Blame: Making a Villain out of EU

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Abstract

The Brexit referendum campaign was characterised by blaming of the EU, with blame seemingly inextricable from politics. However, what is not clear from existing research is what blame actually *does* to the people who read, hear, or otherwise consume it (the 'audience'). Does blame actually matter? Specifically, in what ways does exogenous blame make *villains* in politics, as characters who are bad, strong, and active, and whom we feel negatively towards? Such a question is vital in the context of affective polarisation, where it is not simply that we disagree with our opponents—it is that we experience negative emotions towards them.

This research applies an abductive approach grounded in a critical realist ontology that cycles between theory and empirical data. Feldman Barrett's Theory of Constructed Emotions is introduced to connect societal 'feeling structures' discussed in prior international relations work with the human body that has hitherto been absent, while blame is defined as a discursive practice in which a speaker claims a party is doing, or has done, a harmful thing. A data analysis framework is developed that permits for investigation of the *effects* of discursive practices, calling for identification of context, performance, effects, and points of resistance and contestation. The empirical chapters address each stage of this framework in sequence.

The Brexit referendum campaign is selected as a case study, and a mixed methods design utilising both qualitative content and statistical analyses emerges in-depth meaning and wider generalisability alike. Data analysed includes pre-referendum materials from Nigel Farage and the Leave campaigns, particularly Leave.EU, as well as the Remain campaign (355); this is compared with three months of articles and public commentary from the 'Metro' newspaper (60 issues), providing insight into context, performance, and contestation. In-depth semi-structured focus groups and interviews with Leave voters (18) and a survey-experiment conducted amongst UK voters (1368) enables identification of both contestation and the effects of blame—specifically how blame makes people feel, and how it makes them feel about a party who is blamed.

This research finds that blame makes villains in politics *directly* where it engenders negative, 'villain-type feelings' towards a blamed party, with annoyance predominant; and *indirectly* where it engenders compassion for victims. Its effects are mediated by the audience who consume the blame and may be mitigated by contestation strategies employed by that audience or others such as alternative campaigns. These include strategies that engage directly with the blame—counter-blaming, rebuttal, naming and shaming blame—as well as indirectly through use of alternate discursive practices such as credit or threat, and by changing the subjects and objects of blame. This work exceptionally investigates the vilifying effects and contestation of 'exogenous' third-party blame, contributing to the fields of international relations, political science, and social psychology; shows that it is not what we 'are' but rather what we 'know' that circumscribes the effects of blame, defraying concerns over psychometric targeting; provides insight into how communication professionals and EU staff may contest blame, beyond avoiding or shifting it; and demonstrates the effectiveness of blame in creating a villain of the EU in the specific case of the Brexit campaign.

Acknowledgements

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Table of annexes

The following annexes are attached to this thesis.

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Acronyms

BNP	British National Party
BSIE	Britain Stronger In Europe
CA	Cambridge Analytica
DHA	Discourse-Historical Approach
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party (Northern Ireland)
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
FGI	Focus group/interview
GE	General Election
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
ICO	Information Commissioner's Office
IDL	Leaver identity
IDR	Remainer identity
IGV	In-group values
IR	International Relations (as a field of study)
JWB	Just World Belief
L(ALL)	Leave.EU All texts
LBROCH	Leave.EU Brochures and pamphlets
LNAM	Leave.EU News and Media
MEP	Member of European Parliament
MP	Member of Parliament
NHS	UK National Health Service
OCR	Optical Character Recognition
PM	Prime Minister
RWA	Right-wing Authoritarianism
SD	Standard deviation
SDO	Social Dominance Orientation
SE	Survey-experiment
SOA	Sense of Agency
SR	Standardised residual
TCE	Theory of Constructed Emotions
UKIP	UK Independence Party
VP	Voting Preference
VPL	Voting Preference Leave
VPR	Voting Preference Remain

1. Introduction

1.1. Blame and Brexit

> "The politicians swanking around the disaster zones in hard hats and hi-viz jackets are pointing the finger at climate change—a convenient bogeyman in this situation, but in truth this is an unnatural disaster which was made to order in Brussels."[1]

During the 2016 Brexit referendum campaign, Leave.EU Chairperson Arron Banks claimed that European Union regulations were to blame for flooding in northern England. The nefarious EU was equally at fault for destroying the British fishing industry, British industry as a whole, holding back the United Kingdom's economy, and the 'immigration crisis'. Belgian Member of European Parliament and target of 'Brexiteer'[2] ire Guy Verhofstadt commented on this tendency for the UK's problems to be 'made to order in Brussels', reflecting that "Even if it rains in the UK the EU is blamed for it by the British tabloids."[3]

There is perhaps nothing too surprising about this. Former US Vice President Hubert Humphrey suggested that "To err is human. To blame someone else is politics". It seems common sense that politicians blame one another; that blame, and avoiding or shifting it, is integral to politics. The point is to accrue as much credit as you can, securing one's seat, while ensuring the world knows it was the 'other guy's fault'. As Ching Leong and Michael Howlett put it, "in the present era the idea that credit claiming and blame avoidance are key motivating forces of politicians and other policy-makers has become ubiquitous both in academia and in political life, and in public perceptions of these activities".[4] But does blame actually *do* anything, or is it simply a game played by politicians? How does it affect the people who see, read, or hear it? Particularly, how does it make us *feel* about the party that is blamed—or even their supporters?

This is important to consider in light of 'affective polarisation'; "negative feelings towards members of opposing political parties".[5] This is seen in the US, between Republican and Democrat voter blocks,[6] as well as in the UK, where people who voted 'Leave' in the Brexit

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[1] Banks, 'This Unnatural Disaster Was Made in Brussels Thanks to EU Flooding Policies'.

[2] Brexiteers were pro-Brexit. They are usually referred to in this research as 'Leavers'.

[3] Verhofstadt, 'Guy Verhofstadt on Twitter'. See also compiled 'Euromyths'. Peat, 'The EU Has Archived All of the "Euromyths" Printed in UK Media - and It Makes for Some Disturbing Reading'; European Commission in the UK, 'Euromyths'.

[4] Leong and Howlett, 'On Credit and Blame', 3. "The attribution of blame and responsibility is a cornerstone of democratic politics." Malhotra and Kuo, 'Attributing Blame', 120.

[5] Gunn, 'Affective Polarization in the Wealthy, Democratic World'.

[6] Gunn; Boxell, Gentzkow, and Shapiro, 'Cross-Country Trends in Affective Polarization'. See also Rubin, 'It's Not "Polarization."'.

referendum and those who voted 'Remain' do not wish to associate with the other side.[7]
Vitally, research shows affective polarisation is associated with democratic backsliding in a
way that ideological polarisation is not.[8] Importantly—and obviously—these feelings
amongst supporter groups are linked to political actors: it is not just that Leavers and
Remainers dislike each other, it is that they dislike each other for whom they support.

As discussed in Constructing villains and emotions, James Jasper et al paint this as a politics of
'public characters', wherein politics is populated by heroes and their supporters, villains and
their minions. Such public characters are not nuanced; they are caricatures of good and
evil.[9] Similarly, Lakoff has pointed to cultural narratives wherein heroes save victims from
villains, arguing that we interpret everyday politics through such frames.[10] Politics becomes
a Manichean struggle between good and evil, with 'bad' people on the other side—and
anybody who would support a villain must necessarily be bad (or at the very least, feeble-
minded).

How, then, do villains arise? How do we *know* who is a villain? Jasper et al say one method
involves blaming, though it is not clear how precisely this works. Does blame have blanket
effects, such that everybody who hears it will be affected in the same way? Existing
research seems to suggest that blame 'just works' to create villains—but is this truly the
case?

As Blame and its effects will show, research on blame in political science typically describes
strategies for shifting or avoiding it;[11] discusses how the particular structure of the EU
creates more 'space' for blaming by domestic parties who can shift blame up to the EU, as
well as down to more local governments or horizontally to colleagues;[12] shows how third-
party blame leads to different amounts of responsibility being accorded to different
parties;[13] or theorises a link between 'blaming the EU' and reduced legitimacy via lessened
trust, without necessarily testing this mechanism.[14] Moreover, it focuses on parties who are
in power—blame games between domestic government and opposition—without

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[7] Adamson, The Reality of Brexit. Though Brexit identities as 'Leaver' or 'Remainer' are 'softening', voters
feel negative towards each other. In March 2021, 72% of Remain voters felt warm towards other Remain
voters, and cool (19%) towards Leave voters; Leave voters feel warm towards other Leave voters (66%) and
cool towards Remain voters (23%).

[8] Orhan, 'The Relationship between Affective Polarization and Democratic Backsliding'.

[9] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*.

[10] 'Rescue narratives'. Lakoff, *The Political Mind*. See also Hansson, 'Defensive Semiotic Strategies in
Government'; Chong and Druckman, 'Framing Theory', 114; Malik, *We Need New Stories*.

[11] E.g. Hansson, 'Discursive Strategies of Blame Avoidance in Government'; Hansson, 'Defensive Semiotic
Strategies in Government'; Hansson, 'The Discursive Micro-Politics of Blame Avoidance'; Hansson, 'Brexit
and Blame Avoidance'; Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance'; Weaver, 'The Nays Have It'.

[12] E.g. León, Jurado, and Garmendia Madariaga, 'Passing the Buck?'; Heinkelmann-Wild, Rittberger, and
Zangl, 'The European Blame Game'.

[13] E.g. Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, '"They Did It"', 893; Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, 'Selective
Exposure to Populist Communication'; Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, 'Framing Blame'.

[14] Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*

considering the role of social movements,[15] international actors,[16] or external campaigns such as the Leave campaign in the UK and similar 'challenger parties', who have more scope for blaming.[17] Unlike this thesis, it does not seek to explain the vilifying effects of blame among audiences, except to suggest that it is sometimes successful (though it is not clear what success looks like), and sometimes it is not.[18] If we do not know how blame works, then it becomes difficult to contest; in such circumstances, there is the risk of ongoing affective polarisation—and concordantly increased likelihood of democratic backsliding.[19] In the specific case of the EU, affective polarisation could lead to further 'exits' and hampering of EU cooperation.

Meanwhile, research in psychology and social psychology illustrates that blame is associated with not just what we think, but with what we *feel*. It is entangled with cultural discourses, safeguards 'us' against 'others' who break the rules, and thus constitutes who we are.[20] Moreover, it is associated with *emotions*, with some authors going so far as to say that emotions themselves 'are' forms of blame.[21]

Such nuanced understandings of the emotional effects of blame are typically absent from political science and international relations. However, psychological accounts have limited external and ecological validity, and do not consider the effects of 'third-party' blame as in politics.[22] This is important, as blame can be both *exogenous*—coming from a third party— and *endogenous*—arising within us as individuals. A political actor can apportion blame for a harmful thing such as climate change (exogenous blame), and an audience as those people who encounter the blame, intended or otherwise,[23] can hear or read it and be affected. The present research considers the vilifying effects of such exogenous blame specifically[24] while understanding that one effect can be endogenous blame, as when audiences reiterate the

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[15] "[S]ocial movements are successful where their rhetorical framings and communications permit followers to curate and recirculate content of emotional significance to them." Ross, 'The Power of Viral Expression in World Politics', 171.

