)	55	188	15.42	8
9	Sister(s)***	24	81	6.64	9
10	Lesbian(s)	11	41	3.36	11
11	Girlfriend(s)	9	57	4.67	10

* 6 of these instances refer to *mother(s)-in-law*

** 5 of these instances refer to *daughter(s)-in-law*

*** 3 of these instances refer to *sister(s)-in-law*

5.4.2 2016 EU Referendum: normativity, decreased frequency and old(er) age

In 2016, the top 10 most frequent search terms with regard to article yield and term frequency,⁷ as listed in Table 9 below, show that the top 10 of the two different rankings are again almost completely identical. The joint no. 10 terms *grans*, *nan(s)* are the exceptions as they display very similar article yield and raw (and normalised) frequencies (i.e. 11 & 12/13), while all other terms exhibit large(r) gaps between these two frequencies. Overall, *grans* and *nan(s)* yielded quite a few articles, but they are not particularly frequent terms. Consequently, the no. 13 term *aunt(s)* overtakes them with regard to the raw (and normalised) frequency of these terms. As expected, the most frequent terms are the rather general singular and plural forms of *woman/women* (i.e. *wom*n*). *Wom*n* is once again much more frequent than *female(s)* (i.e. 397 articles and 1917 occurrences vs. 73 articles and 256 occurrences). This again illustrates that the media discuss or appeal to women in relation to how they identify (i.e. women), instead of as what role they might fulfil during an election (i.e. voters). However, both *wom*n* and *female(s)* display a strong decrease in their normalised frequencies compared to 2015 (170.79 and 22.81 vs 219.13 and 37.31 in 2015). In fact, all terms except for *lady/ies* and *mum(s)* display a decrease in their normalised frequencies which could spell a decrease in female voters' needs and voices being centred.

Furthermore, *wife/wives* again appear above *female(s)* in both rankings (i.e. no. 2 vs. no. 4). This, in combination with the inclusion of terms for women with children: *mum(s)*, *grandmother(s)*, *grans*, *nan(s)* in the top 10 and the high rank/frequencies of *mother(s)* (i.e. higher than *daughter(s)/sister(s)*), could be seen as indicative of a propensity for a hetero- and-cisnormative use of traditional, heterosexual, reproductive 'nuclear

⁷See Table 58 in Appendix C.3.1 for the complete ranking of the 2016 search terms.

family' terms (Cameron & Kulick, 2003). Once more, female voters are habitually talked about or interviewed in relation to the men in their family or a family in general which signals heterosexual disambiguation, while mentions of queer women are rather infrequent. For example, *lesbian(s)* appears at no. 21, did not yield any additional articles and occurred only 10 times throughout the 2016 corpus.

In addition to these rankings that stand out, the ranking of the potentially gender-biased terms *lady/ladies* at no. 5 and *girl(s)* at no. 8 are marked. The higher rank and higher normalised frequency of *lady/ladies*, which are used primarily (at times as a honorific) to describe female politicians and older female voters (of nobility), in combination with the inclusion of *grandmother*, *gran*, *nan* in the top 10, could be indicative of a corpus, and thus a campaign which is geared more toward older women rather than younger 'girls'. The decrease in the normalised frequency of *girl(s)* (31 in 2015 vs. 13.72 in 2016) also supports this notion. This apparent inclination toward older women can be linked to the EU Referendum campaign at large and the 'target audience' for Brexit. As discussed above, higher frequencies of Vote Leave supporting newspapers were observed in the 2016 corpus. Vote Leave won the vote, which according to numerous referendum analyses was primarily because of 'older' voters' support (Wring, 2016), while younger voters overwhelmingly backed Remain (Fox & Pearce, 2016; Levy et al., 2016a).

Table 9: Top 10 search terms in 2016 by number of articles, raw and normalised frequencies (per 100,000 words)

Article rank	Term	No. of articles	Raw freq.	Norm. freq. 1,122,378	Freq. rank
1	Woma/en	397	1917	170.79	1
2	Wife/ves	109	356	31.72	2
3	Mother(s)*	93	310	27.62	3
4	Female(s)	73	256	22.81	4
5	Lady/ies	67	212	18.89	5
6	Daughter(s)**	49	186	16.57	6
7	Mum(s)	40	182	16.22	7
8	Girl(s)	36	154	13.72	8
9	Sister(s)***	16	67	5.97	9
10	Grandmother(s)	11	39	3.47	10
-	Gran(s)	11	13	1.16	12
-	Nan(s)****	11	12	1.07	13
13	Aunt(s)	8	23	2.05	11

*9 of these instances refer to *mother(s)-in-law*

**4 of these instances refer to *daughter(s)-in-law*

***4 of these instances refer to *sister(s)-in-law*

****Grandmother(s), gran(s) and nan(s) have the same article rank, hence the '-', as they each appear in 11 articles.

5.4.3 2017 General Election: normativity and increased neutral term frequencies

The top 10 most frequent search terms in 2017 with regard to article yield and term frequency,⁸ as shown in Table 10 below, shows that the top 10 of the two different rankings comprise the same terms, yet in different orders. *Daughter(s)* (4 vs. 6), *lady/ies* (6 vs. 8), and *girl(s)* (8 vs. 4) switch places between rankings. The latter displays the biggest difference (8 vs. 4) and it is the only term which has a term frequency rank which is higher

⁸See Table 59 in Appendix C.3.1 for the complete ranking of the 2017 search terms.

than the article yield rank. This suggests the presence of some articles with a high rate of *girl(s)* per article, rather than a widespread use throughout the corpus. The higher rank of *lady/ladies*, which are used primarily to describe older female voters and politicians, could again be indicative of a corpus and a campaign which appear to be geared more toward older women rather than younger 'girls'. Furthermore, as expected, the most frequent terms are the rather general or neutral singular and plural forms of *woman/women* and *female(s)*. However, even though these terms are close in terms of their rank, *wom*n* is once again much more frequent than *female(s)* (i.e. 257 articles and 1438 occurrences vs. 74 articles and 213 occurrences) and all the other search terms. Furthermore, these terms also display their highest normalised frequencies out of the three campaigns which could signal a greater voice for female voters

Moreover, the inclusion of *mother(s)* and *wife/wives* in the top 5, albeit the lowest ranking of *wife/wives* and normalised frequency over the years, in combination with the inclusion of *Mumsnet* at no. 10, is again indicative of a (perhaps decreasing) propensity for a hetero-and-cisnormative use of traditional, heterosexual, reproductive 'nuclear family' terms. Once more, female voters are habitually talked about or interviewed in relation to in an assumed heterosexual context, referring to the men in their family, or a family in general. Mentions of queer women are again infrequent. For example, *lesbian(s)* appears at no. 11/12, but their article yield and frequencies are twice as low for article yield and almost 5 times as low in terms of frequencies as no. 10 *Mumsnet*.

Table 10: Top 10 search terms in 2017 by number of articles, raw and normalised frequencies (per 100,000 words)

Article rank	Term	No. of articles	Raw freq.	Norm. freq. 481,051	Freq. rank
1	Woma/en	257	1438	298.93	1
2	Female(s)	74	213	44.28	2
3	Mother(s)*	43	157	32.64	3
4	Daughter(s)**	33	86	17.88	6
5	Wife/ves	31	102	21.2	5
6	Lady/ies	26	70	14.55	8
7	Mum(s)	23	74	15.38	7
8	Girl(s)	22	145	30.14	4
9	Sister(s)***	14	56	11.64	9
10	Mumsnet	12	47	9.77	10

*3 of these instances refer to *mother(s)-in-law*

**0 of these instances refer to *daughter(s)-in-law*

***0 of these instances refer to *sister(s)-in-law*

5.4.4 Diachronic overview: a (potentially decreasing) normative tale of drowned out and marginalised women

Looking at the overlap between the three yearly corpora's lists of top 10 most frequent search terms, all three corpora display almost identical article yield and term frequency rankings. Moreover, there are 9 terms which consistently appear in both top 10 rankings: *wom*n*, *wife/wives*, *female(s)*, *mother(s)*, *girl(s)*, *daughter(s)*, *lady/ladies*, *mum(s)*, and *sister(s)* (see Table 11 below for their normalised frequencies and frequency rankings over the years). *Sister(s)* unfailingly appears at no. 9,⁹ while *wom*n* appears at no. 1 in all rankings. These search term frequencies, both in terms of their article yield, as well as their raw and normalised number of occurrences, suggest

⁹The higher normalised frequency of *sister(s)* in 2017 is due to a cluster of articles about the fact that "Boris Johnson's sister [Rachel Johnson] joins Lib Dems in bid to block Brexit" (*The Independent*, 27/04/2017).

certain discourses present in and salient to the corpus at hand. Firstly, the rather general or neutral singular and plural forms of *woman/women* and *female(s)* appear in the top 5 of each ranking (i.e. *female(s)* oscillates between no. 3 in 2015, 4 in 2016 and 2 in 2017). However, the former is continuously much more frequent than the latter as well as all other search terms. As explained above, the marked difference between the frequencies of *wom*n* and *female(s)* can partially be explained by the fact that ‘woman’ and ‘women’ are much more frequent in the English language than ‘female’ and ‘females’, but it is also illustrative of the fact that female voters are much more often identified as ‘women’ than functionalised as ‘female voters’. Furthermore, if one compares the normalised frequencies of *wom*n* across the three corpora by means of a log-likelihood calculator, which indicates the overuse or underuse of a certain term in one corpus respective to another corpus (Rayson, 2019), it is evident that *wom*n* is overused in 2017 compared to both 2015 (LL: 88.51, $p < 0.05$) and 2016 (LL: 247.68, $p < 0.05$), as well as overused in 2015 compared to 2016 (LL: 68.74, $p < 0.05$), as the normalised frequencies increase from 219.3 per 100,000 words in 2015 to 298.93 in 2017 while there is a strong decrease present in 2016: 170.79. Thus, *wom*n* is significantly more frequent in the smallest corpus from 2017 (i.e. 438 articles vs. 778 in 2015 and 749 in 2016), than in either of the other corpora and significantly less frequent in 2016 compared to the other corpora. This, combined with the fact that the other neutral term *female(s)* displays a similar frequency as well as rank decrease and increase over the years (i.e. 37.1 and rank 3 to 22.81 and rank 4 to 44.28 and rank 2), is perhaps indicative of a more pronounced focus on women’s voices and needs in the 2017 snap General Election campaign (cf. Harmer & Southern, 2018). On the contrary, despite Brexit being dubbed a ‘feminist issue’ (H. Lewis, 2016), the 2016 EU Referendum appears to be less cognisant of female voters. This finding mirrors several other studies which claimed that women’s voices and a focus on women’s rights were

notably absent from the debate (O'Brien, 2016b).

The search term frequencies also could be seen as indicative of a propensity for a heteronormative and cisnormative use of traditional, heterosexual, reproductive 'nuclear family' terms (Cameron & Kulick, 2003). This is exemplified by the consistent inclusion of *wife/wives* and *mother(s)* in the top 5 most frequent search terms, the fact that *wife/wives* ranks above the general term *female(s)* in both 2015 and 2016. Further examples comprise the high rankings of other terms relating to women with children (e.g. *mum(s)*) for all three electoral events and both *grandmother(s)*, *grans* and *nan(s)* in 2016, and *Mumsnet* in 2017 (and almost in 2015). The use of these terms is line with heteronormative tenets which produce and promote heterosexuality as "as natural, self-evident, desirable, privileged and necessary" (Cameron & Kulick, 2003, p. 149). Female voters are constructed along the lines of 'proper femininity', as having a sexual attraction to men rather than women by being 'wives' of men, being 'mothers', and belonging to a heterosexual nuclear family unit, which is viewed as "the basic unit for the reproduction of society" (Cameron, 2012, p. 177). These units have been and are continuously institutionalised by 'state-sanctioned structures of kinship, marriage and family' (R. Lakoff, 2004, p. 176). Two further indicators of such discourses can be found in the high rank/frequencies of *mother(s)* (i.e. higher than *daughter(s)/sister(s)*) and the fact that *girlfriend(s)* as opposed to the other high-ranking term denoting a female partner: *wife/wives*, consistently places close to the frequency top 10 or at number 10 in 2015 (see Table 8 above), but never in it in terms of article yield. Throughout the permaelection period, female voters are habitually talked about or interviewed in relation to the men in their family (e.g. "and his wife", "mother of [MALE NAME]"), or a family in general ("mother-of-two"), and referred to by means of parenthetical comments which uphold the heterosexual matrix (e.g. 'whose wife is a teacher' in "John, from Motherwell, whose wife is a teacher, said he moved back from

London two years ago" (*independent.co.uk*, 07/04/2015)). At times, women even remain unnamed and constructed as only relevant to political discourse in terms of how they relate to a man. This reflects the lack of agency and sense of objectification of women and perhaps even a sense of male ownership of women often present in discourses involving women (Lamproulou & Archakis, 2015). Such foci on (familial) relationships can also be linked to the concept of 'benevolent sexism', which has been defined as a set of "interrelated attitudes toward women that are sexist in terms of viewing women along stereotypical lines and in restricted roles but that are subjectively positive in feeling" (Glick & Fiske, 2018, p. 491). Popular examples of such sexism, as opposed to more explicit 'hostile sexism' which involves explicitly negative evaluations of women, can be found in narratives of men caring about their daughters or wives for example, but not about other women with whom they do not have a relationship, or do not have control over. Only some women are worthy of care and consideration and in the context of this study only certain female voters appear to worthy of having their voices heard. This normative perspective also links to the infrequent mentions of queer women. For instance, even though *lesbian(s)* appear at no. 10 in 2015 in terms of article yield, these terms did not yield any articles in 2016 and occurred only 10 times throughout the 2016 corpus. Additionally, while *lesbian(s)* ranks at no. 11/12 in 2017, their article yield and term frequencies are twice as low for article yield and almost 5 times as low in terms of frequencies as the 2017 no. 10 *Mumsnet*. Other terms referencing queerness were also either wholly absent (e.g. 'gay' or 'bisexual' wom*n) or appeared only once or twice throughout the yearly corpora (e.g. 'trans(gender)' wom*n appeared once in 2017 and twice in 2015 and 2016).

When one compares the three corpora in terms of these normative uses of traditional family terms it can be observed that the 2017 GE campaign displays lower frequencies of hetero-and-cisnormative terms and higher

frequencies of the more neutral terms than the other two campaigns, while the 2016 EU Referendum campaign displays the highest amount of such normative use. In 2017 the primarily hetero-marital terms *wife/wives* drops down the frequency ranking from no. 2 in 2015 and 2016 to no. 5 in 2017 and sees an overall decrease in normalised frequencies (i.e. 50.72 to 31.72 to 21.2 in 2017). This is in favour of the rise of the more general terms *female(s)* to no. 2 behind the other general terms *wom*n*. Furthermore, *daughter(s)*, which do not explicitly indicate either a heterosexual relationship or a cisnormative reproductive relationship, appears higher than ever before at no. 4 in terms of article yield and no. 6 in terms of overall occurrences. However, normative motherhood terms still prevail as *mother(s)* appears at no. 3 and displays similar normalised frequencies during both GEs in 2015 and 2017 (i.e. 35.35 and 32.64), and both *mum(s)* and *Mum-snet* appear in the top 10. In contrast, the 2016 corpus displays the lowest normalised frequency and rank for the general terms *female(s)* at no. 4, the lowest normalised frequency of *wom*n*, and normative *wife/wives* appears at no. 2. Meanwhile, the only explicitly queer search term *lesbian(s)* displays its lowest rank in 2016 and is replaced in the top 10/11 by the reproductive relationship terms *grandmother(s)*, *grans* and *nan(s)*. Thus, as regards the search term frequencies, queerness and queer women's voices appear to be more overtly silenced in the 2016 campaign.

Lastly, the ranking of the potentially gender-biased terms *girl(s)* and *lady/ladies* warrant further analysis, as their ranks are the least stable among the regular top 10 terms. They tend to fluctuate and swap places throughout the permaelection period. Table 11 below shows the higher normalised frequencies and frequency ranks of *girl(s)* in 2015 (i.e. no. 5) and 2017 (i.e. no. 4), compared to the ranks of *lady/ladies* (i.e. no. 7 in 2015 and no. 4 in 2017), which could be indicative of the target female audiences of these GE campaigns. These GE campaigns appear to be either geared more toward younger women or 'girls' rather than older 'ladies', or toward an

infantilising notion of women perpetuated and reinforced by the use of 'girl' (Bolinger, 2014; Ross & Carter, 2011). However, the higher frequency of *girl(s)* in 2017 can also be attributed to a high usage rate within certain articles, rather than a widespread use throughout the corpus. In contrast, the 2016 corpus, which also displays the highest level of hetero-and-cisnormative use of the search terms, appears to be geared more toward older women (e.g. 'ladies', 'grandmothers', 'grans' and 'nans')¹⁰ rather than younger 'girls': *lady/ladies* places well above *girl(s)* (i.e. no. 5 vs. no. 8), while the latter also registers its lowest normalised frequency. This apparent inclination toward older women should be viewed in respect of the EU Referendum campaign at large and Vote Leave's target audience: older voters (Levy et al., 2016a). As discussed above, higher frequencies of Vote Leave supporting newspapers were observed in the 2016 corpus. Moreover, Vote Leave came out victorious, which according to numerous referendum analyses was primarily because of the support of older voters (Wring, 2016). Voter turnout among older voters was higher than average and the turnout among younger voters who tended to support the Remain campaign (Fox & Pearce, 2016).

¹⁰*Grandmother(s)*, *grans*, and *nan(s)* only appear in the top 10 in terms of article yield in the 2016 corpus. *Nan(s)* in particular, is only frequent in 2016, as this term registered no occurrences in either 2015 or 2017.

Table 11: Normalised frequency (per 100,000 words) and rank development of the 9 consistent top search terms over the permaelection period 2015-2017

Cumulative rank	Term	Norm freq. & (rank): 2015	Norm freq. & (rank): 2016	Norm. freq. & (rank): 2017
1	Wom*n	219.13 (1)	170.79 (1)	298.93 (1)
2	Female(s)	37.31 (3)	22.81 (4)	44.28 (2)
-	Wife/wives*	50.72 (2)	31.72 (2)	21.2 (5)
4	Mother(s)	35.35 (4)	27.62 (3)	32.64 (3)
5	Girl(s)	31 (5)	13.72 (8)	30.14 (4)
6	Daughter(s)	18.04 (6)	16.57 (6)	17.88 (6)
7	Lady/ies	17.96 (7)	18.89 (5)	14.55 (8)
8	Mum(s)	15.42 (8)	16.22 (7)	15.38 (7)
9	Sister(s)	6.64 (9)	5.97 (9)	11.64 (9)

*Female(s) and wife/wives both have the same cumulative ranking

Sub-corpora composition caveat: term usage

The following sections will outline the distribution of terms across the political orientation, publication type and author gender sub-corpora. Before delving deeper into these distributions a general caveat must be noted with regard to the composition differences of the sub-corpora under analysis and the possible effects on the notion of 'term overuse'. Certain instances of overuse of the terms in a sub-corpus can be argued to relate more to the size of said sub-corpus and the length of its articles than its term usage. For example, there are more right-wing articles than left-wing articles present in the 2015 corpus (424 vs. 203 articles included in the corpus based on their use of the search terms), but the left-wing articles are generally much longer while these two sub-corpora are rather similar in terms of the total no. of tokens (545,906 vs. 516,610). Thus, even though the right-wing corpus comprises more than double the articles, it does not comprise double the no. of tokens. Therefore, overuse of the search terms is almost guaranteed in the right-wing corpus, because each article will

include at least one instance of a search term. Additionally, longer articles will add more non-search terms, or 'noise', to a corpus, whereas shorter articles will include less 'noise'. However, these compositional differences are not the only explanations for any identified overuse, as will be outlined below.

Political orientation & referendum stance

The overuse of terms across the political orientation and referendum stance corpora over time appears to shift from almost total domination by the right-wing corpus (i.e. all 9 terms were significantly more frequent in the right-wing corpus in 2015) to a more level playing field in 2016 and 2017, as shown in Table 12 below. In the 2016 and 2017 political orientation corpora 2 and 4 out of these 9 terms (and 4 in the referendum stance sub-corpus in 2016),¹¹ do not display any significant overuse in any of the corpora, compared to none in the 2015 corpus. The main explanation for this shift lies in the presence of the aforementioned skewed article/token ratio of 2015, which is absent in 2016 and 2017. Therefore, the 2016 and 2017 political orientation corpora provide a better illustration of the distribution and use of this study's search terms. In addition to these corpora providing a better indication of search term use, they are rather similar and do not display major differences in their distributions. The main difference lies in the equal use of *female(s)* in the 2017 corpora (see Table 12 below). The fact that all political orientation corpora in 2017 make approximately equal use of this neutral term, combined with its rise to the no. 2 most frequent search term, could again potentially be indicative of the above-mentioned decrease in biased and/or normative language use in 2017 compared to the other two years.

Furthermore, in terms of differences between the political orientation

¹¹See Tables 60-63 in Appendix C.3.2 for the search term frequencies and their overuse per political orientation (and referendum stance) sub-corpus per year.

and by extension the referendum stance corpora, the right-wing/Leave corpora are consistently more biased in their search term use than the left-wing/Remain and unaffiliated corpora. This is the case even though the use of search terms in the latter ones is consistently more similar to right-wing use than left-wing use. They primarily display significant overuse of age-biased and hetero-and-cisnormative terms (e.g. *girl(s)*, *wife/wives*), while the left-wing and by extension the Remain corpora primarily display significant overuse of the more neutral search terms (i.e. *wom*n* in 2016 and 2017). This juxtaposition illustrates both the stereotypical more biased language use of the right-wing press registered in media studies (van Dijk, 1995) and, as a look at the concordance lines of *wife/wives* shows, a clear penchant for stories involving the wives of male political leaders in the right-wing press, which will be discussed in more depth in Chapters 6-7. However, significant overuse of potentially gender-biased and normative family terms is not entirely absent from the left-wing and 'other' corpora (e.g. see the lack of overuse for *mum(s)* and *lady/ies* in 2017 in Table 12). This offsets the notion that bias and stereotypes are significantly more frequent in right-wing articles and discourses. Moreover, the right-wing and Leave corpora also appear to be geared more toward older women throughout the years (e.g. overuse of *lady/ladies* and *grandmother*) which links to the Vote Leave and by extension right-wing focus on older voters (Harrison, 2018; Wring, 2016).

Table 12: Overuse development of the 9 top search terms per political orientation sub-corpus: 2015-2017

Rank	Term	Overuse 2015 p < 0.05	Overuse 2016 p < 0.05	Overuse 2017 ¹ p < 0.05
1	Wom*n	R > O > L	L = O > R	O > L = R
2	Female(s)	R = O > L	O > R = L	L = R = O
3	Wife/wives	R > O > L	R > O > L	R > L = O
-	Mother(s)	R = O > L	L = R = O	R > L, L = O, R = O
5	Girl(s)	R = O > L	R = L > O	R = O > L
6	Daughter(s)	R > O > L	L = R = O	L = R = O
7	Lady/ies	R > O > L	R > L, L = O, R = O	L = R = O
8	Mum(s)	R = O > L	L > R, L = O, R = O	L = R = O
9	Sister(s)	R = O > L	L = R = O	L = O > R

¹Search term frequencies were compared across the three sub-corpora by means of a Log-Likelihood calculator which indicates overuse or underuse in one corpus relative to another (Rayson, 2019). The 'Overuse' column indicates whether there is significant overuse present and where it occurs. Example: R > L signifies significant overuse of a certain term (i.e. LL > 3.84; p < 0.05) in the right-wing corpus relative to the left-wing corpus, while R = O signifies that there is no significant difference present between the right-wing and 'other' sub-corpus.

Publication type

The overuse of terms across the publication type corpora over time, also shows an almost total domination by the tabloid corpus throughout the permaelection period up until 2017 (i.e. 8 out of the 9 most frequent terms were significantly more frequent in the tabloid corpus in 2015 vs. 5 in 2016 and 3 in 2017), as shown in Table 13 below. The main explanations for the differences in use among the publication type corpora shift from the aforementioned skewed article/token ratio as well as contrasting language use across the three separate publication type corpora in 2015, to only differences in language use in 2016 and 2017. Additionally, 2016 and

2017 are again rather similar and do not display major differences in their distributions.

Furthermore, the tabloid corpora appear to mainly align with the right-wing corpora's use of terms, while the broadsheet and 'other' corpora appear to align with the left-wing corpora's use of terms. For example, the tabloid corpora also primarily display significant overuse of age-biased and hetero-and-cisnormative terms (e.g. *lady/ladies*, *wife/wives*), while the broadsheet and 'other' corpora primarily display significant overuse of the more neutral search terms (e.g. *wom*n*, *female(s)*). This juxtaposition again illustrates both the stereotypical, more biased language use of the tabloid press registered in media studies (van Dijk, 1995) and the aforementioned clear penchant for 'soft' content stories involving the wives of male political leaders in the (right-wing) tabloid press, which will be discussed in more depth in Chapters 6-7. Moreover, the tabloid corpora also appear to be geared more toward older women throughout the years (e.g. significant overuse of *lady/ladies*, and *grandmother* in 2016)¹² which links to the aforementioned right-wing focus on older voters (Wring, 2016).

¹²See Tables 64-66 in Appendix C.3.2 for the search term frequencies and their overuse per publication type sub-corpus per year.

Table 13: Overuse development of the 9 top search terms per publication type sub-corpus: 2015-2017

Rank	Term	Overuse 2015 p < 0.05	Overuse 2016 p < 0.05	Overuse 2017 ¹ p < 0.05
1	Wom*n	T = O > B	B = O > T	B = O > T
2	Female(s)	O > B, O = T, B = T	B = O > T	B = O > T
3	Wife/wives	T > O > B	T > B = O	T > B = O
-	Mother(s)	T = O > B	T > B, T = O, B = O	B = T = O
5	Girl(s)	T = O > B	B = T > O	O > B, O = T, B = T
6	Daughter(s)	T > B = O	T > B, T = O, B = O	B > O, B = T, T = O
7	Lady/ies	T > B, T = O, B = O	T > B = O	T > O, T = B, B = O
8	Mum(s)	T > O > B	T = B = O	T > B, T = O, B = O
9	Sister(s)	T > B, T = O, B = O	T = B = O	B = T = O

¹The B, T and O stand for broadsheet, tabloid and other, respectively.

Author gender

As shown in Table 14 below, the overuse of terms across the author gender corpora over time, shows mostly in the female corpus throughout the permalection period (i.e. 9 out of 10 terms were significantly more frequent in the female corpus in 2015 vs. 8 in 2016 and 6 in 2017).¹³ The main explanations for the differences in use among the author gender corpora throughout the permalection period oscillate between contrasting language in the male vs. female corpora, and skewed article/token ratios in the 'other' vs. male corpora. Therefore, all three campaigns, as opposed

¹³See Tables 67-69 in Appendix C.3.2 for the search term frequencies and their overuse per author gender sub-corpus per year.

to just the 2016 and 2017 corpora, as was the case for the sub-corpora discussed above, provide a clear illustration of the distribution and use of this study's search terms. Even though female corpora consistently display overuse of both the neutral and more biased terms relative to the male and 'other' corpora, there is also a decrease evident in the number of terms displaying overuse in the female corpora (i.e. 9 to 8 to 6). These differences could potentially be linked to the rise in the number of included female authors and a possible levelling of language use with regard to the articles written by male and female journalists, while the writing of the 'other' corpora appears to become more dissimilar to the female corpora over the years.

The overuse in female corpora also mirrors reported disparities in the writing of male and female journalists. Several studies indicate that there is a relationship between author gender and story framing, as female journalists tend to cite more female sources than their male counterparts (Lavie & Lehman-Wilzig, 2003). However, female journalists also tend to reinforce sexist stereotypes, and a larger presence of gendered stereotypes in the writing of female journalists has been reported (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Kian et al., 2011). One could take the significant overuse of search terms in the writing of female journalists as a sign of women taking a larger interest in women, female sources and female voters. Women lifting other women up and making sure they are being heard and their needs are considered in the wider election (or referendum) debate. Yet, the overuse of the potentially gender-biased terms by female journalists can also be seen as illustrative of the heightened use of bias and stereotypes in the writing of female journalists relative to the writing of male journalists (Kian et al., 2011; Meeks, 2013). However, the significant overuse of *wife/wives*, which can be seen as illustrative of heteronormative language use and/or a focus on political leaders' wives rather than female voters, in the male corpus in 2017 and the lack of a difference in the use of *wife/wives*

in 2016 and *lady/ladies, mum(s)* in 2017 dispute the lesser use of normative and gendered language in the writing of male journalists.

Table 14: Overuse development of the 9 top search terms per author gender sub-corpus: 2015-2017

Rank	Term	Overuse 2015 p < 0.05	Overuse 2016 p < 0.05	Overuse 2017 ¹ p < 0.05
1	Wom*n	F > M > O	F > M = O	F > M > O
2	Female(s)	F > M = O	F > M = O	F > M = O
3	Wife/wives	F > M > O	O > M, O = F, F = M	M > F = O
-	Mother(s)	F > M > O	F > M = O	F > M = O
5	Girl(s)	F > M > O	F > M = O	F > M = O
6	Daughter(s)	F > M > O	F > M = O	F = M = O
7	Lady/ies	F > M > O	F = O > M	F = M = O
8	Mum(s)	F > M > O	F > M = O	F = M > O
9	Sister(s)	F > O, F = M, M = O	F = O > M	F > M = O

¹The F, M and O stand for female, male and other, respectively.

5.5 Keywords: 2015-2017

Following on from the previous section, this section will further explore the content of this study's corpus outside of the search terms discussed above by delving into analyses of the keywords. Similarly to the previous sections, it will first provide analyses of the top 20 keywords per year, which will be followed by an overview of the similarities and differences between the three different campaigns' keywords.

5.5.1 2015 General Election: Labour prevalence

Aside from the characteristics discussed in the previous sections, the 2015 GE corpus can also be characterised by its keywords. In this case, the top

20 keywords,¹⁴ Log-Likelihood 4 term $p < .05$; Log Ratio effect size $> .05$ (Anthony, 2019) using the BE06 reference corpus (P. Baker, 2009), as shown in Table 15 below. This list of the 20 most 'key' words characterising the corpus primarily consists of words you might expect to find in political discourse and coverage of political campaigns in general (e.g. *party, election, campaign, vote(rs), leader, PM [Prime Minister]*)¹⁵ rather than topic or issue-based words. This was to be expected, as news discourse tends to focus on the political 'horse race' and the strategies of the participating parties rather than on the issues at stake in the election at hand (Iyengar, 1994; Strömbäck & Shehata, 2007). All other included words relate to the specific political landscape of the UK in 2015, such as the British political parties *Labour, Tory/Tories, SNP, Ukip, Lib[eral Democrats]* and their respective leaders (i.e. *Ed Miliband*, then incumbent PM *David Cameron*, *Nicola Sturgeon*, *Nigel Farage*, and *Nick Clegg*). Interestingly, *Labour*, the main opposition party, is much more frequent and 'key' coming in at number 1, than the ruling Conservative party, or the *Tories/Tory Party*. The word 'Tory' comes from the Irish words for 'outlaws' and 'pursuit' and therefore started out as a term of insult. It still carries negative connotations even though Conservatives themselves use the two terms interchangeably, in a neutral manner, or even prefer the colloquial version. However, those who are in opposition of the Conservative party often view and use 'Tory' in a more pejorative manner as exemplified by the following quote by former Labour MP, who stepped down at the 2015 GE, and cabinet minister David Blunkett: "I use "Tory" and "Tories" to describe our opponents because to

¹⁴Included: (proper) nouns, main verbs. Excluded: prepositions, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, determiners, particles, conjunctions, and *to have/be* either as lexical or auxiliary verbs. Furthermore, the article frequency threshold was set at the commonly used 5% in order to prevent the inclusion of words which are only highly frequent in a handful of articles.

¹⁵The use of *PM* could also indicate time, but usually 'pm' is attached to the number indicating the time and thus the small amount of stray 'pm's in the corpus were not found to skew the data in a significant manner.

me, those terms place them somewhere backward-looking, negative and reactionary” (Padmanabhan, 2015, n.p.).

The discrepancy between the frequency of the ruling and oppositional parties’ names can partially be explained by the *Tory/Tories* split, yet the frequency of *Labour* (5877) is still higher than the frequencies of *Tory/Tories* combined (3322). Better explanations lie in the split in the use of the colloquial terms ‘Tory/Tories’, which can depict both the party itself, its members and its supporters, and the official Conservative Party/Conservatives. Labour does not have a widespread colloquially used name like ‘Tories’. Furthermore, ‘Labour’ can only be used as a proper noun for the name of the party, or as a compound noun when used to describe members or supporters of the party (i.e. ‘Labour’ politician, or ‘Labour’ supporter) and it does not change spelling nor can it be pluralised, as opposed to the common pluralisation of *Tory/Conservative*. Consequently, the many ways to refer to the Conservative party and its members or supporters and the subsequent scattering of frequencies divided across the numerous terms and spelling skews the keyness results and might make anything to do with Labour seem more key to the corpus than anything to do with the Conservative party. Furthermore, even though *Miliband* appears to be more ‘key’ to the corpus at no. 3 than *Cameron* at no. 5, the latter is more frequent in the corpus (3280 vs. 3159), and is only shown to be less ‘key’, albeit marginally, as it is merely a more common name.

However, there are a few counter-arguments to be made against the artificiality of the keyness of Labour to this corpus. Firstly, the UK national press is in general more right-wing and tends to support the Conservatives (see Table 2) and more articles from Conservative papers were included in the 2015 corpus (see Table 5). Secondly, Deacon et al. (2015) showed that the Conservative party and their leader David Cameron received more coverage in the national press during the 2015 GE campaign. Thus, having such high frequencies and keyness stats in such a biased political and

media landscape, and corpus, indicates that Labour is in fact key to this corpus. This, accounting for the gendered parameters of the corpus which did not produce any lexically gendered keywords, then might indicate that Labour and the news discourse surrounding this party was more focused on women (e.g. their infamous pink bus to attract female voters) than the other parties.

Table 15: Keywords: 2015

Rank	Term	Freq.	Keyness stat.
1	Labour	5877	5698.06
2	Party	4439	3894.65
3	Miliband	3159	3809.53
4	Election	3521	3680.09
5	Cameron	3280	3522.47
6	Vote	2783	2660.8
7	SNP	2215	2531.28
8	Ukip	1928	2295.83
9	Ed	2033	2242.27
10	Tory	1680	1629.63
11	Clegg	1380	1625.023
12	Tories	1642	1602.33
13	Campaign	1818	1586.3
14	PM	1927	1579.19
15	Sturgeon	1330	1576.15
16	Leader	1795	1556.54
17	Says	2700	1455.52
18	Lib	1265	1423.58
19	Voters	1463	1403.28
20	Farage	1117	1346.18

5.5.2 2016 EU Referendum: referendum-based terms and issues

The 20 most 'key' words characterising the 2016 EU Referendum corpus looks rather different than the 2015 one, as it comprises 14 different words (see Table 16 below). Only *vote*, *campaign*, *Cameron*, *voters*, *Labour*, *Farage* appear in both lists. The other 14 unique keywords again do not include any lexically gendered terms and primarily comprise expected words relating to the fundamentals of the EU Referendum, a public vote to decide in favour or against continued membership of the European Union: words describing the union *EU*, *European*, *union*, *Europe* or the campaigns (i.e. *campaign*, *Leave*, *Remain*, *Brexit*, *Britain*, *polling*), as well as the main political figures supporting Vote Leave (i.e. Conservative MP *Boris Johnson* and Ukip leader Nigel *Farage*) and Vote Remain (i.e. then incumbent PM *David Cameron*). Some of these terms were also included in the search terms (i.e. *vote(rs)*, *referendum*). The remaining keyword, placed at no. 18, *immigration*, is the only word related to the (main) topics within the discourse of the campaign and specifically within Vote Leave rhetoric (Cap, 2017, 2019; Jackson et al., 2016). Thus, there appears to be no difference with regard to the salience of this topic to UK voters in general or female voters in particular. Perhaps the fact that the particular political 'two-horse race' of 2016 did not involve established political parties which constitute the usual focus of the news media (Iyengar, 1994; Strömbäck & Shehata, 2007), but instead more abstract, cross-party and issue-based campaigns, facilitated the slight shift in focus toward issue-based reporting. This is not to say that 'women's issues' or women's voices featured heavily in the campaign, as lexically gendered terms are notably absent from this list of keywords, as well as from the referendum debate at large (H. Lewis, 2016; O'Brien, 2016b), even though this is also partially due to the fact that words such as 'women' are more frequent in the reference corpus than political terms.

Furthermore, Vote Leave, the winning side, and specifically its related

keywords *leave* at 3 and *brexit* at 4 are much more frequent and key than *remain* at 6. This can partly be explained by the fact that the newspaper landscape in the UK in 2016 leaned heavily toward supporting Vote Leave (see Table 2), more articles from Leave-supporting newspapers were included than from Remain-supporting ones (see Figure 7), and Vote Leave received more coverage during the referendum campaign than Vote Remain in the national press (Jackson et al., 2016). Yet, taking this newspaper bias into account, because of the large differences in frequency for the terms *leave* (4939) and *remain* (3500) in the 2016 corpus, Vote leave appears to have been the more salient campaign (for both the general public and women).

Another interesting observation is the lack of political parties among the keywords (as opposed to the 2015 keywords). This is primarily due to the difference in electoral events. The EU Referendum was not about political parties as such or who becomes PM. Politicians from all parties were found on both sides of the EU campaign. The Referendum did not comprise a vote for specific parties or politicians, there were only the two different options: leave or remain. The PM was affected by it however, as David Cameron who campaigned for Vote Remain resigned after the unfavourable result (Worthy, 2016). Furthermore, only *labour* appears in the top 20 at no. 14, while it was the no. 1 keyword in 2015. As argued before, Labour's prevalence might primarily be due to the singular use of this word and the lack of different names and spelling for this party, its members, politicians and supporters.

Table 16: Keywords: 2016

Rank	Term	Freq.	Keyness stat.
1	EU	8189	9604.26
2	Vote	4814	5370.46
3	Leave	4939	4717.9
4	Brexit	3345	4291.48
5	Referendum	3489	4216.67
6	Remain	3500	3709.09
7	Campaign	2921	3044.96
8	Cameron	2461	2746.87
9	Britain	3313	2582.89
10	Voters	2069	2254.58
11	European	2364	1989.18
12	Union	1801	1632.27
13	Johnson	1449	1628.64
14	Labour	2053	1611.92
15	Europe	1761	1489.18
16	Farage	1124	1440.98
17	Boris	1189	1431.84
18	Immigration	1282	1355.93
19	Polling	1124	1341.41
20	David	1552	1269.04

5.5.3 2017 General Election: death of multipartism

The 20 most ‘key’ words characterising the 2017 snap GE corpus, as shown in Table 17 below, are rather similar to the other GE corpus from 2015. This list again primarily consists of words one might expect to find in political discourse and the coverage of political campaigns in general rather than topic or issue-based words. Nine of these ‘political campaign’ keywords also appeared in 2015: *labour, party, election, vote, ukip, tory, tories, leader, voters*, while *labour, vote/voters, Brexit* also appeared in 2016. The result of the EU Referendum loomed large over the 2017 GE, which explains the presence and high ranking of *Brexit* at no. 4. This leaves ten keywords unique to 2017: a) *campaigns* and *voted*, which are merely the plural and past par-

ticipate forms of *campaign*, *vote(rs)* which appear in the other keyword lists, b) the names of the then incumbent PM *Theresa May* who succeeded David Cameron, and the leader of Labour and the opposition *Jeremy Corbyn* who succeeded Ed Miliband, c) the official name of the Conservative party (i.e. *conservatives*, *conservative* rather than just the colloquial 'Tories', d) another general political term in *manifesto* and e) the lexically gendered term of address *mrs*. This last one is especially interesting, as *mrs* tends to be used to refer to Mrs Theresa May, rather than PM Theresa May. 'PM' is also not a top 20 keyword here, whilst it was one during David Cameron's premiership in 2015. Concurrently, 'Mr' was not a top 20 keyword when Cameron was Prime Minister. This betrays the news media's sexist bias. The female PM is referred to by a gendered indicator of marital status, while the male PM is referred to by means of his professional title. Another notable observation is the fact that the gendered search term *women* almost made it into the top 20 at no. 22 which might be indicative of the smaller size of the corpus, but also of the aforementioned possible stronger focus on women in 2017, both as voters and as politicians because of the presence of a female PM in this campaign.

Once again, *Labour*, the main opposition party, is much more frequent and 'key', coming in at no. 1 than the ruling Conservative party. This can partially be explained by the *tory/tories* and *Conservative(s)* splits. However, the frequency of *Labour* (2762) is still higher, albeit marginally, than the frequencies of *tory/tories* and *Conservatives/Conservative* combined (2609). Furthermore, *Corbyn*, but not *Jeremy*, appears to be more 'key' to the corpus, at no. 3, than *Theresa & May* at no. 7 and 8. However *May* is more frequent in the corpus (2386 vs. 1437 instances of *Corbyn*). 'May' is possibly only shown to be less 'key', due to it being a more common name and its multiple uses: as a noun for the fifth month of the year, and as an auxiliary verb. The fact that *Theresa* is more key and frequent than *Jeremy* appears to support this argument. However, the fact that these other uses

exist might have also skewed the results, as not all instances of *may* will refer to Theresa May.

Lastly, the lack of keywords referencing political parties aside from Labour and the Conservatives can also be attributed to the nature of the 2017 campaign itself. As opposed to the ‘multipartism’ landscape of 2015, this campaign seemingly only revolved around these two parties, and May vs. Corbyn, while the smaller parties, which did show up in the 2015 list (e.g. Lib Dems, SNP, Ukip) fell by the wayside (Deacon et al., 2017a).

Table 17: Keywords: 2017

Rank	Term	Freq.	Keyness stat.
1	Labour	2762	4983.54
2	Election	2015	4011.66
3	Corbyn	1437	3220.56
4	Brexit	1187	2683.6
5	Vote	1465	2661.24
6	Party	1512	2245.15
7	Theresa	982	2170.92
8	May	2386	2066.5
9	Voters	845	1563.33
10	Ukip	690	1533.66
11	Jeremy	710	1514.99
12	Tory	760	1362.53
13	Tories	746	1346.81
14	Conservatives	562	1045.85
15	Leader	683	1036.88
16	Campaigns	639	952.64
17	Voted	442	890.9
18	Manifesto	413	867.53
19	Conservative	541	864.02
20	Mrs	615	823.62
22	Women	1063	775.52

5.5.4 Diachronic overview: Labour prevalence, the death of 'multipartism' and a lack of women

Looking at the overlap between the three corpora's lists of top 20 keywords, the GE corpora of 2015 and 2017 unsurprisingly show more overlap (9 terms) than any of the other combinations (i.e. 2015/2016: 6 overlapping terms; 2016/2017: 4 overlapping terms). The smaller overlap between 2016/2017 could be seen as slightly surprising as the result of the EU Referendum loomed large over the 2017 GE. The larger overlap between 2015/2016 could be explained by the overlap in the people being in charge (i.e. David Cameron being the incumbent PM). In addition to this, the 2016 Referendum corpus is the most 'unique', as it comprises 13 terms that do not show up in the 2015 and 2017 lists, and the only year which includes a term that hints at the salient topics of the campaign (i.e. *immigration*). This contrasts with the 10 unique terms of 2017 and only 8 unique terms in 2015.

All three corpora's lists of top 20 keywords primarily consist of words connoting political content, rather than topic or issue-based words. This is to be expected because of the parameters of this study. It also corroborates previous research on campaign coverage, as news discourse has been shown to focus on the political 'horse race' and the strategies of the participating parties rather than on the issues at stake in the election at hand (Iyengar, 1994; Strömbäck & Shehata, 2007). These political terms include some of this study's search terms, for instance, *election*, *referendum* as well as variations of the verb *to vote* (e.g. the infinitive *to 'vote'*, past participle *'voted'*, or gerund *'voting'*) as well as its noun forms (e.g. the *'vote'*, *'voter(s)'*). The other typical and generic campaign words included in the keywords of the permaelection period campaign involve *campaign*, *manifesto*, *party*, *polling*, *leader*, while the political terms particular to the political landscape in the UK include the names of the main political parties (e.g. *PM*, *Labour*, *Conservative Party*) and colloquial names (i.e. *Tories/Tory Party*)

for the Conservative Party. In addition to the party names, the names of the incumbent PMs and politicians pertinent to the campaigns also appeared as top keywords (e.g. *David Cameron, Ed Miliband* [Nicole] *Sturgeon* and [Nick] *Clegg* in 2015, *Cameron, Boris Johnson, Nigel Farage* in 2016 and *Theresa May, Jeremy Corbyn* in 2017). The names of smaller parties with seats in parliament in 2015-2017 such as the Green Party of England and Wales, as well as the Northern Irish DUP [Democratic Unionist Party] and Sinn Féinn, and the Welsh Plaid Cymru (C. Baker et al., 2017; Hawkins et al., 2015), or smaller parties without any members of parliament such as the newly founded WEP [Women's Equality Party], which might have been referred to within the context of the study's gendered parameters, did not appear in any of the lists. This means that the Scottish SNP in 2015 is the only regionally restricted party, which is included as a top keyword. This is quite possibly due to its large gains in the 2015 GE and the accompanying new status as the third largest party in terms of the number of MPs in 2015 (59, up from 9 in the 2010 GE, which decreased to 35 in 2017, still maintaining its third-party status) (C. Baker et al., 2017; Hawkins et al., 2015). Furthermore, the SNP's female leader Nicola Sturgeon, whose last name was a keyword in its own right in 2015, was depicted in the press as a genuine threat to the major parties (Jackson & Thorsen, 2015). Party status seems to have also had a large effect on the inclusion of *Ukip* as a top keyword in both 2015 and 2017. Despite the fact that Ukip only gained one seat in parliament in 2015 and none in 2017, it was the third largest party in terms of votes in 2015. Dispersed voting patterns impeded its gains in parliament, thwarting its significant media gains.

Despite the inclusion of female politicians' names in the keywords, none of the lexically gendered search terms (e.g. *wom*n, female, mother*) appear in any of the top 20 keyword lists. This shows that even within a corpus focused on female voters, women do not appear to be 'key'. Only during the 2017 campaign did a gendered search term come close to en-

tering the top 20, as *women* ranked at no. 22. As mentioned above, the names of female politicians did constitute top keywords over the years: as a threat to the establishment in 2015 (Sturgeon), and as PM in 2017 (May). An interesting, connected observation which is once more indicative of the second-rate status of women, both politicians and voters, within political discourse (e.g. Adcock, 2010; Cameron & Shaw, 2016) is the fact that *PM* is a top keyword in 2015 and 2016 (i.e. during David Cameron's reign), but not in 2017 (i.e. during Theresa May's run as Prime Minister). Rather, *Mrs* does appear in the top 20 in 2017. Here *Mrs* is primarily used to refer to Theresa May as 'Mrs May' rather than 'PM May' as was custom for 'PM Cameron'. May is referred to by her marital status, linked to her husband as also appears to be custom for female voters according to the search term analyses discussed above, while Cameron is referred to by his professional title, without a link to his private and/or family life.

Furthermore, Labour, the main opposition party, is much more frequent and 'key' in all three corpora than the ruling Conservative party for the entire permaelection period. The fact that the national press in the UK is generally more right-wing and tends to support the Conservatives rather than Labour (see Table 2) and more articles from Conservative papers were included in all three corpora (see Tables 5, 6 & 7) imbues the higher Labour frequencies as well as the higher frequencies of the names of Labour politicians in 2015 and 2017 with a heightened sense of salience. This might indicate that Labour and the discourse surrounding this party in the news was more focused on women than the other parties. It might also indicate that the opposition to both the government and the Conservative nature of the media landscape, Labour in this case, receives more coverage than the ruling party. This might be the case because of the gendered parameters of this study, as previous studies have shown that the Conservative party and their leader David Cameron received more coverage in the national press during the 2015 GE campaign (Deacon et al.,

2015a). During the 2016 EU Referendum the opposition to the status quo, Vote Leave, and its leaders Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage, also received more coverage than the status quo (Vote Remain). However, the difference with the 2015 and 2017 elections is that in this case the media landscape overwhelmingly supported Leave, the side of the opposition which might have amplified its 'keyness' even more.

Lastly, there is a distinct shift from a state of 'multipartism' in the top 20 keywords (i.e. *Labour, Tories, Lib[Dems], Ukip, SNP*) to a two-horse race between Labour and the Conservatives in the 2017 keywords. This reflects the two campaigns at large. Even though the 2015 GE polls predicted a 'hung' parliament and the 'horse-race' coverage of Miliband (Labour) vs. Cameron (Conservatives) shaped the campaign narrative of the news media (Harmer, 2015), the smaller parties still came out fighting and received quite a bit of coverage. The 2017 GE on the other hand has been described as the 'death of multiparty Britain' (Prosser, 2018). The 2017 campaign seemingly only revolved around two parties and their leaders: May vs. Corbyn and how the Conservatives and Labour would deal with Brexit proceedings. This was also reflected in the outcome of the 2017 GE, as smaller parties fell by the wayside (C. Baker et al., 2017; Deacon et al., 2017a).

After having quantitatively analysed the article frequencies, type and author gender distributions, search term frequencies and overuse as well as the keywords of this study's corpus, the next chapter will continue the quantitative analyses (and add qualitative perspectives) of the content and search terms of this study's main corpus by means of collocation and verb process analyses.