[16] See 5.3 The Brexit assemblage.

[17] Parties outside of government cannot lose their seats in government or opposition. See 2.3 What does blame do? and E5. On 'challenger parties', Hobolt and Tilley, 'Fleeing the Centre: The Rise of Challenger Parties in the Aftermath of the Euro Crisis'; Vries and Hobolt, *Political Entrepreneurs*.

[18] Per Hood, some politicians are 'Teflon' in that blame does not 'stick' to them (Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game'.). Effects on trust in the EU are considered in Kumlin, 'Blaming Europe? Exploring the Variable Impact of National Public Service Dissatisfaction on EU Trust'; Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*.

[19] Orhan, 'The Relationship between Affective Polarization and Democratic Backsliding'.

[20] E.g. Ryan, *Blaming the Victim*.

[21] Sheikh and McNamara, 'Insights from Self-Blame and Victim Blaming'; Menges, 'The Emotion Account of Blame'.

[22] Malle et al refer to 'cognitive' and 'social' blame rather than 'endogenous' and 'exogenous', noting that "the psychological literature is surprisingly limited on [the topic of social blame], having made advances primarily on cognitive blame" Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame', 171. This lack is addressed here. See also 3.3.3.a) A word on cognition.

[23] See discussion of the 'audience' in 2.1.1 Aristotle, audiences, and proofs.

[24] For instance, what actors such as Nigel Farage or Arron Banks said to UK voters in the lead-up to the Brexit referendum.

blame or blame somebody else. Blame and concordant vilification can therefore *spread*, which is not apparent when considering endogenous blame only.

Drawing the above fields together, this thesis asks "**In what ways does blame make villains in politics?**", and uses the case study of the Brexit campaign to leave the European Union. 'Blame' is limited to blame that is performed socially, meaning it does not include cognitive processes that occur *entirely* within one's head as when we perceive some harm and react by mentally noting who is at fault, consciously or otherwise.[25] Within the subset of 'social' blame, there may be blame performed by ourselves after witnessing harm—the endogenous blame mentioned above, performed socially—or blame performed by third-parties: exogenous blame. Blame itself is given a minimal definition in 2.4, so that it relates to instances of (alleged) harm only, and does not relate to 'being' something or doing things that are merely 'bad' without being harmful. The current work is then limited to an examination of the vilifying effects of exogenous blame on audiences only, where that blame refers to harmful things. Notably, social blame is always done *by* somebody; it is non-agentic and cannot arise in the social world by itself.[26] 'Politics' is understood broadly as the exercise of power, with 'power' consisting of the discourses that shape and construct groups—and are shaped and constructed by those groups in turn.[27] Power is thus emerged between actors. While this case study positions itself vis-à-vis 'traditional' political actors such as politicians, states, and the EU as an intergovernmental organisation,[28] it does so within a critical realist framework that understands social reality as only relatively stable,[29] highlights that discourses circulate amongst networks and groups,[30] uses notions of constructed narratives and emotions, and positions blame as a discursive practice that supports such discourses.[31]

Notably, the question implies there are ways in which blame makes villains in politics, and ways in which it may not.[32] Blame can affect people differently, be contested, and thereby potentially mitigated. This means demagoguery reliant on blame can be countered, and concordant polarisation of the public limited.[33]

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[25] Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame'.

[26] See also discussion in 2.4 Defining blame.

[27] Discourses comprise a 'regime of truth', with each society having "its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true." Foucault and Rabinow, 'Truth and Power', 73. Power and discourse become inseparable.

[28] Each of whom are using similar concepts—notions of heroes and villains, for example—to "play different games". Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 77.

[29] E.g. Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*.

[30] See for example 5.3 The Brexit assemblage, 3.3.4.a) Culture and acculturation.

[31] See 2.4 Defining blame and 2.4.2 Blame as discursive practice.

[32] This is later related to notions of 'causal power', whereby blame always has the 'causal power' to create villains, but this may be interrupted or mitigated by other mechanisms. See 4.2 Research design.

[33] Demagoguery utilises Manichean ideas and characters of 'victims' and 'good people' (heroes/supporters). As Patricia Roberts-Miller points out, "[d]emagoguery says we don't have to debate policies, since what we

To investigate these phenomena, this research takes an *abductive* approach embedded in critical realism, consistently cycling between theory and data. Ultimately it finds that blame makes villains when it engenders negative, 'villain-type feelings' such as anger or annoyance towards a blamed party, and when audiences' compassion for perpetrators' victims turns them against that perpetrator. While exogenous blame always has the possibility to create villains,[34] this is partially mediated by the audience who consume the blame, and may be mitigated via contestation strategies employed by audiences or others.[35]

'Mediation' means that something[36] intervenes with effects, here the effects of blame to create villains (Figure 1).[37] It implies that whether or not blame works to create a particular villain depends on the audience at hand. This research engages with the notion of psychometric targeting per Cambridge Analytica[38] and existing research alike, and finds that what people already want and know—in the form of voting preferences—determines how they react to exogenous blame in a way that underlying characteristics such as in-group value systems or demographics do not. It delivers insight into the ways in which blame can be contested, whether directly by engaging with the blame, indirectly by using opposing practices such as credit or threats, or by changing the subjects and objects—who speaks, and who does not. Notably, it is not just politicians who can contest blame in the form of avoiding or shifting it; this work shows that audiences also actively contest it, meaning there are several locations at which the effects of blame may be mitigated. It clarifies what blame is and is not, separating it from related discursive practices and establishing a toolbox for how the *effects* of discourse may be investigated.[39] It conclusively demonstrates that in the specific case of Brexit, blame had a profound role to play in the creation of the EU as a villain, and concordant polarisation against it. Overall, it shows that the effects of blame are nuanced, but not unpredictable; and they may be redressed.

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should do is empower good people (or a good person) to do what every good person recognizes to be the obviously right course of action; we need to stop thinking and debating and just act."; it "[tells] us that we can stop questioning ourselves and our judgment—we didn't do anything wrong; we were absolutely right in our decisions. We are the real victims here." Roberts-Miller, *Demagoguery and Democracy*, 25–26. ('Demagoguery' is referenced here rather than 'populism', given the multiple meanings of that term as an exaggerated but normal way of doing democratic politics—'I will represent you better than they will'—or us against the elite, or an emotionalised way of talking—demagoguery.) See also Wodak, *The Politics of Fear*.

[34] See discussion of 'causal power' in Methodology.

[35] This research limits investigation of contestation to that *against* blame, and not for it.

[36] In natural scientific terms, this 'something' would be an additional independent variable; here it refers to mechanisms that exist in 'real' reality. See 4.2.1 Multiple realities.

[37] The research does not include statistical mediation analyses, partly because of the use of categorical data, and partly because social reality is infinitely complex. It does however incorporate the established language of mediation/moderation when discussing effects, and Steven Spencer et al note the validity of using experimentation to establish mediation effects. Mediation is 'partial' in that blame's effects remain whether or not the specific audience is considered, but taking voting preference into account explains the *way* in which it works to produce villains. Baron and Kenny, 'The Moderator–Mediator Variable Distinction in Social Psychological Research'; Spencer, Zanna, and Fong, 'Establishing a Causal Chain'; Bhandari, 'Mediator vs Moderator Variables'.

[38] See discussion in 5.3 The Brexit assemblage

[39] See also Banta, 'Analysing Discourse as a Causal Mechanism'., who likewise uses a critical realist framework to consider how the effects of discourse may be described.

Figure 1: Audience knowledge, including preferences and beliefs, as mediator[40]
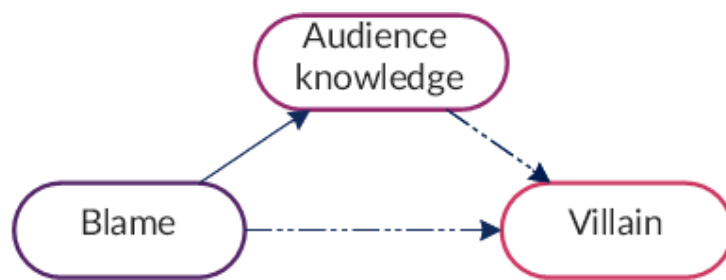
This chapter goes on to highlight the importance of emotions to the process of making villains; outline the critical methodology and abductive approach applied; explain why Brexit specifically is an excellent case study for investigating the blame/villain link; establish researcher positionality; and give a brief overview of the remainder of the thesis.

1.2. Emotions rather than labels

As an outcome of Constructing villains and emotions, this work argues that audience emotions both help *construct* a villain and provide a way to identify that a villain has been made. This is because villains are bad, and strong, and active, *and* we feel negatively towards them.[41] The first three may be identified discursively and are already implied by blame, and the fourth may be surfaced amongst audience members. Identifying negative, 'villain-type feelings' towards a blamed party—for instance, anger, hatred, or fear—is then a way to verify that vilification via blame has taken place. Note that this approach does not require that people *label* villains; audiences can feel somebody is a villain before comparing them to a wicked witch or fascist.

This focus on emotions means it is necessary to consider what emotions *are*, and so Lisa Feldman Barrett's Theory of Constructed Emotion ('TCE') is introduced.[42] This argues that emotions are not of natural kinds but are rather constructed social products. In short, an emotion is 'made' when certain 'affect' (bodily information) is linked to certain 'knowledge' (emotion concepts) in a certain context.[43] They do not, and cannot, exist separate to human knowledge.[44]

Use of TCE is innovative in the political sciences, and completes a 'missing link' in work on emotions as constructed. For instance, a recent volume from Simon Koschut et al highlights multifarious approaches to constructed emotions in international relations, wherein

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[40] There are broken lines between 'blame' and 'villain' and 'audience knowledge' and 'villain' to both indicate there may be additional factors at play; social reality is always only 'relatively' stable. See 4.2 Research design. Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*; Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*; Bhaskar, 'On the Possibility of Social Scientific Knowledge and the Limits of Naturalism'.

[41] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*. See full discussion in 3.2 The art of character work

[42] E.g. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

[43] This research uses 'affect' in the same sense as authors working on emotions as constructed, notably Feldman Barrett. See also 3.3.3.b) What is 'affect'?.