Chapter 6

Discourses: Collocations and Verb Processes

This chapter will act as a bridge between the more quantitative perspectives of the previous chapter and the qualitative perspective of the analyses of prototypical articles and headlines in the following Chapter 7. By means of collocation, verb process and concordance analyses, it will delve deeper into the main RQs, as well as specifically address the following RQ 2 sub-question: “What are the words and verb processes associated with the most frequent and relevant terms for female voters per year?”.

In particular, this chapter will analyse the contexts in which the lexically gendered terms used to refer to female voters are used in the coverage of the 2015-2017 permaelection period. First, collocation and verb process analyses of the 8 most frequent search terms (i.e. *woman/women*, *female(s)*, *girl(s)*, *lady/ladies*, *wife/wives*, *mother(s)*, *mum(s)*, *daughter(s)*), as discussed in Section 5.4, will be provided.¹ Collocates of both the singular and plural forms of the 8 most frequent search terms facilitate analyses of

¹The ninth most frequent of the search terms, *sister(s)*, which was discussed together with the other terms in Section 5.4.4 will not be explored further in this chapter due to their lower ranking (never above 9) and much lower frequency than the top 8 terms, see Table 11 in Chapter 5.

the discourse prosody of these terms and how the contexts of these terms contribute to certain gendered discourses and types of representation. The collocates, as shown below in Tables 18-23, all occur within 3 words either side of the search terms, have a frequency of at least 5 and an MI score of at least 3 (see Baker, 2014). They are grouped together in terms of discursive themes and the way in which they represent female voters. This is to show which sets of words female voters are frequently associated with in political newspaper coverage in the UK. These tables compile the collocates of all 16 singular and plural terms through the years presented in order of frequency (i.e. in order of the number of corresponding collocates as well as the frequency and strength of collocation of the corresponding collocates) to provide an overview of all representations that are present throughout the permaelection period. The concordance lines of the 'term + collocate' combinations, 100 tokens either side, or collocations, have also been studied. Collocates might appear to be used in a particular sense, but might in fact carry unexpected connotations when read in context. The overarching table has been split into 6 separate parts (Table 18-23), labelled part 1 through 6, for reasons pertaining to page size and legibility, as well as theme cohesion. Each emergent theme and how it relates to and is inflected by traces of other local discourses and socio-historically significant discourses will be discussed following its occurrence in the corresponding part of the table. The sections that follow will delve deeper into the contexts and use of each term as I will discuss the themes and discourses that are present for each of the terms separately per year and per sub-corpus, accompanied by concordance line examples from the (sub-)corpus at hand.

Those sub-sections will also elaborate on the verb processes, which are also included in Tables 18-23, in which the lexically gendered terms occurred. All verbs that were found among the collocates were analysed in terms of how they were used and where they occurred in relation to the

gendered term (i.e. on the left or right and in active or passive voice). They were consequently labelled in terms of grammatical action as either an AGENT or PATIENT process. They were labelled as AGENT processes, if the verb occurred alongside the term in active voice with the term as its subject, thus indicating that a female voter was the person having agency and performing the action denoted by the verb. They were labelled as PATIENT processes when the verb occurred alongside the term in active voice with the term as its grammatical object or alongside the term in passive voice with the term as its grammatical subject, thus indicating that the female voter was acted upon or subjected to the action denoted by the verb. The analysis of the verb processes will tie in with the analysis of the collocates to uncover how these processes either support or counteract the discourse in which they are used and how they might consequently 'boost' a discourse's influence and epistemic force.

An overview of how the themes have developed over the years and how they compare across the different terms will conclude this chapter. This will subsequently lead into Chapter 7 in which various headlines and seven prototypical articles will be analysed in full. The prototypicality of these articles is based on and informed by the search term frequencies discussed in Chapter 5, as well as the discourse frequencies explored in the current chapter. Articles containing both high frequencies of search terms and high frequencies of collocates/verb processes linked to the most frequent and salient discourses present in this corpus will therefore be analysed in full.

6.1 Main discursive themes: 2015-2017

6.1.1 Desubjectification vs. subjectification

A discursive theme that has been identified in previous studies revolves around the marginalisation of women's voices in politics by aggregating and portraying female voters as a homogenous group, thereby desubjectifying them. Female voters are often addressed in a general sense, by means of plural 'women' rather than listened to on a more specific and individual basis. They are often seen as a group of citizens, rather than individual experts (Deacon et al., 2016; Harmer, 2015). This is exemplified by the fact that for every permaelection campaign the plural form 'women' was more frequent than the singular form 'woman'. Plural 'women' is accompanied by more statistically significant collocates ($MI > 3$). This is not to say that female voters should not be addressed as a group, as there are many shared experiences among the group of voters who identify as women. The electorate is also often divided up into groups, or target demographics, to either better target said groups or enhance a group's influence by strengthening their number and consequently amplifying their voices. However, when female voters are generally only grouped together and their experiences tend to be conflated, not only will this group of marginalised voters not be heard properly, but the voices of marginalised voters within this larger group (e.g. women of colour, queer women, disabled women) will be drowned out in an even more disproportionate manner.

The desubjectification collocates that accompanied the 8 most frequent lexically gendered terms show that female voters are portrayed in terms of quantity and frequency. The fact that this theme is the most frequent theme among all the salient collocates, indicates that women appear to primarily be depicted in this manner. These quantitative portrayals of women are established by means of different word types which all ex-

press degrees of quantity, similarity (or lack thereof) and/or homogeneity. These word types include terms that explicitly deal with quantity and/or degrees, and comparisons in terms of quantity, such as enumerators (e.g. *all, any, both, every, few(er), less, many*), (ordinal) numbers (e.g. *second, first, five, hundreds, million(s), thousands*), superlatives (e.g. *last, most*), adverbs of frequency (e.g. *always*), adverbs of quantity (e.g. *lot, none*), adjectives of quantity (e.g. *different, equal, few, many, more, most, other, plenty, same, single, some, such, together*), demonstrative adjectives (e.g. *these, those*), indefinite pronouns (e.g. *all, any, everyone, many, none, some, whose, which*) which do not refer to a specific person but rather to a group of people. This, as well as types that are not inherently quantitative but can indicate quantity such as prepositions (e.g. *among, apart, between*), focusing adverbs (e.g. *disproportionately, especially, general, only, particular(ly), separately*), adverbs of degree (e.g. *very*), third person plural pronouns (e.g. *themselves (reflexive), us*) and nouns which in this case do denote group similarity or even homogeneity and thus aggregation by means of quantification (e.g. *kind, lack, lot, number(s), percentage, proportion, quotas, record, shortlists, society*), as well as collectivisation through references to groups (e.g. *group, groups, minorities, team*).

The verbs and accompanying verb processes found among the collocates bolster the notion of quantified desubjectification by means of both their form and meaning. Firstly, these verbs primarily occur with plural gendered terms rather than their singular forms. Secondly, the verbs, which are all transitive, tend to be used in a passive manner and/or posit the gendered term as a PATIENT or acted upon party, rather than the acting party or AGENT within the action that is being described. Women are perceived and acted upon by others, seen from the perspective of others in power as a group and treated as such. Even the one verb which denotes activation, *tend*, is also indicative of a group identity and conflates experiences and needs. Most, if not all, collectivised female voters appar-

ently 'tend' to do certain things such as "*tend* to prioritise the NHS and public services over tax cuts and relations with Europe" (*The Guardian*, 26/04/2015), "*tend* to decide later" who to vote for (*The Guardian*, 26/04/2015), "*tend* to be the ones trying to find the school places" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 24/05/2016), and "*tend* to follow trends" (*The Times*, 08/06/2016) as a group, while they are also acted upon once again, as they "*tend* to get a lot more flak than men .. on social media" (*ExpressOnline*, 22/04/2017). Furthermore, the actions described by the verbs *included*, *involved* and *compared* deepen the notion of desubjectification, as the former quantifies women and 'includes' them in an overarching group, while the latter 'compares' women, as a group, to other groups. For example, women are 'included' in "Theresa May's new fan club" (*The I*, 22/04/2017), as well as included together with other minorities in such examples as "manifestos include targets for the number of women and ethnic minorities on company boards" (*ExpressOnline*, 05/04/2015) and "former business minister whose portfolio in the Coalition *included* women and equalities issues" (*The Independent*, 30/05/2016, while they are often also 'compared' to men as an afterthought and mentioned second (e.g. "men are also more hostile towards the EU: only 45 per cent want Britain to stay *compared* to 55 per cent of women" (*The Independent*, 29/04/2016). Female voters were often described as being 'undecided' voters who, as mentioned above, "*decide later*" who to vote for, whereas men already knew who to vote for (e.g. "14 per cent of female voters remain *undecided*, compared with just seven per cent of male voters" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 21/05/2016)). This is positive representation in terms of female voters being deemed a significant target demographic where votes can be won, but it also positions women as political newbies. This perpetuates the common exclusionary notion that politics is not a female domain.

On the other hand, the second most frequent discursive theme is 'female voter agency', which fits within a larger theme of representation and

subjectification that appears to juxtapose the desubjectification discourse. However, there are traces of desubjectification present in this theme and there are more intertextual similarities than there might appear at first glance.

The subjectification discourse portrays female voters as subjects in and of themselves rather than a homogenous group with singular needs, and as the acting party who are able to voice their own needs. The associated collocates consist of terms that relate to portrayals of female voters as capable, of making decisions, being present, and actively taking part in the perceived 'masculine' domain of political processes. These collocates also comprise relational processes (*are(n't), is, was, were*) which denote their presence in the political sphere, by means of political relational attributes (e.g. "women *were* more Eurosceptic than men" (*The Observer*, 31/05/2016)). The collocates also include verbs involved in material (*can, does, don't, get, getting, goes, had, have, having*) and mental processes (*like, tend, think(s), want(s)*) which describe the female voters as participating in the political process both physically (e.g. "women *can* change the world" (*The Guardian*, 11/05/2017)", "women *do* online politics their own way" (*The Daily Telegraph*, 13/04/2015)), primarily by means of *voting* (e.g. "in 2010, 36% of women *voted* Conservative, 31% Labour and 26% Lib Dem" (*The Observer*, 05/04/2015)), and mentally (e.g. "women *want* to understand and cast a considered, thoughtful decision" (*The Observer*, 31/05/2016)). More specifically, they include terms that explicitly link to a voter identity, the notion of being 'voters', and existing within a political context by means of political domain nouns (*campaign(s), campaigner, movement, suffrage, voters, votes*) and verbs (*campaign(s), cast [a vote], elected, vote(s), voted, voting*). Proper nouns denoting the names of (famous) female voters who speak out also play a significant role in this depiction, as these women assert their identity as voters within a 'masculine' domain. Examples include: actresses *Emma* [Thompson/Watson], *Finty*

[Williams, daughter of actress Dame Judi Dench], presenter [Myleene Klass, playwright Sophie [Hunter] (and wife of Benedict Cumberbatch), Victoria [Beckham] (former Spice Girl, designer, and wife of footballer David Beckham), [Lady Tina] Green (wife of entrepreneur Sir Philip Green), as well as the non-famous Jodie and Mandy [Heard]. Agency is further asserted by verbs and AGENT processes that show female voters 1) voicing their opinions (e.g. *answered, ask(ed), believe, blasted, feel, find, heckled, know, like, said, say(s), saying, scream, seeking, show, talk, tells, tend, think(s), told, want(s)*), 2) voicing disagreement by means of negation (e.g. *aren't, don't*), 3) being asked about their opinions (e.g. *answered*), and 4) fighting for their rights (e.g. *can, fighting, forced, fought, made, make, making, take, taking, use*). Examples of these include 1) “female voters *say* May stands for decency and efficiency” (*The Independent*, 22/04/2017), “women *want* to be in politics” (*The Times*, 30/04/2015), “who was the woman who *heckled* David Cameron during leaders debates?” (*ExpressOnline*, 03/04/2015), “Nick Clegg’s wife today *blasted* David Cameron’s EU reforms as a ‘Mickey Mouse renegotiation’ that had left the UK ‘sleepwalking towards disaster’” (*MailOnline*, 14/06/2016), “8 million women *say* they might not vote this Thursday” (*telegraph.co.uk*, 05/06/2017); 2) “women *aren’t* flocking to the DUP” (*telegraph.co.uk*, 30/04/2015), “women *don’t* need Brussels” (*The Daily Express*, 14/06/2016); 3) “the wife of Norman Lamb, the likeable Liberal Democrat candidate for North Norfolk, knocked on a door recently, and was *answered* by a woman who growled ‘I’m angry’” (*The Times*, 07/05/2015); and 4) “as government cuts *hit* hard, women are *fighting* back” (*mirror.co.uk*, 19/05/2016), “women *fought* a bloody battle for the right to vote” (*telegraph.co.uk*, 10/05/2017), “there are many ways young women *can* do more than just vote” (*telegraph.co.uk*, 06/05/2015), this also includes literal politically charged fights as “one woman and another woman were spotted *fighting* in Hartlepool before Ukip leader Paul Nuttall headed out on the campaign trail” (*MailOnline*, 29/04/2017).

This is not to say that this theme is a wholly positive one. First of all, traces of desubjectification are present in the form of verbs that are also used in PATIENT verb processes alongside plural forms of the gendered terms (see the 'Patient' column of Table 18), as female voters are once again acted upon as a group and perceived as passive. Furthermore, as discussed throughout, many of the female voters who are mentioned are shown in relation to their (famous) husbands (e.g. Lady Tina Green, Sophie Hunter, Victoria Beckham). Even as subordinate and secondary to men, as both Mandy Heard and Sophie Hunter are introduced as secondary to their husbands by means of relational identification (i.e. "Phil Heard and wife Mandy" (*ExpressOnline*, 23/06/2016)), as well as relationally identified in their role as sisters (i.e. "Boris Johnson's sister Rachel" (*MailOnline*, 23/06/2016)). Female agency is also undermined within this theme, as certain descriptions of women voicing their opinions demonise female agency (e.g. see examples above of *blasted*, *heckled* [*a male politician*]). Criticism uttered by women is represented as negative, out of place, or even "hysterical" (*MailOnline*, 13/052016), which reiterates the sense of women being out of place and perhaps even unwelcome in the political domain. Another set of terms, descriptive adjectives in this case, perpetuate this sense of displacement by zooming in on female voters being *undecided* (e.g. "14 per cent of female voters remain *undecided*, compared with just seven per cent of male voters" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 21/05/2016), "Women are more likely to be *undecided* than men" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 16/04/2015), as opposed to male voters who know who to vote for and what they are doing within this context. This draws a picture of female insecurity and being unsure, as women are seemingly 'new' to the political process and do not fit in (yet).

Table 18: All discursive themes in order of frequency (i.e. the number of corresponding collocates and the frequency and strength of collocation), the corresponding collocates, and verb processes 2015-2017 - Part 1

Theme	Collocates	Agent	Patient
DESUBJECTIFICATION: AS A HOMOGENOUS GROUP	<i>all, always, among, another, any, apart, between, both, per cent, class, compared, different, disproportionately, eight, equal, especially, every, everyone, few, fewer, first, five, former, four, general, group, groups, hundreds, include, including, involved, just, kind, lack, last, less, lot, many, million, millions, minorities, more, most, new, nine, no, none, number(s), one, only, other, particular, particularly, percentage, plenty, proportion, quotas, record, same, second, separately, shortlists, single, six, society, some, such, team, tend, themselves, these, third, those, thousands, three, together, too, two, united, us, very, which, whose</i>	[women] <i>tend</i>	[women/Mrs May] <i>compared to, include/including</i> [women], <i>involved</i> [women], <i>lack</i> [of women]
SUBJECTIFICATION & REPRESENTATION: - FEMALE VOTER AGENCY	<i>answered, are, aren[t], ask, asked, believe, blasted, campaign, campaigner, campaigns, can, cast [a vote], does, don[t], elected, Emma [Thompson/Watson], feel, fighting, find, Finty [Williams], forced, fought, get, goes, [Tina] Green, had, have, having, heckled, is, Jodie [not famous], [Myleene] Klass, know, like, made, make, making, Mandy [Heard, not famous], movement, said, say, saying, says, scream, seeking, show, Sophie [Hunter], state, suffrage, take, taking, talk, tells, tend, think, thinks, told, undecided, use, Victoria [Beckham], vote, voted, voters, votes, voting, want, wants, was, were, worried</i>	The following verbs all occur on the right side of the lexically gendered terms: (i.e. women): <i>answered, are, aren[t], ask, asked, believe, blasted, campaign, campaigns, can, cast, does, don[t], elected, feel, fighting, find, forced, fought, get, goes, had, have, having, heckled, is, know, like, made, make, making, said, say, saying, says, scream, seeking, show, take, taking, talk, tells, tend, think, thinks, told, use, vote, voted, voting, want, wants, was, were, worried</i>	The following verbs were also used in PATIENT processes: <i>ask, campaign, fighting, know, made, say, saying, scream, seeking, show, talk, think, thinks, use, voted, votes</i>

6.1.2 Non-agentic subjectification

The theme of representation and subjectification continues via a type of subjectification that treats women as voters and as political subjects of their own, but forgoes instilling explicit activation or semantic agency in them. This again displays traces of desubjectification, as even though women are shown to be a target demographic, they often do not get to actively participate in the political process. Instead, female voters tend to be discussed; spoken about and appealed to rather than shown to demand certain rights and/or voice their needs.

The first sub-theme within this non-agentic subjectification representation relates to 'positive appeals', which sit alongside, or in opposition to, the other sub-themes of '(negative) talk about' and a 'fight for equality'. The collocates that make up the 'positive appeals' bracket include core terms such as the preposition *about* (e.g. "she [Harman] said the goal of the [pink] bus was to make the general election all *about* women" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 29/04/2015)) and the verb *appeal*. This verb only occurs in PATIENT processes which is indicative of the fact that women are discussed and talked 'about' rather than the ones doing the talking, and politicians, campaigners and journalists appeal to women rather than female voters appealing to politicians in power to listen to them (e.g. "a policy designed to *appeal* to female voters" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 15/04/2015)). The positive aspects of these appeals lie in the notion that they appear to be willing to raise the profile of female voters. The fact that female voters are *under-represented* is identified as an issue that needs to be combatted and nouns and verbs such as *champion*, *equal(ity)*, *help*, *increase*, *launch*, *manifesto*, *petition*, *representation*, *right(s)*, *support* reinforce this apparent explicit need to increase the representation of female voters by means of positive reinforcement and encouragement to vote and participate in the political process. The verb collocates primarily occur in PATIENT processes and tend to indicate (positive) subordination (e.g. "to *help* women affected by the ris-

ing pension age" (*The Sunday Express*, 23/04/2107)), or (alleged) agency (e.g. "I was invited by Harman to join a non-partisan group of older women to find out what policies would *help* women" (*The Independent*, 20/04/2015)). Moreover, some verbs also occur in grammatically active AGENT processes (e.g. "more women *support* charities than men" (*The Guardian*, 08/04/2015)), but none of the verbs occur exclusively in such processes. Female voters are apparently subordinate and *given* or *granted* rights and opportunities (e.g. "equal pay, paid maternity leave and protections against unfair dismissal were all *granted* to women by the EU" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 16/06/2016)), "*cared about*" (*ExpressOnline*, 24/05/2016), and *included* and *involved* by the people in power (see examples in the previous section). Rights are bestowed upon them from above. "Underrepresentation of women *matters*" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 11/05/2016) and it is prudent to *appeal* to them or even *woo* them into voting (e.g. "Miliband defends Labour's pink bus touring country to *woo* women" (*MailOnline*, 15/04/2015)). The sense of wanting to raise up female voters is also instilled in these verbs (e.g. *champion*, *help*, *increase*, *launch*, *support*), as well as perhaps even an aim to empower women to act themselves (e.g. *ask(ed)*, *hear(d)*, *inspiring*, *pay*, *trust* and "*encourage* women to at least start the journey [into politics] and make it a more welcoming environment" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 25/04/2017)). The latter still comes from a place of subordination, which permeates this discursive theme, as (possible) agency is bestowed from above and women are thus still inherently subordinate and dependent upon others.

In addition to the positive appeals to female voters, the semantic prosody of how women and the issues that purportedly interest them are discussed tend to oscillate between neutral and negative. The negative prosody is conveyed both by terms that denote neutrality but convey negative connotations, as well as terms with explicitly negative denotations. The news sources included in this study also consider the *representation* and *treat-*

ment of women by providing facts without necessarily trying to explicitly appeal to female voters. Mental and verbal process verbs, used in PATIENT constructions, such as *ask(ed)*, *found*, *know*, *say(s)*, *see*, *show(s)*, *tell*, *think(s)*, *told*, as well as material processes such as *get(ting)*, *put(ting)* are used to represent female voters and 'show' poll results and 'get' figures without giving an actual voice to female voters (e.g. "today's findings *show* that women now expect David Cameron's party to win 32 per cent of the vote" (*Sunday Telegraph*, 05/04/2015)). Furthermore, the ways in which women could or are (sometimes falsely) assumed to be negatively affected by policies that *hit* and *impact* women *disproportionately* or a lack of specific policies implemented to support women are also highlighted and *revealed* (e.g. *alienate*, *driven*, *subjected*, in examples such as "this will *alienate* women across the economic and political spectrum" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 14/04/2015) and the xenophobic and racist claim that "a vote for remain is a vote for British women to be *subjected* to the same horrific assaults [from migrants]" (*MailOnline*, 07/06/2016)). Such representation might appear to verge on equality/equal representation, but is still heavily imbued with subordination, as certain actions and portrayals are chosen for women. They are *told*, *urged*, *driven*, *made* to be a certain way and need certain things (e.g. "Boris Johnson has *urged* women that to control their destiny, they must vote to leave EU" (*MailOnline*, 20/06/2016)). Moreover, within these discussions of female voters, they are also shown in overtly negative or *patronising* ways, as women are seen to be *banned [from]*, *forced [to]*, *struggling*, *subjected [to]* (e.g. "the pink bus - which is meant to showcase 'women's issues' - has been derided for being *patronising* to female voters" (*MailOnline*, 15/04/2015), "overqualified women are *forced* to take part-time dead-end jobs" (*The Observer*, 05/04/2015), and "women *struggling* to get jobs" (*The Guardian*, 15/04/2015)). Such representation is quite complex as it can be argued that it perpetuates negative and oppressive

portrayals of women as well as make said oppression more visible.² Consequently, it might open up avenues for discussion and perhaps even policy changes to combat the oppression mentioned and continue the ‘fight for equality’.

This fight for equality is portrayed as being fought ‘by’ women but more so being fought ‘for’ women, as shown above most verb collocates indicate passive uses and/or women being acted upon. Women are also shown as actively *fighting*, *struggling* for equality and *campaigns* are shown to be actively *led* by women (e.g. “expanding her Inspiring Women *campaign* globally” (*MailOnline*, 05/05/2015) and “pressure groups *led* by women in an attempt to counter a debate largely dominated by middle-aged men” (*The Guardian*, 31/05/2016)), thus placing women in the middle as well as at the forefront of the fight for equality. However, verbs depicting the road to equality (e.g. *fight(ing)*, *help*, *impact*, *tackling*), and victories along the way (e.g. *banned*, *ending*) occur in PATIENT verb processes much more often (see Table 19 and examples above). Therefore, the fight appears to be fought ‘for’ women and/or the fight and its leadership is not properly attributed to women. The noun collocates reinforce the notion of the need for *aid*, which often refers to the ‘Women’s Aid’ charity, and *help* to achieve *equality* for women, *power*, women’s *right(s)*, *representation*, *suffrage* and more importantly justice and effectual change by means of political change (e.g. *act*, *ballots*, *bill*, *campaign(s)*, *clause*, *manifesto*, *petition*, *policies*) through organisational structures and effective leadership (e.g. *boards*, *chair*, *committee*, *founder*, *leadership*, *movement*, *positions*, *team*). Lastly, the current lack of equality is identifiable in the descriptive adjective *underrepresented* as well as the PROBLEM semantic domain nouns *discrimination*, *issue(s)*, *matters*, *minorities* and *problem*.

²See Section 6.1.3 for further explorations of negative portrayals of female voters.

Table 19: All discursive themes in order of frequency, the corresponding collocates, and verb processes 2015-2017 - Part 2

Theme	Collocates	Agent	Patient
- POSITIVE APPEALS: AS A TARGET DEMO- GRAPHIC	<i>about, allowed, allows, appeal, ask, asked, believe, care, cared, champion, encourage, engage, engaging, ensure, ensured, equal, equalities, equality, given, gives, giving, granted, hear, heard, help, hopes, include, included, including, increase, inspiring, involved, launch, manifesto, matters, paid, pay, petition, representation, right, rights, seeking, show, showed, shows, support, trust, underrepresented, woo</i>	<i>ask, care, engaging, hear, including, increase, launch, matters, seeking, show</i>	<i>allowed, appeal, ask, asked, believe, care, cared, champion, encourage, engage, engaging, ensure, ensured, given, gives, giving, granted, hear, heard, help, hopes, include, included, including, increase, inspiring, involved, launch, matters, paid, pay, petition, seeking, show, showed, shows, support, trust, woo</i>
- FIGHT FOR EQUALITY	<i>act, aid, attitudes, ballots, banned, bill, boards, campaign, campaigns, chair, clause, committee, democracy, discrimination, ending, equal, equalities, equality, fight, fighting, founder, help, impact, issue, issues, leadership, led, manifesto, matters, minorities, movement, petition, policies, positions, power, problem, record, representation, right, rights, struggling, suffrage, tackling, team, treat, treatment, underrepresented</i>	<i>campaign, campaigns, fighting, issue, issues, led, matters, struggling</i>	<i>banned, campaign, chair, ending, fight, fighting, help, hit, led, matters, petition, record, tackling, treat</i>
- TALK(ED) ABOUT: AS A TARGET DEMO- GRAPHIC	<i>about, alienate, allowed, allows, appeal, ask, asked, believe, creating, driven, found, get, getting, hopes, impact, know, made, points, put, putting, representation, revealed, said, say, saying, says, see, should, show, showed, shows, subjected, talk, talking, target, tell, think, thinks, told, treat, treatment, urged, use</i>	<i>ask, creating, getting, know, made, say, saying, says, should, show, talk, think, thinks, use</i>	<i>alienate, allowed, allows, appeal, ask, asked, believe, creating, driven, found, get, getting, hopes, impact, know, made, points, put, putting, revealed, said, say, saying, says, see, should, show, showed, shows, subjected, talk, talking, target, tell, think, thinks, told, treat, urged, use</i>
- NEGATIVE TALK: AS A TARGET DEMO- GRAPHIC	<i>patronising, attacks, alienate, attitudes, banned, struggling, subjected, forced, target</i>	<i>struggling</i>	<i>patronising, attacks, alienate, banned, subjected, forced, target</i>

6.1.3 Negative representations: female victimhood and demonisation of female agency

The third overarching discourse develops the negative representations already present in the previous themes in a more comprehensive manner. Not only is there 'negative talk' about female voters, but they are also portrayed AS A VICTIM and as sexist and misogynistic portrayals prevail. Collocates range from negational prepositions (e.g. "violence *against* women", women were "put off .. at the last general election" (*The I*, 14/06/2016), and *anti* used in 'anti-woman': "one of their [the Tories] likely coalition partners is a homophobic, creationist, *anti*-women throwback to several centuries ago" (*The Guardian*, 24/04/2015), nouns depicting both physical and mental *violence* (e.g. *abuse*, 'wife-beater', *mutilation*, the latter of which often related to FGM) and descriptive adjectives depicting women as ignorant, difficult, or in other negative ways (e.g. *bigoted* which refers to a frequently mentioned incident involving Gordon Brown calling a female voter a 'bigoted woman' during the 2010 campaign, "*desperate* to make up our pension deficit" (*The Independent*, 23/06/2016), *difficult* which primarily refers to Theresa May, while the verbs and verb processes once again lean toward portraying women as PATIENTS, as well as victims (e.g. *died*, *suffer*, *murdered* wives and "eight year-old girls" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 30/05/2017)), or villainised if they display higher levels of semantic agency (e.g. the above-mentioned *blasted*, *heckled*, *scream*). This overarching discursive theme can be divided in the following sub-themes: 1) saviourism: damsels in distress, 2) women as victims of physical violence, 3) demonisation of female agency, and 4) subordination to men (androcentrism). Each will be explored in detail below.

As mentioned above, the most frequent sub-theme is one where female voters are portrayed as damsels in distress, as needing to be saved. In this notion of saviourism, women inherently need to be saved by others, primarily men. This once again conjures up notions of subordina-

tion and submissiveness in regard to women, which have been prevalent throughout the themes and collocates previously discussed as well as in broader misogynistic discourses in society. In addition to such subordination, this need for a saviour also calls into question both the agency and capabilities of women. They do not appear to be capable of saving themselves, nor might they have the power to do so, if they are indeed capable enough. It also implies that women are inherently inferior, and it is up to men to raise them up and provide them with rights, and in this case a voice in the political process. The collocates that comprise such representations include nouns illustrating the act of at the very least helping women if not saving them (e.g. the before-mentioned *aid, care, fight (for), help, support, treatment*), as well as nouns depicting the tools necessary for saviour behaviour (e.g. *bill, clause, manifesto, petition, 'women's refuges'*), and people and organisations, often politicians who have a general tendency of portraying themselves as saviours, acting as saviours (e.g. *champion, charity, 'women's officer'*). Verbs that describe the before states (e.g. *need* in such examples as "women *need* a stronger voice in politics" (*The Observer*, 05/04/2015)) and nouns that describe the current or after states (e.g. *'women's safety'*) of help being offered are also part of this theme. Furthermore, women are constructed as explicitly needing help and not being able to help themselves by means of adjectives such as *desperate, vulnerable* as well as jokingly as female authors describe how male politicians think of them as "little women" (*The Guardian*, 11/05/2016). The verb processes predictably consist primarily of PATIENT processes. Women are acted upon, decisions are being made for them, and fights are being fought for them. In fact, all verb collocates which operate under the banner of this theme position women as PATIENTS. Except for the aforementioned *need* and *struggling*, which depict how one of the only active roles women can play is the 'damsel in distress', which is synonymous with 'struggle', and the trope of being in 'need' of saving. The other verbs

that occur in both AGENT and PATIENT processes are actively voicing a need for help (e.g. *hopes*, or *seeking* “support” (*The I*, 29/05/2017), *seeking* “terminations” (*The I*, 22/04/2017) or “asylum” (*The I*, 16/04/2015)). In addition to those double role verbs, the other PATIENT processes comprise verbs within the HELP domain either by actively helping women and/or ending their torment (e.g. the aforementioned *aid*, *allows*, *care(d)*, *ending*, *fighting*, *given*, *granted*, *help*, *support*, *tackling*), or helping women by having them potentially take steps to help themselves (e.g. *encourage*, *engage*, *inspiring*).

Furthermore, the ‘damsels in distress’ of the previous sub-theme morph into outright victims of violence. These women are primarily victims of physical violence but some terms construct notions of both physical and mental violence. Women are often depicted as victims in both literature and news coverage (Ross & Carter, 2011). This negative representation invokes a view of women as perhaps only being noteworthy and newsworthy after they have been hurt, and their agency has been fully compromised. Consequently, their stories and images can be used for saviour narratives and political gain, as politicians (appear to) fight for the rights of women, whilst perhaps primarily advancing their own careers. Moreover, if “not properly checked, such obsessions [with violence against women] may find expression in how women are treated” (Diabah, 2020, p. 99). These representations are thus often used as political tools. Violence against women, as common as it is, still sparks outrage. While women are viewed as more vulnerable, their hurt often garners more outrage than violence against men. Conversely, men are perceived to be capable of defending themselves. Furthermore, the outrage and newsworthiness of violence against women is often heightened by notions of ‘benevolent sexism’, as people often appear to care more about female victims who are explicitly named as someone’s, often a man’s, daughter, mother or wife and are thus explicitly linked to these men (Glick & Fiske, 2018). The violence present in

this theme's collocates is often also highly sexualised and sensationalised. Invasions of privacy, and specifically (sexual) bodily autonomy, are rife. Therefore, a content warning regarding sexual violence and broader depictions of violence against women must be issued here before discussing the collocates in further detail.

The noun collocates primarily depict physical violence, but certain terms can refer to both physical and mental abuse (see Table 20 below). These single nouns and compound nouns all denote *violence* commonly associated with and perpetrated against women: explicitly sexual violence (e.g. *rape*, [female] *genital mutilation*), other forms of physical violence (e.g. 'wife-beater') and mental/physical violence (e.g. (*domestic*) *abuse*), as well as the need to avoid such violence (e.g. the afore-mentioned *refuges*). The above-mentioned negational preposition such as *against* is also an integral part of this theme, as it is indicative of how such violence is primarily perpetrated 'against' women. The verbs, which overlap with multiple nouns, are again primarily present in PATIENT verb process and much like the nouns are split in verbs depicting sexual violence (e.g. *rape*, *raped* which is especially common in racist and xenophobic pro-Brexit discourse: "Nigel Farage said that British women risked being *raped*, if we didn't vote for Brexit" (*MailOnline*, 19/06/2016)), and other physical/mental violence (e.g. *forced*, *hit*, *murdered*, *suffer*). However, there is also a sense of agency instilled in these collocates.

The same sense of agency present among the portrayals of women as victims of physical violence is developed further within the overarching negative theme, by means of the demonisation of female agency. Female voters actively engaging in the political process and making their voices heard are vilified. The vilification lies in condemning any behaviour that is viewed as 'unbecoming' of women. For example, atypical active participation that contradicts the notion that women are meant to be docile, subordinate, feminine, and maternal leads to their femininity being ques-

tioned. They are viewed as too manly by demanding agency and displaying civil disobedience. Firstly, the proper noun *Macbeth* exemplifies this vilification of female agency quite succinctly, albeit the vilification of female politicians and not female voters. This, once again illustrates the prominence of female politicians within the parameters of this study. SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon was compared to 'Lady Macbeth' with Labour leader Ed Miliband being her 'Macbeth' by Boris Johnson in a 2015 *Telegraph* article, which was subsequently used in more right-wing news coverage. This is not only a reference to her Scottish heritage, it also denounces female leadership and women's place in politics. In summary, in Shakespeare's play 'Macbeth' Lady Macbeth is the wife of the protagonist and goads him into committing regicide. As her husband ascends to the throne, she becomes queen and starts to regret and feel guilt over her involvement in the regicide and dies by suicide. She is portrayed as being rather nervous and also becomes less important as the play goes on (Shakespeare, 2001). Lady Macbeth and by extension Nicola Sturgeon are shown to be on the one hand subordinate to their husbands, weak, regretful, not standing by their choices and out of place. On the other hand, they are portrayed as villainous and a threat, specifically to men in power. Sturgeon, instead of being docile, is seen as a real threat to the PM and perhaps to the Union. She is vilified because of it. Furthermore, some literary critics have argued that Lady Macbeth represents both a witch and an anti-mother (Levin, 2002). Her femininity and maternal instincts, the epitome of femininity, are questioned and as such she embodies and invokes evil. The adjectival collocates expand on the demonisation of a lack of femininity or displaying non-normative femininity. Adjectives such as *difficult*, *hard*, in combination with the adverb of degree *bloody*, signal a disavowal of 'bloody difficult' women displaying disobedience and toughness. The description of Margaret Thatcher, to whom most if not all other UK female politicians and leaders, and especially Theresa

May, are compared, as the 'Iron Lady' expands on this (e.g. "the PM was given her 'iron lady going into battle' moment" (*The Times*, 04/05/2017)), "posturing as a robotic reincarnation of the Iron Lady" (*The Independent*, 03/05/2017)). 'Iron' is considered a rather hard, strong, and ultimately unfeminine material. In terms of the verb collocates, the AGENT process verbs *blasted*, *heckled*, *scream* mentioned above all belong to the semantic domain of (loud) VOCALISATION and all hold negative connotations (cf. Caldas-Coulthard, 1995). The negative associations occur especially in relation to women raising their voice and they are framed as particularly onerous when directed at men, as these verbs are only used when directed against men (e.g. "the woman who *heckled* David Cameron during leaders debates" (*ExpressOnline*, 03/04/2015), or "one furious woman *blasted*: 'You [Cameron] say you know what needs to be done - so why aren't you announcing where those benefits cuts are coming please?'" (*mirror.co.uk*, 30/04/2015)). Women verbalising and voicing their opinion in a way that is not palatable, as it does not conform to the idea of the docile and polite woman. This again signals that female voters' femininity is often questioned and an alleged lack of femininity is marked. Consequently, their place in politics can be questioned, as women actively participating in politics is represented as unwelcome or even untoward.

Lastly, the subordination evident in the other sub-themes can also be considered its own sub-theme. Female voters tend to be portrayed as second or subordinate to, or less than, the men in their lives, be it their partners, husbands, fathers, colleagues or male peers. This patriarchal, androcentrist notion is illustrated by such adjectives as *desperate*, *little*, *married*, and *vulnerable* used to describe women in situations where they are fragile and dependent on others (e.g. "*vulnerable* women across this country who are already suffering unbearably" (*The Independent*, 07/05/2017) and "there are urgent issues that need to be addressed if we are to help the most *vulnerable* women" (*The Independent*, 27/04/2017)). These collocates

index smallness of size, fragility, a belittling dependency (on men), and a heteronormative view of relationships by focusing on *married* women (and motherhood as the occurrence of phrases such as “*married* mum of one” and “*married* mum of two” (*The Sun*, 12/04/2015) suggests). During the 2015-2017 permaelection period marriage equality was still a rather new concept in England, Scotland and Wales, having only been established in 2014. Moreover, Northern Ireland did not establish marriage equality until 2020. The verb collocates which mainly occur alongside the search terms ‘wife/wives’ confirm the heteronormative subordination bias by displaying how women mainly appear at a man’s side in PATIENT processes. For example, *accompanied* in such examples as “Jacob, 19, *accompanied* by his mother, said he had been roused out of his apathy by the event” (*The Guardian*, 31/05/2016)), “by Friday he [Cameron] could be surrounded by packing boxes, leaving Downing Street for the last time, *accompanied* by his wife and confused three young children” (*MailOnline*, 02/05/2015), where the women’s names aren’t mentioned, merely the fact that they accompany a man). Female voters are often a second thought and not the focus of an article as the story revolves around the men in their lives, chiefly their husbands (see also Chapter 7).

Table 20: All discursive themes in order of frequency, the corresponding collocates, and verb processes 2015-2017 - Part 3

Theme	Collocates	Agent	Patient
NEGATIVE: AS A VICTIM	<i>abuse, against, alienate, anti, banned, beater, des- perate, detention, died, discrimination, dispor- tionately, domestic [violence], ending, face, faced, fell, fight, fighting, forced, fought, genital [mutilation], hard, hit, illegal, issues, lack, leave, left, less, murdered, mutilation, off, patronising, problem, rape, raped, refugees, risk, scream, segre- gated, struggling, subjected, suffer, tackling, tar- get, undecided, underrepresented, urged, violence, worried</i>	<i>died, face, faced, fell, fighting, fought, hit, lack, left, risk, scream, struggling, suffer, worried</i>	<i>abuse, alienate, attacks, banned, ending, fight, fight- ing, forced, hit, lack, leave, left, murdered, patronising, rape, raped, scream, seg- regated, subjected, tackling, target, urged</i>
NEGATIVE: DE- MONISED	<i>anti, attitudes, banned, bigoted, blasted, bloody [difficult woman], different, difficult, heckled, iron, [lady], little, Macbeth, problem, scream</i>	<i>blasted, heckled, scream</i>	<i>banned, scream</i>
SUBTHEMES:			
- SAVIOURISM: AS A DAMSEL IN DISTRESS	<i>aid, allowed, allows, bill, care, cared, champion, charity, desperate, discounts, encourage, ending, engage, fight, fighting, fought, get, getting, given, gives, giving, granted, help, hopes, inspiring, little, need, officer, paid, pay, petition, refugees, safety, seeking, struggling, subjected, support, tackling, treat, treatment, trust, vulnerable</i>	<i>care, fighting, get, getting, need, pay, seeking, struggling</i>	<i>allowed, allows, care, cared, champion, encourage, ending, engage, fight, fight- ing, get, getting, given, gives, giving, granted, help, hopes, inspiring, paid, pay, seeking, subjected, support, tackling, treat, trust</i>
- PHYSICAL VIO- LENCE: AS A VICTIM	<i>abuse, against, beater, bloody, domestic, forced, fought, genital, murdered, mutilation, rape, raped, refugees, risk, suffer, violence</i>	<i>fought, risk, suffer</i>	<i>abuse, attacks, forced, murdered, rape, raped</i>
- DEMONISATION OF FEMALE AGENCY	<i>blasted, bloody [difficult woman], different, dif- ficult, hard, heckled, iron [lady], loose, [lady] Macbeth, scream</i>	<i>blasted, scream</i>	<i>scream</i>
- SUBORDINATION	<i>accompanied, desperate, girl, girls, little, mar- ried, patronising, underrepresented, vulnerable, wife</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>accompanied [by his wife], married [his wife]</i>

6.1.4 Political content and proper nouns: topic-specific androcentrism

The political collocates primarily consist of nouns and include political acronyms (e.g. *MPs, PM*), the election-related search terms (e.g. *election, vote(s/rs)*), political parties and political affiliations (e.g. *Conservative, Green, Labour, left, Lib [Dem], remain, right, Tory, Ukip*), which are also all used as adjectives, politicians and collectivised members of parliament/government (e.g. *cabinet, candidates, mayors, (prime/shadow) minister(s), parliament, politician(s)*), campaign terms (e.g. *campaign(s/er), launch [of manifestos], leader(s), manifesto, movement*), subjects and objects of voting processes (e.g. *act, ballots, bill, clause, petition, MPs, PM, policies*), geographical context and seat of Government (e.g. *Britain, Westminster*), and general political terms (e.g. *democracy, politics, society, suffrage*). The verbs are primarily used in grammatically active AGENT processes (see Table 21), and refer to women displaying higher levels of semantic agency by means of actively voting and participating on the voter side of the political process. Yet, they also show that within discourses surrounding female voters, female politicians and their actions are quite prevalent. Female voters agentively *cast* votes and ballots, *vote, elected* officials, and *campaigned* (see examples such as “[Cameron] and his wife Samantha *cast* their votes at Methodist Hall in Westminster” (*telegraph.co.uk*, 23/06/2016), “older women *vote* - there are loads of them” (*The Guardian*, 11/05/2016)), and “Emma Thompson has said she does not want to die before the gender pay gap closed as she *campaigned* for the Women’s Equality Party” (*telegraph.co.uk*, 02/05/2016)). The verb collocates also refer to female politicians who agentively *campaign, launch* manifestos, *led* parties, *stand* for election and were (somewhat less agentively) *elected* (e.g. in “the woman [Jo Cox] who *campaigned* so passionately for refugees” (*The Times*, 21/06/2016), “The Conservatives and Plaid Cymru, despite being *led* by women, are neck-and-neck towards the back of the pack with just 28% of their

parliamentary candidates female" (*mirror.co.uk*, 25/05/2017), "new female mayors elected this week" (*The Guardian*, 03/05/2017)). *Elected* is in fact used as a passive, technically a PATIENT process and it is less agentive than some of the other processes, it is however also empowering and gives the PATIENT a mandate to represent people and speak on behalf of a broad group of people. Therefore, it represents semantic agency by means of grammatical passivity. This type of semantic-AGENT role is confined to female politicians, however, which shows that even within discourses relating to female voters, female politicians might still take centre stage.

Furthermore, some of the above-mentioned terms, as well as some additional ones, explicitly relate to the EU Referendum and Brexit topics. These collocates include nouns referring to the main Brexit topic of immigration (i.e. *immigration, immigrants*). Related collocates include adjectives describing *foreign* nationalities of either European immigrants (i.e. *German, Spanish* in examples such as "my wife is *German* and we're here for the long-term, so freedom of movement is essential" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 28/04/2015)), European communities with close ties to Britain/Britons living abroad who would be affected by a possible British cessation from the EU (i.e. *Spanish* communities are home to one of the largest British-born populations in the world (IESE-IRCO, 2005)), as well as racist, Islamophobic and xenophobic claims about *Asian* and other (Muslim) immigrants forming a *threat* to *Britain* and *British* women in particular (e.g. "Brexiteer Nigel Farage argued that remaining in the EU would leave women vulnerable to the *threat* of sex attacks by gangs of migrants" (*The I*, 21/06/2016) and "a group of "influential Pakistani councillors" in Rotherham were accused of blocking attempts to tackle the abuse and also of meddling in domestic abuse cases involving *Asian* women" (*The Daily Telegraph*, 30/04/ 2015)). This anti-immigration discourse primarily revolves around the othering and/or even demonisation of *foreign* nationals as well as British citizens, primarily of Asian descent, who are viewed as not be-

ing 'British' and white enough and as such they pose a threat to actual 'British' citizens by supposedly taking up resources and jobs (such as maternity services in "one in six of all babies born in the EU are now born in Britain. Twenty-seven per cent of those babies have a *foreign* mother. The situation is so dire that last year 575 pregnant women turned up to give birth at their chosen maternity unit only to be told: 'You can't come in'" (*ExpressOnline*, 14/06/2016), or more generally "there seem to be fewer opportunities now for British people as they are being undercut by foreign workers" (*The Sun*, 22/06/2016)). Such xenophobic demonisation of immigrants in general, and immigrants or citizens of colour in particular, is rife in any political discourse, but it is especially rife in Brexit discourse (see Cap, 2017; Cap, 2019), as mirrored in this study.

In addition to the specifically political terms, there are also numerous terms that relate directly to the GE and Referendum campaigns without belonging to the POLITICS semantic domain. These terms can be divided into the following domains of 'Media', 'Organisations', 'Law/Justice' and 'Events' (see Table 21). The media collocates include company acronyms (i.e. *BBC*, *ITV*), international media organisations (e.g. *Getty*, *Reuters*) and newspapers (e.g. *Telegraph*), as well as entertainment and news programmes (e.g. *interview*, *radio*, *show(s)*), among which are programmes explicitly aimed at women (e.g. *BBC's [Woman's] Hour* radio show and *ITV'S Loose [Women]*) (e.g. "ITV's *Loose Women* held debates on whether or not wolf-whistling should be made a crime" (*The Guardian*, 29/04/2015)). These broadcasters and programmes aim to inform the public in general, and women in particular, during election times. They *show* things to women as well as *show* and represent women on TV and radio. The media organisations are also accompanied by other organisation in both informing and representing women and the fight for equality such as charities and aid schemes for women (e.g. *charity*, *quotas*, *shortlists*, *trust*, *WASPI [Women Against State Pension Inequality]* in examples such as "[Miliband]

also wants to reform the civil service and introduce *quotas* for women" (*Sunday Express*, 05/04/2015) and "she co-founded Daughters of Eve, a charity dedicated to ending FGM (*The I*, 28/04/2017)), as well as female politicians (e.g. *quotas*, *shortlists*) and general leadership (*boards*, *committee*, *founder*, *institute* in a "push for an increase in the number of women sitting on *boards* of companies" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 18/05/2017)). Following up on the aid schemes for (political) gender justice, there are also specific noun collocates denoting the law (e.g. *law(yer)*), illegality (e.g. *detention*, *discrimination* in "Harman said equality is "hardwired" into the EU, pointing out that it has banned *discrimination* between women and men in the workplace and enshrined the principle of equal pay" (*The I*, 21/06/2016)) and striving for justice (e.g. *act*, *bill*, *petition* in "a *Bill* on ending violence against women and girls" (*MailOnline*, 24/04/2017)), as well as adjectives depicting aspects of legality in *illegal* (e.g. "in 1975, the UK made it *illegal* for a woman to be fired merely because she was pregnant" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 16/06/2016)). Lastly, the 'event' section of collocates consists of events happening both along the campaign trail as well as events important to voters, politicians and their family members (e.g. the *graduation ceremony* of politicians' children: "[Boris] Johnson had a busy day at his daughter's *graduation ceremony* in St Andrew's (*telegraph.co.uk*, 23/06/2016)). Moreover, the verb collocates depict women *attending* these events to accompany men (e.g. the aforementioned *accompanied*, *arrived [with]*). Women are shown to arrive with their male partners, as such they are once again not the focus of the story, but subordinate to the men they are linked to (e.g. "the leader [Corbyn] was all smiles when he *arrived* with his wife Justine" (*mirror.co.uk*, 07/05/2015)).

The second part of Table 21 and this section deal with the multitude of proper nouns that appear among these collocates. These proper nouns primarily deal with topic-specific identifications and nominations (i.e. politicians, their partners, and voters), as well as topic-specific androcentrism

in the sense that political discourse is fraught with male protagonists and 'masculine' topics (e.g. 'the economy'). This androcentrism in combination with common heteronormative discourses are reflected in this study. The two most frequent sets of proper nouns comprise the names of male politicians and their female life partners, primarily wives. The collocates referring to male politicians, centred in a corpus focused on female voters, encompasses both first names (e.g. *David [Cameron], Jeremy [Corbyn], Nick [Clegg]*) and more surnames (e.g. *[David] Cameron, [Jeremy] Corbyn, [Boris] Johnson, and [Ed] Miliband*). Even numbers of Labour (e.g. Labour leaders Jeremy Corbyn, Ed Miliband) and Conservative (e.g. former PM David Cameron, and future PM Boris Johnson) politicians are present, as well as the former Liberal Democrats leader Nick Clegg, and the Chief Minister of the British overseas territory of Gibraltar, Fabian Picardo. Picardo's name appears in and is pertinent to Brexit-related articles, as the citizens of Gibraltar are British overseas territories citizens whilst residing in continental Europe (e.g. "Gibraltar Chief Minister Fabian *Picardo* and his wife Justine vote in the EU Referendum" (*ExpressOnline*, 23/06/2016)).

Aside from party leaders and Prime Ministers, who are expected to appear in any political coverage during election times, there are no names present of male politicians who have specifically reached out or tried to appeal to female voters. Conversely, the name of Conservative MP Philip *Davies* who called for an 'international men's day' to complement international women's day as well as said that "'Women and equalities committee' should be renamed to remove reference to women" (*The Independent*, 07/05/2017) does appear among the collocates. This once again feeds into the harmful representation of female voters where they are primarily newsworthy when actively oppressed or opposed. Furthermore, the female partners of these and other male politicians appear among the collocates, illustrating the rather prominent and strong link to men and androcentrism that is present in this study's corpus. These partners are almost

all introduced by means of a parenthetical comment signalling heterosexual disambiguation as the 'wife of' a male politician (e.g. in 2015 and 2016, but not in 2017: "wife of Lib Dem Nick Clegg" (*The Guardian*, 08/04/2015), "wife of Michael Gove" (*The Daily Telegraph*, 27/04/2016)). They do not tend to be the focus of the articles they appear in and often merely appear as an accompaniment to their husbands (see *accompanied* and *arrived* examples above). Even though the male politician collocates were divided more equally among Labour and the Conservative Party, the women that are mentioned among the collocates are mostly partners/wives of Conservative politicians. For example, there are *Laura Kind*, who is Sajid Javid's wife, *Marina Wheeler* as Boris Johnson's former wife, *Samantha Cameron* as David Cameron's wife, and *Sarah Vine*, who is Michael Gove's wife. This might be due to the higher frequency of both articles from Conservative-leaning newspapers and the higher occurrence of the terms 'wife/wives' in those articles. Conservative, or right-wing, newspapers appear to be more interested in politicians' wives in general and Conservative politicians' wives in particular. Partners of some politicians from other parties, countries and all party leaders' wives are also included (e.g. *Laura Alvarez*, who is Jeremy Corbyn's wife, *Justine Thornton*, Ed Miliband's wife, *Miriam González Duránte*'-Clegg, wife of Nick Clegg, *Kirsten Farage*, wife of Ukip's Nigel Farage, and *Justine Picardo*, wife of Gibraltar's Chief Minister Fabian Picardo) as well as one affair (e.g. *Helen*, wife of BBC DJ Steve Ladner who had an affair with Tory MP Tracey Crouch (*MailOnline*, 03/04/2015)).

As mentioned above, even within discourses relating to female voters, female politicians might often still take centre stage. This is also the case for the proper noun collocates, as female politicians' names prevail over the names of female voters. Among the female politicians' collocates are the leaders of the SNP *Nicola Sturgeon* and then incumbent PM and leader of the Conservatives *Theresa May*. One would expect these to appear in coverage of the 'permalection' period regardless of the specific scope of

this study. The other politicians that are mentioned are two women that made waves during the Brexit debate (i.e. Baroness Sayeeda *Warsi*, a Conservative member of the House of Lords who switched from Vote Leave to Vote Remain (e.g. “Lady *Warsi* said her decision to change sides was sparked by a “xenophobic” poster released by Mr Farage” (*telegraph.co.uk*, 20/06/2016), and Lady Glenys *Kinnock*, a former MEP who called members of the European Parliament “fat cats” (*The Daily Mail*, 11/06/2016)), and Labour MP [*Harriet*] *Harman*, the one politician who tried to directly appeal to female voters by means of her notorious ‘pink bus’ campaign (see Figure 13 in Appendix A.1). In addition to these living current and former politicians, the name of Margaret *Thatcher* is also present. This is indicative of both her continued influence and the lack of prominent female leaders and voices, as mentioned above, practically every female party leader gets compared to the ‘Iron Lady’.

In addition to female partners and female politicians, female celebrity voters are included in the collocates as they appear to be put forward as the main representatives of the coveted female voting bloc. These women are famous in their own right such as actresses *Emma* Thompson/Watson and presenter *Myleene* *Klass*, but they are also explicitly linked to a famous family member (e.g. “Dame Judi [Dench] and her daughter *Finty* Williams” (*telegraph.co.uk*, 07/05/2015) or their famous husbands (i.e. singer/entrepreneur *Victoria* Beckham, wife of former footballer David Beckham, playwright *Sophie* Hunter, “theatre director wife” of actor Benedict Cumberbatch (*The Sunday Times*, 24/04/2016), and entrepreneur Lady *Tina* Green, wife of Sir Phillip Green, a British High Street tycoon). Lastly, three non-famous voters’ names appear among the collocates, two of which are female (i.e. *Jodie* [no last name], and *Mandy* Heard) which is, in addition to the greater presence of the names of politicians, their partners and famous voters, indicative of the lacking voice of the voting female public. Often, female family members are mentioned, discussed and put forward as rea-

sons to vote for certain policies and politicians, but they are almost never mentioned by name. Moreover, *Mandy* is only included in articles as the 'wife of' and subordinate to the non-famous voter *Phil* Heard (e.g. "Phil *Heard* and wife *Mandy* arrived on horseback to cast their vote at Meldon Village Hall, Devon" (*ExpressOnline*, 23/06/2016)).

Table 21: All discursive themes in order of frequency, the corresponding collocates, and verb processes 2015-2017 - Part 4

Theme	Collocates	Agent	Patient
POLITICS	<i>act, ballots, bill, Britain, cabinet, campaign, campaigner, campaigns, candidates, cast, chair, clause, committee, Conservative, democracy, elected, election, Green, held, independence, Labour, launch, leader, leaders, leadership, led, left, Lib, manifesto, mayors, minister, ministers, movement, MPs, officer, parliament, party, pe- tition, PM, policies, political, politician, politi- cians, politics, prime, remain, right, shadow, so- ciety, stand, standing, suffrage, Tory, Ukip, vote, voted, voters, votes, voting, Westminster</i>	<i>campaign, cam- paigns, cast, elected, held, launch, led, left, remain, stand, standing, vote, voted, votes, voting</i>	<i>campaign, elected, launch, led, left, voted, votes</i>
SUBTHEMES:			
- MEDIA	<i>BBC, cast, getty, [woman's] hour, interview, show ITV, loose [women], Macbeth, pictures, radio, Reuters, show, showed, shows, Telegraph</i>	<i>show</i>	<i>show, showed, shows</i>
- ORGANISATIONS	<i>WASPI, boards, chair, charity, committee, founder, industry, institute, movement, quotas, shortlists, trust</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
- LAW/JUSTICE	<i>act, appeal, bill, detention, discrimination, illegal, law, lawyer, officer, petition, treatment</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
- BREXIT	<i>Asian, Britain, British, country, discrimination, German, illegal, immigration, immigrants, Span- ish</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
- EVENTS	<i>accompanied, arrived, attending, ceremony, Span- event, graduation, parade, party</i>	<i>arrived</i>	<i>accompanied, attend- ing</i>
PROPER NOUNS:			
- MALE POLITICIANS	<i>Brown, Cameron, Clegg, Corbyn, David, Davies, Ed, Gove, Jeremy, Johnson, Kinnock, Miliband, Nick, Phillip, Picardo</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
- THEIR FEMALE PARTNERS	<i>Alvarez, Archer, Cameron, Clegg, Duran- tez, Farage, Gonzalez, Helen, Justine [Pi- cardo/Thornton], Kinnock, Kirsten, Laura [Al- varez/Kind], Marina, Miriam, Samantha, Sarah, Thornton, Vine, Wheeler</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
- FEMALE POLITICIANS	<i>Harmann, Kinnock, May, Nicola, Sturgeon, Thatcher, Theresa, Warsi</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
- FEMALE CELEBRITY VOTERS	<i>[Poppy] Cook, Emma [Thompson/Watson], Finty [Williams], [Tina] Green, [Myleene] Klass, spice [girl], Victoria [Beckham], Sophie [Hunter]</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
- NON-FAMOUS VOTERS	<i>Jodie, Mandy, Phil</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
- OTHER	<i>getty, Macbeth, SH</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>

6.1.5 Soft content and hetero/cisnormativity

Table 22 below shows the ‘tabloidisation’ of the press and subsequent move toward more ‘feminised’ or ‘soft’ content (e.g. opinions, entertainment, ‘human interest’ stories) discussed in Chapter 5. Politics is generally considered ‘hard’ or more ‘masculine’ content. However, as shown before, political discourse can include certain ‘soft’ content stories. Opinion and ‘vox pop’ pieces gauging the public’s opinion are obvious choices, but this study has also shown that tabloid newspapers have a clear penchant for ‘soft’ content stories involving the wives of political leaders. Furthermore, female politicians and politicians’ wives are judged more on their appearance and attire than their male counterparts in political discourse. Moreover, because ‘soft’ content is stereotypically associated with femininity and considered to be of interest to women, such content might deliberately be used to attract and appeal to female voters. Among the ‘soft’ content collocates there are nouns relating to ordinary daily life stories (e.g. *ASDA*, *life*, *lives* in “Mr Miliband, who was answering questions from two mums from *Asda*’s Mumdex panel” (*mirror.co.uk*, 20/04/2015); “I’ll flag up some of the ways in which politics currently affects women’s *lives*” (*The Guardian*, 08/06/2017)), and entertainment (e.g. the aforementioned *BBC*, *ITV*, *ceremony* and *cast*, *parade* in “the three leaders’ wives were on *parade* yesterday” (*The Daily Mail*, 30/04/2015), and fandom *pictures* as ““Mili-fans” sharing *pictures* online of Ed Miliband’s face superimposed onto the heads of Daniel Craig, David Beckham and Aidan Turner” (*Sunday Telegraph*, 03/05/2015)). There are also family life and relationship terms (e.g. *babies/baby*, *child(ren)*, *ex*, *friend*, *love* and *sex*, in examples such as “NCT’s feedback from women having *babies* this year shows that midwives are still overstretched” (*independent.co.uk*, 11/04/2015); “women *love* single men with babies” (*MailOnline*, 01/04/2015)). The adjectival collocates expand on these topics in terms of entertainment (e.g. the aforementioned *loose* [women], *spice* girls) as for example, 20 years ago Victoria Beckham

“then an active member of the *Spice Girls*, expressed deep scepticism about the EU” (*The Guardian*, 21/06/2016), as well as (heteronormative) relationships (e.g. *married*, and *single*). Likewise, the verb collocates depict women’s daily lives as homemakers, and especially wives of male politicians, as carers who have to do the *cook(ing)* (e.g. “Mr Clegg also revealed he is such a bad *cook* his wife only lets him do the washing up” (*MailOnline*, 23/04/2015)), who are *married* to the head of the nuclear family unit and the heads of political parties. Their appearances are also discussed, as what they *wear* is deemed newsworthy and so is the way they actively choose to *look* as well as how others *look* at them (e.g. “today’s [politician’s] wives must *wear* ordinary high street clothes and nothing that hints at their secret, massive wealth” (*The Daily Mail*, 30/04/2015); “if women *look* at politics and don’t see people like themselves [...] then who can blame them for switching off?” (*The Guardian*, 27/05/2016)).

The ‘soft’ topics of relationships and family life are rather prominent and warrant further exploration. The collocates belonging to these topics can be divided into the following five sub-fields, in order of frequency: 1) (subordinate) relationships to men, 2) family, 3) normative domesticity, 4) motherhood, and 5) relationship status. The previously discussed themes, of desubjectification, victimhood and political androcentrism, unearthed the prevalence of female voters being viewed as inherently connected or even subordinate to the men in their lives. The collocates grouped together under the header of ‘relationships to men’ demonstrate this connection more thoroughly. This is primarily accomplished by means of masculine (possessive) pronouns and title collocates (e.g. *he*, *him*, *his [wife]*, *mr*), nouns depicting masculine sex and gender (i.e. *male*, *man/men*) and other masculine-identified noun collocates mainly depicting familial bonds (e.g. *boys*, *dad(s)*, *father(s)*, *husband*, *son*, “*vicar’s daughter*” (*The Observer*, 30/04/2017)). These terms display subordinate familial bonds with men at the head of such bonds (e.g. *dad(s)*, *father(s)* in “the *father-daughter* team of Joe

and Joanne Borzacchiello, 63 and 34, are committed Conservatives" (*The Times*, 11/05/2017)), and traditionally and historically subordinate marital bonds (e.g. *husband*, "a *husband* and wife complained they hadn't signed the election papers for Lib Dem candidate Patrick Haveron" (*mirror.co.uk*, 27/04/2015)). Furthermore, *male* and *men* are part of common androcentrist noun clusters in which the male noun is fronted and the female noun is mentioned last (i.e. 'male and female', 'men and women' in for example "there are signs of clear differences in how *men and women* behave on Twitter" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 02/04/2015)).

Further noun collocates construct more covert connections to men by means of second-person plural possessive pronouns (e.g. *our*, *their*, *your* in such racist statements as "if you don't vote Brexit *our* women are going to be raped in the streets" (*The Observer*, 14/05/2017)), and family terms that could refer to either or both men and women (e.g. *children*, *ex*, *family*, *grandparents*, *parents*). However, stereotypically *family*, *grandparents*, *parents* are used to refer to a relationship that involves a man and a woman not two men or women (e.g. "'Proud of him and my mother.' His *parents* always emphasised that education was the route out of hardship" (*The Daily Telegraph*, 04/04/2015)), thus erasing both marginalised queer relationships and marginalised gender identities (e.g. agender, genderqueer, non-binary persons). The adjectives continue this theme of supposed gender-neutrality which in fact is hetero-normative and cisnormative in nature (e.g. *married*, *pregnant*), as the latter is indicative of a cisnormative and ableist notion of reproductivity where womanhood and pregnancy are inextricably linked). The verb collocates also focus on the men linked to female voters, as women are shown to be actively accompanying or marrying men, the men are *accompanied* by them and *married* to them (see examples from previous sections). The men are the focus and the women come second. Furthermore, the 'family' collocates not only inherently link women to the men in their lives in a subordinate man-

ner, as notions of the traditional family show the inequality of men and women to be intrinsic (Giddens, 2003), but also show another facet of how female voters are not viewed as political subjects in and of themselves. They are rather parts of a larger whole: the nuclear *family*. Women's needs are subsequently inherently linked to their families' and children's needs, presupposing that all women either are or wish to become mothers and wives. Female voters appear to be seen through a filter of both old-fashioned and hetero/cisnormative as well as ableist traditional "'family values' vocabularies associated with social conservatism" (McRobbie, 2013, p. 121). Therefore, they are only reachable when one appeals to the emotional attachment to their families.

The invocation of motherhood is so prevalent that its associated collocates can be grouped together as another sub-theme (see Table 22). The image of the anti-mother has been placed upon undesirable, or threatening women (e.g. Nicola Sturgeon as Lady *Macbeth*), while the notion of normative maternity is used to represent and appeal to the female voting bloc as *mother(s)* and/or *pregnant* women (e.g. in "Labour promised *pregnant* women one-to-one care by a designated midwife" (*The Observer*, 12/04/2015)). Consequently, noun collocates referencing voters' and (female) politicians' children (e.g. the aforementioned *babies, baby, child, children, daughter, son*) are rife. In addition to this normative maternity, 'normative domesticity' also comes into play. According to numerous studies, the majority of domestic and care work (e.g. childcare, cleaning, cooking, shopping) is still performed primarily by women (Giles et al., 2014; Gonçalves & Schluter, 2017). Mirroring this, female voters are shown to be carers and *domestic* homemakers playing the *role* of the *loyal* wife (e.g. "she's been his *loyal* wife for 35 years, yet Cherie Blair cut a forlorn figure when she appeared beside Tony" (*MailOnline*, 11/04/2015)) and, as aforementioned, they take care of their family's *domestic* life, *cook* for them and *love* them. The queer exclusion present in the normative depictions of

family, motherhood and domesticity is also prevalent in the 'relationship status' collocates. These status collocates comprise explicitly male nouns and titles (e.g. *husband, Mr*), but no explicitly female titles (e.g. *Ms, Miss, Mrs*) nor any gender-neutral titles such as 'Mx'. They chiefly refer to heteronormative marital status (e.g. *husband, wife, "mother-in-law"* (*MailOnline*, 19/04/2015), *marry, married*), or lack thereof (e.g. the aforementioned *ex, single*) and consequently uphold a patriarchal, heteronormative view of relationships. The aforementioned familial, and marital values and domestic normativity culminate in certain historically entrenched hegemonic ideologies regarding the ways in which women should behave. This overall sexist 'behavioural normativity' (see Table 22) reflects both traditional and contemporary patriarchal structures and stereotypes by means of showing women to not only be maternal, married, caring, non-threatening and docile 'domestic goddesses', but also emotionally intelligent and warm (e.g. adjective and adverb collocates such as *friendly, kind, nicely*) or even forcing them to be warm (e.g. "today's [politicians'] wives must smile *nicely*. Today's wives must not rock the boat." (*The Daily Mail*, 30/04/2015)).

Conversely, non-normative behaviour is also highlighted. A whole set of adjectival collocates attributing traditionally masculine properties to women are present. They describe women as *important* (albeit linked to motherhood: "what voters really respect is someone who mirrors the qualities of the most *important* female figure in their lives: their mother" (*MailOnline*, 29/04/2015)), as capable (e.g. *good, able, right, successful, sure, talented*), charismatic (e.g. the aforementioned *engaging, inspiring*), exuding power (e.g. *powerful, strong*), and thus as the opposite of the docile, dependent, subordinate, vulnerable women asserted by the stereotypical collocates (see examples such as "I stood in a room full of *successful* women in business and public life" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 20/05/2017); "an open letter in *Telegraph Women* this week, signed by a group of *powerful*

women" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 11/05/2016)). Furthermore, there are noun collocates portraying women in high-powered jobs and positions (e.g. *lawyer*, *leader(s)*, *senior*) emphasising their *independence* and *power* (see examples such as "the news came as two of Ukip's *senior* women rejected suggestions the party remains hostile to women" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 09/04/2015); "she sat on the committee of her local Women for *Independence* group" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 15/04/2015)). Additionally, there are verb collocates that further celebrate non-normative conduct by showing women to be successful (*win*, *won*). However, these material process verbs primarily refer to how "women *won* the right to vote" in 1918 (*Sunday Express*, 26/04/2015)). Women are shown to be active leaders rather than subordinate followers (e.g. the previously discussed *creating*, *engaging*, *inspiring*, *lead*, *led*). However, the low(er) number and occurrence of these collocates once again illustrate how such representations tend to fall outside the norm. These non-normative positive representations are present, but nowhere near as pervasive as the negative, normative representations discussed in detail above.

Table 22: All discursive themes in order of frequency, the corresponding collocates, and verb processes 2015-2017 - Part 5

Theme	Collocates	Agent	Patient
SOFT CONTENT	ASDA, babies, baby, BBC, cast, ceremony, child, children, cook, ex, friend, friendly, graduation, ITV, life, lives, look, loose [women], love, Macbeth, married, marry, nicely, parade, pictures, sex, single, spice [girl/s], teenage, wear wearing	cook, look, love, marry, wear, wearing	look, love, married
HETERO/CISNORMATIVE RELATIONSHIPS & FAMILY: AS A SUBORDINATE			
- RELATIONSHIP TO MEN	accompanied, boys, children, dad, dads, ex, families, family, father, fathers, grandparents, he, him, his, husband, male (L), man, married, men (L), mr, our, parents, pregnant, single, son, their, vicar[’s daughter], your	n/a	accompanied, married, patronising
- FAMILY	babies, baby, child, children, dad, dads, daughter, domestic, families, family, father, fathers, grandparents, law, married, marry, mother, mothers, parents, pregnant, son, wife	marry	married
- NORMATIVE DOMESTICITY	ASDA, babies, baby, child, children, cook, domestic, families, family, home, husband, love, loyal, married, mother, mothers, pregnant, role, sex, wife	cook, love	love, married
- MOTHERHOOD	babies, baby, child, children, daughter, grandparents, mother, mothers, parents, pregnant, son	n/a	n/a
- RELATIONSHIP STATUS	ex, husband, law, married, marry, mr, role, single, wife	marry	married
BEHAVIOURAL NORMATIVITY:			
- AS A STEREOTYPE	ASDA, care, cared, carries, child, children, cook, feel, friendly, home, kind, little, married, marry, mother, mothers, nicely, pregnant, scream, teachers, vulnerable, wife	care, carries, cook, feel, marry, scream	care, cared, married, scream
- AS AN NON-NORMATIVE OPPOSITE	able, creating, driven, engaging, good, important, independence, inspiring, lawyer, lead, leader, leaders, leadership, led, power, powerful, right, rightly, senior, strong, successful, sure, talented, win, won	creating, engaging, lead, led, win, won	creating, engaging, inspired, led

6.1.6 Objectification: age, body and identity

The last set of discursive themes deals with the further desubjectification of female voters by focusing on and/or reducing women to their age, body, health and identity markers. Firstly, there are numerous noun and adjective collocates denoting someone's *age*, which can be split into general age-related terms (e.g. *age(d)*, *born*, *generation*, [*number*]-*olds*, *year*), as well as the comparative terms 'younger', 'school'-age and 'older' (see Table 23). Firstly, even though both young(er) and old(er) ages are represented, the collocates tend towards younger ages. This is rather notable as these collocates refer to various group of women that are not yet eligible to vote and are thus not a target demographic in and of themselves. These groups include the very young (e.g. the aforementioned *baby/babies*, *child(ren)*, and *little* [girls] in "there was bad news for one *little* girl at the Ukip launch" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 23/04/2015)), and the superlative *youngest*, (secondary) *school*-age (e.g. *teenage*, both girls and mums as in "I spoke to a whole variety of single mothers, from older ladies to *teenage* mums" (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 24/04/2016)), further school domain (proper) nouns (*graduation ceremony*, *teachers* and *Katharine, Berkeley* which refers to "Katherine Lady Berkeley's School" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 18/04/2015), an academy in Gloucestershire, founded in 1394 (Katharine Lady Berkeley's School, 2020)), as well as lexically gendered terms carrying the feature [+female] which are commonly associated with youthfulness (e.g. *girl(s)*). The focus on youth could be present in order to establish a platform for future female voters. However, in the context of the other discursive themes it appears to be more likely that such youth-related terms are used either in more nefarious, patronising ways or in order to appeal to female voters on the basis of their purported motherhood. As discussed in earlier chapters, referring to women by means of the patronising terms *girl(s)* is often used to discount women in general, and from the political process in particular. On the other hand, *babies* and *children* are discussed in terms

of their connections to adult female voters which once again reinforces the focus on female voters' supposed maternal instincts and reduces women to their fertility and assumed ability and desire to conceive. The 'older' collocates comprise adjectives such as *elderly*, *eldest*, *middle[-aged]*, *old(er)* (e.g. examples such as "an *elderly* woman tells the Labour candidate she's simply "had enough"" (*The Independent*, 06/06/2017)) and nouns denoting seniority and in particular pension-related terms such as *pension*, *senior*, and the acronym *WASPI* which stands for Women Against State Pension Inequality, a campaign which "is fighting for justice for all women born in the 1950s affected by the changes to the State Pension Age (SPA)" (*WASPI*, 2021). One would think that because all 'older' women are indeed eligible to vote, as opposed to their 'younger' counterparts under the legal voting age, this group of women would be given more of a voice. However, the apparent ageism, which is partly pointed out by the inclusion of *WASPI*, appears to prevent these female voters from being more active participants in the political process. The rather prevalent focus on maternity and young children or babies among the discursive themes might play a role in this, as 'older' women, even though they might be grandmothers, might not be the main target group for childcare and maternity policies. Therefore they seem to be of lesser interest to the female voting bloc as a whole which is primarily perceived to be made up of mothers.

In addition to the emphasis on female voters' ages and purported motherhood, there are several other identity markers present among the collocates. These take the form of nouns and adjectives describing women's social class, nationality, race/ethnicity, disability, religion and sexuality. However, these terms do not function as neutral labels describing someone's identity, instead they single out non-normative identities which might be considered an 'Other'. Moreover, the lack of such markers often tends to obfuscate and ignore the existence of non-normative identities by implying that being a woman, or being British, inherently entails a certain

configuration of identities (i.e. white, cisgender, heterosexual, married, non-disabled, middle class, and either Christian or not actively religious) (hooks, 2000a). There are discourses which draw attention to this othering and the lack of representation of marginalised people by illustrating the *discrimination* of women as well as *underrepresented* minorities and *immigrants*. As shown above, women face sexism and discrimination in the media, but these sexist practices function and intersect, and consequently exacerbate, differently for all women dependent on their unique sets of identity markers. Gender constructions are multidimensional and intersect with as well as mutually constitute different social categories (Crenshaw, 1990). Consequently, women all face different patterns of discrimination.

The collocates referencing 'social class' show a mix of working, middle and upper *class*-related terms, yet they primarily single out working class identities (e.g. *benefits*, *workers*, *working*). This focus identifies their previous media underrepresentation and current underrepresentation in politics (e.g. "Leanne Wood has long championed the rights of *working class* women - a group often hit hard by Westminster" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 27/04/2015)), as does the inclusion of Myleene Klass who made a documentary about the intersections of gender, motherhood, and social class in Britain titled 'Single Mums on Benefits' (Klass, 2016). However, it also isolates working class women as a separate target demographic which does not fall under the normative notion of what a female voter is perceived to be. The 'upper' class label is not explicitly included, but alluded to by means of such terms as *Lady* and *fortune* (e.g. "the *Fortune* Most Powerful Woman International Summit in London" (*MailOnline*, 14/06/2016)) and the names of famous 'Ladies' and politicians (e.g. *Green*, *Warsi*), while its *working* and *middle* class counterparts are explicitly mentioned (e.g. "female *middle class* v *working class* : who's more likely to vote?" (*Daily Mirror*, 20/04/2015)). Working and middle class identities are further alluded to by means of

WORK domain nouns which could fit either label but are more commonly associated with working class identities (e.g. *Asda*, a lower budget supermarket, *employment*, *industry*, *job(s)*, *teachers*, *work(ers)*). *Lawyer*, which primarily refers to Miriam González Durántez'-Clegg, is the one exception as a distinctly middle or even upper class form of employment.

The 'nationality' collocates which have previously been discussed in the context of *Brexit* and *immigration* indicate a *British* nationality and identity, and pitch this against foreign or 'other' nationalities (e.g. *German*, *Spanish*) and broadly categorised ethnicities (*Asian*) and religious identities that are viewed as ethnicities (*Muslim*), all of which are perceived to be 'other', un-British or at times even incompatible with being British (e.g. Islamophobic manifestos such as "Ukip is expected to include a ban on the full veils worn by some *Muslim* women, as part of its 2017 General Election manifesto" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 02/05/2017)). These adjectives are also often nominalised and consequently they reduce voters to these facets of their identity (e.g. "I [DUP leader Peter Robinson] wouldn't trust Muslims to give me spiritual advice" (*independent.co.uk*, 24/05/2015)). This is a common strategy used to other marginalised communities, reducing them to a homogenous group with a sole focus (P. Baker, 2014) that is painted to be opposite to the national 'British' focus. The 'nationality' collocates also include non-country geographical monikers such as "a group of east-London women" (*The Guardian*, 15/06/2016) and "Worcester woman" (*The Times*, 07/05/2015) that reduce these women to their place of origin, or in the latter case refer to a nickname for the working class "classic swing voter courted so assiduously by the parties at previous elections" (*independent.co.uk*, 19/04/2015), rather than actually calling voters by their names.

Moreover, the race and ethnicity-related collocates refer primarily to the separate parts of the 'BAME' – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic – acronym (i.e. *Black*, *Asian*, *minorities*, *ethnic*) commonly used in the UK press to refer to people of colour. The acronym itself does not appear

among the collocates. However, *white* is present among the collocates, as it is used primarily in opposition to 'BAME' identities (e.g. "a retweeted image of a *white* woman surrounded by burkas" (*The Times*, 21/06/2016)). The use of the 'BAME' acronym has in fact been heavily criticised as it is first of all a rather non-specific moniker. 'Asian' is a rather broad term and so is 'ethnic minorities'. Furthermore, lumping everyone who is not white together, as well as those who identify as having a mixed identity, and labelling them as such, both labels them as an 'Other' and ignores the specific forms of discrimination people of different, potentially mixed, ethnicities encounter (DaCosta et al., 2021). Britons of Black Caribbean descent face other forms of discrimination than Britons of South Asian descent. Moreover, when one takes into account people's further identity constructions and the ways these intersect, the specificities of their discrimination change and evolve even more. Black women, white women and Black men, for example, all face discrimination, but Black women are 'purely oppressed' as bell hooks puts it, in the sense that white women and Black men are both oppressed/oppressor depending on the situation. Black men are victimised by racism, but sexism allows them to oppress women, while white women are oppressed by sexism and misogyny, racist structures allow them to also act as oppressors (hooks, 2000a). In addition to this, the acronym encompasses, yet does not specifically mention, mixed identities. The use of these terms and the lack of more specific labels fits with the overarching theme of objectification and othering, which runs through the entire corpus. Furthermore, the inclusion and use of *Muslim* as a conflation of both a religious and an ethnic identity further illustrates the broad strokes the media appears to make when it comes to the representation of marginalised identities. An attempt at representation of women of colour is made, but the sense of othering has not been dispensed with. Neither has the lack of intersectional awareness as shown by the lack of 'disability' and 'sexuality' terms and the ways in which the identity marker collocates

do not tend to appear together but rather in separate instances.

As shown in Table 23, the number of 'religion', 'disability' and 'sexuality' collocates is rather low. They only describe non-normative identities and they do so in a rather superficial manner. Firstly, *Muslim* and *vicar* are the only religion-related collocates present. The former, as mentioned above, is primarily linked to the othering and subsequent demonisation of Muslim people and specifically Muslim immigrants in the Brexit debate. No other religion is mentioned or marked. Furthermore, the other term, *vicar*, does not even refer to the voting public as it is only used in the context of describing then PM Theresa May as a 'vicar's daughter', thus once again representing her in relation to a man. Secondly, *disabled* female voters are mentioned, but not in a meaningful way, as shown by the lack of specific collocates, nor are they catered to by policies or manifestos (e.g. "Theresa May confronted by *disabled* woman angry over government cuts" (*The Independent*, 07/06/2017)). The lack of representation is in line with the erasure of disabled identities and ableist ideologies that are rather common in media discourse in general and political discourse in particular (B. A. Haller, 2010). Thirdly, the exclusion of queer women persists, as the single 'sexuality' collocate, *gay*, which only appeared as a collocate for *women* in 2017 does not refer to gay women, but rather to "women and gay people" being grouped together as people whose rights are under attack (*The Guardian*, 24/05/2017). Additionally, the lack of gender identity terms (e.g. 'trans(gender), cis(gender), non-binary) is again indicative of the hetero/cisnormative discourses discussed above. Being heterosexual and cisgender appears to be the assumed identity of female voters. Being *gay* is aberrant and outside of the norm, while trans and non-binary identities are erased entirely. Furthermore, the lack of other LGBTQ+ terms further illustrates the aforementioned queer exclusion.

The final set of objectification themes deal with a more explicitly physical manner in which female voters are objectified in 'permalection' dis-

courses. Female voters including the wives of male politicians and the female politicians which are put forward to appeal to them, are judged on their appearance, attire, health and (sexual) attractiveness, more so than their male counterparts. Women are judged within patriarchal and misogynistic parameters, and consequently they are meant to be attractive to the 'male gaze' (Mulvey, 1989). This gaze favours non-disabled, thin, cisgender bodies, and thus bodies that fall outside of that norm are singled out in this discourse (see *disabled, obese, pregnant, genital*). Bodies that are too big are seen as unfeminine and ultimately unappealing (e.g. "a panellist on ITV's Loose Women, suggested this week, in the wake of the documentary, that shops shouldn't stock clothes for *obese* women" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 23/04/2015)). Furthermore, the material process verb collocates *carries, wear*, which display low levels of semantic agency, expand on the sexist focus on women's bodies and the ways they choose to adorn said bodies (e.g. the accessories they carry "a woman *carries* an umbrella [at] the polling station" (*ExpressOnline*, 23/06/2016)). A woman's *look* appears to be more important than her opinions at times. This is reminiscent of a notorious Daily Mail cover which included the headline "Never mind Brexit, who won Legs-it!" alongside an image of PM Theresa May and SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon seated next to each other, their legs 'exposed' (Vine, 2017)³ [see Figure 15 in Appendix A.3 for an image of this cover]. The cover was heavily criticised by other news outlets such as The Guardian as being sexist and offensive (Malkin, 2017). Lastly, the focus on the 'health' of women and caring for them (see also the previously discussed HELP domain verb collocates such as *care(d), help, treat*) does not appear to include their mental health and this theme, like most themes discussed here, is once again rather non-inclusive.

³The author of this article is Sarah Vine, who is Conservative MP Michael Gove's wife.

Table 23: All discursive themes in order of frequency, the corresponding collocates, and verb processes 2015-2017 - Part 6

Theme	Collocates	Agent	Patient
AGE:	<i>age, aged, babies, baby, born, child, children, elderly, eldest, first, generation, graduation, little, middle-aged, old, older, olds, pension, school, senior, teenage, year, young, younger, youngest babies, baby, child children, girl, girls, graduation, little, school, teenage, young, younger, youngest</i>	n/a	n/a
- YOUNG(ER)	<i>elderly, eldest, middle-aged, old, older, pension, senior, WASPI</i>	n/a	n/a
- OLD(ER)	<i>Berkeley [Katharine Lady Berkeley's School], ceremony, child, children, class, graduation, Katharine, senior, teachers, teenage</i>	n/a	n/a
- SCHOOL	<i>discrimination, immigrants, immigration, minorities, underrepresented</i>	n/a	n/a
IDENTITY MARKERS:	<i>ASDA, benefits, class, employment, fortune, [Lady] Green, industry, job, jobs, [Lady] Kinnoch, Klass, lady, lawyer, middle, teachers, [Lady] Thatcher, [Lady] Warsi, WASPI, work, workers, working</i>	<i>work, working</i>	<i>working</i>
AS AN OTHER:			
- SOCIAL CLASS			
- NATIONALITY/ GEOGRAPHICAL IDENTITY	<i>Asian, British, German, immigrants, immigration, international, London [London woman], Spanish, Worcester [Worcester woman]</i>	n/a	n/a
- RACE/ETHNICITY	<i>Asian, Black, ethnic, immigrants, immigration, Muslim, white</i>	n/a	n/a
- DISABILITY	<i>able, disabled</i>	n/a	n/a
- RELIGION	<i>Muslim, vicar[']s daughter]</i>	n/a	n/a
- SEXUALITY	<i>gay</i>	n/a	n/a
OBJECTIFICATION:			
- AS A BODY:	<i>carries, disabled, face, gender, genital, look, obese, pregnant, sex, wear, wearing</i>	<i>carries, wear</i>	<i>wear, wearing</i>
- HEALTH:	<i>able, aid, care, cared, disabled, help, obese, treat, treatment</i>	<i>care, cared</i>	<i>cared, help, treat</i>
- SEXUAL:	<i>genital, rape, raped, sex</i>	n/a	<i>rape, raped</i>

6.2 Collocates and verb processes per search term: 2015-2017

The following sections will provide a more detailed insight into both the discursive themes and some of the individual collocates discussed in the previous sections. In order to do this, it will first discuss the themes observed per election campaign among all significant collocates (i.e. an MI of 3 or higher) for frequent terms 2-8: *female(s)*, *girl(s)*, *lady/ladies*, *wife/wives*, *mother(s)*, *mum(s)* and *daughters*. This will be followed by a discussion of the themes observed per election campaign among all significant collocates for both the singular and plural forms of the most frequent term: *wom*n*. For the first group of terms, the collocates of the singular and plural forms are grouped together by theme. Consequently, these groups are ranked in order of frequency, and their occurrences across the different political orientation, publication type and author gender sub-corpora as well as any significant verb processes are discussed. Subsequently, longitudinal changes per term and across all terms are discussed and compared to the overall ranking of discursive themes, as shown in Tables 18-23. The decision to separate the terms like this was made because, as shown by the many in-text examples, the main ranking of themes discussed in the previous sections is mainly based on the collocates for *wom*n* as they were much more numerous than the collocates for the other 7 terms. Thus, seeing that these other terms have been somewhat overshadowed up until now, it makes sense to single them out first and analyse them separately. Furthermore, the grouping of singular/plural collocates was chosen for these terms, as even though the separate collocates were statistically significant, their MI scores as well as their frequencies are not particularly high. It also makes more sense to look at their overall patterns, rather than a less salient sample of the top collocates per form of a term. The separate singular and plural collocates of *wom*n* do display high MI and frequency

scores however, and will therefore be analysed separately. Thus, for each year, the order, frequency and behaviour across sub-corpora of the top 10 collocates for both singular *woman* and plural *women* are analysed and ultimately compared to each other, as well as compared to the patterns observed for the other 7 terms. This way, a comprehensive overview of both individual collocates and overarching discursive themes is achieved.

6.2.1 2015 General Election

Female(s)

The collocates of *female(s)* in 2015, as shown in order of salience in Table 24 below, include most of the prevalent discursive themes discussed in Sections 6.1-6.6. All collocates occur with the singular *female*, while the plural *females* barely yielded any significant collocates. These collocates primarily appeared in right-wing, broadsheet articles written by women and primarily relate to the semantic field of POLITICS, describing female politicians in particular (e.g. [*female*] *ministers, MPs, politicians, candidates*), specifically singling out the *Lib Dem* and the *Conservative* parties. The lack of 'Labour' among the collocates is significant as the Labour party attempted to appeal to female voters in a much more explicit way than the other parties, for example, by means of the aforementioned 'pink bus' campaign. The fact that this party does not show up in the collocates speaks to the right-wing nature of the UK media landscape, but also to the (lack of) effectiveness of this campaign. Once more, female politicians appear to overshadow the women potentially voting for them in political discourse in general and female voter-focused content in particular. Furthermore, these female voters are homogenised, yet appealed to in a positive manner. For instance, the positive, yet somewhat patronising, verb *woo* is used to discuss appealing to women and notions of (numerical) representation in politics (e.g. "Harriet Harman and co.

board Labour's pink bus to *woo* female voters with 'women's manifesto'" *MailOnline*, (15/04/2015). This notion of representation and the number of women present in the political sphere also links back to the prevalence of terms and names referring to female politicians. However, female voter agency is also discussed, as voting-related nouns and agentic verbs such as *vote* show up in the data. Thus, even though female politicians appear to overshadow female voters, the latter are not wholly absent. Another main theme deals with violence against women in general and female *genital mutilation* or FGM in particular. This is partly due to it being a relevant topic to women, as well as it being a set noun cluster, making these words appear together more frequently than others and potentially heightening their perceived importance in the corpus. Lastly, in addition to the presence of function words, some other minor themes that showed up include relations to men (e.g. the oft-used construction of "*male* and female" MPs/candidates/voters) references to youthfulness (i.e. *young*) and soft, stereotypical content, describing policies and pledges as female-friendly (e.g. "a series of female-friendly pledges designed to woo struggling mothers" (*MailOnline*, 16/04/2015)).

Table 24: Female(s) 2015

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Politics	Agent	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female > Male
Desubjectification: homogenisation	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female > Male
Desubjectification: positive appeals	Patient	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	Female > Male
Violence	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female > Male
Subjectification	Agent	Right = Left	Broad = Tabloid	Female = Male
Normative relationships	n/a	Right = Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female > Male
Soft content	n/a	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	n/a
Age	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female > Male

*The '>' and '=' signs indicate whether a theme occurs more in a particular sub-corpus (e.g. 'Right >' Left' means this theme is more frequent in the right-wing sub-corpus. The n/a label indexes a (near) equal spread among the sub-corpora. No statistically significant overuse was found.

Girl(s)

The collocates of *girl(s)* in 2015, as shown in Table 25 below, also include most of the prevalent discursive themes. The predominant theme among these collocates is, unsurprisingly, age-related, as the terms ‘girl(s)’ themselves connote a young(er) age. These semantic associations are exemplified by such youth-and-family-related collocates as *baby* [girl], *little*, *teenage*, *young*. Furthermore, both the conflicting subjectification/agency and desubjectification themes are present. However, overall, a sense of desubjectification wins out. Not only are homogenising collocates more numerous than the subjectification ones (8 vs. 1), but the fact that plural ‘girls’ was accompanied by more significant collocates than singular ‘girl’ points toward the desubjectification of these girls, as do both the age-related focus as well as sex-related objectification that is also evident in the data (i.e. *call girl*). ‘Girls’ are mainly discussed as “groups of girls” (*telegraph.co.uk*, 01/05/2015), rather than on their own. The main way they are grouped together is as a teenage Ed Miliband ‘Milifandom’ and they are then discussed as a fanbase as a whole (e.g. “Ed Miliband has developed an unlikely fanbase of smitten *teenage girls*” (*The Guardian*, 22/04/2015)). Another prevalent topic among these collocates is violence against girls. In general as well as a narrow, racialised focus, often imbued with racist, Islamophobic and xenophobic language, in right-wing papers on “sex *abuse* of white girls by groups of mostly Muslim men” (*The Times*, 11/04/2015). This focus can be linked to the broader focus on immigration, ethnicity and (assumed) nationality within the Brexit debate (Cap, 2017; Jackson et al., 2016).

Table 25: Girl(s) 2015

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Age	n/a	Left = Right	Broad > Tabloid	Female > Male
Desubjectification	n/a	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	Female = Male
Violence	Patient	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	Female > Male
Normative relationships & Family	n/a	Left = Right	Broad = Tabloid	Female > Male
Identity: ethnicity	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	n/a
Subjectification	Agent	n/a	n/a	Female > Male
Objectification: sexual	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	n/a

Lady/ladies

The collocates of *lady/ladies* in 2015, as shown in Table 26 below, actually exclude most of the prevalent discursive themes. In fact, barely any of those themes feature. The main theme that is both present and expected is the group of collocates related to age. However, the content of this group of collocates is remarkably similar to the age-related collocates found among the semantic contexts of the search terms *girl(s)* (i.e. *little, young*) and consequently it differs from the expectation that *lady/ladies*

would be accompanied by collocates denoting an older age bracket. This difference can be explained by looking at the other theme that is evident: names. Aside from patronising or even demonising adjectives and references to famous characters in literature used to describe female politicians (i.e. *Iron lady* and *Lady Macbeth*), the names *Katherine* and *Berkely* show up. As mentioned before, these refer to the Katherine Lady Berkeley academy school in Gloucestershire and showcase articles on how young female voters would vote in the 2015 GE. Thus, these themes both encapsulate descriptions of (future) female voter agency and a demonisation of female politicians' agency, which differs from the overarching desubjectification theme found among the *girl(s)* collocates. The fact that these collocates mainly occur with singular *lady* also feeds into this subjectification, as *ladies* are almost never discussed as a group.

Table 26: Lady/ladies 2015

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Proper nouns: names	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female = Male
Age	n/a	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	Female = Male

Wife/wives

The collocates for *wife/wives* in 2015, as shown in Table 27 below, feature some of the most prevalent discursive themes, but not all. This is due to the lower frequency of these terms, the use of the terms themselves, as well as the fact that they mainly occur in articles from right-wing, tabloid papers, written by male journalists. Thus, the scope of the use of *wife/wives* is quite narrow. The main group of collocates here is made up of per-

sonal names and politicians' and their wives' names in particular (e.g. Miriam González Durántez'-Clegg and Samantha Cameron, wives of Nick Clegg and David Cameron respectively). Such collocates also feed into the political, class identity (i.e. the collocate 'lawyer') and the 'normative relationships' themes. González Durántez'-Clegg is the aforementioned a lawyer, but she is the only one whose profession is mentioned in addition to her relationship to a male politician. The other male politicians' wives' worth is primarily determined by the men they are linked and *loyal* to – no non-heterosexual relationships are included among the names. The marriage-related terms are obviously at least partially inherent to the terms *wife/wives* themselves, but the desubjectification terms (i.e. *all/their wives*) and soft/stereotypical content (i.e. *cook*, "smile *nicely*" (*The Daily Mail*, 30/04/2015)) need not be. Yet, they are included. Therefore, these collocates perpetuate normative frameworks of gender roles and marriage, which the small amount of subjectification collocates such as agentic *voted* do not counteract.

Table 27: Wife/Wives 2015

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Proper nouns: names	n/a	Left = Right	Broad = Tabloid	Female = Male
Normative relationships & family	Agent	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Male > Female
Politics	Agent	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Female = Male
Soft content / stereotypes	Agent = Patient	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Male > Female
Subjectification	Agent	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Male > Female
Desubjectification: homogenisation	n/a	Left = Right	Broad = Tabloid	Female = Male
Identity: class	n/a	n/a	n/a	Female > Male

Mother(s)

The collocates of *mother(s)* in 2015, as shown in Table 28 below, also lack most of the more frequent discursive themes. For example, there is little evidence of desubjectification of female voters, political terms, or explicitly negative representations. The collocates mainly denote familial bonds and relations to men which is inherent to the term *mother(s)* itself as it entails such family relationships (i.e. primarily possessive pronouns such as 'her' and 'his') as well as the dominant heteronormative discourse present in

this corpus. 'Mothers' do not seem to be heard, or viewed as voters in their own right, apart from a few instances of the verb 'to say' appearing in verbal AGENT processes (e.g. "one mother *says* she will take time to listen to what the parties have to say before making up her mind just hours before polling day" (*independent.co.uk*, 05/04/2015)). Particularly, in right-wing articles, they are linked to other voters and/or politicians. Consequently, their presence is not necessarily about them but rather a tool to humanise (often male) voters and politicians, and endear them to the public or imbue them with a sense of knowledge regarding 'women's issues' (e.g. "seven-year-old smiled and waved as she sat on Prime Minister's shoulders. *Her* mother said the Tory leader was 'charming'" (*MailOnline*, 04/05/2015); "I am political because of her," the leader of the Liberal Democrats once said of *his* mother" (*MailOnline*, 26/04/2015)). These collocations and concordances indicate a perspective that foregrounds children and male politicians rather than these 'mothers' themselves. Moreover, the working class identity and 'body' (i.e. *obese*) collocates are only present with plural *mothers*. Consequently, these collocates homogenise these women and demonise certain mothers by negatively focusing on their weight, rather than presenting them with explicit agency and room to tell their own story (e.g. "morbidly *obese* mothers have higher than usual levels of foetal deaths and of complications when giving birth" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 24/04/2015)). In addition to the aforementioned themes, significant collocates for *mother(s)* primarily included function words such as prepositions, conjunctions, and articles.

Table 28: Mother(s) 2015

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Normative relationships & family	n/a	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	Female = Male
Age	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	n/a
Subjectification	Agent > Patient	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	Female = Male
Identity: class	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female > Male
Objectification: body	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	n/a

Mum(s)

The collocates of *mum(s)* in 2015, as shown in Table 29 below lack most of the more frequent discursive themes. There is no evidence of desubjectification, objectification or subjectification of female voters, nor are there explicitly negative representations or political terms. The collocates mainly denote familial bonds and relations to men. This is partially inherent to the term *mum(s)* itself as it entails such family relationships (i.e. primarily possessive pronouns such as 'her' and 'his'), but it also indexes the apparent heteronormative discourses. 'Mums' appear to not be viewed as voters even if they are discussed within the context of political discourse. In right-wing articles in particular, much like 'mothers', they are linked to other voters and/or politicians. Consequently, their presence is not necessarily about them, but rather a tool to humanise other voters and politi-

cians (e.g. “*my* [then leader of the Green Party, Natalie Bennett] mum was someone who always helped other people, so public service always felt like part of my background” (*telegraph.co.uk*, 27/04/2015)). These collocates again indicate a perspective that foregrounds their children rather than these ‘mums’ themselves (e.g. “I grew up in Salford and *my* mum would take us to Stratford-upon-Avon to see plays” (*The Daily Telegraph*, 02/05/ 2015)). Moreover, the working class identity collocates are only present with plural *mums* (e.g. “two mums from *Asda’s* Mumdex panel” (*mirror.co.uk*, 20/04/2015)), and consequently these collocates appear to homogenise these women, obscuring their unique voices and thus weakening their agency. In addition to the aforementioned themes, collocates for *mum(s)* again primarily includes function words such as prepositions, conjunctions, and articles.

Table 29: Mum(s) 2015

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Normative relationships & family	n/a	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	Male > Female
Identity: class	n/a	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Female = Male

Daughter(s)

The collocates of *daughter(s)* in 2015, as shown in Table 30 below, also lack many of the more frequent discursive themes. There is no evidence of desubjectification or subjectification of female voters, nor are there explicitly negative representations or political terms. These notable absences are exchanged for the presence of collocates denoting kinship bonds as well as age-related terms, which are partially inherent to the term *daughter* it-

self as it entails (subordinate) family relationships and the relevance of age within those relationships. However, it is also suggestive of daughters not being viewed as voters, even if they are discussed within the context of political discourse. Particularly in right-wing articles, they are linked and subordinated to other voters and/or politicians (e.g. “she [a Lib Dem candidate] waited until *her youngest* daughter was 19 to take the full plunge into politics” (*The Observer*, 27/04/2015)). Consequently, their presence is again not necessarily about them but rather a tool to humanise often male voters and politicians. In addition to the aforementioned themes, collocates for *daughter(s)* primarily includes function words such as prepositions, conjunctions, articles, as well as linking and auxiliary verbs which were mainly present in AGENT processes (e.g. *daughter is, has*), which display lower levels of semantic agency.