[44] Barrett, 'The Theory of Constructed Emotion'.

emotions are social products—part of cultural 'feeling structures' guided by 'feeling rules'.[45] However, the human body—where emotions are experienced—is absent. This absence is redressed in the current work, rendering it possible to see how feeling structures are upheld and contested alike. It becomes possible to understand how emotions arise and become entrenched in connection with a particular blamed party—how, in short, villains are made. It makes the emotions we feel as a result of blame *matter*—because if we feel something once, we are more likely to feel it again.[46]

1.3. Methodology: A critical spiral

The present work is embedded in a critical realist ontology/epistemology. Under such a schema, there are three realities—an 'empirical' reality, full of events we experience directly; an 'actual' reality, with the events that happen, whether or not we experience them; and a 'real' reality, where the mechanisms that lead to those events exist.[47] The 'social' world is less stable than a 'natural' world; however, it is still 'relatively stable' enough for mechanisms to be identified and reality described.[48]

Under this typology, mechanisms may not be 'causes' but instead have 'causal power'.[49] They always have the capability to produce effects, but those effects may be mitigated. Sunlight always has the causal power to burn skin, but the effects may be reduced or prevented via sunscreen or increased skin melanin content.[50] Sunlight can also have effects that are not burning skin, for instance, heating water tanks, or facilitating photosynthesis; but it is still possible to speak just of sunlight's ability to burn skin.

In the same way, in the present work blame is considered to have 'causal power', and specifically the ability to effect vilification; this does not preclude other effects.[51] The effects of blame may also be interrupted—blame may be contested and thereby mitigated, whether by politicians themselves as in previous research or by audience members; or its causal powers may be mediated by the existing knowledge of individuals who hear or read the blame.

As the purpose of critical realist research is to identify mechanisms and thereby approximate reality, experimentation becomes important.[52] This is because 'real' reality may not be observed directly; the manipulation of events to produce results as in an experiment helps the researcher get closer to a description of that reality.[53]

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[45] Koschut, *The Power of Emotions in World Politics*.
[46] See 3.3.3.e) The predictive brain.
[47] Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*.
[48] Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*.
[49] Danermark et al.
[50] I.e. Melanin is also a mechanism with causal power.
[51] As such, the research speaks of blame's effects; this does not imply that blame itself has agency or the ability to act by itself. Blame is a mechanism that takes place in social reality, so is socially performed.
[52] López, 'Critical Realism: The Difference It Makes, in Theory', 76.
[53] Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*, 20.

A survey-experiment is therefore used in the present research, and is key to identifying the causal powers of blame to create villains. It gathers information about participants then presents one of four vignettes, each of which is similar but for the party blamed. After reading the vignette, interlocutors are asked a series of questions to establish the effects of blame as they relate to vilification.

However, the survey-experiment is just one of several tools applied: mixed methods are used to more thoroughly investigate blame's effects and associated explanations, thereby generating theory around how it works to make villains. Text-based data, including Brexit campaign polemic, content from the free newspaper 'The Metro' and public commentary from the 'MetroTalk' sections of that same publication, are used to identify what blame actually happened in the lead-up to the Brexit referendum, forming essential context for the survey-experiment and for focus groups and interviews. These latter helped expose the mechanism of blame as experienced by people who were audience—intended or otherwise—to the Brexit campaign.[54] Data is identified, processed and analysed via a novel framework that enables investigation of the effects of discourse in politics.[55] This framework is developed in 4.3.1 Data analysis framework.

The present research is ultimately theory *generating* rather than theory *testing*, and thus applies a predominantly abductive mode of inference to identify the ways in which blame makes villains in politics. To this end, the research began by centralising the effects of blame, then moving through cycles of theory and data in an ever-widening spiral to explore and identify the vilifying effects of blame. This involved recursive interrogation of the research question, literature, theory, and methodology, and is depicted in 4.2.5 The research spiral.

Under an abductive approach, research is essentially endless; the end point is selected by the researcher themselves. This means research is never objective, but rather informed from beginning to end by the position of the researcher themselves (see below).[56] For the present research, scope was limited by selecting Brexit as a case study, and through focusing on the felt/emotional effects of blame.

1.4. Why Brexit?

There are several reasons why the Brexit referendum campaign makes a compelling case study. Firstly, underlying mechanisms become more visible during periods of transition or crisis.[57] Brexit represents a rupture, whether internally in the sense of creating new divides

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[54] In this research, 'audience' means 'receivers'—all those who encountered the blame, whether they were the intended audience or otherwise. See also 2.1.1 Aristotle, audiences, and proofs.

[55] See also Banta, 'Analysing Discourse as a Causal Mechanism'.

[56] Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*. Critical work "necessarily moves recursively between theory and empirical data". Wodak and Meyer, *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*, 32.

[57] Bhaskar, 'On the Possibility of Social Scientific Knowledge and the Limits of Naturalism', 20.

along Leave/Remain lines,[58] or externally vis-à-vis its relationship with the EU and countries thereof. There were further pragmatic reasons in that the case could be examined in the researcher's native tongue of English, and the proximity of the UK enabling access to archival materials. Per the following subsection, the researcher has lived in the UK, granting her a level of cultural understanding that assisted in the interpretation of data.

Further, if blame created a villain of the EU within UK populations, could not similar strategies be applied in order to instigate further EU exits? Given blame does not need to be true to be effective,[59] populations of other Member States could be manipulated in a similar fashion, even to their own detriment. This is vital in light of ever-improving techniques for persuasion via social media, and given media can reach—and persuade—international audiences. For instance, Andy Greenberg highlights how Russian-sponsored actors use social media and other methods to destabilise politics in favour of Russian interests.[60]

However, while the present research takes advantage of the Brexit crisis to more closely examine reality, the object of analysis is not blame in the UK per se—nor even specific vilification of the EU—but rather exogenous blame and its vilifying effects. Per Culture and acculturation, emotions—including those associated with cultural narratives[61] such as that of heroes and villains—may be learned and shared. For groups with broadly similar cultures, it is probable that blame will operate to create villains in similar ways. This may be particularly the case for other places that speak similar languages, and certainly for countries where English-language popular culture is consumed.[62] The results of the present study can therefore be generalised to other places with broadly similar cultural narratives, emotion concepts, and languages. In the first instance, that would be existing EU member Ireland, as well as further-afield countries such as the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Given broad similarity of emotion concepts across Indo-European languages,[63] it is also likely extensible to countries throughout Europe.[64]

This means the current study, as designed, has theoretical implications that go beyond just the exemplifying case study of Brexit to other jurisdictions and contexts. Given the

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[58] E.g. Hobolt, 'The Brexit Vote: A Divided Nation, a Divided Continent'; Adamson, *The Reality of Brexit*.

[59] This is despite Malle et al's argument that 'social' blame (exogenous blame) requires elaborate warrant to be effective. Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame'.

[60] Greenberg, *Sandworm*. This is not to say that blame is always bad. Rather, as highlighted in Blame and its effects below, it helps preserve groups by describing what is and what is not desirable behaviour. The objective of the present research is not to eradicate blame, but rather to understand specifically how it creates villains in politics, and how this mechanism may be countered. Even where blame is 'true' and 'helpful' though, it may obscure 'real' underlying problems though: for that reason, the present research introduces the fallacy of 'bad-be-gone' as the faulty reasoning that removing a disliked person or party will make underlying problems go away.

[61] E.g. Rescue narrative, Lakoff, *The Political Mind*.

[62] 3.3.4.a) Culture and acculturation

[63] 4.3.5 Recognising emotions

[64] Bar Hungary, Finland, and Estonia, and other populations where non-Indo-European languages are spoken.

necessity to limit scope and word count, it is not possible to consider how to fix *all* the world's blame-related problems. Because vilification of the *EU* via blame is given particular attention as the primary blamee apparent in the analysed campaign materials—vilification of the UK and its government, or possibly even vilification of Leavers or Remainers, could have equally served to generate theory—and given the case study of Brexit used herein, both retrospective considerations along the lines "how could campaigns have been improved" as well as the recommendations for further research focus on those items that would prevent further EU-exits and the heightening of affective polarisation. It is though envisaged that the current work, by generating theory, forms a useful contribution to studying the vilifying effects of exogenous blame and what to do about it in multitudinous other arenas.

1.5. Researcher positionality

Labelling research 'critical' implies ethical measures, including "an intention to make one's position, research interests and values explicit and their criteria as transparent as possible"; self-reflection becomes an essential part of research.[65] While use of third-person language in research may obscure the researcher in an attempt to present work as more 'objective', it is used in the main body of this thesis out of convention and habit. However, when employing self-reflection and discussing my role in data generation, I as the researcher use first-person pronouns. There is thus a 'purposeful mix'[66] of voices, conveying the information and process of scientific enquiry using the third person perspective, while acknowledging that I as the researcher am intimately involved in the research.

1.5.1.   Why I wanted to do this research

I began this project during my MA in EU External Relations, prior to the Brexit referendum taking place. I saw the claims of the Leave campaign as jokes or memes at best, and manipulative lies at worst. At the same time, Trump's campaign was gearing up in the US, and similar discursive strategies were apparent there, as well as elsewhere in Europe and around the world. Irrespective of my own perceptions of these campaigns, it was clear that at least some people in the Brexit case were being convinced to vote Leave, and I wrote a paper projecting that the use of blame in the Leave campaign would help contribute to a Leave result. As results came in, and my pro-Remain friends sank into despair[67] while pro-Leave commentary seemed victorious and vengeful in equal measure, it struck me that blame had had a part to play—but it was not about how we *think* about blamed parties, but rather how we *feel* about them. While Remainers were despondent, Leavers were joyous

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[65] Wodak and Meyer, *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*, 7.

[66] Zhou and Hall, 'Mixed Methods Papers in First-Person and Third-Person'.

[67] Per Moss, Robinson, and Watts, 'Brexit and the Everyday Politics of Emotion', 849., "Remainers in particular described feeling unexpected 'grief' at the result: 'I don't think grief is too strong a word for what I felt in the aftermath: I cried daily for a while, and felt quite destabilised by what had happened – unexpectedly'". See also Wahl-Jorgensen, 'The Emotional Politics of the EU Referendum'.

that they had escaped a villain in the form of the EU. Blame had contributed to what, post-referendum, was clearly an emotional issue with winners and losers, good and bad.

Considering Brexit as one case of blame, I wondered how blame was used by Eurosceptic groups, how it contributed to the derogation of the EU amongst audiences, and what that implied for 'project Europe'—and on this basis sought to undertake a PhD to help refine our knowledge of the effects of blame. My hope was that by elucidating how blame worked to make us feel things, I could at the same time identify ways in which this could be ameliorated or mitigated. After all, if blame always works, then it can be endlessly employed to manipulate audiences, irrespective of their wishes or desires. There had to be a way to counter such manipulation, or make it less effective. For that reason, my thesis is carefully critical—it describes how blame works to make villains in politics, but also identifies ways in which this can be redressed.