Table 30: Daughter(s) 2015

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Normative relationships & family	n/a	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	Female = Male
Age	Agent = Patient	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Female > Male
Proper nouns	n/a	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Male > Female

6.2.2 2016 EU Referendum

Female(s)

The collocates of *female(s)* in 2016, as shown in Table 31 below, again include most of the prevalent discursive themes. These collocates also again

primarily appear in right-wing, broadsheet articles written by women, and all collocates occur with the singular *female*. Similar to the 2015 collocates, political terms, which mainly refer to female politicians, homogenising terms, a relation to men, and notions of representation are prominent (e.g. “if all the women were *elected*, *female representation* would jump from 32 to 40%” (*The Guardian*, 29/04/2016)), while FGM switched from being more evident in broadsheet to being more evident in tabloid papers. On the other hand, more minor themes such as names, ‘soft content’ and age have disappeared, as the group of collocates is smaller than in 2015. Interestingly, this time *Labour* as well as *Remain* show up in the collocates, while the Conservatives and Vote Leave are conspicuously absent. An explanation for this could be the fact that the average Brexiteer was both assumed and shown to be male, while the average Remain voter was female (F. Smith, 2016). Moreover, female voter agency is more prevalent, yet perhaps less empowering than in 2015, as female voters are portrayed as having low semantic agency by being more *undecided* than their male counterparts (e.g. “almost twice as *many* female voters are *undecided* about which way to vote than men” (*telegraph.co.uk*, 16/06/2016)).

Table 31: Female(s) 2016

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Politics	Agent	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female > Male
Desubjectification: homogenisation	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female > Male
Subjectification	Agent	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female > Male
Violence	n/a	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Female > Male
Normative relationships	n/a	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	Female > Male
Desubjectification: positive appeals*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

*This theme showed no clear prevalence of the type of verb process or any of the other main categories (e.g. the collocates appeared in articles from similar numbers of broadsheet/tabloid/digital sources and mixed or unknown authors).

Girl(s)

The collocates of *girl(s)* in 2016, as shown in Table 32 below, include most of the same themes as the 2015 collocates discussed above. An expected focus on (young) age is once again evident and most common among the collocates (e.g. *little, young*). Desubjectification and homogenisation collocates, as well as a focus on motherhood and family, also feature. However, female agency terms are no longer present. Other themes that no longer occur among the collocates for *girl(s)* are the ones linked to the 2015 right-

wing focus on stories featuring violence against girls. Therefore, the ‘violence’ and ‘ethnicity’ themes no longer appear. Instead, celebrity culture and celebrity opinions on Brexit feature more heavily, as *spice* was the most significant collocate for ‘girls’ in 2016 (e.g. “Euro sceptic comments she made in 1996 while she was in the *Spice Girls*” (*MailOnline*, 21/06/2016)).

Table 32: Girl(s) 2016

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Age	n/a	n/a	n/a	Male > Female
Desubjectification	n/a	Left = Right	Broad > Tabloid	n/a
Normative relationships & family	n/a	n/a	n/a	Female > Male
Soft Content	n/a	Right > Left	n/a	n/a

Lady/ladies

The collocates of *lady/ladies* in 2016, as shown in Table 33 below, like 2015, exclude most of the prevalent discursive themes. The main group of collocates is again the one related to age. However, this time, as opposed to 2015, these collocates do match the expectation that *lady/ladies* would be accompanied by collocates denoting an older age bracket (e.g. *elderly*, *old*). In addition to the semantic association, this also links to the salience of age in the Brexit debate. Furthermore, names are once again prevalent, including names of female politicians, but primarily names of ‘Ladies’ whose husbands were relevant to the Brexit debate (e.g. Ladies Archer,

Green and Kinnock). Thus, even though these women's names appear, they were not the focus of the news story. The link to their husbands, a relation to a man, is what appears to make them relevant in the eyes of a sizeable group of journalists. *Husband* and *wife* even appear among these collocates (e.g. "Sir Philip Green's *wife* Lady Green" (*The Daily Mail*, 18/06/2016) in which her name, Tina, is never mentioned). The subjectification theme, although present, thus appears to be less prevalent than in 2015. Moreover, the Brexit-related terms feature quite heavily among these collocates, as shown by the 'ethnicity'/'nationality' collocates, which hint at broader immigration themes and notions of xenophobia in the Brexit debate (e.g. "THE repulsive poster of a snarling white skinhead trying to intimidate a serenely smiling *Asian* lady has understandably provoked a storm of protest" (*The Daily Mail*, 27/05/2016)).

Table 33: Lady/ladies 2016

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Proper nouns: names	n/a	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Female = Male = Mixed
Age	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Male > Female
Normative relationships & family	n/a	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Female > Male
Identity: ethnicity	n/a	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	n/a
Subjectification	Agent	Right > Left	n/a	Male > Female

Wife/wives

The collocates for *wife/wives* in 2016, as shown in Table 34 below, are similar to the 2015 collocates in the sense that politicians' and politicians' wives' names feature heavily again, as do family terms/masculine possessive pronouns denoting a subordinate status (e.g. the many occurrences of "his wife" and the lack of her name). However, there are two prominent differences. The first one can be linked to the different electoral events being covered, as mentions of the nationalities of politicians' wives garnered a greater interest during the EU Referendum campaign than during the GE campaigns. Furthermore, agentic verbs within the semantic field of VOTING are slightly more prevalent this time and thus 'wives' appear to be given a greater voice this time around (albeit it often by their husbands side, e.g. "as he [David Cameron] and wife Samantha *cast* their votes at Methodist Hall in Westminster" (*The Independent*, 23/06/2016)). However, so do depictions of violence against women (i.e. *rape*, *murdered*) and verbs depicting female agency in a negative light (e.g. the use of *blasted* to discuss Miriam González Durántez'-Clegg, described as "Nick Clegg's wife" expressing criticism of David Cameron (*MailOnline*, 14/06/2016)). Consequently, explicitly negative, as well as more covert misogynistic representations referring to the subordinate status of the 'wife' still prevail.

Table 34: Wife/Wives 2016

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Proper nouns: names	n/a	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Male/ Mixed > Female
Politics	Agent	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Female/ Mixed > Male
Normative relationships & family	Agent	Right/ Other > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Male/ Mixed > Female
Subjectification	Agent	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Male/ Mixed > Female
Violence	Patient > Agent	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Male > Female
Nationality	n/a	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Male > Female
Identity: class	n/a	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Male > Female
Desubjectification	n/a	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	Female = Male

Mother(s)

The collocates of *mother(s)* in 2016, as shown in Table 35 below, are quite similar to the ones found in 2015 (see Table 28). These collocates also mainly denote familial bonds and relations to men, as well as some subjectification, and age-related terms (i.e. *year* and *old*). On the other hand, in 2016 class identity has disappeared, whilst references to disabilities pop up for the first time. However, ‘disability’ does not appear to be a main theme. Other differences compared to 2015 lie in the presence of the collocates *worried* and *Jodie*. Mothers are portrayed as ‘worried’, a somewhat negative representation which, even though it provides them with some semantic agency, it also portrays them as fearful of the future and fearful of a potential inability to affect the Referendum outcome (e.g. “mothers, *worried* about their children’s future” within the EU (*MailOnline*, 21/05/2016)). The *Jodie* collocate links to this potential inability to affect the outcome, as ‘mother-of-two Jodie Rose’ is not asked about her vote or opinions on Referendum issues, instead she is portrayed as saying that flooding might hit voter turnout and her mother will be unable to go vote (*MailOnline*, 23/06/2016)). Lastly, significant collocates for *mother(s)* again primarily includes function words such as prepositions, conjunctions, and articles.

Table 35: Mother(s) 2016

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Normative relationships & family	n/a	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Female = Male
Age	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Male > Female
Subjectification	Agent > Patient	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Male > Female
Desubjectification: talk about	Patient > Agent	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Male > Female
Proper nouns: names	n/a	n/a	Tabloid > Broad	n/a
Identity: disability	n/a	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Male > Female
Politics	Agent	Right > Left	n/a	Female > Male
Negative: fear	Agent	n/a	n/a	n/a

Mum(s)

The 2016 collocates of *mum(s)*, as shown in Table 36 below, like the 2015 collocates lack much evidence of desubjectification, explicitly negative representations and political terms. ‘Mums’ are again linked to (other) voters and politicians, as family, class – primarily due to the above-mentioned ‘Single Mums on Benefits’ documentary (Klass, 2016) – and normative relationships are once again present, as well as new age-related, media and

disability terms, and passive representations of female voters. ‘Mums’ are merely talked about, as their age, identities and choices are discussed. This is done by means of verbs such as *says*, *said* combined with patient verb processes (e.g. “the EU *says* mums-to-be should have 14 weeks’ maternity leave paid at a rate equivalent to sick pay” (*ExpressOnline*, 14/06/2016)), and by means of modals such as *should*, which tell ‘mums’ how to act. Yet, they do not get to have a ‘say’ themselves (e.g. “Gordon Brown: Mums *should* vote remain for their children’s sake” (*telegraph.co.uk*, 21/05/2016)). Lastly, significant collocates for *mum(s)* also primarily included function words such as prepositions, conjunctions, and articles.

Table 36: Mum(s) 2016

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Normative relationships & family	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female > Male
Political context: media	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female > Male
Age	n/a	Left > Right	Broad = Tabloid	Female > Male
Desubjectification: talk about	Patient > Agent	n/a	Broad = Tabloid	Male > Female
Identity: class	n/a	n/a	Broad > Tabloid	n/a
Identity: disability	Patient > Agent	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Male > Female

Daughter(s)

The 2016 collocates of *daughter(s)*, as shown in Table 37 below, again lack desubjectification, subjectification, and explicitly negative representations. Overall, they are rather similar to the collocates observed for 2015, as family-based terms once again prevail. However, in 2016 the age-based terms tend towards slightly younger women due to the presence of articles which discuss the graduation ceremony of Boris Johnson's daughter which took place on the day of the EU Referendum (i.e. *graduation, ceremony*). The fact that this particular daughter is not yet of voting age, but does feature in the discourse, is again exemplary of how their presence is not necessarily about them. Instead it is a tool, chiefly employed by the right-wing press, to humanise a male politician and endear him and his Vote Leave rhetoric to the voting public. The other difference with regard to 2015 lies in the presence of the Brexit-related term *immigrants* in right-wing, male author articles. This term politicises and tokenises the immigrant identity of then Conservative minister Priti Patel in particular, instead of giving voice to immigrant voters (e.g. "Ms Patel says she is well qualified to comment on the issue [of immigration] as the daughter of Indian *immigrants*" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 15/04/2016)). Lastly, function words also featured heavily among the 2016 collocates.

Table 37: Daughter(s) 2016

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Normative relationships & family	n/a	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	Female = Male
Age	n/a	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	Female = Male
Proper nouns	n/a	Right > Left	n/a	n/a
Politics	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Male > Female

6.2.3 2017 General Election

Female(s)

The collocates of *female(s)* in 2017, as shown in Table 38 below, again include most of the prevalent discursive themes. These collocates again primarily appeared in right-wing, broadsheet articles written by women, and all collocates occur with the singular *female*. Similar to the 2015 and 2016 collocates, political terms which mainly refer to female politicians, homogenising terms, FGM, relation to men, and notions of representation are prominent (e.g. “record level of female candidates in the 2017 general election” (*telegraph.co.uk*, 05/06/2017)). Furthermore, 2017 sees both a return of the minor age theme (i.e. the collocate *young*), as well as a return to references to the *Conservative* party and a lack of Labour party references. The EU Referendum campaign appeared to be an outlier in this, and the GE and political landscape order seems to have been restored. Moreover, collocates explicitly indexing female voter agency have disappeared. Fe-

male *voters* are still on politicians' radars (e.g. "the Labour leader was hoping to woo female *voters* by appearing on Woman's Hour on BBC Radio 4" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 30/05/2017)), but the verb 'to vote' for example, is no longer a significant collocate of *female(s)*.

Table 38: Female(s) 2017

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Politics	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female > Male
Desubjectification: homogenisation	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female > Male
Violence	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female = Male
Desubjectification: positive appeals	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female = Male
Normative relationships	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female > Male
Age	n/a	n/a	n/a	Female > Male
Work	n/a	n/a	n/a	Female > Male

Girl(s)

The collocates of *girl(s)* in 2017, as shown in Table 39 below, include most of the same themes as the 2015 and 2016 collocates discussed above. An expected focus on (young) age is once again evident and most common

among the collocates (e.g. *little, young*). Desubjectification and homogenisation collocates, as well as a focus on family and motherhood also feature (e.g. “nearly *half of young* girls believe there has been arise in media sexism in last six months” (*The Independent*, 05/05/2017); “*my* [then WEP leader Sophie Walker] *youngest* girl loves science and superheroes” (*ExpressOnline*, 24/04/2017), but collocates denoting female voter agency do not. For the 2017 GE, celebrity culture, or at least the Spice Girls, appear to be of lesser interest, while ‘*violence against girls*’ is present again among the collocates and thus the newspaper articles (e.g. “*violence violence against* women and girls still rife in our society” (*mirror.co.uk*, 09/05/2017)).

Table 39: Girl(s) 2017

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Desubjectification	n/a	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	Female > Male
Age	n/a	Other > Left / Right	Other > Broad / Tabloid	Female > Male
Normative relationships & family	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female = Male
Work	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female = Male
Violence	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Lady/ladies

The collocates of *lady/ladies* in 2017, as shown in Table 40 below, akin to 2015 and 2016, mainly occur with singular *lady*, continuing the theme of

subjectification. However, the collocates are also more sparse and aside from some function words, ‘names’ is the only theme that is evident. In fact, the names only refer to Margaret Thatcher, a female politician from a bygone era, comparing PM Theresa May to her, instead of referring to the situation at hand in 2017 (e.g. “Mrs May has Lady *Thatcher’s* cultural conservatism under her belt” (*telegraph.co.uk*, 07/05/2017)). Even age-related terms do not show up. Thus, both younger and older ladies were less prominent, and perhaps age in general was less of a factor during the 2017 campaign.

Table 40: Lady/ladies 2017

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Proper nouns: names	n/a	Right > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Male > Female

Wife/wives

The collocates for *wife/wives* in 2017, as shown in Table 41 below, are much more scarce than in 2015 and 2016. The plural *wives* did not yield any significant collocates. Therefore, only certain discursive themes show up. Names still prevail (e.g. *Corbyn*), function and family collocates are still present (e.g. the prevalence of ‘his wife’), but subjectification, desubjectification, negative representations, identity markers and political terms are either largely or completely absent in 2017.

Table 41: Wife/Wives 2017

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Names	n/a	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Male > Female
Normative relationships & family	n/a	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	Male > Female
Subjectification	Agent	n/a	n/a	n/a

Mother(s)

The collocates of *mother(s)* in 2017 as shown in Table 42 below, are rather scarce but share the same core theme as the 2015 and 2016 collocates: ‘normative relationships & family’. (De)subjectification, objectification, negative representations and political terms are wholly absent. The one stand-out collocate is *Theresa* which appears in right-wing tabloid articles authored by men. This is both a reference to ‘Mother Theresa’, as well as a possible dig by horse-racing pundit John McCririck and inflammatory *Daily Mail* columnist Richard Littlejohn at the fact that Theresa May does not have children and is not a mother. Her childlessness is not directly mentioned in Littlejohn’s columns, but his continued use of the reference could imply a not-so-veiled dig (e.g. “if Mother *Theresa* is in trouble in the latest polls, she has only herself to blame” (*The Daily Mail*, 19/04/2017)). Therefore, she might be viewed by some as lacking in her role as a woman. Moreover, once again most significant collocates for *mother(s)* primarily included function words such as prepositions, conjunctions, and articles.

Table 42: Mother(s) 2017

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Normative relationships & family	n/a	Right/ Other > Left	Broad > Tabloid	Female > Male
Proper nouns: names	n/a	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	Male > Female

Mum(s)

The 2017 collocates of *mum(s)*, as shown in Table 43 below, like the 2015 and 2016 collocates, lack evidence of most of the prevalent discursive themes. In fact, only family terms that are innate to the term *mum(s)* itself and function words are present. Moreover, these collocates only occur with the singular *mum* (e.g. “I grew up in a Labour household - *my Mum, my Dad, my stepfather* always voted Labour” (*telegraph.co.uk*, 11/05/2017)), while *mums* does not yield any significant collocates. ‘Mums’ therefore appear to be of lesser relevance and importance in the 2017 debate.

Table 43: Mum(s) 2017

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Normative relationships & Family	n/a	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	Female > Male

Daughter(s)

The 2017 collocates of *daughter(s)*, as shown in Table 44 below, similarly to 2015 and 2016, lack both desubjectification and subjectification, and explicitly negative representations. Overall, they are similar to the collocates observed in 2015 and 2016, as family-based terms once again prevail. However, the age-based terms observed in 2015 and 2016 are absent. Moreover, *vicar*⁴ is newly apparent this year, which indicates a subordinate link to a man, as well as a shorthand reference to Theresa May's principled values and "duty-first" character (*MailOnline*, 12/05/2017), as Theresa May was often described by means of the phrase 'vicar's daughter'. Lastly, function words again featured heavily among the collocates.

Table 44: Daughter(s) 2017

Theme	Verb Process	Pol. Orient	Pub. Type	Author Gender
Normative relationships & family	n/a	Right > Left	Broad = Tabloid	Female = Male
Desubjectification	n/a	Right > Left	Tabloid > Broad	n/a
Identity: religion	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

⁴This term shows up in the collocates for the 2017 overall corpus but is not significant for any of the sub-corpora.

6.3 Discourse development and change: 2015-2017

6.3.1 Gendered search terms

Female(s)

Over the years, the collocates for *female(s)*, akin to many of the other terms, mainly occur in right-wing, broadsheet papers, and display a steady decrease during the 2015-2017 period. They also mainly occur with the singular version of the term, and in articles written by female authors. The main themes throughout the years encompass political terms which mostly refer to female politicians, homogenising terms, FGM, a relation to men and notions of representation. Female politicians, Conservative ones for the GE campaigns and Labour ones for the EU Referendum campaign, appear to be the main focus, rather than female voters. In 2015 and especially in 2016 female voter agency is discussed, but this topic appears to be absent in 2017. Could Brexit indeed be viewed as a 'feminist issue', more so than the two general elections? Another explanation for this decline in attention for female voters could be the uproar and (political) concerns caused by the EU Referendum vote. Perhaps, the voices and needs of female voters were snowed under in 2017 due to an alleged need to focus on issues being faced by the entire voting public.

Girl(s)

Throughout the permaelection period, the collocates for *girl(s)* mainly occur in right-wing, broadsheet papers, and display a steady decrease which is similar to the drop in frequency of the search term itself. Desubjectification expressed through homogenising terms, as well as maternal bonds exemplified by family terms and age-objectification prevailed throughout the years. Meanwhile, subjectification themes appeared infrequently, and violence against girls only featured during the GE campaigns of 2015 and

2017. The EU referendum on the other hand brought a focus on celebrity culture. Overall, (explicit) female agency was largely absent from the context of *girl(s)*.

Lady/ladies

The collocates for *lady/ladies*, akin to the collocates for the other term carrying connotations of age (i.e. *girl(s)*), mainly occur in right-wing, broadsheet papers, and display a sharp decrease between 2016 and 2017. However, as opposed to the overarching desubjectification theme found among the collocates for *girl(s)*, female agency was more prevalent among the collocates for *lady/ladies*, where it was at times celebrated and at times demonised. Overall, two main themes emerge. Firstly, the names of and nicknames for female politicians appear in all three years. The (nick)names are seemingly used to patronise, disparage, or compare current female politicians to Margaret Thatcher, or to focus on their husbands. The named women do not tend to be in charge of their own stories, as their agency appears to be lacking. Secondly, age is a major theme in 2015 and 2016, but the collocates behave in opposite manners: in 2015 they signify youth, while in 2016 they signify old age. Young female voices were heard during the 2015 GE campaign, while they were overlooked in 2016. The opposite is true for older female voters, as they were overlooked in 2015, yet heard in 2016. Lastly, the 2016 corpus adds salience to women's ethnicities and issues regarding immigration.

Wife/wives

Across the 2015-2017 period, the collocates for *wife/wives* primarily occurred in right-wing, tabloid, male-authored articles and show a sharp decrease in 2017, which is in line with the decline in frequency of these terms themselves. Kinship bonds and heteronormative relationships, expressed

by politicians' and politicians' wives' names, prevailed throughout the entire permalection period. All the while, subjectification themes appeared infrequently and objectification themes were wholly absent. The main development, aside from the decrease in collocates and themes, lies in the switch from more soft content in 2015 to a more aggressive and divisive discourse in 2016. The Brexit debate evoked a rather harsh political discourse, exemplified in the previous chapter by the evident Islamophobic and homophobic EU Referendum discourses, and exemplified in the 2016 collocates by means of depictions of violence against women, the lower status of women, as well as negative denunciations of female agency. Overall, the collocates for *wife/wives* display the same overarching tone of female subordination as the set of themes discussed in the previous sections.

Mother(s)

The collocates for *mother(s)* also show a steady decrease. Kinship bonds and heteronormative relationships again prevailed throughout the entire permalection period, while age-related terms and subjectification terms also featured prominently in 2015 and 2016. 'Mothers' get to have their 'say' on some occasions and they are even shown to 'vote', but in doing so they are also portrayed to be fearful and 'worried'. The family terms are inherent to the term *mother(s)* itself, but they, in combination with the other themes, also indirectly indicate the desubjectification of these mothers. They are backgrounded in favour of their, apparently more important, children. Explicit desubjectification terms and themes, as well as any explicitly negative collocates were notably absent. Overall, the number of collocates for *mother(s)* was too small to encompass all the discursive themes present throughout the corpora.

Mum(s)

The number of collocates for *mum(s)* fluctuate heavily. They spike in 2016 while the lowest number is observed in 2017 (28 vs. 39 vs. 10). The 2016 spike appears to have been caused by a documentary concerning ‘single mums on benefits’ by TV presenter Myleene Klass (2016). Familial bonds and heteronormative relationships prevailed throughout the entire permaelection period, while social class-based terms also featured quite prominently in 2015 and 2016. The family terms are inherent to the term *mum(s)* itself. Yet, similarly to the collocates for *mother(s)*, they also indirectly indicate the desubjectification of these mums as they are backgrounded to or conflated with their children/families. They do not index desubjectification directly, as explicit desubjectification themes as well as any explicitly negative collocates were notably absent. Overall, the number of collocates for *mum(s)* was too small to encompass all the discursive themes present throughout the corpora.

Daughter(s)

Lastly, *daughter(s)*'s significant collocates also dwindle from 2015 to 2017, from 26 collocates in 2015 to 22 in 2015 and only 12 in 2017. These collocates generally appear in right-wing articles authored by men. Subordinate family bonds prevailed throughout the entire permaelection period, while age-based terms also featured heavily. As discussed previously, these two themes are inherent to the term *daughter(s)* themselves, but they also indirectly indicate the desubjectification of these daughters by linking them to voters and politicians without really considering their own voices. Moreover, the explicit desubjectification and subjectification themes as well as any explicitly negative collocates were also notably absent from these collocates. The same holds for identity markers and political terms, except for the presence of the Brexit-related collocate *immigrants*

in 2016 and the religious, duty-bound, identity term *vicar*['s daughter] in 2017. Overall, the collocates for *daughter(s)* were also too infrequent to encompass all the discursive themes present throughout the corpora.

6.3.2 Thematic overviews: normativity, age, personalised content, and a decreasing voice

2015 General Election

The aggregate discursive themes found among the 2015 collocates for *female(s)*, *girl(s)*, *lady/ladies*, *wife/wives*, *mother(s)*, *mum(s)* and *daughters*, as shown in Table 45 below, include all of the main themes (i.e. desubjectification, subjectification, violence, demonisation and politics) but do display distinct differences to the general overview of themes discussed in Section 6.1. Firstly, as mentioned throughout this chapter, collocates relating to normative relationships, kinship and maternity, as well as age-related collocates are more prevalent with the above-mentioned 7 search terms than with *wom*n*. The higher occurrence of these discourses is partially inherent to the familial terms (i.e. *wife/wives*, *mother(s)*, *mum(s)*, *daughter(s)*) and age-association terms (i.e. *girl(s)*, *lady/ladies*). Moreover, there are certain differences that are not necessarily inherent in these terms which are worth further consideration. A trend of personalisation and tabloidisation is also present, as both politicians' and voters' names and soft content are more prevalent than in the general overview. However, this focus on personal affairs is not all mere gossip fodder, as references to and even celebrations of female voter agency are more prominent than the desubjectification which dominated the general overview. The personalisation which yielded names and interest in women's private lives also appears to have granted them higher levels of agency and a louder voice.

Table 45: Theme Overview 2015

Rank	Theme	Rank	Theme
1.	Normative Relationships & family	8.	Violence
2.	Age	9.	Soft Content
3.	Subjectification: female voter agency	10.	Desubjectification: positive appeals
4.	Proper nouns: names	11.	Identity: body
5.	Desubjectification	-	Identity: ethnicity
6.	Identity: class	13.	Demonisation
7.	Politics	-	Sexual

*The '-' signs indicate an equal presence/ranking (e.g. there is no number 12, as there are two number 11s).

2016 EU Referendum

Akin to the 2015 collocates, the aggregate discursive themes of 2016 for *female(s)*, *girl(s)*, *lady/ladies*, *wife/wives*, *mother(s)*, *mum(s)* and *daughters*, as shown below in Table 46, include the main themes (i.e. desubjectification, subjectification, violence and politics). Furthermore, collocates relating to normative relationships, family and maternity, as well as age-related collocates are again more prevalent with these terms than with *wom*n*. In addition to these similarities to the themes of 2015, the 2016 themes also display a few differences. In 2016, violence, desubjectification and politics are ranked higher than in 2015, while soft content is ranked lower. Additionally, appearance-related and sexual terms have disappeared, and disability collocates have appeared in their stead. This could all be indicative of the aforementioned more serious and more aggressive discourse surrounding the EU Referendum, as more distinct lines were drawn in the political sand. Lastly, the influence of the EU Referendum is also visible

in the appearance of new themes such as nationality and media, as the referendum gained heightened media attention and people's nationalities gained relevance in a debate dominated by the topic of immigration.

Table 46: Theme Overview 2016

Rank	Theme	Rank	Theme
1.	Normative Relationships & family	-	Identity: disability
2.	Age	10.	Violence
3.	Desubjectification	11.	Media
4.	Proper nouns: names	12.	Identity: ethnicity
5.	Politics	-	Soft Content
6.	Subjectification: female voter agency	14.	Desubjectification: positive appeals
7.	Violence	-	Identity: nationality
8.	Identity: class	16.	Negative: fear

2017 General Election

The 2017 aggregate themes for *female(s)*, *girl(s)*, *lady/ladies*, *wife/wives*, *mother(s)*, *mum(s)* and *daughters*, as shown in Table 47 below, also comprise the overarching corpus's main themes (i.e. desubjectification, subjectification, violence and politics), but this year differs more from the other years than 2015 and 2016 did from each other. A large group of themes present in 2015, 2016 and the general overview, are no longer present in 2017 (e.g. class identity, ethnicity, soft content). Moreover, even though the top theme remains the same, 'age', which was the other theme which set the collocates for these more minor search terms apart from the general overview, is ranked much lower in 2017. In general, the 2017 campaign

sees a decrease in personalised, identity-related collocates. The much higher rank of desubjectification collocates relative to subjectification supports this notion. Overall, female voters appear to have a smaller voice in 2017, as the post-Brexit debate focuses on broader topics.

Table 47: Theme Overview 2017

Rank	Theme	Rank	Theme
1.	Normative Relationships family	6.	Work
2.	Proper nouns: names	7.	Politics
3.	Desubjectification	8.	Identity: religion
4.	Violence	-	Subjectification: female voter agency
-	Age	10.	Desubjectification: positive appeals

2015-2017 overview: a decreasing voice for female voters?

Overall, the themes for *female(s)*, *girl(s)*, *lady/ladies*, *wife/wives*, *mother(s)*, *mum(s)* and *daughters* are more similar to each other and the general overview than dissimilar. Family and age-related collocates are, as expected, prevalent across the entire period. In fact, the majority of themes that occur, appear across the entire period (i.e. normative relationships and family, age, politics, names, desubjectification, subjectification, positive appeals). However, the 2015 and 2016 campaigns are more similar to each other than to 2017. Thus, a post-Brexit shift is clearly visible. It is a shift to less soft, but also less personalised and less agentic representations of female voters, as subjectification collocates decrease over the years and are barely even present in 2017. This also seems indicative of a lesser voice for women in 2017 and a renewed focus on broader topics.

6.4 Wom*n collocates: an in-depth look

The final section of this chapter will deal with the collocates of singular *woman* and plural *women* per year, as well as per sub-corpus. It will therefore analyse the top 10 collocates per term per year, the collocates' frequency and their prevalence and possible overuse per sub-corpus, as well as their contexts.

6.4.1 Wom*n 2015

The top 10 collocates for singular *woman* and plural *women* in 2015, ranked by MI, as shown in Tables 48 and 49 below, primarily relate to how female agency is represented, both in the presence of female agency and its absence. Its presence is mainly apparent among the collocates for singular *woman*, while the overall main discourse of desubjectification and its oft-accompanying weakened sense of or even a lack of agency, is more prevalent among the plural *women* collocates (see the homogenising terms *short-lists*, *quotas*, *equalities*, *equality*, and the PATIENT verbs processes of *alienate*, *ensured*). Regarding singular *woman*, agency appears to be feted in some ways, but demonised in more ways, while a lack of agency and notions of desubjectification are also present (see the previously discussed “Worcester woman” nickname to refer the “classic swing voter courted so assiduously by the parties at previous elections” (*independent.co.uk*, 19/04/2015), rather than speak or refer to female voters by their own names). The top term for singular *woman bigoted* relates to a campaign trail incident from the 2010 GE campaign, which remains relevant throughout the permaelection period: Gillian Duffy, a Labour voter, was labelled a “bigoted woman” by then Labour PM Gordon Brown after she voiced her concerns regarding immigration (Mullany, 2011). Although the content of her comments may indeed have been ‘bigoted’, this also exemplifies a focus on negatively labelling or even demonising women who speak up in the political debate.

The no. 4 and 5 collocates, *dangerous* and *heckled*, are further examples of this demonisation of both female voters and politicians. For instance, SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon was labelled “the world’s most dangerous woman” by TV personality Piers Morgan and *The Daily Mail*, for daring to voice her opinion, campaign against the Conservative party, and support a referendum on Scottish independence (*MailOnline*, 03/04/2015). Furthermore, the use of the negatively loaded verb *heckled* to describe a female voter speaking up against PM David Cameron at a campaign event also connotes a diminishing view of the ‘heckler’s’ speech. On the other hand, the presence of the agentic terms *answered*, *powerful* and *voter* describe women as having agency and power in political discourse. A similar celebration of agency is displayed through the following collocates for plural *women*: *inspiring* and *loose*, the latter of which refers to the TV talk show ‘Loose Women’ where a panel of famous women discuss a range of topics. Furthermore, the presence of *pregnant* for plural *women* shows how women’s voices and needs were considered during the 2015 campaign, as this collocate refers to a pledge by parliament to increase funding for mental health services aimed at “*pregnant* women and mothers dealing with depression” and to create direct access to mental health services for pregnant women and new mums (*The Daily Telegraph*, 30/03/2015).

However, both the notion of agency being taken from women, and others asserting their agency over women are also prominent. This is evidenced by the presence of the violence theme as represented by the collocates *beater* for the singular and *refuges* for the plural form of *wom*n* (e.g. “a young Tory wannabe - who is today revealed as a convicted woman *beater*” (*Daily Mirror*, 10/04/2015); “The Green Party wants to provide core funding for crisis centres and women’s *refuges*” (*The Sun*, 12/04/2015). Lastly, no clear political orientation, publication type, or author gender⁵ patterns

⁵Other than the prevalence of singular *woman* in the male sub-corpus and plural *women* in the female corpus, which was discussed in Chapter 5.

appear to be present among the use of the collocates.

Table 48: Top 10 collocates for woman: 2015

Rank	Collocate	Freq. (L/R)	MI stat.	Pol. Orient	Pub. type	Gender
1	bigoted	17 (17/0)	10.51016	Right/Other	Broad	Male
2	beater	5 (0/5)	10.26819	Left	Tabloid	Male
3	Worcester	11 (11/0)	9.54771	Right/Other	Broad	Male
4	dangerous	30 (30/0)	9.03297	Left/Right	Broad/ Tabloid	Female/ Male
5	heckled	5 (5/0)	8.68322	n/a*	n/a	n/a
6	answered	5 (1/4)	8.1389	n/a	n/a	n/a
7	Asian	5 (5/0)	7.03937	n/a	n/a	n/a
8	powerful	5 (5/0)	6.98278	Right	Broad	n/a
9	young	41 (41/0)	6.65276	n/a	n/a	Male
10	voter	8 (0/8)	6.10077	Right	Tabloid	Male

*The n/a label indexes a (near) equal spread of the collocate among the sub-corpora.
No overuse was found.

Table 49: Top 10 collocates for women: 2015

Rank	Collocate	Freq. (L/R)	MI stat.	Pol. Orient	Pub. type	Gender
1	shortlists	18 (0/18)	8.79846	Left/Right	Broad/ Tabloid	Female
2	refuges	9 (0/9)	8.1355	Right	Tabloid	Female
3	equalities	6 (0/6)	8.09802	n/a	n/a	n/a
4	inspiring	17 (17/0)	8.09151	Right	Broad/ Tabloid	Female
5	loose	12 (10/2)	8.04358	n/a	n/a	Female
6	ensured	6 (6/0)	7.89157	Right	Tabloid	Male
7	alienate	5 (5/0)	7.83499	n/a	n/a	n/a
8	violence	42 (36/6)	7.72317	Left/Right	Broad	Female Male
9	pregnant	19 (17/2)	7.70654	Right	Broad	Male
10	quotas	8 (4/4)	7.62854	n/a	Broad	Female

6.4.2 Wom*n 2016

The top 10 collocates for singular *woman* and plural *women* in 2016, ranked by MI, as shown in Tables 50 and 51 below, again require a discussion of the presence and absence of female agency. For singular *woman*, agency is clearly demonised, while desubjectification is the name of the game for both singular *woman* and plural *women*. *Bigoted* is once again the no. 1 collocate for *woman*, while the presence of *scream* and absence of *voter*, which was a top 10 collocate in 2015, provide further proof for the demonisation of female voters' agency. The fact that the 'bigoted woman' incident is still being referenced and the 'scream' in question primarily refers to a Leave campaign video describing the supposed horror of Turkey joining the EU in which a pre-recorded woman's scream is added in for dramatic effect is also indicative of a lack of real representation for (current) female voters (i.e. "a woman's *scream* can be heard, which does not occur in the raw footage" (*The Independent*, 20/06/2016)). Even though women are being called *powerful* again and there is talk of a *Fortune* [Most] *Powerful Woman Summit*, *shortlists* and the Women's Equality Party is being discussed, they are also being referred to by their appearance without being given a voice (e.g. *carries* and *umbrella* in the description of a picture included in multiple articles: "a woman *carries* an *umbrella* and polling station sign in North London" (*ExpressOnline*, 23/06/2016) – this woman is not interviewed, merely pictured). Throwbacks to the struggle for *suffrage* also divert the focus from contemporary female voters. This lack of representation is being pointed out by the press themselves, however, as *underrepresented* is the no. 1 collocate for *women* (e.g. "it is not only in leadership roles that women are *underrepresented*. Women are *underrepresented* across all areas of our cultural life" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 11/05/2016)). Thus, there is some talk about female voters (see PATIENT *cared* in "if the EU really *cared* about women" (*ExpressOnline*, 24/05/2016)), and the violence committed against them (i.e. *rape*, *detention* in "*detention* of pregnant women

at immigration centres” (*The Observer*, 17/04/2016)), but this also means that desubjectification prevails. Moreover, the 2016 EU Referendum also makes itself known in the collocates. Firstly, the main topic of immigration is evident as the collocate *Asian* moves up the ranks and displays a higher MI than in 2015 (9.73 vs 7.04). The presence of this identity marker could have indicated an interest in women of Asian descent as a voting bloc, but instead it relates to how others depict said women (e.g. “Controversial EU referendum ad that shows ‘white thug’ berating *Asian* woman sparks outrage” (*ExpressOnline*, 25/05/2016)). Secondly, while 2015 focused on ‘young’ female voters, the 2016 corpus displays a focus on *elderly* female voters, which can be explained by the average Brexiteer being described as older rather than younger. As discussed above, this age-switch is also apparent among the collocates of the other gendered terms. Lastly, similar to the other terms’ collocates and frequency breakdowns, these collocates mostly occurred in right-wing, tabloid and female authored articles and thus no clear differences in the use of these collocates can be found.

Table 50: Top 10 collocates for woman: 2016

Rank	Collocate	Freq. (L/R)	MI stat.	Pol. Orient	Pub. type	Gender
1	bigoted	14 (14/0)	10.6069	Right	Broad/ Tabloid	Male
2	fortune	5 (5/0)	10.06489	Right	Tabloid	Male
3	umbrella	8 (0/8)	9.79955	Right	Tabloid	Mixed
4	scream	5 (3/2)	9.76533	Other	Other	Male
5	Asian	18 (18/0)	9.73069	Right	Tabloid	Female/ Male
6	carries	8 (0/8)	9.158	Right	Tabloid	Mixed
7	elderly	13 (13/0)	9.09945	Right	Tabloid	Female
8	summit	5 (0/5)	8.95798	Right	Tabloid	Male
9	handing	6 (0/6)	8.17039	n/a	Tabloid	n/a
10	powerful	5 (5/0)	7.63605	Right	Tabloid	Male

Table 51: Top 10 collocates for women: 2016

Rank	Collocate	Freq. (L/R)	MI stat.	Pol. Orient	Pub. type	Gender
1	underrepresented	6 (2/4)	9.79883	Right	Broad	Female
2	discounts	5 (5/0)	9.5358	Right	Tabloid	Female
3	pregnant	37 (37/0)	8.99036	Left/Right	Broad/ Tabloid	Female/ Male
4	shortlists	6 (0/6)	8.95084	n/a	Broad	Female
5	suffrage	11 (1/10)	8.6733	Other	Other	n/a
6	cared	6 (6/0)	8.5358	Right	Tabloid	Female
7	raped	8 (0/8)	8.21387	Right	Tabloid	n/a
8	loose	8 (8/0)	7.95084	Left	Tabloid	Female Male
9	equality	52 (2/50)	7.86992	Left/Right	Broad/ Other	Female/ Mixed
10	detention	10 (10/0)	7.85773	Left	Broad	Male

6.4.3 Wom*n 2017

The top 10 collocates for singular *woman* and plural *women* in 2017, ranked by MI, as shown in Tables 52 and 53 below, are in many ways similar to the 2015/2016 collocates. Female agency is both celebrated (i.e. *powerful, talented, agentic tells* (e.g. "I am with the Labour leader - we should stay in', another woman *tells* Mr Benn" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 16/05/2016)) and demonised (i.e. the phrase *bloody difficult*), and women are judged and referenced by their appearance (e.g. *wear(ing)* in "a woman in the front row *wearing* a giant Union Jack jumper could barely sit still all night" (*The Independent*, 19/04/2016)). Additionally, identity markers are used in support of xenophobic and Islamophobic anti-immigration discourses, not to appeal to a certain group of voters, but to talk about or even verbally attack these voters (i.e. *Asian* in 2015 and 2016 vs. *Muslim* in 2017). Meanwhile, desubjectification also emerges as a significant theme once again (i.e. *shortlists, ballots, refugees*). This desubjectification does appear

to take a more positive approach in 2017, however, as shown by the high frequency and high(er) ranks of *equality/equalities*. Women are still being talked about rather than consulted, but now equality is prioritised over mere (under)representation. The no. 1 collocate *WASPI* (Women Against State Pension Inequality) for *women* also supports this notion of a fight against inequality.

Some differences or developments in comparison to 2015-2016 lie in an increased focus on (female) politicians and another age-switch. The phrase 'bloody difficult' of which both elements appear among the top 10 collocates of *woman* at no. 1 and 4, refer to PM Theresa May dubbing herself a "bloody difficult woman" and the press running with it. The inclusion of *hour, radio* refers to Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's aforementioned fateful appearance on the radio show 'Woman's Hour'. The media focuses on these politicians, and how they talk about or try to attract female voters (i.e. Corbyn's radio appearance on a woman-focused show) rather than the voters themselves. Lastly, the age-related top collocate has now switched from 'young' in 2015 to 'elderly' in 2016 to *middle[-aged]* women in 2017 (e.g. "Mr Speaker, while out canvassing at the weekend I attempted to strike up a conversation with a *middle-aged* woman" (*telegraph.co.uk*, 20/04/2016)). Has a 'middle ground' been found, or are the media perhaps trying to desubjectify women even more by appealing to the largest age-related female voting bloc? Lastly, most collocates appear in right-wing, broadsheet and female authored articles, and no clear patterns of different uses of these collocates were found.

Table 52: Top 10 collocates for woman: 2017

Rank	Collocate	Freq. (L/R)	MI stat.	Pol. Orient	Pub. type	Gender
1	bloody	14 (14/0)	9.22552	Right	Broad/ Tabloid	Female/ Male
2	hour	33 (0/33)	8.76953	Right	Tabloid	Female/ Male
3	powerful	6 (4/2)	7.91002	Right	Broad	Female
4	difficult	17 (17/0)	7.52987	Right	Broad/ Tabloid	Female/ Male
5	radio	9 (9/0)	7.26616	Right	Broad	Male
6	Muslim	13 (12/1)	7.24413	Left/Right	Broad/ Tabloid	Male
7	tells	6 (0/6)	6.97928	n/a	n/a	n/a
8	wearing	5 (1/4)	6.83963	n/a	n/a	n/a
9	middle	5 (5/0)	6.23759	n/a	n/a	n/a
10	whose	5 (0/5)	6.09239	n/a	n/a	n/a

Table 53: Top 10 collocates for women: 2017

Rank	Collocate	Freq. (L/R)	MI stat.	Pol. Orient	Pub. type	Gender
1	WASPI	10 (10/0)	8.82187	Right	Tabloid	Female/ Male
2	shortlists	6 (0/6)	8.82187	n/a	n/a	n/a
3	talented	5 (5/0)	8.1438	n/a	n/a	Female
4	refuges	10 (1/9)	8.05634	Other	Broad	Female
5	died	26 (11/15)	8.03046	Left/Right	Broad/ Tabloid	Male
6	equalities	16 (0/16)	7.96389	Other	Broad/ Other	Female
7	equality	67 (4/63)	7.55705	Left/Right/ Other	n/a	Female/ Male
8	wear	12 (0/12)	7.19738	Right	Tabloid	Male
9	Muslim	35 (35/0)	7.1698	Left/Right	n/a	Female/ Male
10	ballots	6 (4/2)	7.01452	Right	n/a	Male

6.4.4 **Wom*n overview 2015-2017: an increase in desubjectification & a decrease in agency**

Overall, the themes present among the collocates for singular *woman* and plural *women* differ quite significantly from the themes evident for the other top gendered search terms discussed above. Both desubjectification and subjectification collocates are more frequent, while, as expected, normative relationships, family and age-related collocates are less prevalent for *wom*n*. *Wom*n* as terms are not as explicitly semantically associated with the aforementioned domains. However, they are both implicitly and explicitly linked with motherhood in a broader sense, as the next chapter will show. Additionally, this smaller presence of the family and age-related collocates makes a case for the inclusion of the family search terms. One could argue that their inclusion will skew the corpus toward family/maternity themes. However, the significance of those themes would have not appeared to such a degree, even though they are very much part of the discourse, if only the more general search terms had been used to build the corpus. In fact, it shows when there is a discussion of family issues and rights, women are discussed as mothers/wives, as the (normative) roles they fulfil, rather than the people they are.

Furthermore, the age-switch observed among the other terms' collocates is evident here, as the focus shifts from 'young' women to 'elderly' women to 'middle-aged' women over the permalection period. Moreover, the top 10 collocates for *wom*n* also display several further longitudinal developments. Desubjectification is a major theme across the years. For example, the collectivising collocate *shortlists* is ever-present. In fact, it becomes more prominent as the years go on. In 2015, the collocates are more focused on female voters themselves and *voter* is even a top 10 collocate. In 2016 and 2017 on the other hand, the collocates show a shift to more 'talk about' female voters and a focus on their appearance, rather than talk or actions done by them. This might be linked to a shift in more of the top 10

collocates appearing in right-wing articles. This shift away from women's voices being heard mirrors the decrease in agentic representations of female voters observed among the other gendered terms' collocates. Meanwhile, the change between 2016 and 2017 lies in the difference in focus. In 2016 '(under)representation' is the main theme, whereas in 2017 representation is displaced by the notion of 'equality'. Mere representation no longer appears to be enough, if equality is not achieved. While this seems to be a positive change, it does happen at the cost of female voters' agency. Agentic representations are still present but less prevalent in 2017, while celebrations of agency such as *powerful* as well as demonisations of agency are a constant throughout the years. As a last point of interest, the EU Referendum once again appears to display a more aggressive tone than the two general elections, as the demonisation of female agency is at its highest in 2016.

Chapter 7

Discourses: Social Actors & Legitimation

This final analytical chapter will build on the frequency and context analyses of the previous two chapters by casting a wider net concerning the representation of female voters. It will analyse prototypical articles and headlines in order to address the three main RQs as well as their sub-questions regarding the characteristics of female voter representation, and the development of its discourses throughout the permalection period (see Section 1.2.1.). In doing so, it will provide the final step in addressing research sub-questions such as who is included and who is excluded from the category of the 'female voter'? How are institutionalised power asymmetries between (and among) groups of women and men sustained in UK press representations of female voters, and who constructs and perpetuates the image of the female voter?

More specifically, this chapter will develop the previous chapter's collection of data-driven discursive themes in both diachronic and synchronic ways. The emergent discursive themes will serve as a starting point as I will trace their developing and changing realisations per year as well as through the permalection period by means of analyses of headlines and

seven full-length articles¹ (i.e. 3 articles from 2015, and 2 each from 2016 and 2017).² The discourse analyses chiefly employ van Leeuwen's (1996) taxonomy of social actor representation. I combine this approach with secondary applications of and references to stance-taking and evaluations which are indebted to appraisal theory and legitimisation strategies (Cap, 2008; J. R. Martin & White, 2003; van Leeuwen, 2007). This approach will also contain a strong focus on the contextualisation of semantic agency and grammatical action. Where is the agency located, does this representation and realisation bestow, deny, or obscure agency? This set of approaches was chosen to cover the many changing and overlapping social roles, practices, and ideologies present in the intersecting realms of political and media discourse as well as the attitudes, emotions, and judgments, which can be seen as elements and consequences of said ideologies (Koller, 2014), in a systematic way. For example, the physical 'act' of voting is merely ticking a box but the consequences are far-reaching and intricate.

The first step in this analysis is then to identify the social actors that are present within the texts. I will identify them in a more structured and fine-grained manner when discussing the separate themes, headlines and articles. However, I would like to start with an overview of the most salient features, i.e. the social actors or more specifically the social actor roles that consistently show up throughout the corpus. The 'roles' the social actors play remain the same across the texts included in the corpus, but they are performed and represented differently as well as inhabited by different persons, or groups of people depending on the specific publication and consumption contexts of each newspaper and article. For example, the

¹See Appendix B for a compilation of the seven full-length articles.

²The 2015 corpus, being the largest at 777 articles and having a much higher article count per day of the campaign than the other two corpora (19.9 per day vs 10.7 and 8.4), provided and included more salient data in terms of search term frequencies, collocations, and discourse themes (see Chapters 5 and 6) than the other yearly corpora and therefore three articles rather than two were included from this corpus.

role of Prime Minister shifts from David Cameron to Theresa May in 2017, MPs are voted in or out, and the role of both the reader and the author are played by different people (almost) every time. Additionally, experts and voices of authority differ per source, and 'us vs. them' narratives change depending on a newspaper's political orientation and Brexit stance. Furthermore, the role that is perhaps most pertinent to this study, the role of the female voter, can also be played by different specific named subjects, as well as groups of women who might be collectivised differently depending on the context.

Moreover, these roles can also be overdetermined in the sense that they can be inhabited by multiple different actors and/or actors can play several different, overlapping or even seemingly inverse roles at once. In fact, the social practice of politics can be described as being overdetermined in and of itself. For instance, politicians are also voters, journalists can vote, and a newspaper might ask a politician to write an article and play the role of a columnist. Thus, social actors can simultaneously inhabit roles that are viewed as [+ voter] and [- voter]. Consequently, such overdetermination might foster delegitimation, as connecting two practices might weaken both or transfer questionable features from one to the other. Conversely, when only one role is mentioned, full agency might be denied, or an author might obscure part of their own identity for a different purpose.

The set of overarching roles played by the social actors present in this study's corpus can be given the following ad hoc labels. There are singular and plural *voters*³ primarily functionalised by what they 'do' (vote), who can be split in a multitude of sub-groups, of which *female voters* is the most salient to this study. *Female voters* can also be divided into further sub-groups such as *Brexiters* and *Remainers*. However, as demonstrated

³Voters who are allowed to vote in general elections: these exclude such politically marginalised groups as asylum seekers, refugees, people (usually women) on spouse and family visas, and immigrants who do not qualify as British, Irish or Commonwealth citizens.

by Chapters 5 & 6, *mothers* are both shown to be the most salient group of female voters, and equated to the group at large: a female voter often equals a mother. Female voters are identified by their relational identification (e.g. by means of postmodifying prepositional phrases such as “mother-of-five”).