Notably, an objective of my work was to go beyond just Brexit: to generate theory[68] that was applicable at a wider scale (and which may now be tested in subsequent studies). For that reason, while I use Brexit as a case *of* blame, my work aims to theorise the vilifying effects of exogenous blame in politics more broadly. This is the difference between a research question that considered "how did use of blaming by the Leave campaign effect vilification of the EU", which could be largely answered with just the use of focus groups or interviews to gain people's retrospective perspectives, and the higher-level question of "in what ways does blame make villains in politics". To address the latter question, there is the need to include those factors that could limit the applicability of Brexit as a case study. This means, theoretically, diving into character and emotion construction and how this relates to culture and acculturation, as well as additional empirical work: examining context so that one can understand why *this* blame is effective in the Brexit context and not others, so that future researchers know what kinds of factors to consider when undertaking additional work; performance of blame to help highlight how political actors use blame differently, so that we can understand blame's strategic use (effectively considering performance by different parties as 'sub cases'); and resistance and contestation so that we can better understand the circumstances that allow blame to be used and be successful in creating villains. This facilitates going from the Brexit case study to wider theoretical conclusions that may now be examined in further cases.

This is not to say that the current work generates 'grand theory' in the sense of a broader ontological framework for understanding the world, for example. It generates theory in the smaller sense—working from building blocks of existing theory and data to produce findings about how exogenous blame makes villains in politics specifically. As Robert Sutton and Barry Shaw put it:

> "Theory is about the connections among phenomena, a story about why acts, events, structure, and thoughts occur. Theory emphasizes the nature of causal relationships, identifying what comes first as well as the timing of such events. Strong theory, in our

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[68] Not generate *a* theory.

> view, delves into underlying processes so as to understand the systematic reasons for a particular occurrence or nonoccurrence. It often burrows deeply into microprocesses, laterally into neighboring concepts, or in an upward direction, tying itself to broader social phenomena. It usually is laced with a set of convincing and logically interconnected arguments. It can have implications that we have not seen with our naked (or theoretically unassisted) eye. It may have implications that run counter to our common sense. [A]… good theory explains, predicts, and delights."[69]

My work, in its abductive 'critical spiral' mentioned above and discussed in depth in following chapters, considers the causal power of blame, takes context as broader social phenomena into account, is iterated through multiple data sources and forms of analysis, applies retroductive reasoning and counterfactual thinking to emerge 'nonoccurrence'—and hopefully delights (or at least, does not disturb!). It does not pretend to be separable from the work that has come before, and the following chapter in particular highlights how existing literature has informed the approach taken herein. However, it does go beyond that work to generate theory around how exogenous blame makes villains in politics, which may now be further verified in additional case studies. The word 'generated' is used rather than 'developed', not to suggest that the villain-making effects of blame emerged in this thesis exist in a silo without reference to other work, but to reflect experimental language around theory testing vs theory generation.

More succinctly, my work aims to generate theory, not generate *a* theory. This results in a theoretical statement that exogenous blame makes villains in politics where it engenders negative, 'villain-type' feelings against the blamee, or compassion for their victims; and that such effects are mediated by existing audience knowledge or preferences, and may be mitigated via a range of contestation strategies.

Thus, while my work in this thesis uses the lens of the Brexit campaign to help understand the vilifying effects of exogenous blame, it has wider theoretical ambitions; and, as critical, it also advocates for ways in which the vilifying effects of blame may be redressed. These twin goals are addressed throughout the course of the thesis, with theory developed iteratively and recursively per the 'research spiral', and the critical implications addressed in later empirical chapters—notably E5—as well as via theory-driven reflections in the Conclusion. Ultimately, the theory generated is that exogenous blame makes villains in politics where it engenders 'villain-type feelings' towards the blamee or compassion towards their ostensible victims. Further, this is mediated by the audience consuming the blame, and may be mitigated via a range of contestation strategies.

1.5.2.   My position vis-à-vis the research

I have been living in Brussels for approximately seven years, and previously spent several years living in the UK, both in Manchester and Salcombe (Devon). I continue to travel there regularly, global pandemics permitting. Where I grew up in Tasmania (Australia), a large

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[69] Sutton and Staw, 'What Theory Is Not', 379.

part of the population at the time identified as 'British';[70] an initial two television stations were dominated by BBC content; and British authors and imagery predominated—down to Christmas cards ludicrously showing UK animals in wintery settings. Due to local perceptions that UK accents meant 'more intelligent', or at least higher quality education, almost all the teachers I had during school and high school were from the UK—and we were taught British history as Australian history. I then moved to the UK on a working holiday visa, while undertaking a degree via the London School of Economics. My MA and now PhD programs have been with the University of Kent's campus in Brussels. While I am of course Australian, I have also been socialised into and experienced 'UK' culture as a quasi-insider.

As somebody who envied the ability of UK citizens to live and work anywhere in the EU, I myself would have voted Remain. Most of my UK-born friends did vote Remain, including those who are still in the UK—it is not just that my sample is skewed by pro-EU people living in Brussels. Having lived in four countries, travelled to many more for extended periods of time, receiving a good deal of education, and being feminist, I am also an exemplar of the 'anywhere', metropolitan, over-educated person that pro-Leave participants in my research were to complain about.[71] For this reason, it was vital that I engage with any biases and generate as much empathy as I could for the Leave campaign, to try and understand it from within, prior to speaking with Leavers. This was accomplished through essentially indoctrinating myself through reading only pro-Leave materials for a period of a month, and employing non-violent communication to generate empathetic spaces in the course of research, as described in Methodology. It is also worth adding that despite my being in some sense the 'enemy', interlocutors in my research inevitably explained that they did not mean *me*—I was not the problem. This speaks to the fiction of who is the hero or the villain, and the lack of truth in the images of 'Leavers' or 'Remainers'.[72] It highlights the necessity of the present research, which elucidates how characters are created and constructed via blame specifically.

1.6. Thesis structure

Blame and its effects reviews existing literature on the effects of blame. It firstly outlines how literature was collected then moves on to work on blame's effects in political science and

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[70] Based on an Australian Bureau of Statistics report in the early 2000s; I have not been able to re-locate that report, which I read at the time. The 2006 census indicated that 70.9% of Tasmanians were born in Australia and 4.3% England. Australian Bureau of Statistics, '2006 Census QuickStats'. Under the 'White Australia' policy, British immigrants were the most 'desired' immigrants and thus formed a high proportion of immigrants to Australia, with other Europeans who were 'white enough' later permitted to immigrate. National Museum of Australia, 'White Australia Policy'. There were also 'ten pound poms', which was an initiative designed to encourage UK citizens to immigrate to Australia for a payment of just ten pounds including the boat trip. This is evidenced not just in skin palettes of older generations and cultural influences, but also in place names—Tasmania had a great number of Cornish and Devonian miners settle, and has similar place names to those parts of the UK (e.g. Hobart where I was born, Launceston where I grew up, or Exeter where I used to go sailing).

[71] See empirical chapters.

[72] See also E1: The Brexit context.

(social) psychology alike. Blame protects and constitutes groups, interacts with cultural contexts, and is understood to be a key part of politics, but what does it do? A dearth of attention to emotional effects and hence vilification is noted. While research on endogenous blame in (social) psychology suggests *anger*—a villain-type feeling—is apparent when blaming others, such work has suffered some issues with ecological and external validity and oft neglected blame's *social* role—exogenous blame—which is necessary to understanding the effects of blame in politics. The current work draws these ideas together to understand how blame may be examined and project potential effects. The chapter goes on to highlight that while previous work has spoken about what researchers call 'blame', blame is rarely clearly defined, which is necessary to identifying and reproducing it for use in research. To this end, blame for 'being' something (name-calling) is divided from blame for 'doing' something; it is clarified that blame is not necessarily dialectic and may work even if it is not true; and it can look like an argument or a moral judgment but is not necessarily either. Based on a synthesis of existing literature, blame is ultimately minimally defined as a discursive practice in which a speaker claims a party did, or has done, a harmful thing. This makes a contribution in that blame is clearly separated from related discursive practices of credit, threats, and promises, meaning the relationship between these practices and their role in contestation and therefore potential mitigation can be discussed. Two fallacies are presented in connection with blame—scapegoating and a new fallacy of 'bad-be-gone'.

Constructing villains and emotions starts with a discussion of characters in politics before moving on to consider how such characters are 'created'. Previous work has tended to conflate the *process* of vilification with the end result of 'villain', which means villains just 'are', rather than being constructed. Work on victims highlights that the process and end result may be separated, and this work develops the idea that audience emotions help indicate whether characterisation as a victim or villain has been successful or not. 'Villain-type feelings' precede explicit labelling.   As identifying villains made via blame comes down to identifying negative *emotions* towards parties that are blamed ('blamees'), the chapter describes 'how emotions are made' per the Theory of Constructed Emotions, and how addition of this theory bolsters work on emotions as constructed in political science and international relations.

Methodology describes the critical realist epistemology/ontology used in the present work, and depicts the abductive approach using a novel 'research spiral'. It develops a new data analysis framework embedded in existing literature that permits for analysis of the effects of particular discursive practices on audiences, while stressing the need for contextual information as highlighted in Defining blame. This data analysis framework requires identification of (1) contextual background, (2) performance (including discursive context, subjects and objects), (3) effects, and (4) points of resistance/contestation. The process for identifying key items, notably blame, emotions, villains, and contestation, is documented, and data sources selected and justified in accordance with the framework.

Next are the empirical chapters, which are aligned with the data analysis framework such that E1: The Brexit context establishes context for the Brexit case study, E2: Blame campaign

evaluates performance, E3: Effects and E4: Blame and underlying characteristics emerge and explain vilifying effects, and E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation locates contestation. The five empirical chapters are often abbreviated with 'E' and a number as shown.

E1 gives background information to the Brexit referendum, including a brief history of Euroscepticism in the UK. The Brexit 'assemblage'[73] is depicted, showing who spoke (and who did not) in the campaign, then participants in the current research are compared to those who voted Leave/Remain in previous research, establishing ecological validity for this research and thereby the case study.

E2 identifies performance of blame in the lead-up to the Brexit campaign, and shows that the Leave campaign blamed in a way that the Remain campaign did not. The EU was the most common blamee, while the UK/Britain was consistently portrayed as a victim. This provides necessary context to later chapters, while also contributing to the field vis-à-vis strategies of discursive discontent.

E3 starts with focus group and interview participants, who explain that blame caused them to feel angry at the EU and compassionate towards its victims; this compassion led them to turn against the EU. This is interpreted as two pathways for vilification: direct (anger being an example of a 'villain-type feeling'), and indirect (a 'compassion backhand'). This data is triangulated with that from the survey-experiment, where it becomes clear that where exogenous blame leads to villain-type feelings amongst audiences—commonly 'annoyance' for SE participants—existing voter preference mediates who becomes the villain. When people who were pro-Leave read a vignette blaming the EU, they became angry at the EU; those who were pro-Remain instead become annoyed at the text author as a new villain. Not everybody experienced 'villain-type feelings', pointing at further mechanisms that intervene in blame's causal power: that is, forms of contestation that could mitigate its effects.

On the premise that blame's differentiated effects could be the result of audiences' underlying characteristics per previous research, E4 returns to the survey-experiment results. It shows that vilification via blame is not due to underlying characteristics—for example, whether somebody has in-group values, or is angry prior to reading the vignette. This indicates that psychometric targeting as conducted by firms such as Cambridge Analytica may not be as effective as feared—at least, not for the measured characteristics, and not as it pertains to blame. Rather, it is the stories we tell ourselves about our desires, preferences, and the world around us that mediate the vilifying effects of blame.

Contestation is the topic of the final empirical chapter, E5. It groups contestation identified in the data into three types: direct methods wherein the person talks about the blame, including counter-blaming, rebuttal, and naming and shaming blame as an unacceptable behaviour; indirect methods wherein opposing practices such as 'credit' and 'threats' are

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[73] See discussion and definition in 2.4 Defining blame and Methodology. Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, 'When Good Arguments Do Not Work'; Deleuze and Guattari, 'A Thousand Plateaus'.

used; and changing the agenda by changing the subjects and objects of blame. These strategies are discussed in the context of the Brexit campaign, highlighting that the Remain campaign failed to engage with blame in the Leave campaign. Ultimately, the Leave campaign constructed a villainous EU, while the Remain campaign's hero was reluctant or absent. Through use of blame, the Leave campaign thereby won the character wars. This chapter further demonstrates that exogovernmental 'challenger parties'[74] have particular scope to employ blame, and that not just politicians, but also individual audience members contest blame in politics.

Conclusion finalises the piece with a summary of findings, theory-driven reflections on contesting vilification, areas for further research, and impact planning. As a result of the present research, our understanding of blame's effects in politics become more nuanced than simply "if we blame them, we won't like them", and our toolbox to contest blame is greatly enhanced.

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[74] Vries and Hobolt, *Political Entrepreneurs*.

2. Blame and its effects

2.1. Introduction

The present research asks, "in what ways does blame make villains in politics?".[75] A first step in addressing this question is establishing what answers have already been provided in existing work. Evaluating existing research on the effects of exogenous,[76] third-party blame in this chapter helps to site the present research and provides the basis for exploration and operationalisation in later chapters.

First it must be noted that this research, in an attempt to generate theory—not generate *a* theory[77]—uses a critical, *abductive* approach,[78] necessitating simultaneous puzzling over theory and data.[79] Thus research proceeded in an ever-expanding 'spiral' (depicted in 4.2.5 The research spiral), starting from a central concept of 'the effects of blame' then cycling between existing research/theory development and data processing/analysis in widening iterations. This required that the literature review was likewise iterated and reiterated, commencing with an expansive approach that encompassed all research into 'blame' from fields as diverse as victimology, rhetoric, political science, law, philosophy, and (social) psychology, then coming to encompass work on emotions, characterisation, and vilification. Lastly, after analysis of all empirical data, the literature review as it is presented here was limited to only those items pertinent to the final research question and concepts.[80] Hence it focuses on the effects of blame, later honing in on the *vilifying* effects of *exogenous* blame only.

A further outcome of this abductive approach is that there is not a linear way to present the literature review and theoretical components of this research. Thus while this chapter focuses on siting the present research in existing literature and establishing the research gap, it also develops theory with regard to defining blame and associated fallacies. In a similar vein, the following chapter, Constructing villains and emotions, reviews literature on character creation and develops theory on how villains are emotionally constructed as well as justifying and explaining the Theory of Constructed Emotion used in the present research.[81]

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[75]The notion of a villain as somebody who is bad, strong, and active (Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*.) and who feel negatively towards is developed in 3.2 The art of character work.

[76] Blame that emerges from outside the individual; the individual does not witness a harmful, blameworthy act themselves, but rather hears about it from somebody else.

[77] See 1.5.1.

[78] Please see 4.2 Research design; 'critical' refers to critical realism. See Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*. for a discussion on the relation between critical realism and abductive reasoning.

[79] Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, *Interpretive Research Design*, 242.

[80] See also 4.2.5 The research spiral.

[81] Exemplified by Lisa Feldman Barrett and her colleagues. E.g. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

This chapter begins with an explanation of how literature on blame specifically was located, giving an overview of the contexts in which blame has been discussed. Literature is divided into philosophical, prescriptive accounts for blame; descriptions of when and why we blame; the instance of blame itself; what blame effects; and how blame may be contested. As the present work focuses on blame's effects and potential mitigation or mediation thereof, these latter two categories are of particular import and are discussed further in the ensuing sections.

Next, in 2.3 What does blame do?, work on blame's effects in political science and social psychology alike is drawn together. After a brief discussion of blame and Euroscepticism, the section moves on to note that blame has a role in protecting and constituting groups. Research on blame in political science and international relations is discussed, where it is highlighted that such work neither problematises the vilifying effects of blame other than at the level of the population nor evaluates the relationship between blame and emotions, which the present work redresses. This is important, because we *feel* someone is bad *before* we vote them out of office, with implications for affective polarisation as discussed further in 3.2 The art of character work. Such effects go beyond shifts in attribution patterns, as when 'party A' may come to be perceived as 'more responsible' as an outcome of blame.

Work on links between blame and emotion is then discussed. Notably, existing studies often rely on US-based undergraduate audiences, using economic models and quantitative methods that essentialise and limit emotions expressed. The implications of blame in politics are not considered; and research is typically limited to endogenous blame—blame that originates within the person, rather than outside of them.[82] As well as considering the role of exogenous blame, the present research extends this literature by using qualitative methods that permit people to put their emotions into their own words, allowing for the emergence of further, 'surprising' emotions and associated character creation—and in a non-US audience. Additionally, by using a wide audience of real UK voters rather than captive undergraduates, the present work has improved ecological validity over existing research.[83]

The final part of this chapter returns to the nature of blame. It discusses the difference between blame for 'doing' as opposed to blame for 'being' something (name-calling), then locates features of blame in previous work that help to develop a definition of blame. Blame as a social activity is ultimately minimally defined as a **discursive practice in which a speaker claims a party did (or is doing) a harmful thing**. This step of definition-generation is necessary to exploratory experimental work, enabling identification and analysis of blame and thereby operationalisation per Methodology and hence theory generation. Blame is differentiated from credit (helpful in the past/present), threat (harmful in the future), and promise (helpful in the future), already highlighting some areas for

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[82] Malle et al likewise highlight this dearth of research into 'social' blame. Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame', 171.

[83] See discussion of validity in Methodology.

possible contestation of blame.[84] Blame is linked to the existing fallacy of scapegoating and the new identified fallacy of 'bad-be-gone' as the notion that removing a disliked person or body will likewise remove underlying problems.

In addition to identifying the research gap—namely that the vilifying effects of exogenous blame have been underexamined—and establishing the theoretical grounds for the current research, this chapter contributes to the field by clearly defining blame as a discursive practice and therefore permitting clear and comparative analysis of the practice across fields and contexts. Moreover, blame is plotted vis-à-vis alternate discursive strategies of credit, threat, and promise, pointing to potential areas for contesting and thereby mitigating blame in political campaigns. It builds upon existing literature regarding audience effects of exogenous blame specifically and discursive practices more generally.

2.1.1.   Aristotle, audiences, and proofs

Aristotle wrote of three genres of rhetoric, wherein the 'art of rhetoric' is "the ability to see, in any given case, the possible means of persuasion".[85] One genre, *epideictic* rhetoric, was specifically the rhetoric of praise and blame. The present research departs from Aristotle in several areas—it is understood that blame may take place in situations other than, for example, funerals or festivals; it may take a variety of formats; and the Brexit campaign took place in very different time, place, and culture to the ancient Athenian city-state. However, several Aristotelian concepts are useful when developing a definition and understanding of blame.

The first of these is the **division between speaker, what is said, and the audience**. In the case of blame, a speaker and their audience could theoretically be the same person—internally blaming oneself, or indeed, blaming to the mirror. The present research does not presume access to mental states of figures from the Leave or Remain campaigns, and thus there is typically a clear divide between speakers who blame 'to' audiences (Figure 2). Exogenous blame from speakers leads to effects amongst audiences, noting that one such effect might be endogenous audience reiteration of that blame. This research examines such audience effects, specifically as they relate to vilification; effects upon the speakers are out-of-scope.

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[84] In the sense of 'arguing against' blame; see chapter E5.
[85] Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, ll. 1355b26-27.

Figure 2: Relationship of speaker/blamer to audience. In this example, the blamer blames the EU (blamee), with migrants (victims) suffering; the UK voting public (audience) hear/consume the blame.
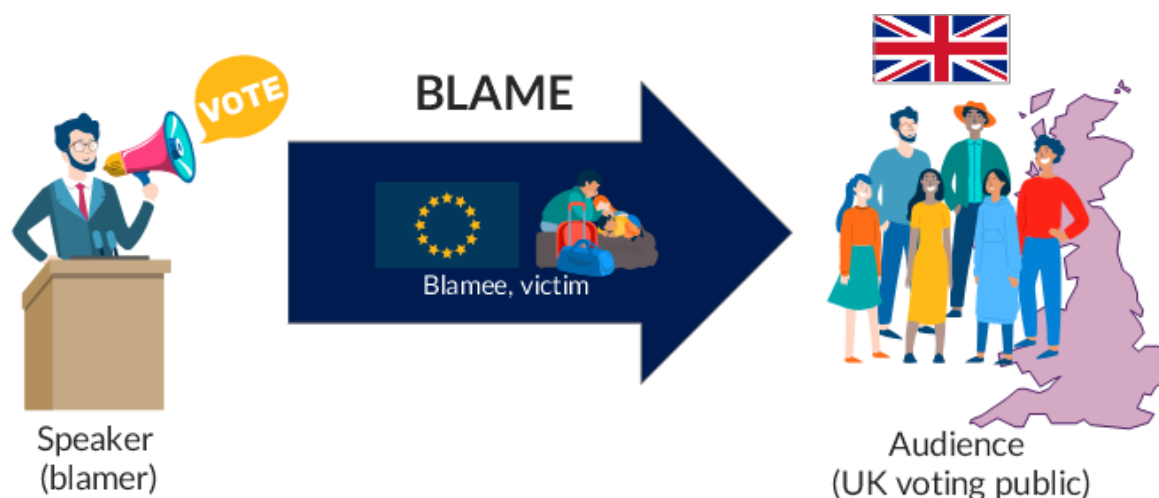
Whereas Aristotle may have envisaged the audience to epideictic rhetoric as those people who are specifically addressed by the speaker, this is not the only way to interpret 'audience' and it is not how the term is used in this research. This is because, as Douglas Park points out, "obviously one can listen to a speech or read a work of prose without being in any rhetorical sense a member of the audience". Park describes two main ways in which the concept of 'audience' is used: those people that must be accommodated in the rhetorical sense (who is this speech *for*), and an audience implied by the text itself where "attitudes, interests, reactions" and conditions of knowledge may address a different or wider audience (who could be *interested* in this speech).[86] This means discourse creates an audience for itself, irrespective of a speaker or writer's intention—interested parties go beyond the intended addressees.