Wives of (male) politicians are another group of relationally identified social actors. Identified by who they are, in relation to the men in their lives, and functionalised by what they do (e.g. by accompanying their husbands on the campaign trail). They can also play the role of *female voters* while they are also adjacent to *politicians*, without being actual politicians or being elected by the public, by virtue of their proximity to their husbands’ political positions and power. However, they do not hold any institutional power themselves. Furthermore, there are the abstract actors *the NHS, politics, government* (often spatialised as ‘Westminster’), as well as the more concrete groups of *Britons, immigrants, suffragettes*, and *politicians* themselves. The latter group consists of, among others, *MPs, Prime Ministers, Ministers* as well as specifically gendered (both male and female) versions of the aforementioned roles. Context-specific *experts* or voices of authority (e.g. doctors and midwives in articles concerning NHS funding) can also simultaneously be voters and politicians. In addition to the politics-related roles, there are the media-specific roles which are subsumed in the *voters, politicians* and *experts* categories but might be explicitly positioned on the outside of these roles. First there is the *author* who penned the articles in the context of their newspaper’s publication particulars (e.g. political orientation, broadsheet vs. tabloid) and gives voice to the other social actors. They are both a vessel for other actors’ thoughts and opinions and their own (de)legitimizing force. Lastly, there is the intended *reader* who changes identity depending on the topic, publishing newspaper, or separate sections of the same newspaper. This last category also includes myself, and therefore my own positionality and political investment cannot

be underestimated and must be acknowledged and interrogated in these analyses.

In summary, the social actors present in this corpus are a politics-based set of concrete actors (i.e. *(female/male) voters, Brexiteers, Remainers, (female/male) politicians (PMs, MPs, ministers), wives of politicians, Britons, immigrants, suffragettes*), other voices of authority (i.e. *experts*), a set of abstract actors (*government, politics, the NHS*), as well as media-based actors which are subsumed in the voters, politicians and experts categories but might be explicitly positioned to appear to be on the outside of these roles (i.e. *readers and authors*). All in all, representation is conditional on the inclusion and exclusion of these actors and what degree of agency is allocated to them depending on the text, the author, and the readership. In the following sections I will discuss these roles, in-and-exclusion, levels of agency and activation, and the specific ways in which they comprise the linguistic representation of and discourses surrounding female voters in UK political coverage. This will be done by means of a diachronic hierarchy of discourses in which I will first discuss the initial discourses, their social actors, strategies and evaluations, that were present from the beginning: 1) About them but without them; 2) Normative motherhood; 3) Addressing the lack of female voices; 4) Female voter agency demonisation. This will be followed by a discussion of anti-immigration discourses that were only present from the 2016 EU Referendum cycle onward. After this, both sets of discourses will be summarised to end the chapter.

7.1 Initial discourses: present from the beginning

7.1.1 About them but without them

The central theme in both 2015 and the entire permaelection period can be summarised by the phrase '*about them but without them*'. Female voters

are included in the conversation in certain ways, but none of them involve particularly significant levels of agency. The first strand of this set of representations relates to the prevalence of patronising appeals to female voters and their concurring lack of a voice being pointed out by primarily female journalists. Even though this non-agentive strand is present in all years, it is most salient during the 2015 GE campaign and therefore most examples as well as the article put forward for a more comprehensive analysis are sourced from the 2015 sub-corpus.

Many of the articles included in the 2015 corpus point out the lack of women's voices when it comes to voter representation as well as a lack of being listened to when female voters are in fact discussed and included as social actors (see examples 1-2 and the bold parts in particular). Other studies support this notion of a lack of women's voices. For example, Harmer (2015) found that women accounted for only 15.4% of all sources included in the press during the 2015 campaign.

- (1) "CAN YOU HEAR ME?; WHEN OUR ONLY ELECTION CHOICES NEXT MONTH ARE ED, NICK AND DAVE, **WHO'S LISTENING TO WOMEN? NOBODY, SAYS TANYA GOLD**"

(The Sunday Times, 5 April 2015)

- (2) "When, instead of trying to make the debates more diverse, will we make politics more diverse?; **Politics needs to be more inclusive and less alienating to women**, writes Helen Whitehouse"

(mirror.co.uk, 10 April 2015)

UK Politicians, who have been shown to find it difficult to appeal to women (Katwala et al., 2016), are then portrayed as trying to 'solve' the issue of the silent and/or silenced female voters by appealing to women in patronising ways which mirrors the patronising tone and infantilisation of the

electorate found in Scullion's (2015) and Farrell's (2016) study of Brexit coverage. Labour's infamous pink bus is perhaps the foremost example of a direct appeal to female voters being labelled as 'patronising'. This pink campaign bus with the phrase "Woman to Woman" pasted on its sides was introduced by Labour MP Harriet Harman (see Figure 13 in Appendix A.1 for an image of the bus). It toured the UK focusing on five topics that Labour had determined, presumably through focus groups, to be key to women's interests: childcare, domestic violence, equal pay, political representation and social care, in order to attract female voters and reach out to them 'at the kitchen table' (Mason & Perraudin, 2015). It was viewed as a stereotypically gendered appeal, or 'stunt', propagating the notion that women are often solely asked about so-called 'women's issues' (Guerrina & Masselot, 2018) and as such was met with a large amount of criticism. Other examples of patronising appeals included the following headlines referencing Labour's pink bus (ex. 3) and using informal and condescending, 'clipped' monikers such as 'Cautious Cath' (example 4). 'Cautious Cath' is not a real person, rather, she is the personification of a female voter who does not dare take risks. The use of this shortened informal nickname both instantiates a negative stance by judging these women, and takes away their agency by assigning an archetypal nickname they did not choose themselves, nor did they give permission to be referred to in such an informal, clipped and ultimately patronising manner.

- (3) "Look who is left holding the baby! Harriet Harman and co. board **Labour's pink bus** to woo female voters with 'women's manifesto'"

(MailOnline, 15 April 2015)

- (4) "The nation's fate is resting in her hands ... meet **Cautious Cath**; Mothers in their 30s who hate taking a risk could swing the election either way, writes Patrick Kidd"

(*The Times*, 7 May 2015)

Conversely, headlines criticising the patronising appeals also abound, often even brandishing the term ‘patronising’ in their critiques (ex. 5).

- (5) “If politicians want to engage women voters, try treating us the same as men; David Cameron’s suggestion that he can’t multitask “because I’m a man” is electioneering at its most **patronising**, says Jane Shilling”

(*telegraph.co.uk*, 1 April 2015)

In applying this focus, the articles merely speak about women and how their lack of agency is both apparent and patronised without actually giving female voters a voice or bestowing them with agency. Moreover, at times, these articles even perpetuate the condescending tone and notions they purport to criticise (see the discussions of Articles 1 & 3 below, and their full-length versions in appendices B.1 and B.3).

Overall, in terms of social actor representation, female voters are both suppressed and backgrounded, as the analysis of the full article will show. Meanwhile, the social actor group of politicians are either more explicitly nominated or identified such as Harriet Harman who acts as the specific personification of patronising appeals, or collectivised as MPs, parliamentarians, and political parties. These politicians are almost never backgrounded or suppressed but are often the focus on election-based news coverage.

In 2016 the lack of representation is even more significant, as shown by the smaller number of headlines directly targeting women and the fact that the 2016 sub-corpus is smaller than the 2015 one. This lack of women’s voices and attention to female voters echoes findings from other studies concerning the 2016 EU Referendum (O’Brien, 2016a). The campaign did not spawn any particular women’s manifestos. Instead, the focus shifted to much broader and voting-public-wide topics, and the relative luxury of

precise targeting of women seemed to have been lost in the Brexit fray. In fact, women were often backgrounded by either being buried somewhere in an article or merely mentioned in passing, rather than being the focus of an article. Consequently, if there are not as many patronising appeals made, they are also not identified and criticised at the same rate as in 2015. Furthermore, the lack of a voice, which is still apparent, also does not receive the same amount of attention. Some female journalists, however, are still seen criticising the absence of women's voices, labelling Brexit a "feminist issue" as they put forward the issue of "gender equality" and the EU (see ex. 6-7); a topic which, according to them, remained in the "shadows of the debate for too long" (ex. 7).

- (6) "**Brexit is a feminist issue**; Women's voices are not being heard enough in either the Leave or Remain camps. But with more women than men currently undecided, aren't they likely to tip the balance on 23 June?"

(The Observer, 31 May 2016)

- (7) "**Women's rights have remained in the shadows of the debate for too long**; EQUALITY Is the EU a champion of gender equality or behind the curve? Asks Katie Grant"

(The I, 14 June 2016)

Yet again, when the voice deficit issue is discussed, the focus lies on women being left out rather than on actual women's voices or giving women a voice. Moreover, as the press started to focus on more masculinised and consequently assumed to be neutral 'big topics' such as the economy, immigration, trade, nature, security (see examples 8-9) and Brexit 'mudslinging' (see examples 10-11 and their mentions of "hoodwinking" the public and gutter politics), female voters tended to no longer be collectivised as a social actor in and of themselves. Instead they are subsumed in larger

groups (e.g. the electorate as a whole) and/or differently identified groups that might include women (e.g. pensioners, young people, working class people). The abundance of poll results is a prime example of this subsumption, as polls are utterance autonomisations which are aggregated to imbue impersonal authority to the pollsters. The impersonalised aggregations and percentages reduce voter agency, as their agency is abstracted and their unique identities are ignored.

(8) “The EU referendum is a class war”

(telegraph.co.uk, 14 May 2016)

(9) “Is Brexit a threat to national security?”

(The Independent Daily, 21 June 2016)

(10) “Remain campaign ‘hoodwinking’ voters with pro-EU propaganda masked as postal vote facts”

(ExpressOnline, 25 May 2016)

(11) “No **gutter** that the Leave campaign won’t get into, says Lib Dem leader”

(The Independent Daily, 22 June 2016)

This move to big topics and petty fights is both explicitly and implicitly a move away from women: explicitly in the sense that they are almost entirely suppressed and implicitly in the sense that when women are mentioned and a woman’s literal voice is being used in a campaign video (ex. 12), this inclusion is “doctored” and “fake”. The voice of the woman in question, her emotional anguished scream, is a stock sound effect. She is unaware of this inclusion and what it is trying to achieve. Her voice is present, yet she is absent. In short, women’s voices and emotions are being utilised, yet disregarded.

- (12) “Vote Leave campaign video ‘**doctored**’ to include fake screams of woman; ‘This is entirely in keeping with the character of their campaign’”

(The Independent, 20 June 2016)

Similarly to 2016, the 2017 GE campaign saw much fewer headlines explicitly discussing women and/or headlines specifically geared toward women than in 2015. Women are again distanced from the reader as they are backgrounded, referred to generically and subsumed in larger groups, particularly relating to age (ex. 13) and the elusive ‘working class voters’ (ex. 14). Voters are consequently often functionalised as pensioners and potential (non)-voters, i.e. by what they do not do, rather than what they do (i.e. work and vote).

- (13) “United? The **generations** are poles apart politically”

(The I, 27 June 2017)

- (14) “Theresa May’s claim to be the champion of workers rings hollow; Readers are sceptical about the Tories’ attempts to attract **working-class voters**”

(The Guardian, 16 May 2017)

Moreover, the 2017 campaign also saw the lowest total number of articles out of the three campaigns (i.e. a total of 438 articles vs. 778 and 749), as the shift toward broader issues persists. Another explanation for these lower numbers could potentially be the presence of a female PM, which contrasts with the male-fronted campaigns of 2015 and 2016. The prime ministerial glass ceiling was broken for the first time since Margaret Thatcher’s premiership ended in 1990. Consequently, female voters, who are frequently both explicitly and implicitly associated with female politicians in ways that male voters and male politicians are not, are assumed to be voting for

a woman in charge. Therefore, they might be deemed less interesting as a target demographic as will be shown later on in this chapter. Interestingly, there is one part of the UK newspaper landscape that resists the trend of a decreased interest in 'women's issues'. As shown in Chapter 5, the (allegedly) politically neutral *The I* and *The Independent* newspapers, which moved to online-only content before the 2017 campaign, make up a much larger percentage of all articles than in 2015 and 2016. These papers seem to be the only ones still covering women's needs. In fact, they actually increased their coverage of women's issues, as well as LGBTQ+ issues in 2017 (see Chapter 5 and examples 15-16 below).

- (15) "All the anti-gay and lesbian stances Theresa May has taken in her political career; The Prime Minister's stance on equal rights has softened over the years"

(*The Independent*, 25 April 2017)

- (16) "LGBT: How main party leaders have voted"

(*The I*, 10 May 2017)

Lastly, certain appeals to female voters which are not explicitly framed as appeals are criticised for their 'patronising' tone and reported on in a disdainful manner. However, one could question whether a politician making an appearance on a show whose core demographic consists of women is inherently patronising or manipulative. Some authors do view it as such; as 'ticking female-friendly boxes'. Homogenising female voters and speaking of a single 'women's vote' can be viewed in this manner, but certain articles appear to imply that any indication of appealing to women in general is to be viewed in a negative light which is questionable to say the least. Additionally, these discussions again appear to fail to include women in a significant manner. Moreover, these accusations of condescension from primarily right-wing publications mainly appear to

be designed to attack then Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and delegitimise Labour's campaign, as opposed to raising the profile of female voters (see examples 17-18).

(17) "Jeremy Corbyn in car-crash interview over childcare pledge"

(telegraph.co.uk, 30 May 2017)

(18) "Jeremy Corbyn on The One Show: friendly, laid back, and not mentioning difficult numbers"

(telegraph.co.uk, 30 May 2017)

In contrast to the absence of women's voices identified above, each campaign also sees some negations of this supposed absence; firstly, directly by means of articles that explicitly deny this notion and claim that men's voices are overlooked instead (ex. 19).

(19) "Is anyone sticking up for men's interests in this election?; The manifestos of all major parties teem with blandishments to women, yet none of them has a word to say about the glaring disadvantages of boys and men, argues Neil Lyndon"

(telegraph.co.uk, 29 April 2015)

Secondly, each campaigning period includes "your view/readers' letters" articles giving voice to specifically chosen (female) readers as well as articles portraying visits to voters at home and in the streets. The latter option is most common in 2016 and 2017, as journalists visit (former) Labour heartlands such as Barking and Blackpool to assess what has gone or will go wrong for Labour (see examples 20-21). However, these letter compilations and home visits are specifically curated by the newspapers themselves to fit the perceived preferences of a newspaper's readers and to best reflect the newspaper's own identity and point of view (Richardson & Franklin, 2004). It is interesting to note that these letters then often include more male voices than female ones.

- (20) “Bunting is out but in Barking people are leaning towards Brexit; In safe Labour seat, working-class voters say they feel abandoned, know little about Jeremy Corbyn and want to get out”

(*The Observer*, 11 June 2016)

- (21) “Clairvoyant Carol predicts a ‘good day for Corbyn as Tories hope for victory; BLACKPOOL Voters on the Golden Mile consider their options.”

(*The I*, 8 June 2017)

The article chosen for a comprehensive analysis and to illustrate the ‘about them but without them’ discourse is titled “General election 2015: a campaign full of women but not about them”. It was written by Ann Perkins and published in the *Life and Style* section of *The Guardian* on 01/05/2015 [see Article 1 in Appendix B.1]. The following social actors are present in this article: *women [in general]* which overlap with *female politicians*, *female voters*, *voters [in general]*, *wives* and *Labour’s pink bus* which is a non-sentient campaign tool that can be seen as a metonymical substitute for Labour’s campaign targeted at women (e.g. “a triumph for the pink bus” 1.46), displaying a similar pattern as ‘Westminster’ and ‘Holyrood’ acting as metonymical substitutes for the UK and Scottish governments (Higgins, 2004; Law, 2001; Palonen, 2016), and at times as a substitute for ‘women’ and ‘female voters’. Additionally, there are more abstract notions and organisations such as *political parties*, *the media*, *the government*, *polling/political research organisations*, *the Fawcett society*,⁴ present as well as *austerity* which is anthropomorphised in 1.13 . Furthermore, *men [in general]*, *male politicians*, *male voters* are all also included and much like their female counterparts they also overlap with *voters* and the aforementioned more abstract entities.

⁴The Fawcett Society is the UK’s “leading membership charity campaigning for gender equality and women’s rights” (Fawcett Society, 2020, n.p.).

As can already be gleaned from the title in 1.1 “a campaign full of women but not about them”, this article illustrates the ‘about them but without them’ thread permeating the corpus. Women might be physically present, but their voices and needs are missing, as “this election battle is run by men, for men” (1.2). The way in which this notion manifests itself in this article is twofold. First, there is the criticism of the campaign itself and the way it overlooks and even radically excludes or ‘suppresses’ women. However, this article can be said to be guilty of a similar, yet more nuanced and opaque erasure, or ‘backgrounding’ of female voters. Even when pointing out that female voters are invisible, this article perpetuates that same notion. It accuses “the media” of having a “relentless” focus on (male) political leaders (1.21), but does not steer clear of such a focus on political leaders itself. As will be discussed below, it judges the assumed lack of capacity of women and the gender inequality within the campaign, yet perpetuates it as well. Additionally, there is the inclusion of *men*, *male politicians* and *male voters* as actors to primarily generate an ‘us vs. them’ narrative. Creating an opposition between men and women, by means of explicit POLITICS IS WAR metaphors and imagery in this case (e.g. the use of “war” and “battle” in 1.2 and 1.20, and “weaponised” in 1.22), perpetuates the alleged inequality, the notion that politics is war, as well as an outdated ‘battle of the sexes’ perspective of gender. Such metaphors are rather common in political communication as “cognitively accessible ways of communicating policy through drawing on ways of thinking by analogy”, thereby supporting political arguments and framing voters’ understanding of political issues (Charteris-Black, 2011, p. 321).

Secondly, even though *female voters* are referenced throughout the article and referred to more often than *female politicians* (34 vs. 22, and 10 ambiguous references), they are also de-emphasised and backgrounded with regard to *female (and male) politicians* or politician-adjacent *wives of male politicians*. The focus in the beginning of the article lies on *female politi-*

cians, as *female politicians* are referenced explicitly in 1.2, 1.4, throughout 1.5, while the first vague or ambiguous mentions of *female voters* occur in 1.6 (i.e. “women’s issues”) and 1.10 (“voters”) before being more explicitly referred to in 1.11 (e.g. “nine million women didn’t vote in 2010”). Furthermore, *female voters* are referred to in a passive manner 50% of the time and they are more often passivated than *female politicians*, whose referents are passivated only 22.2% of the time. Thus, *female politicians* are portrayed in a more active, agentic manner.

Moreover, they are also portrayed in more deferential (e.g. as “leaders” in 1.4 and 1.43), personalised and specific ways than *female voters*. Although *female politicians* are also collectivised as ‘women’ (e.g. 1.5), they tend to be more explicitly nominated than *female voters*. They are for example also referred to as “women in politics” (1.6) in which the postmodifying prepositional phrase ‘in politics’ is more ambiguous in its identification than ‘politician’ or a more specific function title would be, and much less specific than their full name, thus lessening their agency. However, they are more frequently referred to by their full name (e.g. Nicola Sturgeon, Natalie Bennett and Ruth Davidson (1.5), Yvette Cooper (1.15) and Harriet Harman (1.47)) affording them more personalisation than *female voters*, who are never mentioned by name. Furthermore, interestingly the wives of *male politicians* who are also explicitly nominated, appear to be foregrounded with regard to their husbands and other male politicians. Samantha Cameron (1.22) is mentioned before her husband David (1.38) and Miriam González Durántez is mentioned in 1.23 while her husband Lib Dems leader Nick Clegg is suppressed and not mentioned at all.

Conversely, *female voters* are referred to much more generically, distancing the reader from them and lessening their agency by means of a lack of specific reference. Who are these female voters? This remains unclear. For example, *female voters* are referred to in the plural rather than in specific terms (i.e. 32 instances of ‘women’ of which 68.8% directly refer to

female voters, and only 1 of 'woman'). These *female voters*, or more specifically 'women', who are identified by just their gender rather than their gender and their actions, are collectivised (e.g. "girls" (l.29), Mumsnet [users] (l.39-40)), or even aggregated which lessens their personalisation and consequently their agency even more by merely portraying them as data (e.g. "26% of women" (l.51), "50,000 women" (l.11), "nine million women" (l.11)). The quoted percentages and studies work well as an authorisation legitimisation strategy but they also obscure *female voters'* individual identities and capacity for agency. Instead, they are homogenised, their alleged consensus is underlined and they are viewed as a monolithic group, which takes away their individual agency. Another way in which *female voters'* agency is diminished is by means of the metonymical use of Labour's pink bus. This bus, a non-human referent, stands in for women in general and female voters (and some female politicians) in particular. Consequently, *female voters* are impersonalised due to being abstracted and objectified by the use of a non-human referent, which once again reduces their agency. This also once again underscores the 'about them but without them' discourse when it comes to female voters which is exemplified by this article and characterises the corpus at large.

The 'about them but without them' discourse continues through 2016, as the EU Referendum shifted the media's attention to broader topic and less woman-specific targeting. The following 2016 article chosen for analysis will show how female voters were often backgrounded by merely being mentioned in passing, rather than being the focus of an article. Moreover, at times, as this article will show, women are in fact mentioned in the headline and presented as the main subjects, but this turns out to be a false front to obscure the continued repression of their voices. The article put forward for analysis is titled "BORIS TELLS WOMEN: VOTE LEAVE TO TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR FAMILY'S DESTINY". It was written

by James Slack and Daniel Martin, and published in *The Daily Mail* on 20/06/2016 [see Article 2 in Appendix B.2]. The following social actors are present in this article: the main social actor is Conservative politician *Boris Johnson* who has been interviewed by the authors of this article. The other social actors mentioned in the title, but barely after, as will be discussed below, are *women [in general]* or *female voters* which overlap with *families, the younger generation, Britain* and according to *Johnson* also with *Vote Leave* which are all mentioned later on. Conversely, they do not overlap with *Vote Remain, the EU*, and more importantly they do not overlap with *immigrants/immigration*.

In fact, the notion that *immigrants* do not intersect with British voters and families is the central tenet of this article and much of the wider, Leave-supporting EU Referendum reporting. This indexes the fact that concepts of ethnic nationalism and "nation by birth" still hold a significant amount of power in the sense that "the native inhabitants of a territory are generally perceived as the 'true nationals'" as opposed to people that are perceived to be immigrants or foreigners (Motschenbacher, 2016, p. 72). This focus on immigration is also illustrative of a shift toward broader and more stereotypically 'masculinised' topics such as 'the economy' and immigration. On the other hand, more precise targeting of female voters in 2015, albeit 'about them but without them', has decreased. This article makes it seem as if it is directly appealing to and targeting female voters, as women are addressed in the title (1.1) "in a direct appeal to women voters" (1.3). However, after this 'women-heavy' beginning, they are never mentioned again. The early, misleading appeal to *female voters*, which are here conflated with normative motherhood as 'women with families', is emotional and fear-based; fear of a hypothetical future which threatens the nuclear British family unit, to be precise. Women, or rather families, are told by means of directives containing imperative verbs - a common legitimisation strategy (Moessner, 2010) - to "take" back "control" by vot-

ing Leave. In fact, "control" occurs 11 times in the space of 678 words which is 2% of the entire article length. This 'taking control', according to Johnson and the authors, will assure a future without "out of control" (l.2, l.12, l.24) immigration which threatens *the younger generation's* job security and the NHS (see l.10-11, l.17). This common 'think of the children' trope also merges with xenophobic 'us vs. them' narratives pitting Britishness and British families against immigrants, as a bright future for Britain and the notion of Britishness appears to be threatened by immigrants.

This focus on big topics and immigration in particular is, as mentioned above in the analysis of Article 1, also an explicit move away from women. The article appears to be about 'them', without 'them', but it is never explicitly about or addressed to female voters. In fact, they are backgrounded and subsumed in larger entities such as 'families' and ambiguous notions of 'you' and 'we', after line 3. Furthermore, immigrants, who are explicitly characterised as not being British, as not being part of British families and the aforementioned 'we', are the main adversary. A second, intersecting 'us vs. them' adversary is shown to be the pro-EU, "Remain camp" (l.19) who are represented as being pro-immigration. The different camps are however all unified by a focus on immigration. The article itself stands firmly on the pro-Leave side of the argument. It grammatically passivates immigrants and the immigration system 59% of the time as something to take back control of/over, yet this allocates semantic agency to them, as 'they' instead of 'we' currently have control. It further implies that 'they' are in fact dangerously out of control. The other 41% of verb processes activate immigrants as aggressors, criminalising them as "illegal" (l.4 & l.25), "terror suspects and convicted criminals" (l.31), judging and accusing them of "preventing" (l.5) Britain from, and "depriving" (l.6) it of, achieving a better future.

Women on the other hand, even though they are the implied focus, are only referred to explicitly thrice in the first 3 lines. In these instances they

are passivated. They are told what to do by an activated Boris Johnson. In contrast, the pronominal choices and ambiguous uses of the second person pronouns 'you' and 'we', which can be said to include women, are always activated. However, the ambiguity of these referents also implies the inclusion of both men in general and Johnson himself, which diminishes the active role that could be attributed to women. The active role of both women and other members of the British public is also diminished by the fact that the verb processes surrounding the use of 'we' often consist of commands or instructions on what 'we' "can" (l.32) and "cannot" (l.31) do. Furthermore, unlike the 2015 article, women are conflated with families or collectivised in tandem with the electorate at large, rather than as female voters let alone as individual women, which diminishes their agency even more. In fact, the one time they are referred to as voters in line 3, 'women' is used as a pre-modifying appositive noun, a noun which explains or identifies the noun or pronoun it is set beside in a stronger manner than an adjective (Heringa, 2012; Purdue OWL, 2020). This use of 'woman' is more marked than the use of the pre-modifying adjective 'female'. In fact, this way of modifying a noun can be seen as a more marked and patronising way of addressing female voters, highlighting the rarity of women occupying the role of voters. The use of the appositive NOUN + NOUN structure rather than an ADJECTIVE + NOUN structure highlights the ways in which female voters are not the default type of voter. A 'woman voter' is a different, marked kind of voter, whereas a 'female voter' is a voter who happens to be female. In the former, 'woman' is an inherent part of the noun phrase and an inherent part of the 'voter' at hand, whereas in the latter 'female' is merely additional information. Furthermore, several studies have remarked on the asymmetry between the productive use of pre-modifying 'woman/women' as opposed to the decreasing and almost absent use of pre-modifying 'man/men', as men tend(ed) to have an unmarked status regarding most occupations while

women are marked (Romaine, 2000; Holmes & Sigley, 2001; Pearce, 2008; Caldas-Coulthard & Moon, 2010). The most common example given by these studies is the fact that it “may be possible to talk of a woman doctor, but impossible to remark on a [m]an doctor” (Holmes & Sigley, 2001, p. 253). However, gendered pre-modification using ‘male’ is increasing alongside pre-modifying ‘female’ (Holmes & Sigley, 2001, p. 254). Therefore, pre-modifying ‘male/female’ are more direct counterparts than pre-modifying ‘men/women’. Voters are also assumed to be male and consequently, one does not see the use of ‘men voters’. Yet, the marked phrasing of “women voters” (1.3) is used and implicitly emphasises the markedness of voters who are female. Moreover, women’s voices and names are entirely absent from this article even though they are the implied focus when one reads the title. The 2015 article included women’s opinions from polls, the female author’s own opinion, and female politicians were included. Here, women are not engaged in any way. Instead, the only people to be nominated are men (i.e. Boris Johnson, David Cameron (1.19), Jean-Claude Juncker and Peter Mandelson (1.29)), and Johnson is syntactically fronted in both the title and the majority of sentences.

Lastly, unlike the 2015 article, this backgrounding of women’s voices is neither pointed out nor criticised by the, in this case male, authors. This lack of male criticism further supports the notion of an increased sense of ‘about them but without them’. One might even refer to it as ‘barely about them but without them’.

Aside from the full-length articles, headlines throughout the permalection period also exemplify the topics and discourses discussed above. For example, the move toward big topics (see ex. 22-23) and women being subsumed in larger groups related to age (see ex. 24-25), class (see ex. 26-27) and ethnicity (see ex. 28) are also visible in other 2016 and 2017 headlines.

Big, broad topics

- (22) “Is Brexit a threat to **national security**?”

(The Independent Daily, 21 June 2016)

- (23) “What does the snap election mean for your **finances**?”

(The Sunday Express, 23 April 2017)

Age

- (24) “New EU laws will cost **pensioners** ‘DRAMATIC sums of money’, says Iain Duncan Smith”

(ExpressOnline, 27 May 2016)

- (25) “United? The **generations** are poles apart politically”

(The I, 27 April 2017)

Class

- (26) “The EU referendum is a **class war**”

(telegraph.co.uk, 14 May 2016)

- (27) “Theresa May’s claim to be the champion of **workers** rings hollow; Readers are sceptical about the Tories’ attempts to attract **working-class voters**”

(The Guardian, 16 May 2017)

Ethnicity

- (28) “Why do some **ethnic minority voters** want to leave the EU?; Polls suggest most **BAME** voters favour remain, but there are fears about eastern European migrants, the arrival of neo-Nazis and pressures on poor communities”

(The Guardian, 1 June 2016)

In summary, even though women are a target demographic in 2015, they barely have a voice and they barely have any agency. Even though certain female journalists do express outrage over this in their articles, this outrage is certainly not universally shared. In 2016 women are less of a target demographic, they have even less of a voice, but the outrage over this has also died down. This trend continues in 2017 as women are merely subsumed in larger electoral groups.

Aside from the waning criticism of the lack of a voice, there are also articles which directly address this issue in different ways. Firstly, there is a small group of male journalists who actually negate the ‘supposed’ lack of voice and insist that it is men not women whose “interests” and “issues” are being “ignored” (see ex. 29 & 30):

- (29) “Is anyone sticking up for **men’s interests** in this election?; The manifestos of all major parties teem with blandishments to women, yet none of them has a word to say about the glaring disadvantages of boys and men, argues Neil Lyndon”

(telegraph.co.uk, 29 April 2015)

- (30) “Why are **men’s issues** consistently **ignored** in electoral manifestos?”

(telegraph.co.uk, 29 May 2017)

Secondly, each year there are articles which explicitly try to give voice to the people albeit still along editorial lines. These include curated letters from readers and articles portraying visits to voters at home or in the streets, vox pop-style. The latter is especially prevalent in 2016 and 2017 (Miglbauer & Koller, 2019), as journalists visit (former) Labour heartlands to figure out what has gone or might go wrong for the Remain and Labour vote. At times these 'giving voice' articles directly target female voters, as shown by the 2015 headline below (ex. 31), but more often the articles include letters or quotes from mixed gender groups (see ex. 32 & 33).

- (31) "The sacrifices of the suffragettes bring a pressure to vote': what young female voters really think; Nine young women who voted for the first time in 2010 tell us how their lives changed under the Coalition, and how they're planning to vote in May"

(telegraph.co.uk, 18 April 2015)

- (32) "'Our votes will cancel each other out': the families falling out over Brexit; Parents against children, grandchildren against grandparents: as the EU referendum nears, tensions are high among families across the UK"

(The Guardian, 20 June 2016)

- (33) "Clairvoyant Carol predicts a 'good day for Corbyn as Tories hope for victory; BLACKPOOL Voters on the Golden Mile consider their options."

(The I, 8 April 2017)

Interestingly, in 2016 more so than in other years celebrity opinions on the EU Referendum were also deemed prime article subject matter, as examples 34 and 35 below illustrate. This might be due to the EU Referendum being a new type of electoral event. One might already know a celebrity's

political orientation but their opinion regarding the EU Referendum is an unknown entity and therefore easy content for a host of new articles.

- (34) “Posh, Becks and a host of sports stars back REMAIN just two days before the EU referendum urging voters to stay in ‘for our children’”

(MailOnline, 21 June 2016)

- (35) “EU referendum: Which celebrities support Brexit and which support Remain?; Britain’s actors, singers, sportspeople and authors weigh into the national debate”

(The Independent, 22 June 2016)

Lastly, this section briefly touched on the ubiquitous presence of normative motherhood discourses in the corpus, which will be explored in more depth in the following section.

7.1.2 Normative motherhood

The trend of prevalent normative motherhood discourses first pops up in 2015 and sees female voters conflated with mothers in general, and heterosexual and cisgender motherhood in particular. For instance, all women-specific policies that are discussed centre around motherhood. Motherhood and womanhood are not only conflated, but also often portrayed in patronising, normative and desubjectifying manners. The fact that the agency of mothers is a prevalent topic appears to be superficially empowering but this discourse ultimately ends up being disempowering as this section will show. Other studies have previously shown that political media appeals to women have often comprised appeals to motherhood by politicians identifying as mothers (Quirk, 2015). Furthermore, the focus

on motherhood was already present in the 2010 General Election campaign, which was consequently dubbed the 'Mumsnet' Election (Campbell & Childs, 2010), thus setting up this focus on motherhood. The normative focus on motherhood also comprises a focus on the nuclear, assumed heterosexual and cisgender, family unit. This pervasive discourse of heteronormativity, also perpetuates the norm of compulsory heterosexuality and again diminishes women's agency. This is due to the fact that it primarily portrays women as assumed heterosexual in heterosexual roles, whilst queer identities are disregarded (Coates, 2013; Daddario, 1994; Kitzinger, 2005; Motschenbacher, 2011). Moreover, the desubjectifying ways in which mothers are portrayed adds to these weakened levels of personalisation. One of the main examples in which mothers are desubjectified lies in the relational identification processes present in the corpus. In general, the role of relational identification is seen as less important than classification and functionalisation, especially where kinship relations are concerned (van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 56). However, in this study's corpus women in general and mothers in particular are often referred to by means of possessivated relational identifications (e.g. 'his mother'), or postmodifying prepositional phrases (e.g. 'mother **of two**'). This can signal belonging, but also subordination, especially when these terms are used without inclusions of the woman's (full) name. They might then be viewed as someone's possession, coming second to them, or coming second to their children.

In 2016 the focus on motherhood becomes even more salient as well as disempowering in comparison to 2015. As illustrated by Article 2 discussed above, the 2016 corpus focuses on a hypothetical post-Brexit future which will primarily affect today's children. Consequently, there is a thread of policing 'good' motherhood throughout this corpus. In fact, the appeals to motherhood tend to focus more on the future of today's children rather than on their mothers, or on young women who are sub-

sumed in the larger group of 'parents'. Readers and in particular parents are emotionally appealed to by referring to their genealogical line (i.e. children and grandchildren). This type of fear-based emotional appeal to motherhood is a common legitimisation tactic which draws on several different categories of legitimisation strategies. It draws on people's and in this case women's emotions of fear regarding both a worse present and a threat to a hypothetical post-Brexit future for 'our' children, as doing something for the sake of your children is a much more tangible and personal goal than doing something for the sake of society, democracy or the government (Reyes, 2011). The aforementioned policing is often expressed through conditional sentences where the apodosis, or the consequences of the protasis, which is the subordinate clause of the conditional sentence, is presented as fact without hedging or modal adjuncts. The choice for a certain hypothetical post-Referendum future is presented as a prerequisite for good parenthood and in particular good motherhood. In Article 2 we saw the following example of such policing of parenthood: "[i]f we take back control of immigration we can help local authorities plan for vital services" (l.10) which will mean that "young people will have a better chance of getting on the housing ladder" (l.11). The main message or directive appears to be 'if you love your children and wish to be a good mother, this is how you should vote', in order to make a decision that "future generations will thank us for" (ex. 36).

(36) "Let's make a decision future generations will thank us for"

(*The I*, 20 June 2016)

Another way in which motherhood is both monitored and desubjectified is the notion that "mums(-of-three)" should "ask their kids" to make the decision for them rather than making their own decisions, as the outcome of the Referendum will affect these "kids" the most (see ex. 37 below).

(37) "**Mums** should ask their kids how to vote in the EU referendum,

says Yvette Cooper; **Mum-of-three** Ms Cooper said: "This is going to affect them for decades. If you've not decided, ask your kids what they think"

(*mirror.co.uk*, 14 June 2016)

The link between the EU Referendum and heteronormative motherhood is made even more salient by the presence of pro-Remain metaphors conceptualising Brexit as a potential divorce, as the marriage between the UK and the EU breaking apart. This divorce is also portrayed in an exclusively negative light in pro-Remain papers as "messy" (see ex. 38 below), as "very hard on the children" (ex. 38) and it will cause (young) people to "suffer" (ex. 39). This conceptualisation of the EU as a (potentially broken) family and the subsequent conceptualisation of a Brexit divorce where the target domain is BREXIT and the source domain is DIVORCE is also well-documented in other studies (Berberović & Mujagić, 2017; Charteris-Black, 2019; Đurović & Silaški, 2018; Petraškaite-Pabst, 2010).

- (38) "Brexit would be a **messy divorce, and very hard on the children**; The Leave campaign's idea that renegotiation of trade terms with the EU will be easy is absurd. We will be suppliant outsiders, just as we were in the 1950s"

(*The Observer*, 17 April 2016)

- (39) "Britain's young people will **suffer** most from an EU divorce"

(*The Guardian*, 20 June 2016)

In 2017 these appeals to 'good' motherhood have mostly disappeared, however. Women are referred to and interviewed in their role as 'mothers', but they are no longer explicitly appealed to as such:

- (40) "Does anyone else find him sexy?" Nick Clegg joins **mothers** for live web chat - and reveals he would have Prince, Cate Blanchett and Angela Merkel to dinner (and 'Miriam too, obv's")

(MailOnline, 9 May 2017)

The normative motherhood discourses and patronising appeals to the notion of motherhood discussed above can be further illustrated by analysing an article each from 2015 and 2016. The first article will point out the patronising tone and normative focus of both Labour's 2015 campaign and the media's portrayal of it, whilst applying a hetero and cisnormative, and ableist, focus itself. The article is titled "As a female voter, I'd rather be patronised than ignored by politicians; Labour's Women's Manifesto may seem unnecessary, but when you compare it to what the other parties are proposing it's astounding". It was written by Siobhan Fenton, and published in the COMMENT section of the online version of *The Independent* on 16/04/2015 [see Article 3 in Appendix B.3]. The following social actors are present in this article: the main social actors are *politicians*, *political parties* (48 references) and in particular *female politicians* (17 of those 48 references). Furthermore, there are three more social actors involved in this article who are referred to separately, yet also overlap at times. These actors are the *author* who refers to herself throughout the article, *female voters* as the author also explicitly states she identifies as one (l.1), and the *readers* or intended audience. The *readers* are only referred to explicitly by means of the second person pronoun 'you' (l.2) once, but they are shown to overlap with *female voters* in general, as well as being grouped with the *author* by means of the third person pronoun 'we'.

The article embodies the normativity, a lack of women's agency and queer exclusion themes we have seen throughout the corpora. Firstly, the author supplies herself with agency by promoting herself as an authority on the topic of female voters and thereby legitimising her stance and opinions, but in doing so she also passivates and background other female voters. The female author contrasts herself with the overarching lack of women's voices by means of a syntactic fronting structure in l.1: "[a]s a female voter myself". This declaration of her identity emphasises and

legitimises her personal experience of being a woman and accordingly her authority regarding the topic. Consequently, even though this was published in the 'Comment' section of the newspaper, her opinions regarding political campaigns and media portrayals of said campaign are posited as fact without much external support. For example, if she deems something as patronising, "it's patronising" (l.17). The prominent inclusion and activation of first person pronouns (11 instances, all activated) also contributes to her authorisation and agency. Her emotions and judgements are also placed front and centre. For example, she mentions her "outright derision" (l.16) of Labour's pink bus campaign, her "discomfort" (l.17), "frustration" (l.29) and disappointment regarding the "sad reality" of patronising appeals, her anger directed at the lack of appeals from other political parties (l.25-26), and ultimately her reluctant acceptance of a "lesser of two evils" (l.32) when it comes to the way women are being treated by political parties during the 2015 campaign. However, this focus on herself and in particular herself as a paradigmatic female voter results in the readership being envisaged as female, as well as in other female voters being backgrounded and passivated. The author claims a focus on female voters throughout the article and refers to her readership in the title, but she, in combination with the politicians and political strategies she criticises, become the real focus of the article. For example, female voters are only activated 25% of the time when they do not explicitly include the author. Yet when they do by means of the use of 'we', these female voters (and readers) are always activated. This means that overall, female voters are activated only 55% of the time. Female voters are also being backgrounded and passivated with regard to (female) politicians, as female politicians are activated 82% of the time. Moreover, politicians are nominated (e.g. "Harriet Harman, Yvette Cooper and Gloria De Piero" (l.13) and "Nick Clegg" (l.27), whereas female voters are collectivised and aggregated (e.g. "33m women" (l.8), "half the population" (l.4)). Politicians and political parties

are also referenced 48 times, while female voters, including references to the author herself, are referenced 42 times.

Furthermore, in pointing out the patronising tone and normative focus of both Labour's campaign and the media's portrayal of it, the author perpetuates the homogenisation and normativity she herself laments. The author's criticism is threefold. Firstly, she criticises the Conservatives and Lib Dems for not engaging with female voters at all (l.25-26). Secondly, she also criticises the side that does try to appeal to women. She condemns how stereotypical and ultimately patronising Labour's "cringeworthy" (l.16) pink bus is and mocks female-oriented policies having to be "trussed up in pink glitter" (l.30). Here she also mimics the perceived patronising tone by using demeaning terms and phrases such as "lady voters", "little lady minds" (both l.5), and referring to women as a "monolith of bleeding hormonal minds" (l.4) or a "niche interest group" (l.10). Thirdly, she judges the narrow focus on hetero and cisnormative motherhood and the conflation of female voters with mothers. Here she mentions the focus on "bouncing babies" (l.19). However, she applies this criticism whilst applying a hetero-and-cisnormative, as well as ableist, focus herself. She criticises the notion of a collectivised women's vote, of women being a monolith, but she herself both aggregates women and conflates them with people who have periods (l.4). Even though this reference to periods is sarcastic, it still excludes whole swathes of cis and trans women who do not menstruate. She appears to excuse her own homogenising criticism by linking this to the overall lack-of-choice discourse. She repeats that the only two options during the 2015 campaign appear to be 1) being patronised or 2) being ignored, and that 'we' as female voters have to choose between these two 'evils'. She never thought she would "defend the pink bus" (l.19), but it is preferable to the utter silence coming from other parts of the political spectrum. She also mentions that she hopes future campaigns will serve women better and provide a wider array of choices than

shown in this article and in other 2015 headlines such as the ones in the examples below, which patronisingly refer to female voters as the 'mum vote' (ex. 41) or the "stay-a-home mothers brigade" (ex. 42) which due to the use of negatively loaded 'brigade' has a clear negative connotation. However, as this entire section has shown and as the next article will emphasise, the choice only proceeds to get more narrow instead.

- (41) "David Cameron just made childcare a key election issue. Shame he fluffed it; The Tory pledge to give working parents 30 hours of free childcare a week has impressed precisely no one, says Sally Peck. If politicians want to win the '**mum vote**' they'll have to work harder than this"

(*telegraph.co.uk*, 14 April 2015)

- (42) "With a smart promise of free childcare, the Tories have finally stopped kowtowing to **the stay-at-home mothers brigade**; James Kirkup says the Conservative manifesto pledge of 30 hours a week of free childcare shows the party has finally come to terms with modern British life"

(*telegraph.co.uk*, 14 April 2015)

The next article from 2016 will further elucidate the conflation of female voters with normative notions of motherhood as well as the policing of 'good' motherhood. The article is titled "No wonder women back Brexit - mums know best". It was written by Allison Pearson, and published in the online version of *The Telegraph* without an assigned section on 24/05/2016 [see Article 4 in Appendix B.4]. The following social actors are present in this article: the most prominent social actors are *women*, who are referenced 41 times, of which 14 explicitly (also) refer to the female *author*, and 2 to the *readers*, who are once again envisaged as female (see the use of "us" in 1.36). *Women* also overlap with and are often conflated with

mothers in this text. The other social actors that feature are *politicians*, the NHS and its *patients*, who overlap with the aforementioned actors, as well as *Britons*, and *men*, but they are explicitly portrayed to not overlap with *immigrants*.

Similar to the previous article, the *author* is again very present. The article includes 6 instances of the first person singular pronoun, as well as 8 instances of second person plural pronouns which explicitly group the *author* and *readers* together. She also introduces her voting advice (l.31), judgements and emotions of fear and anger regarding immigration issues and a hypothetical post-EU Referendum future for “our own people” (l.33), explicitly excluding immigrants, as facts which are very similar to the ones found in Article 2 discussed above, as she presents herself as an authority. Other comparisons that can be drawn between this article and the previous articles relate to the way *women* are represented. *Women* are collectivised and referred to generally by means of indefinite plurals (i.e. ‘women’) while their identity as voters is never made explicit as they are never referred to as ‘female voters’. There is one woman who is mentioned by name and appears to escape the collectivisation. However, this “Rosie”, the paradigmatic woman, who is claimed to be the author’s friend (l.2) is not quoted or engaged directly nor is her full name mentioned, whereas male NHS Dr Karol Sikora for example is. The latter might be due to issues of privacy, but it also diminishes her agency and it means that her story is unverifiable.

The ways in which this article differs from the previous and deepens the arguments made in this section on normative motherhood include an even more pronounced conflation of women and mothers as well as explicit policing of ‘good’ motherhood for all women. Immediately in the title of the article “No wonder women back Brexit - mums know best” (l.1) women are explicitly depicted as mothers. This notion is prominent throughout the article, whereas fatherhood is never mentioned when it

comes to men “switching to Remain” (1.23). Men are not conflated with fatherhood, but women are conflated with motherhood. For example, the reasons women are more likely to support Brexit according to this article and the limited sources it references, are entirely linked to women expecting children (e.g. “pregnant women” (1.25 & 27)) or having children and a family. In 1.22 women are said to be “more likely to see the EU as a threat to family life” before they are immediately referred to as “mothers” again in the same sentence. One could note that the women discussed in this article have a higher activation rate (76%) than the women in the previous article, but they are still collectivised and have a maternal identity forced upon them which also narrows their own identities. Furthermore, the notion of all women being or wanting to be mothers is hetero-and-cisnormative, as well as ableist as discussed above. Not all women can or want to have children. This article piles on even more heteronormativity as it implies that there is only one mother per family, and that every family has a mother. It is mothers who take care of the children as it is “women who tend to be the ones trying to find the school places and booking the appointments with the overburdened GP” (1.24). This quote also illustrates how this article conflates motherhood with stereotypical gender roles. Women, and thus mothers, are the main caretakers at home who are “in the frontline for public services” (1.30) and “navigate the broken care system for elderly parents” (1.26). Lastly, this notion of women being the main caretakers also leads to policing and legitimising of what a good mother should be and do which again diminishes women’s personal agency. According to the author, this means that women “agree” with her (1.35). In a more general sense, this article reiterates the notion that women are supposed to know what is best for their assumed family, unlike men as “[m]other knows best” / “mums know best” (1.37/1.1).

Additional headlines from 2016, seen below, emphasise this notion that Vote Leave in particular uses positive directives, and thus “tells women”

how they should vote Leave in order to be ‘good’ mothers and “take control of [their] family’s destiny” (ex. 43). According to Moessner (2010), such positive directives (i.e. ‘do this’) are a clear legitimisation strategy to increase the legitimacy of certain behaviours while negative directives (i.e. ‘do not do this’) index strategies of illegitimation. In this case the practices that are normalised are anti-EU practices which aim to convince people that the EU is a “threat to family” (ex. 44).

- (43) **“BORIS TELLS WOMEN: VOTE LEAVE TO TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR FAMILY’S DESTINY”**

(The Daily Mail, 20 June 2016)

- (44) **“Women rightly see the EU as a *threat to family*”**

(ExpressOnline, 24 May 2016)

However, there are a few examples of how the Remain campaign also polices ‘good’ motherhood by portraying Brexit as ‘gambling’ with their children’s futures:

- (45) **“Sam Cam - I’m in for my kids: In her own words, the PM’s wife delivers a Brexit broadside and says she won’t *gamble on her children’s futures*”**

(MailOnline, 11 June 2016)

7.1.3 Addressing the lack of female voices

This chapter has previously touched upon the apparent lack of female voices throughout the ‘permalection’ period and the criticism of this deficiency. This section will now deal with how predominantly female journalists are trying to address this issue in an attempt to remedy it. Their approach appears to be five-pronged: 1) female journalists discuss the plight

of women in a fact-based manner; 2) rousing and/or shaming appeals to vote are presented to combat this lack of a voice; 3) there is a clear, either patronising or demonising, focus on female politicians; 4) there is a normative focus on politicians' wives and their appearance as well as their behaviour; 5) women are portrayed as voiceless victims of violence. The latter three in particular, abide by heteronormative and sexist discourses providing readers with mental images which underpin "sexist judgements about women such that their subordinate status within patriarchal society is symbolically reinforced" (Carter et al., 1998, p. 6).