'Audience' is here used in this latter sense, incorporating all those people who encountered any given instance of blame, whether or not the speaker wanted to address those people specifically. Nigel Farage as speaker/blamer could blame the EU to a room full of people and that could be broadcast or printed in other avenues later on, being consumed by even 'unintended' audiences; people in far-flung parts of the world could likewise consume the blame and be affected. This research examines the effects of blame on audiences, specifically those effects related to vilification, whether or not audiences were intended. With that said, there is an assumption that the main audience for blame performed during the Brexit campaign were UK residents and voters, meaning this research examines effects on those same people.

Returning to Aristotle, the body of proof for 'what is said' may include two types of 'proof': artificial, and inartificial. Artificial (artistic) proofs are "invented by the speaker and placed in

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[86] Park, 'The Meanings of "Audience"', 249.

a speech specifically for the sake of persuading the audience at hand"[87], whereas inartificial (inartistic) proofs exist separate to the rhetoric, e.g. existing testimonies, laws, and so on.

The three types of **artificial proofs** correspond to the speaker/what is said/audience division: ethos, logos, and pathos. 'Ethos' means the characteristics of the speaker. While he does not go into great detail on how this character may be used or established, Aristotle claims that trustworthy speakers will be more effective in persuading their audience (see discussion of characters in the following chapter).[88] 'Logos' corresponds to the argument itself (is it a good, persuasive, well-grounded argument?), while 'pathos' relates to the emotions of the audience, and how these may be used to persuade. To this last, it is important that speakers know their audience, including their emotions, to have the highest chance of persuading them; as in the present research, it is important to consider the intersection of emotions and discourse.[89]

2.1.2.   A note on nomenclature

Following Weaver, there is a tendency to call parties who do blaming 'blame-makers' and people who receive blame 'blame-takers'.[90] This research instead uses '**blamer**' and '**blamee**', partly for clarity, and partly because this reflects English naming norms wherein -or/-er indicates the person doing something, and -ee reflects the recipient of an action.[91] Thus the 'blame roles' described in this research are *blamer* (party apportioning blame), *blamee* (party whom is blamed), *victim* (party whom blamee has harmed), and *beneficiary* (parties that have benefited from the harmful situation).

2.2. Locating blame in literature

A significant amount of literature about blame does not actually *define* blame. This means it is necessary to describe how literature was identified—where blame is not clearly defined, it would not otherwise be certain that the present researcher is discussing the same phenomenon as that in previous work.[92]

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[87] Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, xxxiii. Note that this relates to ideas of how characters must 'perform' per Orrin Klapp; see 3.2.5. Klapp, 'The Creation of Popular Heroes'.

[88] "[W]e trust good [people] more fully and more readily. In fact, not only do we trust them in general, whatever the issue, but we are even inclined to trust them completely in cases where certainty is out of the question and there is room for doubt. … [I]t is hardly an exaggeration to say that there is no more authoritative proof than character." Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, 7. 1356a6-13

[89] Note that Aristotle firstly refers to 'pathos' as including essentially the emotions the audience arrived with (1356a14-16), and adapting what is said to that, and it is through this that 'the art of rhetoric' may be divided from 'sophistry'. However, he goes on to talk about ways to engender and arouse various emotions. In the present research it is understood that emotions may be roused during the course of rhetoric, rather than addressing simply the emotions people 'arrived' with. Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*.

[90] E.g. Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance'; Resodihardjo, *Crises, Inquiries and the Politics of Blame*.

[91] E.g. Lessor/lessee, elector/electee.

[92] This research defines blame as a discursive practice in which a speaker claims a party has done, or is doing, a harmful thing. See 2.4 Defining blame.

Literature was gathered based on its use of 'blame' in the title, abstract, or tags, and then references in that literature examined in a snowball approach. Each piece of literature located in this process discussed what the authors titled 'blame'. Through this, it became clear that 'blame' literature also encompassed literature on accountability, responsibility, causality, and intentionality. Concepts and authors were mind-mapped until groupings were identified; these were then translated to the reference manager software Zotero, and further reading continued to be divided in the same way.

Work on blame can then be grouped as follows. The relevance of each group to the research question is noted, justifying which literature is reviewed in this chapter.

2.2.1.   Philosophical accounts of blame's role in society

What role should blame play in society? Accounts include George Sher's review of blame in *In Praise of Blame*. Here he considers blame vis-à-vis Humeian concepts of blame as moral disapprobation (a sentiment[93] of disapproval) towards a particular character trait or action. For Hume, things that we approve of are good for society, and those we disapprove of (blame for) are bad for society. While not fully adopting Hume's account, Sher agrees that blame can be a source of motivation to improve one's behaviour in future. Hence blame is essential to morality—blame can be a social good.[94] Other authors such as Michael Zimmerman agree, suggesting that blame means one's moral standing is diminished.[95] Thomas Scanlon reviews blame as a negative moral assessment, but also potentially a kind of punishment, or judgment of blameworthiness, each of which refers to the *role* of blame.[96]

While the present research does identify some ways in which blame may be redressed, implying normative expectations around the role of blame, this does not speak to the effects of blame. Hence the overall societal role of blame is not considered in depth, beyond a brief discussion in 2.3.2 below. Literature that fell exclusively into this group was not specifically addressed in the present research.

2.2.2.   When and why we blame

This includes why we blame (e.g. blaming others to feel better about ourselves (Double, Stuewig et al, Tennen and Affleck)),[97] the relation between crises and blame (crises demand someone is held to account (e.g. Resodihardjo)),[98] and who does blaming (e.g. angry people,

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[93] While this could be described as an emotion, Hume's terminology of 'sentiment' is used to stay true to the source material.

[94] Sher, *In Praise of Blame*; Bayles, 'Hume on Blame and Excuse'; Kauppinen, 'Character and Blame in Hume and Beyond'; Cohon, 'Hume's Moral Philosophy'. See also discussion of blame for 'doing' and blame for 'being' in 2.4.3 Blame for 'being' vs blame for 'doing'.

[95] Zimmerman, 'An Essay on Moral Responsibility', 38. cited in Tognazzini and Coates, 'Blame'.

[96] Scanlon, 'Interpreting Blame'.

[97] Double, 'Blaming the Victim and Blaming the Culprit'; Stuewig et al., 'Shaming, Blaming, and Maiming: Functional Links among the Moral Emotions, Externalization of Blame, and Aggression'; Tennen and Affleck, 'Blaming Others for Threatening Events'.

[98] Resodihardjo, *Crises, Inquiries and the Politics of Blame*; Drabeck and Quarantelli, 'Scapegoats, Villains, and Disasters'.

people with 'populist attitudes' (Hackman et al, Aquino et al, Dawtry et al, Busby et al)).[99] While there is some suggestion that times of crisis may lead to increased character creation,[100] the link between crises and blame is not specifically examined here.

2.2.3.   The instance of blame itself

This includes who is an acceptable blamee (for instance, elites and underlings (Aquino et al),[101] different levels of governance (Heinkelmann-Wild and Zangl),[102] or who is salient and 'familiar' (León et al));[103] how blame is done, including process models such as those of Mark Alicke or Bertram Malle et al; and what blame is, including being an emotion (discussed in 2.3.7 Blame is emotional) or a type of 'argument' or a 'moral judgment' as further discussed in 2.4 Defining blame.[104] The acceptability of particular blamees is out-of-scope for the present research and only briefly mentioned in 2.3.2.

Regarding process models, the 'blame journey' may be simplified into three stages: a harmful thing ostensibly[105] happens, blame is performed, and effects are generated (Figure 3).

Figure 3: A simplified 'blame journey'
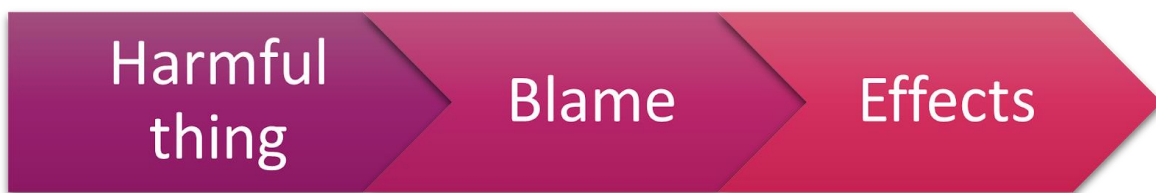
It is however somewhat more complicated than this. The processing of blame—how somebody goes from observing a harmful event to blaming somebody for it—has been investigated by authors such as Alicke (the 'Culpable Control Model', CCM) and Malle et al (the 'Path Model of Blame').[106] Each of these models focuses on the link between 'harmful thing' and 'blame', explaining 'how much' blame a blamer accords—is the perpetrator very much to blame (at fault), or not to blame at all? The CCM model centralises the human experience, noting that "personal expectations and emotional reactions are central

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[99] E.g. Hackman et al., 'Slut-Shaming and Victim-Blaming'; Aquino, Tripp, and Bies, 'How Employees Respond to Personal Offense'; Dawtry et al., 'Derogating Innocent Victims'; Busby, Gubler, and Hawkins, 'Framing and Blame Attribution in Populist Rhetoric'.

[100] Flinders and Wood, 'From Folk Devils to Folk Heroes'; Klapp, 'The Creation of Popular Heroes'.

[101] Aquino, Tripp, and Bies, 'How Employees Respond to Personal Offense'.

[102] Heinkelmann-Wild, 'Blame Shifting in the European Union'; Heinkelmann-Wild and Zangl, 'Multilevel Blame Games'.

[103] León, Jurado, and Garmendia Madariaga, 'Passing the Buck?'

[104] See also 2.4 Defining blame. Hansson, 'The Discursive Micro-Politics of Blame Avoidance'; Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame'. This would also include accounts of blame 'as' emotion, though as noted in 2.3.7 Blame is emotional below, the present research divides the emotional *effects* of blame from the nature of blame itself. Accounts of blame as emotion include Menges, 'The Emotion Account of Blame'; Sheikh and McNamara, 'Insights from Self-Blame and Victim Blaming'.

[105] This research does not presume that all blame is 'true', hence use of 'ostensibly', or 'allegedly'.