The first prong makes explicit what other articles have already hinted at: the lacking involvement of women in the political debate. These articles base their arguments regarding women's deficient participation on "the latest polls" (ex. 46). According to these polls, women are the "majority of undecided voters" and therefore need to be convinced to vote. Consequently, women are deemed an important group to appeal to as they "look likely to decide next government":

- (46) "Politicians need to convince us kick-ass women to vote. Fast; General Election 2015: **The latest polls** say that **women**, including those who work in tech, **make up the majority of undecided voters** and **look likely to decide the next government**. Sophy Ridge reports from the campaign trail"

(telegraph.co.uk, 1 May 2015)

However, women do not seem to be addressed or even considered throughout the 'permaelection' campaigns. Therefore, these articles also argue that in order to combat this, politics and debates need to be made more "diverse" and "more inclusive and less alienating to women" so that henceforth women will be considered:

- (47) "When, instead of trying to make the debates more diverse, will we make **politics more diverse?**; Politics needs to be **more**

inclusive and less alienating to women, writes Helen Whitehouse”

(*mirror.co.uk*, 10 April 2015)

Secondly, the plight of women and lack of women’s voices is addressed by means of rousing appeals to women to vote. Female journalists quote famous names engaging them as social actors (e.g. Natalie Dormer, Helen Pankhurst) to convince women to take to the polls on election day. However, these appeals are not merely rousing, they also mainly appear to draw on shaming other women and invoke guilt in order to get them to vote. This tendency to shame links closely to the previously discussed policing of ‘good’ motherhood. ‘Good’ womanhood is being policed here as women are being accused of being ‘bad’ women if they do not vote. The directives in this article explicitly and forcefully legitimise and normalise the process of voting for women in order to increase the legitimacy of this behaviour in a male arena. The shaming of non-voting women then consists of an emphasis of letting other women down and is supported by the use of imperatives and the use of the modal verb “must” in particular. For example, in ex. 48 below from *The Telegraph’s* “#womenmustvote campaign” women are told that ‘we’ as women “owe it to the women of the world to vote”. The deontic modality expressed by ‘must’ in the hashtag also pits an actual obligation on female voters to use their vote. They are commanded to vote rather than encouraged. Furthermore, ‘we’ cannot let the suffragettes and descendants of the suffragettes such as Helen Pankhurst down by not voting (ex. 49). Voting is legitimised and posited as the only viable option and one, again, “must vote, vote, vote” (ex. 49).

- (48) “Natalie Dormer: **‘We owe it to the women of the world to vote’**; Telegraph Wonder Women **#womenmustvote** campaign: The Game of Thrones actress Natalie Dormer shares what motivates her to vote”

(*telegraph.co.uk*, 7 May 2015)

- (49) “Helen Pankhurst: My great-grandmother fought for the vote - don’t let her down; General Election 2015: Dr Helen Pankhurst, the great granddaughter of suffragette leader Emmeline, lists her top five reasons why women, especially young ones, **must vote, vote, vote**”

(*telegraph.co.uk*, 6 May 2015)

Furthermore, the responsibility for any negative outcomes of an election is put in the hands of female non-voters. Non-voters will be explicitly made “responsible” for and be blamed for the “worst that follows”, as shown by the example below:

- (50) “Not voting makes you **responsible for the worst that follows**”

(*The Independent*, 4 May 2015)

The third way in which the lack of female voices is addressed relates to the aforementioned foregrounding of female politicians as the 2015 GE saw the UK’s highest number yet of female MPs be elected into office, at 29% (Mitchell, 2015). These articles are specifically targeting female politicians, their opinions, behaviour and appearance. This targeting primarily takes place by attacking the female politicians’ supposedly non-normative, non-feminine behaviour, as well as their appearance. In general, female politicians are associated with domestic life, whereas male politicians are associated with neutral, rational politics, normalising them as the ones who ‘do’ politics (Cameron & Shaw, 2016; Ross et al., 2013a; Sreberny & van Zoonen, 2000). Subsequently, any behaviour that is seen as non-normative or too artificially masculine is marked, criticised, and ultimately used to argue that women might not be fit for the political arena. It is not where they, in a gender essentialist argumentation, ‘naturally’ fit in, as opposed

to male politicians who fit the masculine, political mould. For example, Nicola Sturgeon is criticised and labelled “dangerous” by the right-wing press for speaking up, for ‘calling the shots’ and being overall too unfeminine and non-normative (ex. 51). Consequently, she is seen as endangering both normative womanhood and the masculine political status quo.

- (51) “Is this the most **dangerous woman** in Britain? Nicola Sturgeon tells Red Ed: ‘We’ll **call the shots** now’ as it’s claimed she would rather see Cameron win election”

(*MailOnline*, 4 April 2015)

Similarly, Labour MP Harriet Harman is labelled an “[e]qualities zealot” for speaking up (for women’s rights), and presenting Labour’s pink bus and women-focused, equalities campaign:

- (52) “Labour rally that segregated sexes...and the star speaker? **Equalities zealot** Harriet Harman’s husband! ANDREW PIERCE with the stories the spin doctors DON’T want you to read”

(*MailOnline*, 4 May 2015)

Aside from these attacks there are in fact also celebrations of female politicians. However, these celebrations often turn rather belittling, as they objectify the women’s appearances rather than celebrate their achievements. They also frequently include patronising nicknames, which are a common tabloid feature (cf. ‘Red Ed’ for Ed Miliband). However, the nicknames for female politicians tend to more explicitly belittle their appearance. In the headline below for example, we see how Nicola Sturgeon’s ‘Krankie’ nickname is referenced. This nickname refers to the Scottish comedic duo The Krankies one of whom is a little boy character played by an adult woman. This explicitly labels her as masculine (or boyish) and explicitly belittles her, while her “office” is only celebrated in the context of becoming “sex-ier”:

- (53) “Why they’re not calling Scotland’s First Lady a ‘**Krankie**’ any more: Nicola Sturgeon is living proof women become **sexier** with age, income and office”

(*MailOnline*, 5 May 2015)

The focus on appearances is also very present with regard to the portrayals of politicians’ wives. They are identified by their physical features, the way they dress and comport themselves. Appearance comments, both positive and negative, tend to be common regarding as well among women, as they do not clash with notions of (beauty-focused) hegemonic femininity, whereas such appearance comments do clash with hegemonic masculinity discourses (Holmes, 1995). These objectifying comments once again diminish women’s agency, as stereotypical connotations of hegemonic feminine attributes are used to obliquely classify or functionalise them. The examples below illustrate this focus on stereotypically feminine appearance features such as dresses (ex. 54) and pedicures (ex. 55). Furthermore, the latter headline also includes an example of an arguably somewhat belittling nickname bestowed on women on the political scene: “SamCam”. This portmanteau version of Samantha Cameron’s name is a blend of truncated initial elements, or ‘splinters’ (Fandrych, 2008; Minkova & Stockwell, 2009; Rúa, 2002), of her first and last name. Blends are often used for “attention-catching purposes” (Adams, 1973, p. 141). However, in this case, one could also argue that this nomenclature is used to instil a sense of likeability and relatability, yet also a sense of condescending informality and familiarity. Women are much more likely than men to be referred to by their first name or truncated versions of their first name in professional settings by colleagues and clients alike, which might be indicative of a trivialising sense of familiarity (Atir & Ferguson, 2018; Romaine, 2000). Moreover, the fronting of her allegedly unfeminine physical appearance and lack of taking care of said appearance (i.e. “polish-free toenails”) before her political outreach work by “taking tea with a voter”

supports the notion that the nickname is used in a condescending manner here.

- (54) “Glorious in green! Samantha Cameron shows support for British designers in **emerald wrap dress**, £185, by The Fold at Conservative manifesto launch”

(MailOnline, 21 April 2015)

- (55) “Time for a **pedicure**? SamCam shows off a set of **polish-free toenails** after removing her shoes while **taking tea with a voter**”

(MailOnline, 29 April 2015)

In addition to the focus on their appearance, the behaviour of politicians’ wives is also scrutinised. These women are both mocked for being stereotypically feminine and submissive (ex. 56-57) and demonised for being too aggressive, or not submissive enough (ex. 58-59). They truly cannot seem to win either way. Samantha Cameron is criticised for her normative domesticity and submissive “wife and mother act” (ex. 56), while Miriam González Durántez’, wife of Lib Dem politician Nick Clegg, ‘secret’ domestic goddess, food-blogger persona is ‘revealed’ as if it is a sensational and damning revelation (ex. 57).

- (56) “Britain’s ‘political wives’ are juggling work and family like the rest of us. So let’s see it; An interview with Samantha Cameron has said that she does ‘the school run’, while her husband has ‘the government to run’. Groan, says Cathy Newman. Political wives are no longer expected to be arm candy. It’s time to drop the **wife and mother act**”

(telegraph.co.uk, 7 April 2015)

- (57) “Miriam Clegg **reveals secret life as a Nigella Lawson-style food blogger** to teach her children how to cook”

(*MailOnline*, 22 April 2015)

The ‘political wives’ are also marked for speaking up on the campaign trail and being too aggressive and masculine. This is primarily achieved via BATTLE metaphors (ex. 58) and references to outdated notions of perceived unfeminine behaviour such as ‘wearing the trousers’ at home (ex. 59).

- (58) “The wives are out: publicity-shy spouses join the **battle** for votes”

(*The Times*, 4 April 2015)

- (59) “It’s best not to ask who **wears the trousers**”

(*The Daily Telegraph*, 1 April 2015)

Lastly, women are also portrayed as voiceless victims of violence in general and domestic violence in particular. In fact, “[f]or the first time, domestic violence is all over the political agenda” (ex. 60). However, women are frequently specifically referred to as “victims” and the inclusion of real life women’s voices concerning domestic abuse charities and lived experiences like in the headline below is rare:

- (60) “General Election: Here’s who to vote for if you want to end domestic violence in Britain; **For the first time, domestic violence is all over the political agenda** and has appeared in four parties’ manifestos. Women’s Aid chief Polly Neate looks at which party will help **victims** the most”

(*telegraph.co.uk*, 17 April 2015)

In order to further investigate the rousing yet shaming appeals to women to vote, the following article was chosen. The article is titled “We women

must vote or be ignored, argues CAROLINE WHEELER" [capitals in original]. It was written by Caroline Wheeler, and published in the online version of *The Express* on 26/04/2015 [see Article 5 in Appendix B.5]. The following social actors are present in this article: the main social actor in this article is *women*, who can be divided into several more specific social actors such as *the author*, *the readers* (see the explicit overlap between the author, the readers and women in general in "we women" 1.1), *female voters*, *female politicians* and *suffragettes*, while *men* who can be divided into *male voters* and *male politicians*, in addition to *politicians* in general, make up the other social actors.

This article tries to address the lack of female voices explicitly, but aside from the author's voice no other women are directly consulted. Instead of providing women with a voice, the author makes a case for women making their voice heard by voting. On the one hand, this bestows women with higher levels of semantic agency and grammatical activation (87%) than many other articles included in this corpus as well as the articles discussed above. It also highlights the power of female voters as a target demographic, as they "would make a powerful ally for any party hoping to occupy No 10" (1.31). On the other hand, the strategies used to convince women to vote edge into shaming them into voting, pitting them against other women as well as men, and even though female voters are activated they are still backgrounded with regard to other groups.

Firstly, suffragettes are foregrounded with regard to current women and/or female voters. Suffragettes are fronted at the beginning of the article (1.4-1.13) and at the beginning of sentences (1.8-1.11 & 1.13), they are at times aggregated (e.g. "countless" 1.8, "more than a 1.000" 1.9) but also nominated (i.e. Emily Davison and "the Pankhursts" 1.8), and venerated for risking "life and limb so future generations of women would have an equal voice in society" (1.8). In addition to the suffragettes, politicians are also nominated (e.g. David Cameron in 1.28 and Harriet Harman in

1.17), while women are once again primarily aggregated. Female voters are only referred to by the plural form of 'women' (22 instances), as well as numbers (e.g. "9.1 million women" 1.17), percentages (e.g. "61 per cent of women aged 18 to 24" 1.16, "64 per cent of women" 1.22, "one in 15 women" 1.34) and other homogenising quantifiers (e.g. "all women" 1.5, "generations of women" 1.8, 'number(s)' of women 1.15, 18, 20 & 32) and phrases such as "the female vote" 1.30/32. Furthermore, a litany of 'us vs. them' legitimisation strategies is put forward to both illustrate women's lack of a voice and to rouse women to vote. These 'us vs. them' strategies can be split into the following three separate strands. The first relates to the voter "turnout gap between the sexes" (1.19), as it creates an opposition between male and female voters by showing how a smaller percentage of women tends to go out and vote: "[a]t the last election 64 per cent of women voted, compared to 67 per cent of men" (1.22). Women are also pitted against politicians, who are portrayed as uncaring, and as not working for all citizens and society as a whole but only the people who voted in the last election. Politicians are vilified in this narrative and portrayed as having to be convinced to 'work' for women. They are claimed to see a lack of voting women as a "sign that they can stop working to attract the female vote" (1.32), and they will not see women as "important when drawing up policy" (1.26). Non-voting women are also bound to "lose their influence over political parties" (1.26), as "no vote means no voice" (1.24). This last quote also leads us into the final 'us vs. them' match-up, as well as the overall theme of shaming women into voting. The author creates an opposition between potential female voters and the suffragettes and their legacy, and consequently attempts to 'guilt-trip' these women into voting. The author attempts to police 'good womanhood' by means of emotional appeals to and judgements of non-voting women. Women who do not vote will be judged for costing other women their voice, desecrating the suffragettes' memory and legacy, and squandering

their “hard-won” (l.6) rights. Suffragettes, as aforementioned, are venerated and portrayed as heroines that the women of today cannot let down. In doing so their struggles and suffering are amplified. They are passivated more frequently (87%) than today’s women (67%) and they show low levels of semantic agency, as the “scorn they endured” (l.12) and the ways in which they “suffered” (l.13) are highlighted so that to the author’s appeal to “vote or be ignored” (l.1) is more impactful.

The topics and strategies to address and/or combat women’s lack of a voice discussed above are all still evident in 2016 and 2017 albeit in different ways and quantities. In 2016, articles relating to violence and female politicians are still very much evident, while articles about politicians’ wives are almost entirely absent. There are only a handful of Referendum Day articles consisting of referendum live blogs about turnout and wives of politicians arriving with male politicians. This appears to partially be due to the fact that political parties and their leaders and subsequently their partners took a backseat to the wider Vote Remain and Vote Leave campaigns. Furthermore, because, as we have seen above, women are less of a target demographic in 2016, rousing appeals to vote have also mostly disappeared. The ‘plight’ articles are still quite frequent on the other hand. However, they have changed from general overviews of what women might need to more ‘aggressive’, fear-based instructions of what women *should* need and how they should vote (ex. 61-62), as there is supposedly “only one way to vote” (ex. 61):

- (61) “EU referendum: For any woman who values workplace equality, there’s **only one way to vote**”

(*telegraph.co.uk*, 16 June 2016)

- (62) “This is why the EU is TERRIBLE for women, explains SUZANNE EVANS”

(ExpressOnline, 24 May 2016)

In fact, it can be argued that the overviews of women's issues and rousing appeals have mixed together and formed a new set of representations. This new mixture also links to the normative motherhood appeals and Article 4 discussed above, as these 'how you should vote' headlines often reference such topics as women's roles "in the home" and "parental leave" (ex. 63-64).

- (63) "Brexit could derail fight for women's rights, says Harriet Harman; Labour MP claims out campaigners more likely to associate with view that woman's primary role is **in the home**"

(The Guardian, 13 May 2016)

- (64) "Six big reasons for women to vote Remain in the EU referendum; Shared **parental leave**, equal pay, anti-discrimination laws, special funding for women-led projects and protection against harassment and human trafficking: it's all enshrined in EU law"

(The Independent, 23 June 2016)

In 2017, articles about politicians' wives are again almost entirely absent. This is partially due to the appointment of Theresa May, a female PM who is married to a man, on 13 July 2016. Instead, there are more articles present about female politicians and what female voters think of them. These articles tend to focus more on the female politicians than on the female voters and can actually be quite patronising (e.g. how women must love Theresa May). Furthermore, the 'women's plight' articles and appeals to vote are also still present, but their content differs from 2016 and even more so from 2015. The policing of female agency shines through even more in the 2017 articles. For example, similarly to Article 5, voters are told they cannot let the suffragettes down, and in turn May cannot let female voters down. Additionally, the appeals to vote have developed into

instructions to fulfil your role as a woman in this society and overviews of how women will vote. For example, examples 65 and 66 shown below concerning polls and ratings are prevalent. These headlines are primarily just descriptive of women's voting choices rather than analytical.

- (65) "Exclusive Telegraph ORB poll: Labour narrows gap to six points as women voters surge towards Jeremy Corbyn"

(telegraph.co.uk, 27 May 2017)

- (66) "Labour's boost in the ratings is being driven by women who are flocking to Jeremy Corbyn's Party, a new poll shows"

(MailOnline, 28 May 2017)

The latter topic also frequently illustrates how the choice is seemingly already made for female voters due to notions of identity politics and 'female solidarity' with Theresa May. This mirrors other studies that have shown that the voting behaviour of women tends to reflect a preference for female candidates (Dolan, 1998, 2012; McElroy & Marsh, 2010). This preconceived notion of women's voting habits manifests itself in female voters and authors' emotional reactions to May being a woman, how they assess her behaviour along normative principles and what value they assign to her being a woman. These judgements and emotions also tie in with the theory of 'gender issue ownership' (Herrnson et al., 2003), which argues that voters tend to perceive female politicians as more competent than male politicians when it comes to traditional 'women's issues' (Shapiro & Mahajan, 1986). This is partly due to women being viewed as more sensitive, emotional, warm, caring and communal, in contrast to the assertive and dominant normative view of men (Fiske et al., 1999; Len-Rios et al., 2005). On the other hand, masculinity is still the preferred mode for higher office and consequently men's interests are viewed as neutral and more important. Therefore, male leadership remains the default against which

women are judged to be lacking (Meeks, 2012; O'Brien, 2016b; S. Thompson & Yates, 2017). Furthermore, female politicians are also trivialised, sexualised and objectified more harshly than men as their personal lives, physical appearance (i.e. age, looks, fashion sense) and character traits such as sincerity tend to be the focus. Conversely, coverage of male politicians focuses more on their experience, policy positions and professional accomplishments (Cameron & Shaw, 2016; Dunaway et al., 2013; Heldman et al., 2005; Hooghe et al., 2015; Jamieson et al., 1995). In summary, female politicians such as Theresa May evoke rather powerful emotions in both the media and the public (Savigny & Warner, 2015; Sreberny & van Zoanen, 2000) while high politics is still seen as the realm of men (Campbell & Childs, 2010). Consequently, then PM Theresa May being female was put front and centre by news outlets and the articles in this corpus. She was presented in a more personalised and "real" manner (ex. 67-68 below). She also seemingly needed to be portrayed as more relatable, liked and "warmed to" (ex. 68), to be worthy of her office.

(67) "Why Theresa May plays so much better at the school gates than mulish Jeremy Corbyn"

(telegraph.co.uk, 27 April 2017)

(68) "Boyfriends before Philip, exploding puds and her neighbours the Clooneys: JAN MOIR spends time with Theresa May and sees the real woman so many non-Tories are **warming to**"

(telegraph.co.uk, 27 April 2017)

Conversely, Theresa May was also portrayed as a 'Maybot', and a 'bloody difficult woman' (S. Thompson & Yates, 2017), focusing on her gender and how her stubbornness and lack of compassion is seen as un-feminine (Ross, 2017; Savigny, 2017). She was also likened to an even more frenzied version of Disney villain "Cruella De Vil" (ex. 69), drawing on misogynistic stereotypes of hysterical and over-emotional women. She was also

criticised for not being personable enough and lacking a “personality” (ex. 70), called “invisible” (ex. 71) as well as compared to Margaret Thatcher by means of a play on Thatcher’s infamous phrase ‘the lady is not for turning’ (ex. 71). In brief, these headline writers do not seem to be able to make up their mind with regard to her worst character flaws. She is simultaneously portrayed as stubborn and hysterical, and as having no personality.

- (69) “The Tory manifesto translated: it’s like **Cruella De Vil** on a bender; It’s my landslide and you’ll cry if I want you to”

(*mirror.co.uk*, 18 May 2017)

- (70) “Alison Phillips: **Sham ‘personality’** hides the real Theresa May; The PM is hoping to win the election on the strength of her personality. Only thing is, she doesn’t have one”

(*mirror.co.uk*, 16 May 2017)

- (71) “The **Invisible Woman: the lady is not for turning up**”

(*The I*, 2 June 2017)

The ‘double bind’ of women in positions of authority needing to both appear assertive and authoritative, but not so assertive as to be deemed unfeminine or masculine (or robotic), as well as cooperative, warm and relatable whilst this often also makes these women be evaluated as less authoritative, is well-documented (Baxter, 2008; Romaniuk & Ehrlich, 2017). Male politicians on the other hand are not restricted by this specific double bind and appear to be seen as ubiquitous and inherently part and parcel of UK politics. There is a notable lack of relatability coverage concerning men in the current study’s corpus, which is partially due to its focus on women, and when male politicians do receive relatability coverage in this corpus, it often involves making their wife seem more relatable (see ex. 72 below).

(72) “Who is Jeremy Corbyn’s wife? Inside his marriage to Laura Alvarez: Love, politics, vegetables and nights in watching EastEnders; After the success of Jeremy Corbyn’s election campaign we look at the supportive wife behind the Labour leader - a Mexican coffee importer 20 years his junior”

(*mirror.co.uk*, 10 May 2017)

Lastly, there is somewhat of a split present in the data. In general, female voters are ignored, their agency is absent or demonised, and they are mostly just mentioned in passing. However, there are certain female journalists who combat this negative treatment of female voters by means of highlighting women’s needs and appeals. This counters several other studies which have shown that there is no great difference between the ways in which male and female journalists practice journalism (Hanitzsch & Hanusch, 2012; Lavie & Lehman-Wilzig, 2003), nor a relationship between journalist gender and gendered news (Meeks, 2013). This latter group of articles provide more general information regarding “what each party [is] promising women” rather than appeals or direct advice (ex. 73). Therefore, it could also be argued that this equates to bestowing women with more agency, as they can make up their own mind. However, these more ‘neutral’ articles are overshadowed in numbers by the aforementioned articles telling or directing women what to do.

(73) “General election 2017: **What is each party promising women?**”

(*telegraph.co.uk*, 18 May 2017)

In order to further investigate the notion of identity politics and the policing of female voter agency, the following article was chosen. The article is titled “The real reason May will win the women’s vote”. It was written by Judith Woods, and published in the NEWS section of *The Daily Telegraph* on 28/04/2017 [see Article 6 in Appendix B.6]. The following social actors

are present in this article: *women* in general, make up the most prominent social actors and can be divided into more specific actors such as *the author*, *the author's 'Leftie' friend*, *the (intended) readers*, *female voters* and *female politicians*, among whom *Theresa May* is the most salient. These women are pitted against *men* in general and more specific male social actors such as *the author's friend's dad*, and *male politicians*, among whom *Jeremy Corbyn* is undoubtedly the most prominent actor. The identity politics angle in this article primarily manifests itself in 'us vs. them' and other 'vs.' strategies which draw heavily on (hetero)normative gender stereotypes. 'Us' women (61 references), including the author and the intended readership of the article as well as then PM Theresa May, are pitted against men in general (56 references), and against one man in particular: Jeremy Corbyn. As it is written from a female perspective, women are activated more often than men (84% activation vs. 66%). However, men are also portrayed as making women suffer, and this passivation of women and demonising of men is an integral part of the 'us vs. them' narrative running throughout the article. Subsequently, the article posits that female voters should vote for May because she is a woman as well as a specific type of woman which will be discussed below. Conversely, they should not vote for Corbyn precisely because he is *not* a woman. In fact, not only is he not a woman, but he is also both too much of a man and not man enough according to the author, which will be explored in more detail below. Corbyn not being a woman, being the wrong kind of man and making May look more competent in comparison is indeed the main focus of this article. May is in fact only directly referenced 8 times in only 4 out of a total of 45 sentences, while Corbyn is referenced a total of 33 times in 18 sentences throughout the article.

Even though women are activated 84% of the time, they are also once again collectivised, aggregated, and backgrounded with regard to (male) politicians. Additionally, they are portrayed in normative ways while

their agency is policed. For example, women are always pluralised (8 instances). Moreover, their sexuality and relationships are assumed to be heteronormative, as even though “spouse” (l.23) is used once in addition to 3 instances of “husband(s)” (l.19, 36, 43), this use of ‘spouse’ explicitly refers to male partners. In addition to this heteronormative perspective of womanhood, stereotypical notions of women in the domestic space are perpetuated in this article. Women are positioned as primary caretakers and homemakers as they are the ones who “still have hatches, matches, dispatches and wraparound Sandwich Generation care to juggle” (l.29) once the working day is over.

In parallel to these stereotypical notions of womanhood, there is the explicit criticism of masculinity and manhood in general, and Corbyn’s masculinity in particular. The article appears to view masculinity as inherently flawed or even dangerous, yet certain ‘masculine’ traits are portrayed as essential to being a capable leader. Corbyn is simultaneously too masculine as well as not masculine or ‘virile’ enough to be deemed a viable candidate for the position of Prime Minister. For example, the author views men as “tactless” and “thoughtless” (l.23) and vilifies them by portraying them as perpetrators of sexual violence (l.33). Consequently, her main gripe with Corbyn appears to hinge on his “insulting proposal” to “ensure women’s safety” on trains (l.33). According to the author, Corbyn displayed too much masculinity by siding with the (male) perpetrators of sexual violence on trains and suggesting to corral women “on their own in a special carriage” (l.33), and consequently “curtail [women’s] freedom”. Furthermore, the author condemns male politicians, by referring to primarily male Conservative politicians after 2010 as “the clubbable, born-to-rule set, braying their way up the greasy pole” (l.27), and referencing “irritable male syndrome” (l.21) with regard to certain specific male politicians (i.e. Boris Johnson and Donald Trump). On the other hand, the author also appears to argue that Corbyn does not display enough stereotypically

male characteristics to make a good Prime Minister. Firstly, the author calls his overall competence into question by portraying him as lacking such stereotypically masculine characteristics as “pragmatism” (l.30, 45), construction skills and confidence, as she doubts whether he “could assemble an Ikea kitchen cabinet” (l.39), and describes him as a “shambling stooge” (l.26). Moreover, the author criticises Corbyn’s supposed lack of virility in a rather ageist manner: “it’s an age thing” (l.20). Corbyn could not possibly be a strong and capable leader, as his increasing age constantly comes into play. The author also describes Corbyn as an old-fashioned, stubborn old man, with his “head too far down the sand” (l.35), likening him to her friend’s father (l.6-16) who “hates change and never deviates from what he knows” (l.14). Corbyn is said to be “forever harking back” rather than looking to the future (l.32). Moreover, the author illustrates her ageist views of deficient manliness by claiming that this “intransigence” would be construed as “steadfastness” in a more virile young man (l.41), while “in a 67-year-old, it is the expression of mulish inflexibility.” (l.42).

While Corbyn’s (lack of) masculinity bears the brunt of the criticism woven through this article, May’s (lack of) femininity does not escape unscathed. Even though the author urges her readers to vote for a woman and to vote for the type of woman May is in particular, she also criticises May for not being feminine enough. The author judges May’s femininity by referring to the disparaging “Maybot” nickname (l.25). This blended nickname is a combination of May’s last name and the final syllable of ‘robot’. It blends [+human] and [-human] features and therefore diminishes her humanity. Moreover, the [-human] ‘-bot’ part of the blend questions May’s likeability, warmth and relatability and ultimately her suitability for office. However, this misogynistic criticism is complicated by the fact that the author also appears to view May’s lack of stereotypically feminine characteristics as an asset in the race for Prime Minister, as May might represent the middle ground between a male and female leader. Her

“pragmatism” (l.30, 45), lack of emotions and robotic behaviour could also tie in with and underpin her unwavering, strong and stable image. She is a “safe and diligent pair of hands” (l.25) and “possesses the single most important characteristic that Corbyn lacks: pragmatism” (l.30). This emotionless pragmatism is often paradoxically demanded from women hand in hand with likeability, a double bind, discussed above, that is seemingly impossible to escape. According to the author however, the likeability factor is of lesser importance in this race, as Corbyn by virtue of being a ‘stubborn old man’ lacks both likeability and pragmatism in the author’s eyes. All in all, the article appears to pretend that women should vote for May not because she is a woman but because of her pragmatism, yet it specifically and overtly criticises (the author’s own perspective of) masculinity in general and Corbyn’s (lack of) masculinity in particular, while praising May for not being like that.

Aside from Article 6, the 2017 corpus encompasses more headlines from female journalists related to identity politics, either by directly referring to “identity politics” (ex. 74), or by implicitly invoking identity politics by policing ‘good’ womanhood, and ‘good’ feminist practices. The latter is achieved by asking if women are “bad feminist[s]” if they “don’t vote” (ex. 75) and consequently let other women down, or pushing hesitant potential female voters to vote for a woman and specifically “one of these women” (ex. 76).

(74) “Forget the ‘nasty party’. Theresa May can now move beyond **identity politics**”

(*telegraph.co.uk*, 20 April 2017)

(75) “Are you a **bad feminist if you don’t vote?**”

(*telegraph.co.uk*, 8 June 2017)

- (76) “Don’t know who to vote for in the General Election? How about **one of these women...**”

(telegraph.co.uk , 2 May 2017)

Furthermore, female voter agency is further diminished as women intending to vote for Theresa May are collectivised and patronised by the use of overly familiar and at times belittling nicknames such as “Mayllennials”, as well as described as easily influenced schoolgirls “falling for [her] schoolmarmish charms” (ex. 77). Describing May as “schoolmarmish”, as a strict and old-fashioned, female, school teacher, and referring to her by her married honorific “Mrs May” (ex. 78) once again positions the focus on May’s (heteronormative) gender identity.

- (77) “Meet the **‘Mayllennials’** - the young voters **falling for Theresa May’s schoolmarmish charms**”

(telegraph.co.uk, 13 May 2017)

- (78) “If **Mrs May** doesn’t win tomorrow, what will become of us”

(The Daily Telegraph , 7 June 2017)

Overall, as discussed, the lack of women’s voices is pointed out and discussed, yet rarely combatted. Female agency is examined but not provided. In fact, agency is often either denied, forced on women by means of shaming appeals to their identity, or even demonised as the following section will elucidate in further depth.

7.1.4 Demonisation of female voter agency

We have seen how women’s voices have been silenced and how their choices have been actively limited to remain within the borders of a ‘female’ identity during the political campaigns. In addition to these restrictive representations, when female voters’ agency and questioning of

the political elite is on full display, they are once again restricted and restrained, as they are primarily mocked or demonised throughout all three campaigns. They are sometimes celebrated for their agentic behaviour displaying higher levels of semantic agency, but these celebrations are often expressed by means of expressions of ANGER, drawing on misogynistic stereotypes of hysterical and over-emotional women. Moreover, these demonisations and celebrations of female voter agency are once again more *about* them than *with* and/or *for* them. Moreover, they revolve more around the politicians and political parties they speak on or 'attack', than around female voters.

The demonisation of female voters primarily occurs in right-wing newspaper articles written by both women and men. In these articles, female voters and their perceived anger and aggression are disavowed predominantly for the non-normative and 'unfeminine' nature of their agentic, critical conduct. Their anger also appears to be depicted in a negative light due to the fact that women are much more likely to be portrayed as "uninformed, irrational" ordinary citizens than as experts (Adcock, 2010, p. 148). Consequently, their anger and criticism might be viewed as more unwarranted than an informed expert's criticism would be. Furthermore, the female voters in this corpus are vaguely described in terms of their identity as 'women' or 'voters' (see examples 79-85 below), by representations such as "[m]um-of-two" (ex. 79), or mockingly as a "party-loving ex-Catholic schoolgirl" (ex. 81), rather than in terms of their field of expertise. These labels are not chosen by the referents themselves and once again diminish the referent's agency. Moreover, the lexis used stands firmly in the semantic field of ANGER/RAGE, as the women's critiques of mainly male politicians (i.e. David Cameron, Boris Johnson, Michael Gove and Ed Miliband) are described by means of literal references to their "anger" (ex. 85) and then being "angry" (ex. 79) or "furious" (ex. 82), as a consequence of this anger,

These women are portrayed as leaving the male politicians “stumped” (ex. 79) by non-normatively “launching a(n) (seething) attack” (ex. 79 & 82), ‘heckling’ those men (ex. 80), ‘ridiculing’ (ex. 81) and ‘blasting’ (ex. 84) them, swearing and ‘letting rip’ (ex. 83), as well as ‘shouting’ at them (ex. 84) as they have to “face [a] woman voter’s anger” (ex. 85). These verb processes all carry connotations of aggression or even hysteria, hence negative judgement, and can subsequently be linked to the ever-present policing of female agency in general, and female anger in particular. In line with hegemonic notions of gender roles and stereotypes of femininity, women are not supposed to display such unfeminine, aggressive behaviours and are consequently labelled as ‘furious’ and deemed worthy of negative judgement.

- (79) “David Cameron and Boris Johnson left **stumped** by **angry** voter’s welfare questions; **Mum-of-two** Niki Brown, 47, **launched an attack** on the Tory leader and London Mayor as they campaigned at her office”

(*mirror.co.uk*, 5 May 2015)

- (80) “Election 2015: Who was the woman who **heckled** David Cameron during leaders debates?”

(*ExpressOnline* , 3 April 2015)

- (81) “Who is the Essex **party-loving ex-Catholic schoolgirl** that **ridiculed** Cameron’s ‘waffling’?”

(*ExpressOnline* , 3 June 2016)

- (82) “‘They ARE elected!’ **Furious** woman **launches seething attack** on Michael Gove in pro-EU rant”

(*ExpressOnline* , 13 May 2017)

- (83) ““You’ve f***** every f***** thing up,” woman tells David Cameron at Facebook/Buzzfeed Brexit debate; The Prime Minister had to stand and take it as she **let rip**”

(*mirror.co.uk*, 10 June 2016)

- (84) “Muslim woman **blasts** ‘racist’ UKIP at chaotic election campaign launch as protesters storm the building; Railing against UKIP’s burqa ban as she was escorted out, the woman **shouted**: “They are racist and how dare they tell Muslim women what to wear?”

(*mirror.co.uk*, 28 April 2017)

- (85) “MILIBAND FACES WOMAN VOTER’S ANGER ON PHONE-IN”

(*The Daily Mail*, 25 April 2015)

Moreover, other groups that have been portrayed as ‘angry’ such as Muslims, LGBTQ+ rights groups and feminists are often portrayed as such to undermine their cause (P. Baker, 2006b; P. Baker et al., 2013; Jaworska & Krishnamurthy, 2012). Giving in, so to speak, to these groups would then be classed as “political correctness gone too far” and therefore this particular representation is a negative one (P. Baker, 2014, p. 222). We also see this negative stance-taking reflected in the manner in which women are celebrated, or at the very least not judged or mocked for their anger in left-wing newspapers. Their behaviour is still marked and out of the ordinary, however, as they are still described by means of similar negatively connoted verb processes relating to unfeminine aggression. See for example, the use of “tripped up”, “stumps”, “grills” in ex. 86, “slapping” in ex. 87, and mothers leading the “call to arms” and “fight” in ex. 88 below. This aggressive behaviour, while not necessarily judged in a negative light, is still classed as non-normative and therefore worthy of being reported on.

- (86) “Student who **tripped** up David Cameron **stumps** Boris Johnson on LBC; Reema Abdulaziz, whose question PM hailed as best of the election campaign, **grills** London mayor about record in office, leaving him struggling for words”

(The Guardian, 22 April 2015)

- (87) “BBC presenter accidentally touches a Corbyn supporter’s BREAST as she interrupts his broadcast - but she gets her own back by **slapping** him”

(MailOnline, 16 May 2017)

- (88) “**Women lead the call to arms** as anti-fracking **fight** intensifies; Female opposition to drilling soars as mothers unite in desire to safeguard children’s future”

(The Observer, 29 May 2016)

Lastly, women’s voices and their anger, or more specifically their exasperation, are also used “for comic contextual effect” (Adcock, 2010). In 2017 in particular, the previously discussed ‘Brenda from Bristol’ became a sort of mascot for voters expressing their dissatisfaction with having multiple elections thrust upon them in such quick succession.⁵ However, even though her words were omnipresent for a large portion of the 2017 campaign, this female voter’s agency did not take centre stage as she was reduced to a quote rather than given real representation and exposure. She became a tokenistic figurehead and her words became fodder for male journalists to use as they please, often for comedic effect, as illustrated by the example below:

- (89) “I’M WITH BRENDA FROM BRISTOL I’VE HAD A BELLYFUL OF ELECTIONS!”

⁵See Figure 14 in Appendix A.2.

(*The Daily Mail*, 19 April 2017)

In order to further investigate the apparent demonisation of female voter agency in the permaelection period, I analysed a 2017 *MailOnline* article. This right-oriented article was chosen because, as illustrated by the examples above, this theme was present throughout the period yet most prevalent and eye-catching in the smaller 2017 corpus, and primarily occurred in right-wing newspapers. The article is titled “Catfight on the Ukip campaign trail: Remain supporter ‘claws’ at Brexit rival in the street as party leader tours Hartlepool”. It was written by Isobel Frodsham, and published in the NEWS section of *MailOnline*, the online version of *The Daily Mail*, on 29/04/2017 [see Article 7 in Appendix B.7]. The following social actors are present in this article: the main social actors in this article are two specific *female voters* who are referenced 103 times, while the second most frequently referenced social actors are *Brexiters* (93 times). These two female voters are grouped together at times, but one is referenced as a *remain supporter* and the other one, who is backgrounded with regard to her “rival” (l.1), as a *Brexit supporter*. Furthermore, the *Brexiters* can be further broken down into *Paul Nuttall*, then leader of Ukip, and *Ukip members & politicians*, while in addition to the singular Remain-supporting woman, another set of *Remainers* are also present. Other social actors that play a small role in the article include *witnesses, the police, local constituents, non-Ukip politicians* and *MailOnline* themselves.

Firstly, even though women are the most prominent social actors, and their actions and words are displayed and examined in detail, they are once again ‘talked about’ rather than given a voice. For example, footage of them is quoted (l.15), but they themselves are not interviewed. Perhaps they could not be reached or perhaps they were not contacted at all. If an attempt to contact them was made, this is not made clear in the article. Their agency is discussed, but the article appears uninterested in who these women are, or what they have to say. It merely appears to be in-

terested in the sensationalism of their ‘shocking’, unfeminine ‘fight’ and the topicality of the Brexit rivalry. The disinterest is especially made clear by the fact that the two women, even though they are represented as bitter “rivals” (l.1), are collapsed together throughout the article. It is even entirely unclear who is who until l.27: “[e]arlier the older woman, who speaks with a local accent, had been heard criticising the remain supporter for not being local”, which finally reveals that the older, local woman is in fact the “Brexit rival” from the headline. Up until then neither woman is identified and the referents of the personal pronouns and indefinite pronouns such as ‘one’ and ‘another’ referring to either woman in l.16-26 can only be inferred after the identity is revealed in l.27. The fact that their names are not included can be explained with regard to privacy reasons and rules related to their arrest, but the fact that the quotes before l.27 cannot even be attributed to the monikers the author has come up with for these women is rather telling of her disinterest in their agency. Moreover, out of the 35 references to a singular ‘woman’ before l.27, only 29 become clear after l.27, while 7 references in l.32-35 remain unclear even after the revelation in l.27. Furthermore, even though the women are put forward as the focus of the article in the headline and mentioned frequently throughout the article, they become backgrounded after l.45. This is when the focus shifts entirely to the political rivalries surrounding them regarding “the North East for Europe group” (l.56) and Ukip, whose views on 2017’s post-Brexit Britain differ vastly. Moreover, the women are not mentioned at all in the final 6 lines (l.57-62) as the article concludes with quotes and thus engagement from Ukip politicians. This shock at two women fighting is also made clear by the stereotypical and misogynist phrasings used throughout the article. The headline uses feline imagery, drawing on the myth of the feminine as feline (Schroeder, 2002), to describe the fight (i.e. “catfight”, “claws” (l.1)), while the rest of the article emphasises the female ‘hysteria’ by illustrating stereotypically feminine ways of arguing

and fighting. For example, there is a rather apparent focus on the women's 'bickering' in l.15-21 and l.44, while hair pulling (l.32-33) and the fact that one of the women "brandishes a shoe" (l.23) are also highlighted.

Furthermore, while both women are supposedly foregrounded but ultimately backgrounded, the Remain-supporting woman is backgrounded to a much higher degree than her "Brexit rival" (l.1) with whom she argues "over immigration" (l.22), and who is criticised for being "a hard left activist who was disrupting things" (l.49). The Brexit-supporting female voter is referenced 56 times, while the Remain-supporting female voter is only referred to 23 times. She is also activated at a slightly higher rate than the Remain supporter (70% vs. 65%). This appears to be due to the Brexiteer being identifiably quoted, engaged and referred to in first person more frequently than the Remain supporter (17 clear quotes vs. 4; 31 clear first person references vs. 0). Meanwhile, the Remain supporter is more an addressee or bystander than a speaker and identifiably referred to more often by means of second or third person pronouns (7 clear second person references vs. 5; 5 clear third person references vs. 2 for the Brexiteer). Moreover, the Brexit-supporting woman victimises herself and in support of this victimisation her emotional appeals to the bystanders are underscored by the article's inclusion of many quotes regarding her frail health, age and supposed innocence. See for example l.23 in which she lists her ailments as follows: "I am on medication, I have vertigo, I am [a] 62-year-old and I have food poisoning". The author also includes her claim that the Remain supporter attacked her first (l.18) and 'scratched up her legs' (l.40). The author gives her space to intensify her emotional appeals by including the "look at the state of me!" line in l.41. The article appears to overtly support her viewpoint by focusing on her being the victim. In truth, this focus commences and is emphasised in the headline: "Remain supporter 'claws' at Brexit rival" (l.1). The focus on the Brexit supporter having a "local accent" (l.27) also supports this argument. Her

locality is put forward as her having a greater say in this constituency and campaign, which she herself agrees with in l.21: "I live in Hartlepool and I have a right to say what I want to say".

In fact, the pro-Brexit argument and group, here consisting of Ukip politicians and its members, are ultimately foregrounded and allowed to state their cause. This does not include the Brexit-supporting woman from the headline as she is not associated with the party nor does she support them (l.51). For instance, Ukip supporters and politicians are referenced 37 times while the Remain campaign group is only referenced 9 times. This is in line with *MailOnline's* own pro-Brexit viewpoints, yet also diminishes the female voters' agency by backgrounding their voices in favour of (male) politicians such as Paul Nuttall and their pro-Brexit views (l.60-61). For example, both the article's first and final lines (l.1-8 & 59-62), which are foregrounded positions, mention Nuttall and other Ukip members. Additionally, the final lines exclusively consist of mentions and discussions of Ukip quotes. Even though both Ukip and the Remain campaign group deny the women's involvement with their cause, a Ukip spokesperson is quoted and engaged ahead of the Remain campaign group and receives more quoted lines (l.49-55 vs, l.56-58). All in all, the pro-Brexit sentiments in this post-EU Referendum article run deep and both diminish female voters' agency as well as judge said agency rather negatively (e.g. the aforementioned misogynist phrasings). Anti-immigration sentiments dulling or policing female voters' voices also link to the last section of this chapter, in which I will discuss how immigration discourses in relation to female voters permeate the entire EU Referendum and post-Referendum debate.

7.2 Discourses present from the 2016 EU Referendum onward: anti-immigration rhetoric

The topic of immigration permeates the entire EU Referendum debate (Cap, 2017, 2019; Jackson et al., 2016) and is still rather pervasive in the post-Brexit 2017 GE campaign. This stands in stark contrast to the content of the 2015 campaign where the topic of immigration barely featured. In 2015 the alleged threat and dangers of immigration do not appear to be as acutely felt - by the right-wing press - as in 2016 and 2017. There is a stray article discussing voters' opinions on "migration" and "border policies" (see ex. 90) but immigration is not a major or significant theme.

- (90) "Voters tell Cameron to act on **migration**. Barely one in ten say they are satisfied with **border policies** as Tories switch to Ukip"

(MailOnline, 23 April 2015)

On the other hand, as previously touched upon in this chapter, the alleged dangers of immigration are rather pervasive in the 2016 and 2017 campaigns. For example, over the course of the 2016 campaign, many articles comprise mud-slinging between the rivalling Leave and Remain sides regarding big broad topics such as immigration and the economy, as well as explicit 'us vs. them' discourses regarding immigration. This mirrors CDA research which shows that in-groups (i.e. non-immigrant Britons) are constructed as positive, while outgroups (i.e. immigrants) are represented as almost uniformly negative (van Dijk, 2001). An explicitly negative stance is indeed taken by Leave-supporting newspapers regarding immigrants, while a sense of solidarity is fostered between the articles' authors and the in-group readers against a third party Other: immigrants. Consequently, such articles cultivate, nurture and legitimise notions of fear and anger concerning immigration (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999), especially regard-

ing the housing market (ex. 91) and the economic “cost” of migrants (ex. 92), the state of the NHS (ex. 93), and other ‘changes’ brought on by supposed “mass migration” (ex. 94):

- (91) “MIGRANTS HAVE COST MY DISABLED MOTHER NEW HOME”

(The Daily Mail, 28 May 2016)

- (92) “MIGRANTS POSE A DIRECT **COST** TO US ALL”

(The Sunday Times, 5 June 2016)

- (93) “Cameron attacked for **leaving the NHS in ruin** following ‘flood’ of EU migrants”

(ExpressOnline, 20 June 2016)

- (94) “Revenge of the betrayed: Abandoned by the metropolitan political elite, their lives utterly **changed by mass migration**, Labour’s northern heartlands could swing it for Brexit”

(MailOnline, 11 June 2016)

These articles also explicitly discuss and encourage how “confused and frustrated” certain voters are:

- (95) “EU referendum: what’s on the minds of voters?; Focus group research shows voters see immigration as the centre of the argument and people are **confused and frustrated**”

(The Guardian, 15 June 2016)

They also cultivate a fear of a hypothetical pro-immigration future if the UK does not vote to leave the EU. Moreover, the fear these articles intend to instil in their readers primarily relate to Muslim immigrants:

(96) "How long until Muslim way of life dominates?"

(*The Sun*, 15 April 2016)

These hypothetical future strategies are rampant and result in a multitude of conditional sentences in headlines where the *apodosis*, or main clause, of the *protasis*, or the clause expressing the condition, outlines a dreadful outcome of the EU Referendum vote. One particularly widely reported on dreaded outcome relates to a claim posited by Ukip leader Nigel Farage which states that "if we stay in the EU" (ex. 97) "(mass) sex attacks" by "gangs of migrants" on "British women" would occur in the UK (ex. 97-99) which would severely endanger "women's safety" (ex. 99). It is also important to note that these articles specifically attribute these claims to Nigel Farage, yet report on them very readily without much criticism. Even when he is portrayed as a notorious personification of prejudice whose bigotry is supposedly singular rather than pervasive, Farage's xenophobic and Islamophobic claims and language use are included unreservedly in these articles.

(97) "British women could face Cologne-style **sex attacks if we stay in the EU**, says Farage"

(*ExpressOnline*, 5 June 2016)

(98) "Nigel Farage says **British women** will be at risk of **mass sex attacks by gangs of migrants** if we vote to stay in the EU"

(*MailOnline*, 5 June 2016)

(99) "Nigel Farage: **migrant sex attacks** to be 'nuclear bomb' of EU referendum; Ukip leader says **women's safety** is an issue in vote on British membership, referring to New Year's Eve attacks in Cologne"

(*The Guardian*, 5 June 2016)

Due to the EU Referendum having been voted on and Brexit having been agreed upon, conditional sentences and hypothetical future narratives disappear in 2017. Even though the EU Referendum happened the year before, a Brexit shadow still looms over the entire 2017 campaign. Consequently, the Islamophobic discourse regarding immigration might not be as prominent as it was during the 2016 campaign, but it is still clearly present, and much more evident than in 2015. This is also apparent in articles which directly condemn Muslim people and Islamic religious practices such as wearing a "burka" (see ex. 100) in order to appeal to right-wing voters. Muslims, in these discourses, are not seen as voters, or at the very least they are not deemed interesting and useful enough to be a target voter demographic.

(100) "For the sake of national security, we must ban the **burka**"

(telegraph.co.uk, 2 May 2017)

Moreover, the 2017 GE was viewed as the 'Brexit Election' and a choice for a certain party and PM, or a certain MP was subsequently also viewed as a choice regarding Brexit negotiations, which affected the election's outcome (Richards, 2017). The following headlines illustrate the pervasive influence or "damage" of Brexit (ex. 101) and its main topics such as "where each party stands on immigration" (ex. 102), as well as how "Brexitteer[s]" and Remainers, or "Remoaners" as they have demeaningly been dubbed by Leave-supporting sources, are still pitted against each other (ex. 103).

(101) "The **damage** Brexit will do to the UK will be written in the history books in years to come; Please send your letters to lettersindependent.co.uk"

(The Independent, 29 April 2017)

(102) "General election 2017: **Where each party stands on immigration**"

(*telegraph.co.uk*, 31 May 2017)

- (103) “‘The UK is in charge of its OWN destiny’ **Brexit**er blasts **Remoaners** in Newsnight clash”

(*ExpressOnline*, 31 May 2017)

Lastly, the immigration-heavy 2016 EU Referendum campaign comprises another set of significant anti-immigration narratives, right-wing and Leave-supporting newspapers appear to be preoccupied with finding migrant women (of colour) who intend to vote Leave and are willing to express anti-immigration sentiments in their articles. These women are seemingly given a voice but ultimately they are trotted out as tokens of the newspapers’ anti-immigration rhetoric and made to excuse and obscure the racist overtones of this rhetoric. That is, these articles appear to argue that if people of colour express these exact sentiments, they cannot possibly be racist. Therefore, the ethnicity and migrant identities of the women quoted in the articles of which the headlines are listed below (ex. 104-105) are deemed more important than what they have to say or who they are outside of their ‘ethnic’ identity markers – even their gender markers are obscured in the headlines. They are specifically sought out by newspapers rather than given space regardless of their specific, prized identities which are valuable to the newspapers’ pro-Leave, anti-immigration case. In fact, primarily male journalists seek these women out - ex. 104-105 below are all headlines to articles written by men - to reiterate the newspaper’s racist and xenophobic “Britain is great” but there are “too many illegal immigrants” message (ex. 104). The women’s voices are also employed to amplify the newspapers’ scaremongering regarding the notion that only leaving the EU could change the “unequal” rules of the “EU immigration system” (ex. 105).