[106] Alicke, 'Culpable Control and the Psychology of Blame.'; Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame'.

components" to laying blame.[107] Both models add significant complexity to the above diagram, and both acknowledge the importance of existing biases and a presumed role of emotions.[108] However, neither of these models point at the *effects* of blame upon an audience, emotional or otherwise.[109] They therefore cannot assist in identifying the ways in which blame makes villains in politics.

The present research does not aim to provide a new *process model* for blame, such as the CCM or Path Model, though it is understood blame's effects may be influenced by audience characteristics as acknowledged by those models.[110] Rather, it bypasses these debates to consider what happens as an *effect* of blame, and specifically the vilifying effects of *exogenous* blame, as when an audience consumes blame from a third party and 'feels' something.[111] It addresses the blame|effect link in Figure 3, not harmful thing|blame; blame, not the harmful event, is the starting point.

On this note, differences in individual attribution patterns relate to people's decisions about who is properly to blame for a particular outcome according to features such as intentionality, responsibility, or causality (e.g. Malle and Knobe, Baron and Hershey, Alicke, Mikula, Lagnado and Channon, Zultan et al, Lerner et al, Quigley and Tedeschi, Rogers et al).[112] Because the current work considers (re)blame—as blame of the same party or counter-blame of somebody else—only as an effect that hints at snowballing vilification rather than attempting to understand 'how much' blame any given individual accords, this literature is not specifically engaged with here.

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[107] Alicke, 'Culpable Control and the Psychology of Blame.', 557.

[108] E.g. Malle et al, "few scholars would doubt that affect and emotions play important roles in moral judgment", noting that the authors characterise blame as a type of moral judgment. Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame', 165.

[109] Per 2.3.7 Blame is emotional, feeling angry could make somebody more disposed to performing endogenous blame. This is specifically engaged with in E4: Blame and underlying characteristics. See also discussion of blame's effects on Leavers vs Remainers in E3: Effects.

[110] See also E4: Blame and underlying characteristics.

[111] There is precedent for focusing on effects without using a specific process model, e.g. Lerner, Goldberg, and Tetlock, 'Sober Second Thought'. Malle et al say this is compatible with the Path Model of Blame in either event. Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame'.

[112] Malle and Knobe, 'The Folk Concept of Intentionality'; Baron and Hershey, 'Outcome Bias in Decision Evaluation'; Hershey and Baron, 'Judgment by Outcomes: When Is It Justified?'; Alicke, 'Blaming Badly'; Mikula, 'Testing an Attribution-of-Blame Model of Judgments of Injustice'; Alicke, 'Culpable Control and the Psychology of Blame.'; Lagnado and Channon, 'Judgments of Cause and Blame'; Zultan, Gerstenberg, and Lagnado, 'Finding Fault'; Lerner, Goldberg, and Tetlock, 'Sober Second Thought'; Quigley and Tedeschi, 'Mediating Effects of Blame Attributions on Feelings of Anger'; Guglielmo and Malle, 'Enough Skill to Kill'; Schlenker et al., 'The Triangle Model of Responsibility.'; Rogers et al., 'Causal Deviance and the Ascription of Intent and Blame'. Malle et al suggest that exogenous blame ('social blame' in their work) must demonstrate clear intentionality, warrant, and so on. This was not particularly apparent in the empirical work; while there were references to 'accountability', these were not linked to specific policies; EU policies were occasionally named as the cause of a harmful situation—as in the vignettes used in the present research, per 4.4.1 Survey-experiment—but this was a rarity. See also discussion of clarity and accountability in 2.3.5 Hobolt and Tilley and 'Blaming Europe?. Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame'.

2.2.4.   Contesting blame

Contestation includes refuting blame, such as by blame-shifting or -countering, and avoiding blame in the first place. Christopher Hood considers politicians' use of presentational strategies in contesting blame (including excuses and justification), policy strategies (avoiding blame in the first place by implementing strategies that ensure one is not the visible actor, or not responsible for that area of policy),[113] and agency strategies (selecting institutional arrangements whereby one can avoid or minimise blame received, such as through delegating tasks and obfuscating chains of responsibility).[114] Sten Hansson has examined how UK officeholders avoided blame for the outcome of the Brexit vote specifically through discursive strategies such as argumentation, framing, denial, and legitimation.[115] Hernán Flom and Alison Post illustrate that policy-makers and judges in Buenos Aires, Argentina, avoid *doing* things so that they cannot be blamed for (poor) outcomes.[116] Kent Weaver is one of the most visible authors in blame contestation, describing methods such as 'circling the wagons' ("[Diffusing] blame by spreading it among as many policymakers as possible") or 'jumping on the bandwagon' ("[Deflecting] blame by supporting politically popular alternative").[117]

This literature may help indicate ways in which exogenous blame is contested and potentially mitigated, and work on differentiated levels of responsibility attribution amongst audiences following blame avoidance by and excuses from politicians is discussed in 2.3.6 below. This existing work tends to focus on what individual politicians who themselves are blamed may do to avoid the consequences of that blame; it is not clear that the empty signifier of 'the EU' may act in the same way.

Other literature is more focused on the non-politician individual; Kelly Shaver investigates 'defensive attribution', where we as individuals (re)attribute blame to others that aren't like us—as when they are victims that have misbehaved (and therefore deserving of their own victimisation), or because they do not look or behave like us. Shame expert Brené Brown is another author who considers a type of defensive attribution, but instead points out that we endogenously blame others to escape our own shame.[118] This complements work on scapegoating (see 2.4.5). Unlike the political science literature mentioned above, this work considers when we as individuals deflect blame, from ourselves or others that seem in some

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[113] As Hansson puts it, doing things "by the book" is one way in which individual blame may be avoided. Hansson, 'The Discursive Micro-Politics of Blame Avoidance', 547.

[114] Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game'.

[115] Hansson, 'Brexit and Blame Avoidance'.

[116] Flom and Post, 'Blame Avoidance and Policy Stability in Developing Democracies'.

[117] Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance', 385.. See also Hansson, 'Analysing Opposition–Government Blame Games'; Hansson, 'Defensive Semiotic Strategies in Government'; Hansson, 'The Discursive Micro-Politics of Blame Avoidance'; Hansson, 'Brexit and Blame Avoidance'; Hansson, 'Discursive Strategies of Blame Avoidance in Government'; Flom and Post, 'Blame Avoidance and Policy Stability in Developing Democracies'.

[118] Brown, *I Thought It Was Just Me (but It Isn't)*; Shaver, 'Defensive Attribution'.

way like ourselves; albeit with less nuance than that found in the work of Hood or in Weaver's typology for instance.

The present research draws these varied concerns with individual deflection together, and goes beyond them to consider how we as audiences to exogenous blame can and actually do contest it and thereby potentially mitigate its vilifying effects. This incorporates, but is not limited to, counter-blaming as a method of reallocating blame that coheres with notions of defensive attribution. Audience contestation is considered in discussion with what parties outside of government may do to mitigate blame on somebody else's behalf. The present work then contributes to the blame contestation field, providing a toolkit grounded both in empirical findings and theoretical reflections emerging from this research on how blame and its effects may be mitigated and contested by a range of parties beyond just politicians or individuals who themselves are blamed. It makes the conceptual contribution of audiences and parties external to government as actors who contest exogenous blame and concordant effects, and several of the ways in which they may do so.

2.2.5.   What blame **effects**

Literature on the effects of blame incorporates effects themselves, including emotional effects (e.g. Smith et al, Kim and Cameron, Lerner and Tiedens; see 2.3.7 Blame is emotional, below),[119] and audience characteristics that alter, or mediate, those effects. For instance, Sara Hobolt and James Tilley introduce the notion of 'perceptual shields', whereby existing biases inform whether blame is accepted as true or not.[120] As it is central to this research, literature on effects is discussed in some depth.

2.3. What does blame do?

This section considers research into the effects of blame in the political sciences and (social) psychology alike. It finds that what limited research there is in political science tends to focus on how exogenous, 'third-party' blaming is done or countered, rather than its emotional, vilifying effects—the topic of the present research. Meanwhile, work in (social) psychology often focuses on the effects of *endogenous* blame, that is, blame that emerges within us as individuals, whether in response to perceiving harm ourselves or hearing existing blame and reiterating it. Such research is incorporated on the premise that the effects of endogenous blame may be in some way similar to those of exogenous blame.

Overall this section establishes that blame protects *groups*, meaning it can constitute in- and out-group members (as heroes and villains, for example) as well as what their behaviour should entail; that blame interacts with context, meaning the culture in which blame is done

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[119] E.g. Smith et al., 'In Search of the" Hot" Cognitions'; Kim and Cameron, 'Emotions Matter in Crisis'; Lerner and Tiedens, 'Portrait of the Angry Decision Maker'; Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff, 'Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism'; Quigley and Tedeschi, 'Mediating Effects of Blame Attributions on Feelings of Anger'. Do note that there are two 'Lerners' working on blame: Melvin J Lerner in the mid to late 20th century, and Jennifer Lerner working from the late 90's to the present.
[120] Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*, chap. Conclusion.

is important to consider (particularly in light of the bulk of existing work on the effects of blame being conducted in the US); and that blame causes emotions—but that work on those emotional effects to date has been lacking, including as it pertains to exogenous blame and vilification. Particularly, such work tends to suffer from low external and ecological validity, as well as potential essentialisation of emotions causing a limit to what is theorisable—each of which is necessarily redressed in the present research. This research therefore extends work on the effects of blame with practical implications for (social) psychology and political science alike.

2.3.1.   Blame and Euroscepticism

"The term 'Eurosceptic' … in its simplest form, refers to someone who is opposed to the powers of the European Union"[121]

Given the Brexit case study of the present research, if villains are created via blame, they are likely to include the European Union. Euroscepticism literature is therefore briefly outlined here, with blame of the EU specifically considered throughout this section. Understanding the EU as a potential villain helps to bolster literature on and *explanations for* Euroscepticism, particularly as it relates to emotions about the EU.[122] The present work then provides insights relevant for work on Euroscepticism, without necessarily furthering that field in and of itself.

The term 'Euroscepticism' is variously used to encompass criticism of the European Union and scepticism about its mission and/or means. It is often categorised as 'hard' or 'soft', whereby 'soft' Eurosceptics tend to advocate for reform or slow-down of the institution and 'hard' Eurosceptics favour abolishment or exit as in the case of Brexit.[123] A history of Euroscepticism in the UK is presented in E1: The Brexit context.

Euroscepticism occurs amongst European citizens, groups, media, and political parties, as well as within the organisation itself.[124] Those parties that are outside of national governance structures are ostensibly more likely to utilise EU-blaming in their rhetoric: groups in government have a buy-in to the EU and are represented in EU institutions, whereas due to the zero-sum power politics perceptions of domestic audiences, groups in

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[121] Brack and Startin, 'Introduction', 239.