- (104) “**Britain is great**, we are all very polite (**but there are too many illegal immigrants**): [primarily female] Europeans living here

have their say on Brexit vote”

(*MailOnline*, 21 June 2016)

(105) “Cameron blasted as ‘dodgy Dave’ by Indian migrant over
‘unequal’ EU immigration system”

(*ExpressOnline*, 10 June 2016)

Furthermore, when the women are given the chance to write their own article(s) and are given space and a voice (ex. 106), this decision appears to be entirely based on their identity. This is made abundantly clear by the quote that was chosen to be highlighted in the headline below, as it explicitly foregrounds the female voter’s “mixed-race, female, left-wing, [...] 19-year-old” identity by leading with said identity and stating the fact that she is “really” voting for Brexit:

(106) “I’m **mixed race, female, left-wing, a 19-year-old student** - and yes, I **really** am voting for Brexit”

(*The Independent*, 21 June 2016)

Not only female voters are tokenised, however. Conservative MP and former cabinet member Priti Patel, whose Ugandan-Indian parents immigrated to the UK from Uganda, is also quoted in order to excuse anti-immigration rhetoric by claiming it is allegedly “not racist to worry about immigration” (ex. 107).

(107) “Priti Patel interview: It’s **not ‘racist’ to worry about immigration**”

(*telegraph.co.uk*, 15 April 2016)

The quoted female voter’s non-white ethnicity is marked, as whiteness in general is backgrounded, deemed a habit, or even suppressed, yet understood to be ever-present (Ahmed, 2007). Whiteness is reified as a fixed,

universal category of experience and treated as a monolith [149]. Consequently, people of colour are sought out to argue for this monolithic, fixed character and against further inclusion and incorporation of non-whiteness. To conclude this section, this exclusionary in-group view of whiteness in relation to the status of the UK also ties in with the previously examined ways in which Brexit has been discussed by means of family, relationship and divorce metaphors. Race has long been understood through familial metaphors (Ahmed, 2011), and therefore one could argue that such metaphors discussed earlier in this chapter strengthen whiteness and the notion of Britain as a unified, white nation.

7.3 Summary and discussion

As mentioned above, representation is conditional on the inclusion and exclusion of social actors and what degree of agency is allocated to them depends on the text, the author, and the readership. In the case of this study, these social actors included a politics-based, or politicised, set of concrete actors (e.g. *voters, politicians, wives of politicians, Britons, immigrants*), a set of abstract actors (*government, the NHS*), as well as media-based actors which were subsumed in the other categories yet often explicitly positioned externally to these roles (i.e. *readers & authors*).

All in all, the main theme running through the permaelection period's 2015-2017 campaigns in which these actors were engaged, relates to the backgrounding of female voters. Consequently, their voices were often stifled or barely present. This backgrounding occurred both in a set of four initial discourses present from 2015 onward, and anti-immigration discourses that were only present from the 2016 EU Referendum cycle onward. The four initial discourses comprised the following themes, in order of prevalence: 1) about them but without them; 2) normative motherhood; 3) addressing the lack of female voices; 4) female voter agency demonisa-

tion. These discourses again embody the normativity, deficient women's agency and queer exclusion themes discussed in the previous analytical chapters (i.e. 5-6).

Here I must also acknowledge the fact that these analyses, discussions of data and the upcoming summaries and conclusions have been affected by the activist nature of FCDA, and my own positionality as a researcher as well as someone who partially belongs to the intended audience of the articles included in this corpus. Shaped, in part, by my own political investment as a (queer) left-wing woman, and an EU citizen who moved to the UK pre-Brexit. Even though I have created a critical distance between myself and the data and I have guided my activist intent into productive linguistic analyses, the silencing, backgrounding and demonisation of women were viewed through a specific lens. I see these representations as problematic, as an issue to be addressed, outside of my identity markers but with added gravitas from my identity.

About them but without them: 2015-2017

The first initial discourse shows how the media coverage of the political campaigns adhered to an ostensibly implicit mantra of 'about them but without them' where women were at times talked about, without real non-normative and non-stereotypical representation (see Section 7.1.1; Articles 1, 2 & 3 in Appendix B.1-3). Full inclusion of women in the political arena as well as the notion of female voters being taken seriously as full-fledged voters were absent from this discourse. Instead, there was a preference for pointing out women's invisibility as well as patronising appeals to female voters by both the media and politicians, which were most prevalent in 2015 (e.g. Labour's infamous pink bus). However, rather than giving female voters a voice or bestowing them with agency, this strand of representation merely pointed out women's lack of agency and their patronisation and therefore it ultimately failed to include women in a signif-

icant manner. In fact, women were passivated, de-emphasised and backgrounded in comparison to female (and male) politicians or wives of male politicians, as they were referred to in impersonal and generic ways (e.g. collectivised, aggregated). This distanced the reader from them and lessened their agency. All in all, as emphasised by the discussions of Article 1 and 3, female voters were presented with two options: being patronised or ignored. Moreover, the accusations of condescension toward female voters either appeared to be designed by right-wing sources to attack left-wing programmes, or they merely perpetuated the condescending tone and notions they purported to criticise [see Articles 1 & 3 in Appendix B.1 & B.3].

The 'about them but without them' discourse continued through 2016 and 2017, as the EU Referendum shifted the media's attention to broader topics and away from women. Female voters, instead of being targeted directly, albeit in a homogenising, patronising and collectivised ways like in 2015, were often backgrounded by merely being mentioned in passing, referred to generically or subsumed in larger groups (e.g. the electorate as a whole, families, pensioners). Moreover, at times women were in fact mentioned in the headline and presented as the main subjects, but these examples turned out to be a false front to obscure the continued repression of their voices [see Articles 2 & 3 in Appendix B.2 & B.3].

In summary, even though women were a target demographic in 2015, they barely had a voice or agency. Certain female journalists did express outrage over this in their articles, but this outrage was certainly not universally shared. In 2016 and 2017 women were seemingly deemed less of a target demographic and consequently their voices were even more obscured. They were subsumed in larger electoral groups, while the outrage over their silencing also died down.

Normative motherhood: 2015-2017

This discourse, in which womanhood and hetero and cisnormative motherhood are conflated, but manhood and fatherhood are not, and in which queer identities are disregarded was present in 2015 and 2017, but most salient in 2016 (see Section 7.1.2; Articles 2, 3 & 4 in Appendix B.2-4). This link between the EU Referendum and heteronormative motherhood was also made even more salient by the pro-Remain conceptualisation of Brexit as a messy divorce which should be avoided. Aside from the conflation, women and mothers were also often portrayed in patronising, normative and subordinating ways. This occurred primarily by means of the relational identification processes present in the corpus. Women in general and mothers in particular were often referred to by means of possessivated relational identifications (e.g. 'his mother'), or postmodifying prepositional phrases (e.g. 'mother of two'). These constructions can signal belonging, but also subordination, as coming second to someone else, especially when these terms are used without inclusion of the woman's (full) name. Furthermore, this discourse includes a thread of policing 'good' and normative motherhood, especially within Leave-supporting newspapers [see Article 4 in Appendix B.4]. Readers and in particular mothers were emotionally appealed to or even explicitly directed to vote a certain way by referring to their genealogical line (i.e. children and grandchildren). They were told to 'take control of their family's destiny', which is a common legitimisation tactic to make voting more tangible and personal.

In 2017 these appeals to 'good' motherhood had mostly disappeared, however. The conflation persisted, but direct appeals to motherhood did not, as women/mothers were deemed a less important target demographic.

Addressing the lack of female voices: 2015-2017

The aforementioned normative representations, as well as the voice and female agency deficit were addressed (by female journalists) throughout the permaelection period. However, these counter-discourses were much less prominent and often steeped in normative notions and representations themselves, once again backgrounding, aggregating and homogenising women (see Section 7.1.3; Articles 5 & 6 in Appendix B.5-6). The approach to addressing and combatting the female agency and voice deficit appeared to be five-pronged, of which the latter three underpin and reinforce sexist notions of women's subordination: 1) female journalists discussing the plight of women in a fact-based manner; 2) rousing and/or shame-based appeals and 'us vs. them' narratives meant to guilt-trip women into voting [see Article 5 in Appendix B.5]; 3) a clear, yet patronising, objectifying or demonising foregrounding of female politicians' (un)feminine appearance and behaviour; 4) a normative focus on politicians' wives' appearance and behaviour (absent from 2016 and 2017); 5) portrayals of women as voiceless victims of violence.

The most salient development within this discourse occurred in 2017 with the appointment of Theresa May as the first female PM since Thatcher. Consequently, the appeals to vote developed into direct appeals to 'identity politics' and instructions to fulfil your role as a woman in society. These 'instructions' drew heavily on (hetero)normative gender stereotypes and resulted in increased policing of voter agency [see Article 6 in Appendix B.6].

Demonisation of female voter agency: 2015-2017

Aside from being backgrounded, when female voters' voices and agency were expressed they were often demonised and criticised for not being feminine, motherly or 'likeable' enough (see Section 7.1.4; Article 7 in

Appendix B.7). When female voters dared to speak up and agentively challenge the political elite, they were primarily mocked or demonised throughout all three campaigns. This demonisation was most prominent in right-wing articles from the 2017 campaign, however.

Furthermore, female voters were sometimes celebrated for their agentive behaviour, but these celebrations primarily focused on the sensationalism of their 'fight', or the fact that they were harming certain politicians, which once again backgrounded these female voters. Furthermore, they were mainly expressed by anger, drawing on misogynistic stereotypes of hysterical and over-emotional women. Moreover, their perceived anger and aggression were disavowed predominantly for the non-normative and 'unfeminine' nature of their agentive, critical conduct, which links back to the aforementioned and ever-present policing of female agency. Additionally, expressions of anger and exasperation from such figures as 'Brenda from Bristol' were also used for comedic effect. The female voters whose anger was discussed did not take centre stage, rather they were reduced to a quote or to being a tokenistic figurehead.

Anti-immigration rhetoric: 2016-2017

As mentioned throughout this study, the topic of immigration permeated the entire EU Referendum debate and loomed over the post-Brexit 2017 GE campaign. This xenophobic and Islamophobic immigration discourse stands in stark contrast to the content of the 2015 campaign where the topic of immigration barely featured (see Section 7.2, as well as Article 2 in Appendix B.2). The notion that immigrants (of colour) do not intersect with British voters and families was the central tenet of Leave-supporting EU Referendum reporting, as an explicitly negative, racist, xenophobic and Islamophobic stance was taken by Leave-supporting newspapers regarding immigrants. A sense of solidarity was fostered between the articles' authors and the in-group readership, cultivating a fear of a third party

Other: immigrants and in particular Muslim immigrants. One particular widely reported on dreaded outcome of Brexit in the right-wing press relates to claims being made in 2016 that 'mass sex attacks' by migrants on British women would become a reality post-Brexit. These highly offensive claims were made by Nigel Farage, yet reported on without any criticism in many Leave-supporting newspapers. Farage was put forward as a notorious personification of prejudice whose bigotry is supposedly singular rather than pervasive, yet his xenophobic and Islamophobic language use were unreservedly included and normalised in the press. This imbued the Brexit debate's pervasive anti-immigration rhetoric with a highly insidious and dangerous sense of normalised Othering of anyone perceived to be non-white and non-British. This exclusionary view of Britishness equalling whiteness and the concept of 'nation by birth' also strengthens the dangerous notion of Britain as a white nation. This deserves further exploration that lies outside of the scope of the current study. See for further such explorations of the intertwined notions of whiteness and Britishness in the context of the Brexit debate studies by Bowler (2017), Clarke (2021), Begum, Mondon & Winter (2021), Mintchev (2021).

Lastly, there was another problematic set of anti-immigration narratives present in Leave-supporting newspapers which tokenised and exploited (migrant) women of colour. These newspapers were fixated on finding migrant women (of colour) who intended to vote Leave and were willing to express anti-immigration sentiments in their articles. These women were seemingly given a voice but ultimately they were trotted out as tokenistic 'mascots' of the newspapers' discriminatory anti-immigration rhetoric as well as to excuse and obscure the racist overtones of this rhetoric.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

This concluding chapter will summarise and discuss the main and most salient findings from the analytical chapters (i.e. ch. 5-7) by answering the research questions (RQs) posed in the Introduction (ch. 1). In doing so, I will also address the academic and societal impact of this study's findings. As mentioned in the previous chapter, I must again reiterate the fact that even though I have created a critical distance between myself and the data and I have guided my activist intent into productive linguistic analyses, the discussions and evaluations of the analyses in this chapter and throughout this study have been affected by the activist nature of this study's analytical approach, my own positionality as a researcher (Grant, 2013; Lazar, 2007) and my position as someone who partially belongs to the intended readership of the articles included in this study's corpus.

To conclude this chapter, I will also discuss ideas and implications for future research. These avenues for further research will be partly based on the methodological limitations and limited scope of this study, discussed in both the Introduction (ch. 1) and the Methodology Chapter (ch. 4).

8.1 Summary and discussion: answering the research questions

In order to answer the main question posed in the introduction: “How are female voters constructed linguistically in the lead-up to both the 2016 EU referendum, and the 2015 and 2017 UK general elections?” and subsequently raise awareness regarding the place of women – both voters and politicians – in the political sphere, I will first discuss and answer the other two main RQs as well as their sub-questions: a total of 13 other, more specific RQs. First, I will discuss the quantitative and frequency-related questions concerning article frequency, keywords, search terms and collocates (i.e. questions 1-4) which were addressed in Chapters 5 & 6. This will be followed by a discussion of who is included in the category of the female voter and who is not (i.e. 5-6), and who constructs and perpetuates these parameters (7), questions which have been addressed from different angles throughout the analytical chapters (ch. 5-7). The frequent and salient topics and discourses concerning female voters and how they developed both diachronically and synchronically per sub-corpora, addressed in Chapters 5, 6 & 7, will then be discussed (8-12). Ultimately, before the discussion of the main question, the final sub-question regarding how institutionalised asymmetries between men and women are sustained will be outlined.

1. What are the frequencies of articles per year, per month and per newspaper and how do these relate to the wider social context? (ch. 5)

As shown in Chapter 5, the three corpora of 2015, 2016, 2017 are all of varying sizes (i.e. 778, 749 and 438 articles).¹ This cannot be explained in full

¹As mentioned in the Methodology Chapter, the vast majority of these articles were not accompanied by any visual imagery (i.e. only 11.7% in 2015, 6.7% in 2016 and 10.3% of all articles in 2017 were accompanied by images).

by the different lengths of the campaigning periods, as the largest corpus belongs to shortest campaign: the planned election campaign of 2015 only lasted 39 days, while the snap election campaign of 2017 lasted 52 days, and the referendum campaign of 2016 was the longest at 70 days. This is the first indication that the 2015 campaign was most 'women-focused', while as the period drags on, voters (such as the tokenistic 'Brenda from Bristol') and the media get oversaturated with political news. When the EU Referendum advances, women are being increasingly disregarded and the corpora become smaller.

Furthermore, Chapter 5's article frequencies show that the coverage of these campaigns was event-based and episodic rather than linear. The 2016 EU Referendum coverage remained at a slightly steadier pace, but all campaigns relate directly to political events such as debates, polls, manifestos, as well as campaign-specific scandals. In accordance with the UK newspaper landscape being rather Conservative, there is also a clear prevalence for right-wing reporting and a small shift to the right present, as all three corpora comprise larger right-wing sub-corpora. The shift to the right manifests itself in the token ratios, as from 2016 onward right-wing articles tend to be longer than left-wing ones. The frequency that is not in accordance with the character of the UK newspaper landscape is the overrepresentation of broadsheet articles. The gap between broadsheet and tabloid reporting is the smallest in 2016, as the polarising and sensationalist nature of the Brexit debate boosted tabloid ratings. Moreover, as shown by the other analytical chapters, the overall 'tabloidisation' (Holly, 2008; McLachlan & Golding, 2000), the move toward more 'soft content' within newspaper coverage in general and political coverage in particular, of the UK newspaper landscape which is also present in this study might have boosted the inclusion of broadsheet articles. Broadsheet newspapers appear to now publish more 'feminised' or 'human interest' political articles, while still covering 'hard' political content as well.

Lastly, Chapter 5 also shows that there is a shift toward more female journalists present, but men still prevail. All campaigns are covered by a majority of male journalists, which corroborates previous studies (Chambers et al., 2004; Rehkopf & Reinstadler, 2011; Ross et al., 2013a; Thurman et al., 2016). However, the gender gap appears to be slowly closing, at least, when it comes to articles concerning female voters and women in the political arena published in broadsheet newspapers.

2. What are the keywords per corpora per year? (ch. 5)

Most of Chapter 5's top 20 keywords of each campaign, which indicate the 'aboutness' of a corpus, are political in nature, as is to be expected in a corpus focused on political coverage. However, despite the parameters of this study, 'women' and other lexically gendered terms barely feature. This substantiates the notion that even in a corpus focused on female voters, they are not 'key'. Chapter 5 also showed that the two general elections exhibit more overlap between them, than with the EU Referendum, as the 2016 set of keywords is the most singular and unique. The EU Referendum is also the only electoral event to include a topic of the campaign (i.e. 'immigration') rather than just words connoting political content that are intrinsic to political discourse and the coverage of political campaigns (e.g. the search terms 'election, referendum, vote' and names of political parties and politicians). The political party that was most 'key' turned out to be the opposition party, 'Labour'. This is partially due to criticism from Conservative newspapers, and the Conservative/Tory split causing these terms to split keyness. As discussed in Section 5.5.4, instances of 'Labour' were still more frequent than 'Tory/Tories/Conservative(s)' combined. This is also illustrative of Labour's stronger appeals to women (e.g. the infamous 'pink bus'). Furthermore, the names of politicians that were included mainly comprised the leaders of the main parties, as well as SNP's Nicola Sturgeon who was deemed a threat to the sitting government. In

addition to this, she was criticised for not being feminine enough. This, in combination with the keyness of 'Mrs' rather than 'PM' for then Prime Minister Theresa May in 2017, connects to broader normative and sexist discourses regarding a woman's appearance, behaviour and marital status that are prevalent throughout this study and will be discussed in more depth below.

3. What are the frequencies of the search terms concerning female voters? (ch. 5)

The search terms employed in this study suggest a normative tale of drowned out and marginalised women. The more neutral terms 'woman/women' were most frequent through the years and more frequent than 'female', indicating that female voters are often classified as women rather than functionalised as voters. This mirrors how female voters are addressed as 'women' in a rather general sense in Ross (2016). Throughout all three campaigns, and in 2016 in particular, albeit less so in 2017, we also see heteronormative and cisnormative high rankings of traditional, heterosexual, reproductive 'nuclear family' terms (e.g. 'wife/wives, mum(s), mother(s)'), linking to discourses of normative motherhood, which are prevalent in this study (see Chapters 5-7), as well as in Campbell and Child (2010) and Adcock (2010) on the 2010 General Election. These relational identifiers also indicate that women are discussed in relation to the men in their lives (e.g. husbands) and illustrate both the androcentrism of this female-focused corpus and the construction of female voters along the lines of heteronormative 'proper (married) femininity'. Only certain normative female voters appear to be worthy of being heard, while LGBTQ+ women are silenced. Lastly, age-related terms (i.e. 'girls', 'ladies') demonstrate that general elections are more geared toward younger women, whereas the EU Referendum was more geared to older 'ladies'.

4. What are the words and verb processes associated with the most frequent and relevant terms for female voters per year? (ch. 6)

Chapter 6 showed that the main discursive themes present among the collocates of the search terms discussed above consist of: normative relationships and family, age, politics, desubjectification (i.e. female voters are present yet homogenised and portrayed in terms of quantity and frequency), subjectification, positive appeals, personalisation, tabloidisation and anger. All themes are also borne out by the further qualitative analyses from Chapter 7 discussed below. The collocates for 'woman/women', compared to the prevalent kinship terms (e.g. 'mother(s)', 'wife/wives', 'daughter') display higher levels of both subjectification and desubjectification, as well as expected lower levels of normative family and age-related collocates, which are inherent to kinship terms. This both makes a case for the inclusion of the kinship terms, and it illustrates that when there is a discussion of family issues and rights, women are not discussed as women but heteronormatively as mothers and/or wives. The 'age split' between the general elections and the referendum is also substantiated by the collocations, as the focus shifts from 'young' women to 'elderly' to 'middle-aged' women over the permaelection period.

The development of the discourses and themes present among the collocates supports the frequency findings concerning a lesser voice for women in 2017. The 2015 collocates display a larger focus on female voters than the 2016 and 2017 corpora. The 2016 and 2017 collocates on the other hand, display a shift to appearance-based, less personalised and less agentic 'talk about' female voters as subjectification collocates decrease over the years and are barely even present in 2017. This, while 'angry' demonisations of female agency are also a constant throughout the years and most prevalent in 2016. Furthermore, the 2016 collocates signal a focus on 'nationality' in the Brexit debate, while 2017 is the most desubjectified and least 'personalised' year, focusing on vague notions of 'equality' rather than the specific

'underrepresentation' of women present in 2016. Moreover, the verb processes accompanying the collocates emphasise the decreasing agency of female voters by means of an overall theme of passivation, while activated female voters are criticised and demonised.

5. Who is included in this category of the 'female voter', and what are their priorities perceived to be? 6. Who is excluded from the category of 'the female voter', and does a normalising discourse exist which presents particular types of women as 'typical' (e.g. cisgender, white, heterosexual, able-bodied)? (ch. 5-7)

The findings paint a clear picture of the 'typical' female voter who is deemed worthy of representation and being appealed to by politicians and the media. This picture will be further supported by the answers to the other RQs below. A set of normalising discourses exist which present particular types of women as 'typical' (e.g. cisgender, white, heterosexual, able-bodied) and particular normative 'feminine' priorities such as motherhood and a family's future as 'women's issues', does indeed permeate this study's corpus. Hetero-and-cisnormative, and sexist, discourses persist through the search term frequencies (ch. 5), the collocates, verb processes and concordances surrounding these terms (ch. 6), and the wider context of the full articles and excerpts analysed in Chapter 7. Female voters are expected to be mothers and wives, be part of a nuclear family unit, and 'good', i.e. non-agentive and subordinate yet not too subordinate, women. This policing of normative womanhood excludes queer women as well as non-binary people by means of a binary notion of gender. While class appears to feature less explicitly, race does appear in an explicit manner. The racist, xenophobic and Islamophobic stance that immigrants and people of colour do not intersect with British voters and families permeates the 2016 and 2017 corpora (see ch. 6 & 7), explicitly othering and excluding women of colour and immigrant women from the category of 'female vot-

ers'. Conversely, when female voters of colour were included they were tokenised and exploited, as shown in Chapter 7. Furthermore, both the quantitative and qualitative analyses illustrated that female voters were backgrounded in comparison to female (and male) politicians, as well as generally backgrounded and increasingly de-emphasised over the years.

7. Who constructs and perpetuates the image of the female voter? (ch. 5-7)

The author gender frequencies of Chapter 5, as well as the author analyses of prototypical articles and headlines in Chapter 7, show that these representations and constructions of *the* female voter are perpetuated by a varied group of actors. Male journalists are the majority of authors included in the corpora and therefore they primarily perpetuate these representations, especially concerning demonisations of female anger and agency. Female journalists, who themselves are also female voters, do address the women's voice and agency deficit in the political sphere. However, they also tend to do so while perpetuating the patronising, homogenising and passivating discourses they purport to tackle (see Chapter 7). Female and male politicians are also quoted and positioned to appeal to female voters, entrenching the notion of the prototypical female voter. Lastly, Chapter 7 showed that female voters, other than female journalists, are at times quoted and given a voice via 'letters to the editor' sections in newspapers and interviews on the campaign trail, but often these segments include more male voices than female voices. This once again corroborates the notion that female voters are consistently disregarded.

8. What are the frequent topics and discourses employed in representations of female voters in the UK national press: 2015–2017? (ch. 5-7)

The answers to previous RQs have already identified most topics and discourses exhibited in both the quantitative and qualitative analyses; among article and term frequencies, keywords, collocates, verb processes, and discourse analyses concerning social actor theory, legitimisation and appraisal theory. These discourses show clear signs of **marginalisation, normativity and exclusion, and demonisation**. Female voters are often backgrounded, passivated, homogenised, subordinated and marginalised, while female voter agency and subjectification is demonised by drawing on misogynistic stereotypes of hysterical and over-emotional women. The normativity discourses, and in particular the hetero-and-cisnormative discourses, are illustrative of a rather narrow definition of women in general, and female voters in particular. Women and mothers are habitually conflated, while queer identities are disregarded or excluded. Chapters 6 & 7 also showed that women are criticised for not being feminine, motherly or 'likeable' enough. This sexist and normative view of women also heralds the policing of 'proper', normative womanhood and motherhood. Women are supposed to be mothers taking care of their families, while they are also supposed to take care of other women by voting, and specifically voting for female politicians. This results in problematic shame-based appeals and 'us vs. them' narratives meant to guilt-trip women into voting.

9. How do these aspects of female voter representation develop between elections: 2015-2017? (ch. 5-7)

The **marginalisation, normativity and exclusion, and demonisation** discourses discussed above are apparent and on the rise throughout the permutation period. Both the quantitative diachronic overviews of Chapter 5 and the qualitative diachronic overviews of Chapter 6 & 7 indicate that

women are deemed a (minor) target demographic in 2015, yet female voters barely have a voice or agency in 2015. This minor targeting, which gets progressively worse over the permaelection period, is already a step down from the targeting scope of the 'Mumsnet' GE of 2010 which saw a focus on female voters and specifically (middle income) mothers (Campbell & Childs, 2010). The collocates and prototypical articles show that women are also often belittled or ignored, and their voices are drowned out, which supports findings from previous research (O'Brien, 2016a; Savigny & Warner, 2015; Shaw, 2006). From the 2016 EU Referendum onward women are deemed less of a target demographic and consequently their voices are even more obscured and marginalised, as the outrage over their silencing also dies down. Furthermore, the marginalisation, normativity and demonisation discourses present from 2015, are joined by the highest levels of demonisation and anti-immigration rhetoric (i.e. in the collocations, concordances and prototypical articles and headlines) in 2016, which excluded even more female voters. Lastly, as shown in Chapter 7, the most salient development regarding female voters' identities as both women and voters occurs in 2017 with the appointment of Theresa May as the first female PM since Margaret Thatcher. Subsequently, appeals to women to vote develop into direct appeals to a woman's feminine 'identity' and instructions to fulfil their role as a woman in society. These 'instructions' draw heavily on (hetero)normative gender stereotypes and resulted in increased policing of voter agency.

10. How do these aspects of female voter representation develop with regard to the political affiliation of the newspapers? (ch. 5-7)

The characteristics of female voter representation discussed above occur in both Labour-supporting and Conservative-supporting articles. Yet, they primarily occur in Conservative, or right-wing, articles which comprise a larger portion of the data than left-wing or no-affiliation articles, as men-

tioned in RQ 1's answer. Chapters 5, 6 & 7 illustrated that the right-wing discourses are overall more normative, negative and silencing toward women, especially after the shift toward big topics in the Brexit debate occurs (e.g. a focus on politicians' wives and explicit mocking of angry female voters). Furthermore, seeing that there is an overarching shift toward longer right-wing articles and higher article frequencies per right-wing publication in election coverage concerning women (see ch. 5), normative and negative discourses which suppress the plight of women prevail among the representations of women. Additionally, Chapter 5 showed that the normativity of these discourses is also heightened by the overuse of more stereotypical and biased language and term use (e.g. overuse of 'wife/wives', 'girl(s)', 'lady/ladies'), mirroring other studies on the language of the right-wing press (e.g. van Dijk, 1995; Jowett, 2014; Kelsey, 2015; Al-Azami, 2021).

11. How do these aspects of female voter representation develop with regard to the publication type of the newspapers? (ch. 5 & 6)

The representations and constructions discussed throughout this thesis occur in both tabloid and broadsheet articles, but primarily in broadsheet articles which, partially due to the process of tabloidisation, comprise a larger portion of the data than tabloid or digital only articles, as mentioned in RQ 1's answer. However, certain discourses, like the demonisation of female voter agency throughout the years and amid sensationalist Brexit reporting in particular, primarily occur in tabloid contexts (see ch. 6-7). Furthermore, Chapter 5 showed that there is an overlap with political affiliation regarding the right-wing tabloids' overuse of biased and normative language and terms (e.g. overuse of 'wife/wives', 'girl(s)', 'lady/ladies'), while the broadsheet and 'other' corpora primarily display significant overuse of the more general search terms (e.g. 'woman/women', 'female').

12. How do these aspects of female voter representation develop with regard to the author gender of the newspaper articles? (ch. 5-7)

The main difference between male and female authors over the years lies in the fact that women, who by 2017 comprise a larger portion of the authors included in this study's corpus (see ch. 5), are the only ones addressing the lack of a voice and patronisation of female voters (see ch. 7). Men, who still make up the majority of the included authors, even in 2017, do not address these issues at all. However, women also perpetuate the patronisation, aggregation, and homogenisation they claim to combat (see ch. 6 & 7). In addition to this, they also do not give women a voice, as they merely point out that they do not have one. By 2017 they have even stopped pointing this out. This addressing of the issues is corroborated in Chapter 5 by the fact that there is a clear overuse of all search terms by female authors relative to the male and 'other' corpora. This mirrors previous studies where women tend to cite more women than men do (e.g. Lavie & Lehman-Wilzig, 2003), while they also still perpetuate sexist discourses (e.g. Kian, Fink & Hardin, 2011)

13. How are institutionalised power asymmetries between (and among) groups of women and men sustained in UK press representations of female voters? (ch. 5-7)

As illustrated by the discussion above, Adcock's (2010) statement that the views of female voters are judged as inappropriate in the masculine arena of politics, still rings true. Politics is still ostensibly a *man's world* and a hostile environment to female politicians and voters alike. As the search term, collocation, verb process and 'social actor representation' analyses of Chapters 5-7 showed, women in general, and certain women in particular, are backgrounded, aggregated, collectivised, patronised, demonised, subordinated (to men) and conflated with motherhood. This reinforces in-

stitutionalised and 'state-sanctioned structures of kinship, marriage and family' (R. Lakoff, 2004, p. 176) and reflects the lack of agency and sense of objectification of women and/or sense of male ownership of women often present in discourses involving women (Lampropoulou & Archakis, 2015). This ultimately upholds and sustains institutionalised power asymmetries between (and among) groups of women and men.

The main RQ: How are female voters constructed linguistically in the lead-up to both the 2016 EU referendum, and the 2015 and 2017 UK general elections? (ch. 5-7)

As mentioned in Chapter 1, raising awareness is the first step in tackling the underrepresentation of women, and female voters in particular, in the political sphere. The RQs above have summarised and discussed the separate facets of the linguistic construction and representation of female voters in the UK news media. All in all, women appear to either be ignored or belittled. Even in a corpus specifically focused on female voters, women are not 'key'. The main theme running through the permaelection period's 2015-2017 campaigns relates to female voters being marginalised and backgrounded. Their voices are often stifled, go unheard and are barely present, as the campaigns adhere to an ostensibly implicit mantra of 'about them but without them' where women are at times talked 'about', without real non-normative and non-stereotypical representation. Full inclusion in the political arena as well as female voters being taken seriously as full-fledged voters do not seem to be on the political agenda of the UK newspaper media. Aside from their voices and potential agency being backgrounded, their voices and agency when expressed in relation to their identity markers are either tokenised and exploited, or often demonised and criticised for not being feminine, motherly or agreeable enough. Such criticism, normative representations, as well as the voice and female agency deficit are at times addressed (by female journalists). However, these counter-

discourses are much less prominent and often steeped in normative, patronising, homogenising and passivating notions and representations themselves. Only certain female voters are deemed worthy of being heard in this narrow definition of *the* female voter. Women are homogenised, passivated and subordinated to men, and their linguistic construction is subject to a slew of normative and discriminatory conceptions (i.e. heteronormativity, cisnormativity, ableism, racism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, nationalism, sexism, classism).

Consequently, politics is still conceptualised as a 'man's game' (Savigny, 2015, p. 19) by male and female journalists alike. This conceptualisation sustains the aforementioned underrepresentation of women in the political sphere and contributes to the silencing of women, excluding them from the political arena. True equality and equal participation and representation cannot be reached this way. This ultimately upholds and sustains institutionalised power asymmetries between (and among) groups of women and men in politics and in society at large, as political representation directly influences policies and in turn societal rights and power structures. Furthermore, seeing that the British press is "almost unique in large democracies in terms of its reach, ubiquity and one-sidedness" (Barnett, 2015, p. 91), the linguistic practices in UK newspaper coverage of election cycles are norm-making, or norm-affecting, in their contribution to the discursive construction of gendered voter-and-political-related normativities. If women's voices are not heard in the androcentric political landscape, or if only certain women's voices are heard yet distorted through harmful normative lenses, all women's needs will remain unmet. Women might be put off from voting (Katwala et al., 2016), and they will not be taken into account when it comes to political decision making. This reverberates not only through the political arena but through society at large, as harmful and dangerous patriarchal power imbalances and stereotypes are upheld, or even strengthened. The recent overturn of *Roe v. Wade* and the

accompanying setback in the fight for abortion and reproductive rights in the US (Paltrow et al., 2022) serves as a stark reminder of what may happen when women are disregarded, belittled, subordinated to men, conflated with notions of normative motherhood, and their agency and anger are demonised. By raising awareness and delineating how women are represented and how their problematic representations contribute to their absence from the political sphere, this study aims to contribute to levelling the political playing field for women: to contribute to ALL women's voices being present and *heard* and really listened to, rather than ignored or distorted and belittled. However, extensive further changes regarding the inclusion of female journalists and politicians in the political debate, as well as changes to the debate itself are necessary, in order for equality, full equal participation and equal representation in the political sphere to be reached.

8.2 Future research

As laid out above, this study contributes to closing the gap in the literature regarding media portrayals of, and appeals to, female voters, while it raises vital awareness regarding the specific characteristics of the aforementioned dangerous underrepresentation and misrepresentation of female voters. However, there is more work to be done. The methodological limitations, as well as the discourses and representations discussed throughout this study and the current chapter also result in several implications and ideas for future research projects.

Firstly, since the start of this project a fourth electoral event has been added to the permaelection period in the form of the 2019 snap General Election, the third general election in four years and the second snap election in a row after the snap GE of 2017. Adding articles from this election cycle to the corpus would not only complete the now expanded permaelec-

tion period corpora, it would also allow for certain compelling comparisons. It would allow for the comparison of three rather than two general election corpora, as well as the comparison of two snap election corpora. Additionally, these snap elections resulted in two differently gendered PMs, a female PM in Theresa May 2017 and a male PM in Boris Johnson in 2019. This gendered difference of the 2017 and 2019 'snap corpora' would tie in with the already present findings surrounding the difference between PMs Cameron and May, but would add a 'snap vs. snap' element to the analyses.

Secondly, other interesting comparisons could be drawn between the current study's election/referendum cycles and other salient non-election governmental events and crises and how they affect (the representation of) female voters. Examples of this could include the current (2023) cost of living crisis in the UK (UK Parliament, 2023), or pandemic-related political news coverage corpora regarding the media's reporting on PM Boris Johnson's "partygate" scandal and the subsequent 'Sue Gray report': a "civil servant's report into lockdown-breaching parties in and around Downing Street²" (Walker, 2022). This study's corpora and findings could also be compared cross-culturally to newspaper corpora containing political coverage (concerning female voters) from other countries and languages. That way both local and universal problematic representations of female voters will come to light and can be combatted on both local and universal scales.

Thirdly and perhaps most importantly, there have been brief references throughout this study to the (possible) multi-modal dimensions and potential of this study and its corpora. Examples of this include references to the controversial *Daily Mail* 'Legs-it' cover, the discussion of the benefits of multi-modal analyses in the Methodology Chapter, and the construc-

²The official residence and executive office of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

tion of the 'graphics' sub-corpus which was constructed for this study to allow for the analysis of graphics' captions accompanying this study's corpus and the retrieval of online versions of the original graphics themselves (see Section 4.3.1). Unfortunately, this methodological and analytical feature turned out to lie beyond of the scope of this study. This is partially due to the constraints of the project itself and the fact that the vast majority of articles was not accompanied by any visual imagery. However, future projects would be able to benefit from the graphics sub-corpus to enrich the current analyses by providing a more holistic perspective that does not favour any one modality, as meanings construed "by any mode are always interwoven with the meanings made with those other modes co-present and co-operating in the communicative event" (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010, p. 184). This is particularly pertinent considering the move toward increased visualisation in news coverage and political journalism (Boomgaarden et al., 2016; Fahmy et al., 2014; Holly, 2008; Schill, 2012). It would be particularly interesting to analyse the images that go along with the representations of female voters when it comes to sexist appearance-based discourses which have already been touched upon in this study.

Moreover, certain findings and observations which deserve further and more comprehensive explorations that lie outside the scope of this study cropped up throughout the analytical chapters (ch. 5-7). In Section 5.1.4, it was mentioned that 'scandals' happening throughout each campaign (e.g. 'car-crash' interviews) cause peaks in media coverage. It would be interesting to specifically compare and contrast the 'scandals' of each campaign and especially the ones directly relating to female voters to analyse their impact on the representation of female voters.

In Section 5.4, it was also found that female voters are much more often referred to as 'women' than as 'female voters'. This is illustrative of how the media discuss or appeal to women in relation to who they are as a group or how they identify (i.e. women), instead of as what their

purpose might be during an election (i.e. voters), thereby possibly obscuring their real reasons for mentioning women in election discourse. It might be interesting to survey readers of these newspapers to ascertain how they would prefer to be addressed. In Section 5.5.3 on the keywords of the 2017 GE, the difference in the honorifics used for former PMs David Cameron and Theresa May's was briefly touched upon. It would be interesting to delve deeper into the ways in which May is more often addressed by means of her marital status ('Mrs') and Cameron by means of his official title ('PM'). Furthermore, as mentioned throughout, during the permaelection period in general and the 2016 EU Referendum campaign in particular, queer exclusion and nationalism and xenophobia are evident. Therefore it would be interesting to investigate the intersections of queer in-and-exclusion and nationalism in the Brexit debate by means of exploring discourses of 'homonationalism' (and 'heteronationalism'), a notion proposed by Jasbir K Puar (2007) to understand "the complexities of how 'acceptance' and 'tolerance' for gay and lesbian subjects have become a barometer by which the right to and capacity for national sovereignty is evaluated" (Puar, 2013, p. 336). Lastly, a study focused on letters to the editor which, as mentioned in Section 7.1.1, often include more male voices than female ones, could further elucidate the harmful male bias of newspapers in general and political coverage in particular. These letters are curated by the newspapers themselves to fit the perceived preferences of a newspaper's readers and to best reflect the newspaper's own identity and point of view (Richardson & Franklin, 2004), and thus would allow for productive analyses regarding male bias.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Images

A.1 The Labour party's 'pink bus'



Figure 13: The Labour party's pink 'woman to woman' campaign bus (Radburn, 2015)

A.2 Brenda from Bristol



Figure 14: 'Brenda from Bristol' expressing her dismay regarding PM Theresa May's decision to call a snap election (Kay, 2017)

A.3 The Daily Mail's 'Legs-it' cover



Figure 15: The Daily Mail's "Never mind Brexit, who won Legs-it!" cover (Daily Mail, 2017)

Appendix B

Articles

B.1 Article 1

Date: 01/05/2015

Source: The Guardian

Author: Anne Perkins

Author gender: Female

Section: LIFE AND STYLE

Headline:

**1. General election 2015: a campaign full of women but not about them;
2. While female politicians feature more heavily than ever before, the
air war between the main parties shows this election battle is run by
men, for men**

3. This is a curious election campaign for a woman.

4. On the one hand, there are more female political leaders playing a more prominent role than ever before.

5. Nicola Sturgeon and the Greens' Natalie Bennett, Leanne Wood for Plaid Cymru, and the Scottish Tory leader Ruth Davidson - that is a lot

of women getting an unusual amount of airtime to talk about politics.

6. But women in politics is not the same as a campaign around women's issues.

7. And of what might be called a women's campaign, there is almost no sign at all.

8. As the Fawcett Society reports, women are all but invisible.

9. Related: Cupcakes, balloons, Harman and Balls: a day on Labour's pink bus

10. Labour's pink bus, which set off last month to take politics to the voters, has been to Birmingham and Bradford, Burnley, Bristol and Brent and many, many points in between.

11. Its passengers, mainly shadow ministers and mainly but not exclusively female, have sent out messages from the frontline: there are 50,000 women on zero-hours contracts in Wales; the bedroom tax hits women hardest; nine million women didn't vote in 2010.

12. There's a clue there.

13. From the moment of the autumn statement in 2011, austerity has worn a woman's face.

14. Tax credits, the benefit that tends to be paid to women as the main carer, have been slashed.

15. Yvette Cooper, on pink bus duty on Wednesday, reckons that of £26bn of welfare cuts over the past five years, £22bn has come directly from the household incomes that women manage.

16. According Fawcett Society research [sic], 88% of the cuts have fallen on women.

17. It could be the basis for a big campaign.

18. It might have been, one or two elections back.

19. But this time, there is an odd disjuncture between the rise in the number of women campaigning and the decline in the significance of women's

issues.

20. If you just look at the air war between the main parties, this is a campaign run by men, for men.

21. The relentless media focus on the leaders means it will look like that for as long as all the main parties are led by men.

22. Instead, the wives have been weaponised. Samantha Cameron has been in South Thanet trying to shore up the Conservative vote against Nigel Farage.

23. Miriam González Durántez' has been out backing the Lib Dems' female MPs.

24. But that is the way political campaigning is changing.

25. Fewer and fewer big set pieces, more and more one-to-one encounters.

26. Four million conversations this year, Labour claims.

27. That is partly about budgets.

28. But it is also a recognition of the distance Westminster feels from most people's lives, especially women's.

29. At Brentford high school for girls in west London on Wednesday, sixth-formers got short shrift from Cooper, the shadow home secretary, when they said they did not know enough about politics to vote, before getting into a heated debate about how much people who had done well for themselves should pay in tax.

30. But that attitude is typical of the findings in the Hansard Society's regular audit of political engagement, where women are much more likely than men to describe themselves as not very knowledgeable or very interested in politics.

31. Related: Men still dominate ballot box but UK set for 25% rise in female MPs

32. More sophisticated polling and more thoughtful poll analysis has raised some hard questions about old assumptions.

33. For a decade, thinking about female voters was built on the transformation of the historic tendency of women to vote Conservative into a tendency for women to vote progressive (Lib Dem and Green as well as Labour).

34. The watershed was 1997, the year history might take as the high water mark of the influence of feminism in mainstream Labour politics, the year when more than 40% of women voted Labour in every age group except one.

35. Following the introduction of all-women shortlists, more than 100 female Labour MPs were elected.

36. QED, it seemed, incontrovertible proof that reaching out to women brings its own, bountiful rewards.

37. Subsequent elections have suggested that women tend to be on the winning side: but that is not the same as saying it is women who won the election.

38. David Cameron won among the women in 2010 - the election that was supposed to be the Mumsnet election but which turned out to be just the same as its immediate predecessors.

39. And there was panic in Tory HQ in 2014 when Mumsnet again found that women had gone off him, in much the same way as women had led the rejection of Tony Blair after the Iraq war.

40. But early this year, another Mumsnet survey found the gap had narrowed from 14 points to nine.

41. This week's ICM poll for the Guardian shows there is just a one-point difference in women's voting intentions between the two main parties.

42. But women are turning out to be very important indeed to Labour.

43. Their support is holding up much better than men's and after the first debate they rated Ed Miliband more highly than men (they also rated the female leaders' much more generously than men did).

44. This week, there's a nine-point deficit among men's voting intentions

between the two main parties.

45. Worse for Labour, men are much more likely to vote Ukip than women.

46. A triumph for the pink bus?

47. Harriet Harman, the party's deputy leader, set off claiming that women were just not voting in greater numbers than men.

48. Her mission was to get the female vote out.

49. But the statistics show it is much less a question of gender and much more to do with age and ethnicity.

50. Although women do, the poll evidence suggests, make up their minds later.

51. It is only a small sample, but even in this week's ICM poll, while 15% of men say they are still undecided, 26% of women have yet to make up their minds.

B.2 Article 2

Date: 20/06/2016

Source: The Daily Mail

Author: JAMES SLACK AND DANIEL MARTIN

Author gender: Male

Section: n/a

Headline: 1. BORIS TELLS WOMEN: VOTE LEAVE TO TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR FAMILY'S DESTINY

2. BORIS Johnson today warns the out of control' immigration system is depriving families of certainty over access to school places, housing and healthcare.

3. In a direct appeal to women voters, he says the only way for families

to be in control of their own destiny is to vote to leave the EU on Thursday.

4. Mr Johnson yesterday insisted he was a huge supporter of immigration - and even suggested there should be an amnesty for illegal workers who have been in the UK for 12 years or more.

5. But in an exclusive Daily Mail interview, he said uncontrolled EU immigration was preventing the public sector from properly planning to ensure there are enough schools, GP surgeries and homes.

6. He warned that - in turn - this is depriving families of the ability to plan for the future of their children.

7. Mr Johnson said: It is about control.

8. It is about security, safety of your country and your economy and being in charge.

9. You want to be able to manage your household yourself, you want to be able to manage how things work pretty exactly.

10. If we take back control of immigration we can help local authorities plan for vital services.

11. That will mean that young people will have a better chance of getting on the housing ladder and there will be less pressure on school places or the NHS.

12. At the moment the system is out of control and no one can plan effectively.'

13. He added: It will take time - but if you have an immigration system that is based on the needs of the economy rather than just a doctrine and

ideology of free movement, I think you get to plan better.

14. You're thinking about your kids and whether they are going to be able to afford a home.

15. That is of great importance.

16. Whether your kids can be part of an economy that is outward-looking and mobilised - able to do deals with growth economies not locked into the EU.

17. I'd be thinking where is Britain going - what is it going to be like for us in 20 or 30 years' time.

18. Are we going to be part of this very closed system or are we going to take back control and really set our priorities?'

19. Mr Johnson dismissed the doom-mongering of David Cameron and the Remain camp, saying: I have seen no evidence of an economic shock.'

20. He went on: The only way to end this tidal wave of gloom from the Government is to vote Leave.

21. I think the negativity is very intense and I do not think it is doing anybody's mood much good.

22. If I were them I would not have fought the campaign this way.'

23. At a rally in London yesterday, Mr Johnson said the way to neutralise' extremist views in Britain was for the country to regain control of its borders.

24. He said those who play politics' with immigration would be silenced if the UK was able to take charge of a completely out of control' system.

25. The former London mayor also repeated previous calls for an amnesty

on illegal immigrants who have been here for more than 12 years.

26. He said: If we take back control of our immigration system with an Australian-style points-based system, we'll be dealing fairly and justly with every part of the world and we will be neutralising people in this country and across Europe who wish to play politics with immigration and who are opposed to immigrants.

27. That is the way forward.'

28. He asked Leave supporters to imagine waking up on Friday morning to face the terrible sense of shock and disappointment that Remain have narrowly won'.

29. Mr Johnson said the TV cameras would turn to [European Commission president] Jean-Claude Juncker celebrating with what looks suspiciously like champagne, and then go to Peter Mandelson and the rest saying the way is now clear for Britain to join the euro'.

30. He added: We will have missed a fantastic opportunity for change and improvement for Europe and this country?

31. We cannot vote for a status quo, with the EU morphing relentlessly into a superstate, with activist judges making decisions including who can be on our streets whether they are terror suspects and convicted criminals or not.'

32. Attacking the Remain side, he added: They endlessly say we can't do it, we daren't do it, we mustn't do it - and we say that we can.'

B.3 Article 3

Date: 16/04/2015

Source: independent.co.uk

Author: Siobhan Fenton

Author gender: female

Section: COMMENT

Headline: 1. As a female voter, I'd rather be patronised than ignored by politicians;

2. Labour's Women's Manifesto may seem unnecessary, but when you compare it to what the other parties are proposing it's astounding

3. The notion of a "women's vote" existing this election should be as antiquated as it sounds.

4. Yet all the political parties seem to think it's okay to treat half the population as if we are one big monolith of bleeding, hormonal minds.

5. Lady voters are a thing now, exercising our little lady democracy with our little lady minds.

6. And the four middle-aged men at the helm of the main parties want to make sure the "women's vote" goes to them.

7. But there's a slight catch.

8. There are 33m women in the United Kingdom, and we're not all alike.

9. [READ MORE](#) Labour launches 'women's manifesto'

10. Over the course of this election campaign, I've looked on with horror and bemusement as the parties treat women as if they're a niche interest group.

11. Last week saw the broadcast of the LBC women's debate, in which

Conservative Nicky Morgan, Labour Harriet Harman, Lib Dem Lynne Featherstone and UKIP Dianne James battled over their parties' promises.

12. Now, Labour have just launched their own Women's Manifesto.

13. During an event in Stockwell yesterday, Harriet Harman, Yvette Cooper and Gloria De Piero pushed their party's women-friendly policies.

14. These include securing funding for rape crisis centres and domestic violence shelters, ending the detention of pregnant immigrants, and the introduction of a Violence Against Women and Girls Bill.

15. These are great policies, but were promoted while the women bounced babies on their laps at a playschool.

16. And if this wasn't cringeworthy enough, all three women arrived on Labour's now infamous Pink Bus, which was met with outright derision (from myself included) when it debuted in February.

17. It's patronising, and makes me feel uncomfortable.

18. But as the election draws closer, I've started to change my mind.

19. I never thought I'd defend the pink bus, or the sight of female politicians unveiling policies while bouncing babies on their laps, but the utter vacuum of engagement from other parties shows that Labour's gestures towards women's rights might unfortunately be as good as it gets in this election.

20. While Tories led the mockery of the pink bus, it was easy to forget that Labour passed the Equality Act, established the role of Women's Minister and introduced all women short lists.

21. Meanwhile, there was a period of time in the coalition cabinet when there were more Old Etonians than women.

22. And during his time as Prime Minister, David Cameron has looked on

while access to legal aid was restricted for domestic violence victims.

23. General election 2015: The worst gaffes and controversies so far

24. Yes, the Tories and Lib Dems have never had a "pink bus moment".

25. But this wasn't because they have more respect or better policies for women.

26. Rather, it's because they were never going to make any gesture towards the women's rights.

27. The closest the Lib Dems have come is sending out Nick Clegg to target female voters in key marginals, which only served to highlight how few women hold senior positions within his party.

28. It's a sad reality than when it comes to women's rights, the issue is too often either dealt with insultingly or ignored.

29. It's so frustrating that women are still faced with such limited options of how they engage in women's rights.

30. But if debates about domestic violence funding making public debate requires for the issue to be trussed up in pink glitter or framed with a baby in a bonnet, I'll accept it for now, and welcome Labour's well-meaning but botched attempts above other parties' indifference.

31. The choice shouldn't have to be between being insulted or being ignored, and I look forward to a time when we have more than just those two options.

32. But for the moment, I'm just about happy enough to take the lesser of two evils.

33. Labour might have scored a few own goals when targeting the "women's vote", but when they're the only ones even bothering to play the game,

who cares?

34. READ MORE Labour pink bus: Don't worry about the policies, girls, just vote for the pretty colour!

B.4 Article 4

Date: 24/05/2016

Source: telegraph.co.uk

Author: Allison Pearson

Author gender: Female

Section: n/a

Headline: 1. No wonder women back Brexit - mums know best

2. My friend Rosie had a nasty gynaecological scare recently.
3. She was admitted for tests and waited in considerable trepidation for the results.
4. And waited, and waited.
5. It took 31 days for Rosie to get the letter telling her that the growth in her womb was benign.
6. Rosie rang an oncologist mate and asked her whether 31 days wasn't, you know, rather a long time for the NHS to get round to telling a frightened person they don't have cancer.
7. The oncologist laughed bitterly and said: "Thirty-one days? Count yourself lucky. For some patients it's almost double that."

8. The NHS is already having to close up to 50 A&E departments Credit: Chris Radburn

9. This is our NHS which, due to pressure of numbers and mounting debt, is having to close up to 50 Accident and Emergency units.

10. The same NHS which, we learnt this week, will not be prescribing a fantastic new breast cancer drug, because Nice (the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) has turned it down.

11. Something about it not being proven, but we know the real reason, don't we?

12. The same reason Nice turned down a Herceptin-style drug in 2014 that offers women with advanced breast cancer nearly six months of extra life.

13. The reason is money.

14. Dr Karol Sikora, one of the UK's leading cancer specialists, explains helpfully that patients cannot trust their doctors and nurses to make sure they get the best treatments on time.

15. He suggests finding out the names of receptionists and consultants' secretaries and buying them small gifts such as flowers or chocolates to ensure that they bag a prompt appointment.

16. Britons shouldn't have to bribe anyone to secure world-class care
Credit: Getty

17. For some reason, Dr Sikora's advice is seen as amusing rather than the scandal that it is.

18. What about people too old or too sick to play the system, or too poor to present Hotel Chocolat's finest hamper to the oncologist's gatekeeper?

19. You'd think this was a third world country or something.

20. Well, under pressure from uncontrolled immigration, that's exactly what Britain could become.

21. Michael Gove was accused of scaremongering for warning that stay-

ing in the EU could see the British population rise by 5.23 million by 2030, but even the pro-Remain (oops, "completely impartial") Treasury has estimated that figure would be over three million.

22. Could this explain why a new poll by Netmums shows that women are more likely to see the EU as a threat to family life, and mothers are inclined to be in favour of Brexit?

23. A Telegraph poll yesterday indicated that men, in particular, were switching to Remain .

24. But it's women who tend to be the ones trying to find the school places and booking the appointments with the overburdened GP.

25. Pregnant women are among those best placed to see the strain on public services Credit: Andrew Matthews/PA Wire

26. It's middle-aged daughters who navigate the broken care system for elderly parents.

27. Pregnant women who feel the effect of nearly half of all maternity units being forced to close their doors for up to three days because there's too much demand.

28. Compared to that lot, David Cameron's warning yesterday that Brexit could add £230 to the cost of a European holiday is a piffling embarrassment.

29. Mums have other priorities, Prime Minister.

30. It's mums who are in the frontline for public services, mums who are best placed to see what a terrible strain they're under.

31. I will be voting Leave on June 23rd because I don't see how the coun-

try that I love can continue to provide a decent quality of life for its people if beleaguered hospitals and schools have to cope with millions more EU citizens .

32. Why should we be rationing breast-cancer drugs for desperate British women while we're subsidising Bulgaria and Romania?

33. Our own people should come first.

34. No bribes of chocolates or flowers should be necessary to secure first-world care.

35. I'm relieved to see so many women agree with me.

36. Forget the men trying to scare us with dodgy economics.

37. Mother knows best.

38. Brexit: The arguments for and against the EU

39. READ MORE ABOUT:

40. - Immigration

41. - David Cameron

42. - Brexit

43. - EU Referendum

44. - Show more

B.5 Article 5

Date: 26/04/2015

Source: ExpressOnline

Author: Caroline Wheeler

Author gender: Female

Section: n/a

Headline: 1. We women must vote or be ignored, argues CAROLINE WHEELER

2. IT IS NOT even 100 years since women won the right to vote.

3. GETTY

4. Suffragette women demonstrating in England and US

5. On February 6, 1918, a select group gained suffrage but it took 10 more years before all women had the same voting rights as men.

6. Yet at the last election, in 2010, more than nine million women didn't use that hard-won right.

7. As we approach polling day on May 7, it is worth remembering what women were doing 100 [years] ago to secure the right to vote.

8. Emily Davison, the Pankhursts and countless suffragettes risked life and limb so future generations of women would have an equal voice in society.

9. They chained themselves to railings, blew up buildings and more than 1,000 went to jail.

10. They went on hunger strikes, demanded to be treated as political prisoners and were force-fed.

11. A tough women's bodyguard formed around the Pankhursts, leaders of the movement, to protect them from attack.

12. Worse was the scorn they endured as objects of ridicule.

13. They suffered both personally and socially, were seen as unsuitable for marriage, contemptible, hideous un-women.

14. Since women had to struggle so hard to get the vote, you would think they would be first in the queue at the polling booths on election day but that is not the case.

15. In fact, the number voting has fallen over the past 20 years.

16. Last time, 61 per cent of women aged 18 to 24 didn't vote.

17. In total, according to a study by the House of Commons Library at the request of Labour deputy Harriet Harman, 9.1 million women didn't turn out in 2010.

18. This compares to eight million men.

19. The figures also confirm a downward trend in the numbers of women voting and prove the "turnout gap" between the sexes is getting wider.

20. In 1992, more women voted than men but that number has been in decline ever since.

21. In 2005 and 2010 there were more male voters than female.

22. At the last election 64 per cent of women voted, compared to 67 per cent of men.

23. The figures show that while the suffragettes' battle took place more than a century ago, their cause is just as relevant today.

24. Women are often encouraged to vote by being told that no vote means no voice but what does that really mean?

25. Let me tell you.

26. If women don't vote they will lose their influence over political parties, who will not see their voice as important when drawing up policy.

27. It is no coincidence that the Conservative-led Coalition has focused on creating a northern powerhouse; the party knows it is in those seats where the election will be won.

28. So keen is he to woo voters in the North, David Cameron aims to have three in every five new jobs created in the North.

29. With just a few thousand votes expected to decide the election for his party, a bold offer has been made to those soon to cast their vote in those king-maker seats.

30. With that in mind, just imagine what kind of power the female vote could exert.

31. Women, after all, make up half the population and would make a powerful ally for any party hoping to occupy No 10.

32. The fact that declining numbers of women are voting is a sign they feel disengaged but more worrying still is the message it sends out to party leaders and strategists, who will see it as a sign that they can stop working to attract the female vote if it seems large swathes will stay at home on polling day.

33. So while all the main parties have put childcare reforms, with the promise of additional free nursery provision, at the heart of their manifestos, there are other policy areas that have not even been considered.

34. Take the workplace, for example, where the glass ceiling remains, with figures showing that just one in 15 women working full-time earns £50,000 a year, compared to one in seven men.

35. Equal pay, maternity rights and pension equality are issues that are not going to go away.

36. That is why on Thursday I shall be chairing an event organised by Mummy's Gin Fund, a social networking group for mothers in South-east London, to help spark debate and encourage disillusioned female voters to use their ballot paper as a tool to get the issues that are important to them back on the political agenda.

37. My key message will be that while they should give great thought to how they cast their vote, in what may be the tightest poll in a generation, the crucial thing is that they turn out on May 7.

38. Related articles The heroines who fought on the home front Work, not suffragettes, won women the vote Women still patronised by the unfaire

sex.

B.6 Article 6

Date: 28/04/2017

Source: The Daily Telegraph

Author: Judith Woods

Author gender: Female

Section: NEWS

Headline: 1. The real reason May will win the women's vote

2. I had a political epiphany the other evening when I was wandering around Ikea with a card-carrying Leftie friend.

3. Don't judge me; she needed light bulbs, I needed a night out.

4. Anyway, we were idling for a few minutes over chopping boards when it dawned on me why so many women voters are appalled by the prospect of a Labour victory.

5. "You know why I hate Jeremy Corbyn?" my friend suddenly fumed.

6. "I hate him because he is just like my dad."

7. Now, I've met her father and he seems perfectly amiable, if a bit of a military history bore who has no interest in anyone else's opinions, regardless of how much more they know about a subject.

8. He once told a UN ambassador that he didn't know what he was talking about.

9. Standard dad stuff, really.

10. He has also been wearing the same corduroy jacket since the Relief of Mafeking.

11. Maybe that was the clincher?
12. "No!" she cried.
13. "Well, maybe, yes.
14. The clothes are just the outward sign of how much he hates change and never deviates from what he knows.
15. You can see panic in his eyes if my mother says the day's plans have changed.
16. "He isn't a bad person, just a tunnel-visioned, stubborn old booby who looks at the world through a rear-view mirror."
17. I don't think Boris Johnson himself could have skewered inveterate vest-wearer Jeremy Corbyn more decisively, but then the Labour leader is of an ilk that most women can instantly recognise.
18. And not in a good way.
19. In short, he's the sort of curmudgeonly dogmatist we dread our husbands ossifying into; at once irritable, peevish and self-righteous.
20. It's an age thing.
21. People become more concentrated versions of themselves; in the US, "irritable male syndrome" had been used to describe Donald Trump's tetchy tweets.
22. You young people have no business hearing that even the naughtiest bad boy will eventually start nagging about why you've left crumbs on the worktop and grumpily question why he always has to put the bins out.
23. You don't have to watch a One Foot in the Grave box set to know

there are legions of long-suffering women everywhere whose days are dedicated to smoothing the feathers that their tactless, thoughtless spouse invariably ruffles - rather like Diane Abbott trailing into radio studios in her boss's wake, saying: "What Jeremy means is..."

24. What Jeremy usually means is that he'd like to turn the clock back, unplug the interweb, bring back coal mining and resurrect the DDR, but as he is incapable of thinking on his feet he usually just glowers with self-righteousness reminiscent of those photographs of an outraged JD Salinger bearded in his hermit's retreat.

25. Meanwhile, Theresa Maybot might never headline at the Comedy Store, but women instinctively know a safe and diligent pair of hands when they see one - and above all need them.

26. We don't want a shambling Momentum stooge.

27. But nor do we want oleaginous charisma - God knows, we've had a bellyful of the clubbable, born-to-rule set, braying their way up the greasy pole.

28. We want someone who pores over the small print, who thinks long and hard, instead of inventing policy on the hoof, and who has a social conscience.

29. Women like a social conscience because we are the ones who experience life at the business end; once the working day is over, we still have hatches, matches, dispatches and wraparound Sandwich Generation care to juggle.

30. May appeals to my circle, Right and Left, because she possesses the single most important characteristic that Corbyn lacks: pragmatism.

31. Politics is famously the art of the possible, and a prime minister must

adapt to the world as it is, not as she or he would wish it to be.

32. Corbyn, forever harking back, is not a man to safeguard Britain's future or even present a cohesive vision of it.

33. Nor, I suspect, is he anything like the laid-back man of the people-cum-right-on feminist that his backers claim him to be; I can't (shan't, won't) ever forget his insulting proposal that the way to ensure women's safety on trains was to corral them on their own in a special carriage, curtailing their freedom, rather than tackling the perpetrators.

34. Polls published this week have highlighted his personal unpopularity among voters and revealed him to be an electoral liability.

35. The term used in the *New Statesman* was "toxic to voters", but Corbyn's head is too far down in the sand to take a long hard look at anything as inconvenient as the facts.

36. My Labour-voting friends (and indeed my husband) are at the point of hand-wringing despair - especially those who have hard-working Labour MPs who deserve to be returned to Westminster, because any vote for Labour becomes a de facto endorsement of its leader.

37. I happen to believe that a lame duck Opposition is in nobody's interests; one-party rule (Nicola Sturgeon take note) is always a bad idea and inevitably erodes democracy.

38. But Corbyn has not led an effective shadow cabinet.

39. I doubt he could assemble an Ikea kitchen cabinet.

40. That he would rather preside over the potential annihilation of the party he leads than step down says all we need to know about the man.

41. Intransigence can be construed as steadfastness in a young man.
42. In a 67-year-old, it is the expression of mulish inflexibility.
43. Women don't want it in a husband, and we certainly won't vote for it at the ballot box.

44. Read more [www.telegraph.co.uk/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion) opinion Twitter [judithwoods](#)

45. May appeals because she possesses a characteristic that Corbyn lacks: pragmatism

B.7 Article 7

Date: 29/04/2017

Source: MailOnline

Author: ISOBEL FRODSHAM

Author gender: Female

Section: NEWS

Headline: 1. Catfight on the Ukip campaign trail: Remain supporter 'claws' at Brexit rival in the street as party leader tours Hartlepool

2. - Alleged pro EU campaigner and alleged Ukip supporter were seen fighting
3. - The women fell down on the street in Hartlepool while two men tried to intervene
4. - A spokesperson for Cleveland Police confirmed two women were arrested today
5. - It happened before Ukip leader Paul Nuttall headed out on the campaign trail
6. - Mr Nuttall announced today he is to stand as a candidate in Boston

and Skegness

7. A bloody fight broke out in County Durham earlier today as tensions flared over Brexit.

8. One woman and another woman were spotted fighting in Hartlepool before Ukip leader Paul Nuttall headed out on the campaign trail.

9. Witnesses said one was a Ukip supporter and one was a Remainer, however Ukip and a Remain campaign group have both denied these claims.

10. A spokesperson for Cleveland Police confirmed this afternoon that two people had been arrested.

11. As the fight escalated, one of the women was seen grabbing the other woman's jumper before the duo fell to the ground on the street, shocking others around them.

12. One man was seen trying to break up the fight while another man, wearing a stripey scarf and a grey jumper, stood between the two women.

13. Both of the women were later seen with bloodied faces.

14. It is not known who initiated the fight.

15. Footage taken at the scene shows one of the women saying: 'There was no need for that, none whatsoever.'

16. 'Look at what you've done! I'm 62 years old.'

17. One witness asked the woman: 'Then why are you punching her?'
18. The woman responded: 'I didn't punch her, she attacked me.'
19. She accused me of being drunk and I'm not drunk.'
20. 'How dare you do that to me.'
21. I live in Hartlepool and I have a right to say what I want to say.'
22. Another video taken at the scene appears to show the two women arguing about immigration.
23. One woman brandishes a shoe in the air and shouts: 'I am on medication, I have vertigo, I am [a] 62-year-old and I have food poisoning, and I am going to the doctor, OK?'
24. 'I came back into this country...'
25. The younger woman then interrupts her and says: 'So you do not even live here?'
26. 'So you have not always lived here?'
27. Earlier the older woman, who speaks with a local accent, had been heard criticising the remain supporter for not being local.
28. She responds: 'I came back into this country on March 21.'
29. The young woman says: 'So you only just came back?'
30. The older replies: 'I have been abroad to see my family.'

31. I am allowed to go out of the country where they do not tell me who I am and what I am doing.

32. 'You had no right to pull my hair and attack me.

33. 'I did not pull your hair.

34. You need to learn to manage.

35. You need to go to a church and ask for forgiveness.'

36. The younger woman then calmly says: 'You are the one drunkenly brandishing a flip flop.'

37. The older lady responds: 'When the police come I am going to have you arrested for assault and battery.'

38. A UKIP supporter then attempts to diffuse the situation saying: 'Let's leave it.'

39. But this angers the older woman who says: 'No, do not leave it!

40. 'I have a right to say what I want, but she is not attacking me, scratching all my legs.

41. Look at the state of me!

42. 'I have never had a drink and I will prove that because I have the juice there.

43. 'You lady, you are going down for this.

44. I am going to have you in jail for what you have done.'

45. A spokesperson for Cleveland Police confirmed to the MailOnline officers attended the scene.

46. They said: 'We were called to an incident today but we weren't aware that Ukip were going to be there.'

47. They later added: 'Police can confirm two females, one aged 28 and the other aged 62 - were arrested (on suspicion of) assault at the Headland in Hartlepool today while the area was being visited by UKIP members.

48. 'Inquiries are ongoing.'

49. A spokesperson for Ukip said: 'One woman was a local resident and one was a hard left activist who was disrupting things.

50. They are absolutely nothing to do with us.

51. '[The resident] wasn't a Ukip supporter - she wanted to hear what we had to say but she is not known to us.'

52. The spokesperson denied claims that Mr Nuttall had cancelled a planned speech due to the scuffle.

53. He added: 'No speech was planned for Paul.

54. He is there supporting a local by-election candidate, which was booked weeks ago, and that is what he is doing.

55. 'He is now out doorknocking and he's still doing it.'

56. Two members of the North East for Europe group, who were in attendance at the event, said the women were not associated with North

East for Europe in any way.

57. They added: 'We're a peaceful group, we're just trying to make sure people of the North East are aware that we're here to support the North East and their role to Europe.

58. 'We're against everything that Ukip and their xenophobic policies stand for.'

59. This comes as Mr Nuttall announced earlier today he is to stand as a candidate in Boston and Skegness in the General Election.

60. Mr Nuttall described it as 'a great honour and a privilege' to be standing for Ukip in the seat, adding: 'The constituency voted overwhelmingly for Leave inspired in part by the massive betrayal of our fishing industry by successive Governments, something that today's Conservative Party led by Theresa May looks set to repeat.

61. 'I will make it my mission to stand up for the people of Boston and Skegness and ensure there is no backsliding on Brexit.'

62. Sue Blackburn, chairman of the Ukip Boston and Skegness branch, said: 'As branch chairman, I would like to say on behalf of the Boston and Skegness branch how delighted we are to have our leader standing in this election and Paul will have the upmost support of this branch.

Appendix C

Additional tables

C.1 Additional Chapter 5 articles per newspaper tables

Table 54: Number of articles per separate newspaper publication: 2015

Newspaper	No. of articles
The Guardian	130
Telegraph.co.uk	120
MailOnline	109
Independent.co.uk	90
Daily Mail	55
Mirror.co.uk	46
The Times (Daily)	45
The Daily Telegraph	35
The Independent	28
The I	21
The Observer	16
ExpressOnline	15
The Sun (Daily)	14
The Daily Mirror	11
The Sunday Times	11
The Sunday Telegraph	10
Independent on Sunday	6
The (Daily) Express	4
Daily Star	4
The Sunday Express	3
Mail on Sunday	3
Independent Magazine	1
The Sunday Mirror	0
The People	0
The Sun (Sunday)	0
Sunday Star	0
Total	777

Table 55: Number of articles per separate newspaper publication: 2016

Newspaper	No. of articles
The Guardian	137
MailOnline	130
Telegraph.co.uk	99
The Independent (online)	65
Mirror.co.uk	60
ExpressOnline	56
Daily Mail	32
The Daily Telegraph	25
The I	25
The Observer	25
The Independent (Daily edition)	24
The Times (Daily)	23
Mail on Sunday	9
The Sun (Daily)	9
The Sunday Times	9
The Sunday Telegraph	8
The Daily Express	6
Daily Star	3
The Sunday Express	2
The Daily Mirror	2
The Sunday Mirror	0
The People	0
Sunday Star	0
The Sun (Sunday)	0
Total	749

Table 56: Number of articles per separate newspaper publication: 2017

Newspaper	No. of articles
The Independent (online)	80
Telegraph.co.uk	72
The Guardian	51
MailOnline	43
The I	34
ExpressOnline	30
Mirror.co.uk	26
The Times (Daily)	23
The Daily Telegraph	18
Daily Mail	15
The Observer	13
The Sunday Times	10
The Sun (Daily)	6
The Sunday Telegraph	6
The Sunday Express	5
Mail on Sunday	2
The Daily Mirror	2
The People	1
Daily Star	1
The Daily Express	0
The Sunday Mirror	0
Sunday Star	0
The Sun (Sunday)	0
The Independent (Daily edition)	n/a
Total	438

C.2 Additional Chapter 5 author gender figures

C.2.1 Author gender x publication type

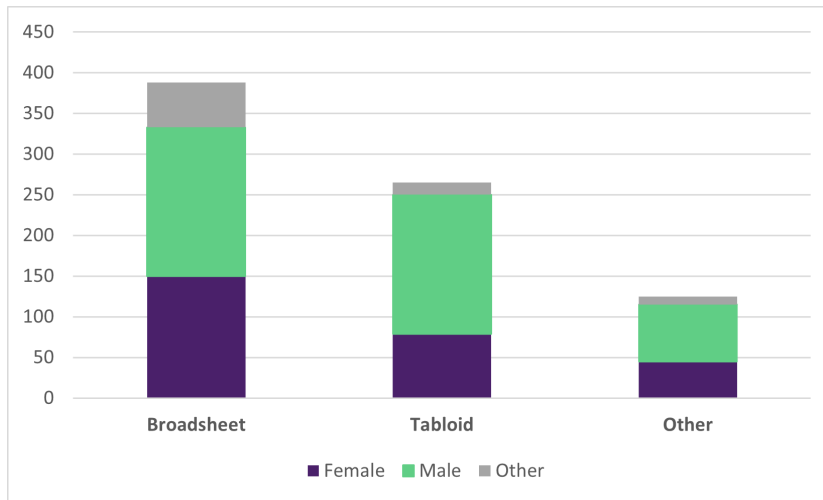


Figure 16: Number of articles published by author gender per publication type during the 2015 General Election

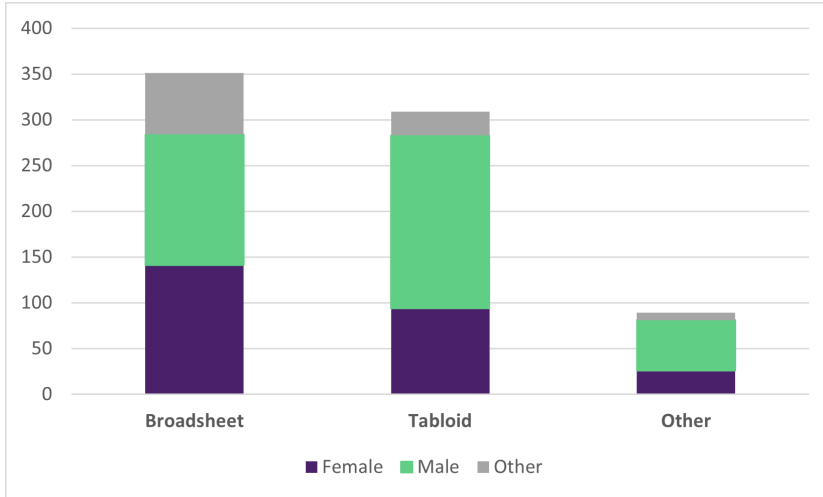


Figure 17: Number of articles published by author gender per publication type during the 2016 EU Referendum

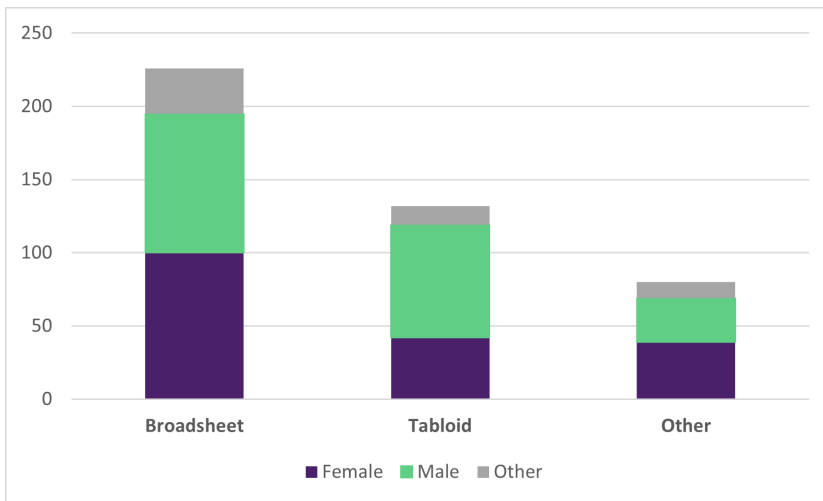


Figure 18: Number of articles published by author gender per publication type during the 2017 General Election

C.2.2 Author gender x political orientation and referendum stance

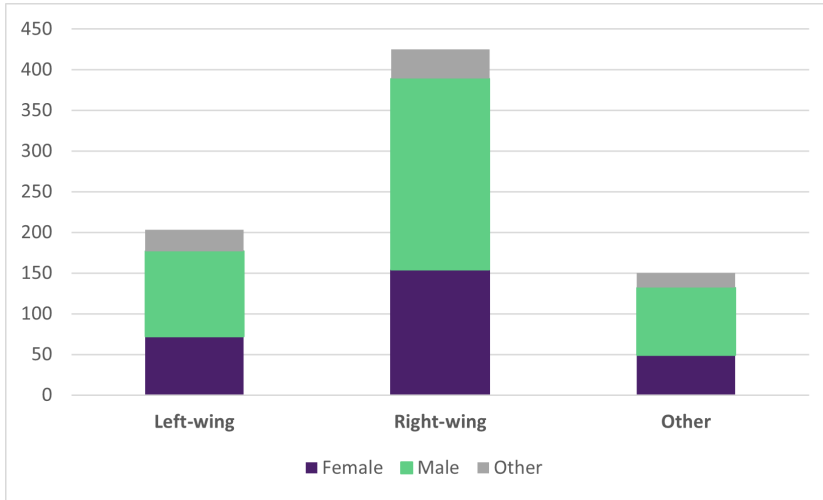


Figure 19: Number of articles published by author gender per political orientation during the 2015 General Election

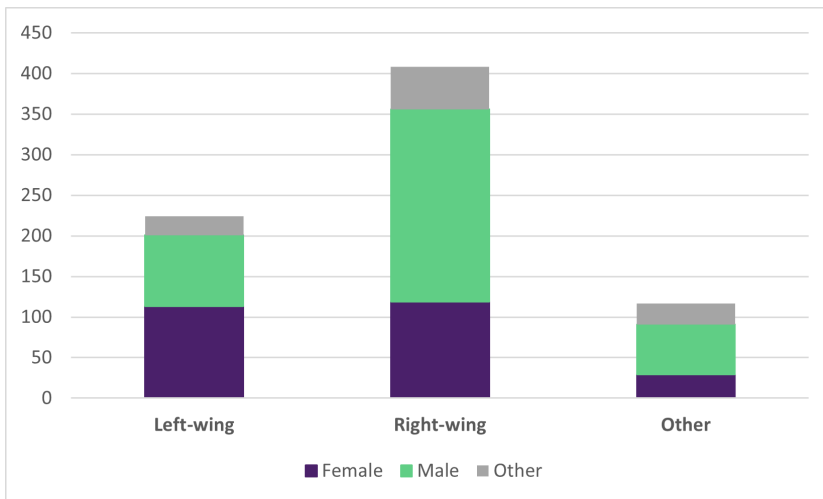


Figure 20: Number of articles published by author gender per political orientation during the 2016 EU Referendum

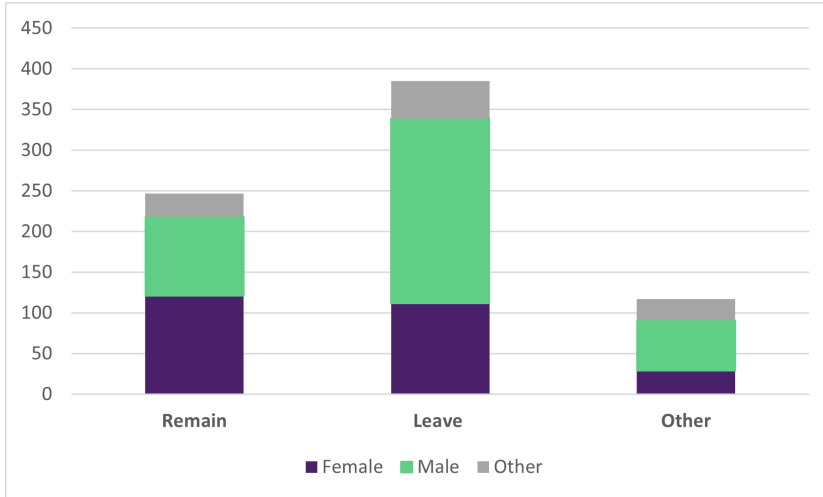


Figure 21: Number of articles published by author gender per referendum stance during the 2016 EU Referendum

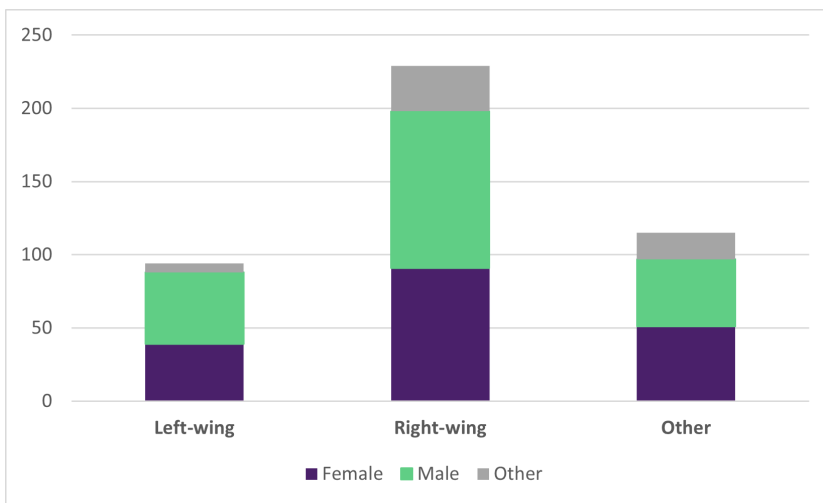


Figure 22: Number of articles published by author gender per political orientation during the 2017 General Election

C.3 Additional Chapter 5 search term frequency tables

C.3.1 Search term frequencies per year

Table 57: Search term frequency in terms of number of articles & raw frequency: 2015

Article rank	Term	No. of articles	Raw Freq.	Freq. rank
1	Woma/en	419	2672	1
2	Wife/ves	158	613	2
3	Female(s)	119	455	3
4	Mother(s)*	98	431	4
5	Girl(s)	65	378	5
6	Daughter(s)**	64	220	6
7	Lady/ies	59	219	7
8	Mum(s)	55	188	8
9	Sister(s)***	24	81	9
10	Lesbian(s)	11	41	11
11	Girlfriend(s)	9	57	10
12	Mumsnet	8	33	12
13	Mummy/ies	7	11	16
-	Niece(s)	7	10	17
15	Grandmother(s)	6	26	13
16	Granddaughter(s)	3	19	14
-	Lass(es)	3	6	18
18	Stepsister(s)	2	4	19
-	Great(-)granddaughter(s)	2	3	22
-	Gran(s)	2	2	24
21	Aunt(s)	1	16	15
-	Grandma(s)	1	4	19
-	Stepmother(s)	1	4	19
-	Great(-)grandmother(s)	1	3	22
-	Matron(s)	1	1	25
-	Godmother(s)	1	1	25
-	Mom(s)	1	1	25
28	Gal(s)	0	0	28
-	Goddaughter(s)	0	0	28
-	Grandmum(s)	0	0	28
-	Mamma(s)	0	0	28
-	Nan(s)	0	0	28
-	Stepdaughter(s)	0	0	28
-	Stepmum(s)	0	0	28

* 6 of these instances refer to *mother(s)-law*

** 5 of these instances refer to *daughter(s)-law*

*** 3 of these instances refer to *sister(s)-law*

Table 58: Search term frequency in terms of number of articles & raw frequency: 2016

Article rank	Term	No. of articles	Raw Freq.	Freq. rank
1	Woma/en	397	1917	1
2	Wife/ves	109	356	2
3	Mother(s)*	93	310	3
4	Female(s)	73	256	4
5	Lady/ies	67	212	5
6	Daughter(s)**	49	186	6
7	Mum(s)	40	182	7
8	Girl(s)	36	154	8
9	Sister(s)***	16	67	9
10	Grandmother(s)	11	39	10
-	Gran(s)	11	13	13
-	Nan(s)	11	12	14
13	Aunt(s)	8	23	11
14	Girlfriend(s)	6	17	12
-	Lesbian(s)	6	10	16
-	Lass(es)	6	6	18
17	Granddaughter(s)	4	12	14
-	Godmother(s)	4	5	20
19	Mummy/ies	2	7	17
-	Mumsnet	2	6	18
-	Grandma(s)	2	5	20
-	Gal(s)	2	3	22
-	Great(-)granddaughter(s)	2	3	22
24	Niece(s)	1	2	24
25	Goddaughter(s)	0	0	25
-	Grandmum(s)	0	0	25
-	Great(-)grandmother(s)	0	0	25
-	Mamma(s)	0	0	25
-	Matron(s)	0	0	25
-	Stepdaughter(s)	0	0	25
-	Stepmother(s)	0	0	25
-	Stepmum(s)	0	0	25
-	Stepsister(s)	0	0	25

*9 of these instances refer to *mother(s)-law*

** 4 of these instances refer to *daughter(s)-law*

*** 4 of these instances refer to *sister(s)-law*

Table 59: Search term frequency in terms of number of articles & raw frequency: 2017

Article rank	Term	No. of articles	Raw Freq.	Freq. rank
1	Woma/en	257	1438	1
2	Female(s)	74	213	2
3	Mother(s)*	43	157	3
4	Daughter(s)**	33	86	6
5	Wife/ves	31	102	5
6	Lady/ies	26	70	8
7	Mum(s)	23	74	7
8	Girl(s)	22	145	4
9	Sister(s)***	14	56	9
10	Mumsnet	12	47	10
11	Lesbian(s)	6	10	12
12	Mummy/ies	4	8	13
-	Niece(s)	4	4	16
14	Lass(es)	3	5	15
-	Great(-)grandmother(s)	3	3	18
16	Girlfriend(s)	2	7	14
-	Granddaughter(s)	2	4	16
-	Matron(s)	2	2	19
19	Grandmother(s)	1	11	11
-	Great(-)granddaughter(s)	1	1	20
-	Stepmother(s)	1	1	20
-	Gal(s)	1	1	20
-	Gran(s)	1	1	20
-	Grandma(s)	1	1	20
25	Aunt(s)	0	0	26
-	Goddaughter(s)	0	0	26
-	Godmother(s)	0	0	26
-	Grandmum(s)	0	0	26
-	Mamma(s)	0	0	26
-	Nan(s)	0	0	26
-	Stepdaughter(s)	0	0	26
-	Stepmum(s)	0	0	26
-	Stepsister(s)	0	1	20

*3 of these instances refer to *mother(s)-law*

**0 of these instances refer to *daughter(s)-law*

***0 of these instances refer to *sister(s)-law*

C.3.2 Search term frequencies and their overuse per year per sub-corpus

Political orientation and referendum stance

Table 60: Top 10 search terms (based on raw and normalised frequencies per 100,000 words) x political orientation: 2015

Term	Left-wing freq. Raw / (Normalised)	Right-wing	Other	Overuse: p < 0.05
Tokens:	516,610	545,906	156,868	
Wom*n	588 (112.82)	1736 (318)	348 (221.84)	R > O > L
Wife/ves	118 (22.84)	421 (77.12)	74 (47.17)	R > O > L
Female(s)	109 (21.1)	278 (50.92)	68 (43.35)	R = O > L
Mother(s)	78 (15.1)	288 (52.76)	65 (41.44)	R = O > L
Girl(s)	90 (17.42)	236 (43.23)	52 (33.15)	R = O > L
Daughter(s)	44 (8.52)	149 (27.29)	27 (17.21)	R > O > L
Lady/ies	37 (7.16)	152 (27.84)	30 (19.12)	R > O > L
Mum(s)	42 (8.13)	116 (21.25)	30 (19.12)	R = O > L
Sister(s)	15 (2.9)	54 (9.89)	12 (7.65)	R = O > L
Girlfriend(s)	14 (2.71)	38 (6.96)	5 (3.19)	R > L, L = O, R = O

*Search term frequencies were compared across the three sub-corpora by means of a Log-Likelihood calculator which indicates overuse or underuse in one corpus relative to another (Rayson, 2019). The 'Overuse' column indicates whether there is significant overuse present and where it occurs. Example: R > L signifies significant overuse of a certain term (i.e. LL > 3.84; p < 0.05) in the right-wing corpus relative to the left-wing corpus, while R = O signifies that there is no significant difference present between the right-wing and 'other' sub-corpus.

Table 61: Top 10 search terms (based on raw and normalised frequencies per 100,000 words) x political orientation: 2016

Term	Left-wing freq. Raw / (Normalised)	Right-wing	Other	Overuse: p < 0.05
Tokens:	310,771	688,840	122,767	
Wom*n	733 (235.86)	910 (132.11)	274 (223.19)	L = O > R
Wife/ves	44 (14.16)	282 (40.94)	30 (24.44)	R > O > L
Mother(s)	78 (25.1)	195 (28.31)	37 (30.14)	L = R = O
Female(s)	71 (22.85)	145 (21.05)	40 (32.58)	O > R = L
Lady/ies	46 (14.8)	142 (20.61)	24 (19.55)	R > L, L = O R = O
Daughter(s)	51 (16.41)	114 (16.55)	21 (17.11)	L = R = O
Mum(s)	76 (24.46)	84 (12.19)	22 (17.92)	L > R, L = O, R = O
Girl(s)	44 (14.16)	101 (14.66)	9 (7.33)	R = L > O
Sister(s)	22 (7.08)	40 (5.81)	5 (4.07)	L = R = O
Grandmother(s)	7 (2.25)	29 (4.21)	3 (2.44)	L = R = O

Table 62: Top 10 search terms (based on raw and normalised frequencies per 100,000 words) x referendum stance: 2016

Term	Leave freq. Raw / (Normalised)	Remain	Other	Overuse: p < 0.05
Tokens:	659,480	340,131	122,767	
Wom*n	862 (130.71)	781 (229.62)	274 (223.19)	R = O > L
Wife/ves	274 (41.55)	52 (15.29)	30 (24.44)	L > R, L > O, R = O
Mother(s)	185 (28.05)	88 (25.87)	37 (30.14)	L = R = O
Female(s)	140 (21.23)	76 (22.34)	40 (32.58)	O > L, O = R, L = R
Lady/ies	136 (20.62)	52 (15.29)	24 (19.55)	L = R = O
Daughter(s)	112 (16.98)	53 (15.58)	21 (17.11)	L = R = O
Mum(s)	82 (12.43)	78 (22.93)	22 (17.92)	R > L, L = O, R = O
Girl(s)	99 (15.01)	46 (13.52)	9 (7.33)	L > O, L = R, R = O
Sister(s)	35 (5.31)	27 (7.94)	5 (4.07)	L = R = O
Grandmother(s)	28 (4.25)	8 (2.35)	3 (2.44)	L = R = O

Table 63: Top 10 search terms (based on raw and normalised frequencies per 100,000 words) x political orientation: 2017

Term	Left-wing freq. Raw / (Normalised)	Right-wing	Other	Overuse: p < 0.05
Tokens:	105,118	271,756	104,177	
Wom*n	310 (294.91)	739 (271.94)	389 (373.4)	O > L = R
Female(s)	44 (41.86)	118 (43.42)	51 (48.96)	L = R = O
Mother(s)	19 (18.07)	107 (39.37)	31 (29.76)	R > L, L = O, R = O
Daughter(s)	14 (13.32)	53 (19.5)	19 (18.24)	L = R = O
Wife/ves	15 (14.27)	75 (27.6)	12 (11.52)	R > L = O
Lady/ies	12 (11.42)	47 (17.29)	11 (10.56)	L = R = O
Mum(s)	18 (17.12)	43 (15.82)	13 (12.48)	L = R = O
Girl(s)	20 (19.03)	87 (32.01)	38 (36.48)	R = O > L
Sister(s)	15 (14.27)	23 (8.46)	18 (17.28)	L = O > R
Mumsnet	2 (1.91)	37 (13.62)	8 (7.68)	R = O > L

Publication type**Table 64: Top 10 search term (based on raw and normalised frequencies per 100,000 words) x publication type: 2015**

Term	Broadsheet freq. Raw / (Normalised)	Tabloid	Other	Overuse: p < 0.05
Tokens:	767,287	323,788	128,309	
Wom*n	1530 (199.4)	833 (257.27)	309 (240.82)	T = O > B
Wife/ves	208 (27.11)	336 (103.77)	69 (53.78)	T > O > B
Female(s)	269 (35.06)	122 (37.68)	64 (49.88)	O > B, O = T, B = T
Mother(s)	193 (25.15)	180 (55.59)	60 (46.76)	T = O > B
Girl(s)	201 (26.2)	130 (40.15)	47 (36.63)	T = O > B
Daughter(s)	112 (14.6)	87 (26.87)	21 (16.37)	T > B = O
Lady/ies	114 (14.86)	81 (25.02)	24 (18.7)	T > B, T = O, B = O
Mum(s)	65 (8.47)	99 (30.58)	24 (18.7)	T > O > B
Sister(s)	39 (5.08)	31 (9.57)	11 (8.57)	T > B, T = O, B = O
Girlfriend(s)	22 (2.87)	30 (9.27)	5 (3.9)	T > B = O

Table 65: Top 10 search terms (based on raw and normalised frequencies per 100,000 words) x publication type: 2016

Term	Broadsheet freq. Raw / (Normalised)	Tabloid	Other	Overuse: p < 0.05
Tokens:	567,509	460,675	94,194	p < 0.05
Wom*n	1130 (199.12)	603 (130.89)	184 (195.34)	B = O > T
Wife/ves	117 (20.62)	217 (47.1)	22 (23.36)	T > B = O
Mother(s)	135 (23.79)	150 (32.56)	25 (26.54)	T > B, T = O, B = O
Female(s)	150 (26.43)	79 (17.15)	27 (28.66)	B = O > T
Lady/ies	76 (13.39)	122 (26.48)	14 (14.86)	T > B = O
Daughter(s)	79 (13.92)	91 (19.75)	16 (16.99)	T > B, T = O, B = O
Mum(s)	90 (15.86)	80 (17.37)	12 (12.74)	T = B = O
Girl(s)	91 (16.03)	59 (12.81)	4 (4.25)	B = T > O
Sister(s)	41 (7.22)	22 (4.78)	4 (4.25)	T = B = O
Grandmother(s)	5 (0.89)	31 (6.73)	3 (3.18)	T > B = O,

Table 66: Top 10 search terms (based on raw and normalised frequencies per 100,000 words) x publication type: 2017

Term	Broadsheet freq. Raw / (Normalised)	Tabloid	Other	Overuse p < 0.05
Tokens:	257,782	150,368	72,901	
Wom*n	790 (306.46)	391 (260.03)	257 (352.53)	B = O > T
Female(s)	135 (52.37)	43 (28.6)	35 (48.01)	B = O > T
Mother(s)	79 (30.65)	58 (38.57)	20 (27.43)	B = T = O
Daughter(s)	51 (19.78)	28 (18.62)	7 (9.6)	B > O, B = T, T = O
Wife/ves	45 (17.46)	49 (32.59)	8 (10.97)	T > B = O
Lady/ies	39 (15.13)	26 (17.29)	5 (6.86)	T > O, T = B, B = O
Mum(s)	28 (10.86)	36 (23.94)	10 (13.72)	T > B, T = O, B = O
Girl(s)	63 (24.44)	49 (32.59)	33 (45.27)	O > B, O = T, B = T
Sister(s)	32 (12.41)	12 (7.98)	12 (16.46)	B = T = O
Mumsnet	31 (12.03)	8 (5.32)	8 (10.97)	B > T, B = O, T = O

Author gender**Table 67: Top 10 search term (based on raw and normalised frequencies per 100,000 words) x author gender: 2015**

Term	Female freq. Raw / (Normalised)	Male	Other*	Overuse: p < 0.05
Tokens:	359,586	610,592	249,206	
Wom*n	1518 (422.15)	895 (146.58)	259 (103.93)	F > M > O
Wife/ves	232 (64.52)	323 (52.9)	58 (23.27)	F > M > O
Female(s)	280 (77.87)	121 (19.82)	54 (21.67)	F > M = O
Mother(s)	189 (52.56)	202 (33.08)	40 (16.05)	F > M > O
Girl(s)	226 (62.85)	123 (20.14)	29 (11.64)	F > M > O
Daughter(s)	75 (20.86)	123 (20.14)	22 (8.83)	F = M > O
Lady/ies	106 (29.48)	97 (15.89)	16 (6.42)	F > M > O
Mum(s)	104 (28.92)	72 (11.79)	12 (4.82)	F > M > O
Sister(s)	34 (9.46)	39 (6.39)	8 (3.21)	F > O, F = M, M = O
Girlfriend(s)	20 (5.56)	31 (5.08)	6 (2.41)	F = M = O

*Mixed, unknown and non-binary authors combined.

Table 68 : Top 10 search terms (based on raw and normalised frequencies per 100,000 words) x author gender: 2016

Term	Female freq. Raw / (Normalised)	Male	Other*	Overuse: p < 0.05
Tokens:	349,870	588,698	183,810	
Wom*n	1149 (328.41)	565 (95.97)	203 (110.44)	F > M = O
Wife/ves	111 (31.73)	168 (28.54)	77 (41.89)	O > M, O = F, F = M
Mother(s)	119 (34.01)	149 (25.31)	42 (22.85)	F > M = O
Female(s)	166 (47.45)	61 (10.36)	29 (15.78)	F > M = O
Lady/ies	82 (23.44)	73 (12.4)	57 (31.01)	F = O > M
Daughter(s)	86 (24.58)	72 (12.23)	28 (15.23)	F > M = O
Mum(s)	101 (28.87)	61 (10.36)	20 (10.88)	F > M = O
Girl(s)	85 (24.29)	48 (8.15)	21 (11.42)	F > M = O
Sister(s)	27 (7.72)	25 (4.25)	15 (8.16)	F = O > M
Grandmother(s)	14 (4)	17 (2.89)	8 (4.35)	F = M = O

*Mixed, unknown and non-binary authors combined.

Table 69: Top 10 search terms (based on raw and normalised frequencies per 100,000 words) x author gender: 2017

Term	Female freq. Raw / (Normalised)	Male	Other*	Overuse: p < 0.05
Tokens:	183,382	210,235	87,434	
Wom*n	961 (524.04)	366 (174.09)	111 (126.95)	F > M > O
Female(s)	147 (80.16)	52 (24.73)	14 (16.01)	F > M = O
Mother(s)	95 (51.8)	37 (17.6)	25 (28.59)	F > M = O
Daughter(s)	40 (21.81)	34 (16.17)	12 (13.72)	F = M = O
Wife/ves	31 (16.9)	59 (28.06)	12 (13.72)	M > F = O
Lady/ies	30 (16.36)	26 (12.37)	14 (16.01)	F = M = O
Mum(s)	39 (21.27)	31 (14.75)	4 (4.57)	F = M > O
Girl(s)	112 (61.07)	26 (12.37)	7 (8.01)	F > M = O
Sister(s)	32 (17.45)	19 (9.04)	5 (5.72)	F > M = O
Mumsnet	19 (10.36)	27 (12.84)	1 (1.14)	F = M > O

*Mixed, unknown and non-binary authors combined.

C.4 Additional Chapter 8 collocation table

Table 70: All discursive themes in order of frequency, the corresponding collocates, and verb processes 2015-2017 - Part 7: Time & Location

Theme	Collocates	Agent	Patient
TIME	<i>ago, already, always, am, day, early, ever, hour, May, morning, now, often, pm, recently, since, still, then, time, today, when, while, year, yet</i>	n/a	n/a
LOCATION	<i>Britain, central, country, London, there, US, Westminster, where, Worcester</i>	n/a	n/a