[122] E.g. Vasilopoulou and Wagner, 'Fear, Anger and Enthusiasm about the European Union'.

[123] Taggart and Szczerbiak, 'The Party Politics of Euroscepticism in EU Member and Candidate States'. Nathalie Brack and Nicholas Startin point out that it possible to add nuance to this model, presenting alternate models that fine-tune 'degrees' of Euroscepticism and motivations. Brack and Startin, 'Introduction', 241.

[124] Brack and Startin, 'Introduction'; Usherwood and Startin, 'Euroscepticism as a Persistent Phenomenon'. Brack describes the European Parliamentary elections as a "channel for Eurosceptic votes", as seen with UKIP in the UK. She also points out that Eurosceptics within Parliament can't do much; public oratory, as for Nigel Farage, may be their only channel. This is because of the predominance of consensus-based decisions within the EU. Brack, 'Euroscepticism at the Supranational Level'.

opposition are dissuaded from criticising the EU.[125] Groups outside of government, whether domestic or transnational, civic or political, thereby have a better platform for rhetoric against the EU and do not have the domestic party politics concerns of those parties already in power.[126]

Left- and right-wing groups alike may be Eurosceptic, with Euroscepticism in the UK dominated by right-wing groups such as the British National Party, and more latterly UKIP and the Brexit Party. Daphne Halikiopoulou et al point out that both left- and right-wing Eurosceptic groups fear the erosion of national sovereignty, with "mainstream parties… neither nationalistic nor Eurosceptic"[127] while radical parties are consistently both. Interestingly, Andrea Pirro and Stijn van Kessel note that "[p]opulist Eurosceptic actors do not promptly, nor automatically, blame 'Europe' amid crises with a marked European trait".[128] This permits for various levels of Euroscepticism within populist parties as well potentially differing levels of vilification of the EU as an outcome of blame specifically—given populist groups may not always or inevitably blame the EU and thus create it as a villain— though this latter is beyond the scope of their research. Meanwhile, Theresa Kuhn et al pose that Europeans blame the EU for rising income inequality, though they do not verify the actual effects of EU-blaming on Euroscepticism (or indeed, any feelings towards the EU); they simply say that "citizens are likely to blame the EU for income inequality" and therefore compare population-level income inequality with levels of Euroscepticism.[129] This link is made explicit in the present research, such that blaming is linked with emotional outcomes and characterisation of the EU.

Sofia Vasilopoulou and Markus Wagner do argue that work on EU preferences needs to integrate emotional explanations.[130] They point specifically to the role of *anger* in entrenching Eurosceptic attitudes, and, as becomes apparent in 2.3.7 Blame is emotional below and throughout the empirical chapters, blame can provoke anger and other villain-type feelings amongst audiences. Blaming of the EU can therefore contribute to Euroscepticism as a 'felt' phenomenon.

The present research does not attempt to explain Euroscepticism per se, partly because the materials analysed tend to show evidence of hard Euroscepticism only—they call to vote out. There is a binary choice between Leave and Remain, with no intermediary reform.[131] It therefore does not lend itself to a nuanced approach to Euroscepticism and the development of those attitudes; rather, it is about how we come to see—and moreover,

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[125] Kumlin, 'Claiming Blame and Giving Credit? Unintended Effects of How Government and Opposition Frame the Europeanization of Welfare'.. See following.

[126] See also Vries and Hobolt, *Political Entrepreneurs*.

[127] Halikiopoulou, Nanou, and Vasilopoulou, 'The Paradox of Nationalism', 520.

[128] Pirro and van Kessel, 'Populist Eurosceptic Trajectories in Italy and the Netherlands during the European Crises', 338.

[129] Kuhn et al., 'An Ever Wider Gap in an Ever Closer Union', 40.

[130] Vasilopoulou and Wagner, 'Fear, Anger and Enthusiasm about the European Union'.

[131] This was arguably attempted first, in David Cameron's 'failed' negotiations with the EU. See 5.2 A brief history of Brexit.

feel—the EU is a villain: some 'body' we could never support, such that hard Euroscepticism and voting Leave is the only possible option. It helps to explain how people became 'divided by the vote',[132] with animosity for not just the EU, but for those that would support it (and vice-versa). We *feel* against villains before we vote against them, which is why it is so important to consider how these emotions come to be. This research then goes beyond work on Euroscepticism as a populist or anti-establishment phenomenon, or resulting from capitalist globalisation and who has been 'left behind', to understand the vilifying effects of a specific discursive practice.[133] It therefore sits alongside and complements work such as that of Vasilopoulou and Wagner, mentioned above, in integrating emotional explanations into our understandings of political attitudes; as a result it helps provide an explanation for affective polarisation as a contemporary concern. In considering performance of blame in the course of generating theory (E2), it incidentally illustrates how blame was used—or not used—by the various campaigns associated with Brexit, complementing work on demagoguery and particularly analysis of the ways in which different parties speak differently to attain their aims.[134]

Overall, while the primary objective of this research is to theorise the vilifying effects of exogenous blame and present critical/theoretical reflections on how this is and may be redressed, as an outcome of the selected case study it incidentally demonstrates the way in which exogenous blame made a villain of the EU specifically during the Leave campaign. It thus forms a contribution to work on Euroscepticism as it pertains to constructions of—and feelings about—the EU. It complements existing work on the EU referendum and particularly the emotion surrounding Brexit and relations with the EU.[135] It supports and adds nuance to work on EU-blaming within the UK specifically, as discussed further below (see particularly 2.3.5); through an examination of what may be *done* about blame in the form of contestation and theoretical reflections, it also contributes to literature on and helps constitute a toolkit for redressing exogenous blame and its vilifying effects in the specific case of the EU and elsewhere (see E5 and Conclusion).

2.3.2.   Blame protects and constitutes groups

Work in (social) psychology notes the role of blame in ensuring compliance with group behaviour: in short, getting blamed for something means reaping the consequences.[136] Through the punishment of transgressions, group ideologies, norms, and boundaries are

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[132] Hobolt, Leeper, and Tilley, 'Divided by the Vote: Affective Polarization in the Wake of Brexit'.
[133] E.g. Hobolt, 'The Brexit Vote: A Divided Nation, a Divided Continent'; Goodwin and Heath, 'The 2016 Referendum, Brexit and the Left Behind'.
[134] See e.g. Roberts-Miller, *Demagoguery and Democracy*; Vasilopoulou, Halikiopoulou, and Exadaktylos, 'Greece in Crisis'.
[135] E.g. Moss, Robinson, and Watts, 'Brexit and the Everyday Politics of Emotion'; Bromley-Davenport, MacLeavy, and Manley, 'Brexit in Sunderland'; Vasilopoulou and Wagner, 'Fear, Anger and Enthusiasm about the European Union'; Wagner, 'Fear and Anger in Great Britain'.
[136] See also Sher, *In Praise of Blame*. for a philosophical account of blame; in short, blame is inseparable from morality.

maintained.[137]   Blame therefore fulfils an important social role, rendering some behaviours unallowable. It implies that *behaviour* alongside self-identification helps to define a group; 'because *they* did *this*, they are *not us*'. This is important to consider in the context of the political sphere, as it suggests that groups are partially *constituted* via blame.[138] These may not yet be understood as 'characters' in an emotionalised relationship, but they are at least constituted as outsiders.

William Ryan examines blame's ability to maintain an (in-)group's status quo,[139] writing on the ways in which impoverished, minority, and African American families in the US as out-group members are blamed for their situations, even by would-be sympathisers. The 'cycle of poverty' cannot be escaped—cultural deprivation leads to poor school performance; families are unstable because of absentee fathers and overly-matriarchical structures; poor people are ill because they have no interest in health care.

> "[C]onsequently, though unwittingly, they cause their own troubles. From such a viewpoint, the obvious fact that poverty is primarily an absence of money is easily overlooked or set aside."[140]

Emma A Jane makes a similar argument regarding online hate speech, noting that blaming renders the actual problem of misogyny invisible:

> "Those in power are dragging their feet with regards to prevention, redress, and victim support, while the real reason for rape threats—the men who make them—are often conspicuously absent from the gendered cyberhate conversation."[141]

By blaming victims for their circumstances, structural concerns can be set aside, and majority group ideology maintained. Blaming may then distract attention from underlying problems as well as maintaining out-groups. It could be that creating villains via blame is ultimately unhelpful.[142] This concern is uptaken in context in the empirical chapters, where it is demonstrated that blame appears to distract people from the needs of victims. The current work therefore supports this existing work.

2.3.3.   Blame interacts with cultural context

Note: This section contains references to sexual violence.

Several authors go further, suggesting that blaming is not just something that arises in the *preservation* of group identities and ideologies, but interacts with other discourses—e.g.

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[137] Ryan, *Blaming the Victim*. Linda Skitka and Philip Tetlock note that politically conservative people are particularly motivated to punish violators of social norms. Skitka and Tetlock, 'Providing Public Assistance'.
[138] See also Jacoby et al on how victimisation is able to be mobilised into a politically salient and active victim political *identity.* Jacoby, 'A Theory of Victimhood'.
[139] Ryan, *Blaming the Victim*.
[140] Ryan, 12–13.
[141] Jane, 'Misogyny Online', 80.
[142] See also discussion in 2.4.5 Blame and fallacies: Scapegoating and 'bad-be-gone.

capitalism, racism, patriarchy—in a way that helps to explain differences in when blame is accepted or contested, with clear implications for vilification.[143]

In researching bar-room sexual aggression, Sarah Becker and Justine Tinklers examine the normalisation of non-consensual sexual contact via examining how and when such contact is socially sanctioned, and by whom. They found that alcohol, context, and gender shape blame attributions for instances of aggression.[144] Particularly:

1. Men are more willing to blame victims rather than perpetrators, partly because of dominant cultural sexual scripts (men must chase women; women must avoid behaviours that will precipitate their victimhood).
2. (Endogenous) blame of perpetrators is reduced or shifted using situational factors (alcohol modifies the blame accorded to aggressors; 'suggestive clothing' modifies the blame accorded to victims).
3. Sexual aggression is normalised in certain social settings (bar rooms).
4. An ideology of victim-blaming is tied to gender roles and associated norms.
5. Only by addressing the underlying logic of victim-blaming can sexual aggression be ameliorated.

This implies that social norms—cultural stories—circumscribe appropriate objects of blame and associated sanctioning; blame arises out of and reinforces group beliefs and norms.

Helen Eigenberg and Christina Policastro agree with (4) above, claiming victim-blaming is not associated with one particular ideology, but is instead a fundamental worldview and device for explanation.[145] If a person lacks another conceptual framework to explain a negative outcome, they will blame the victim (see also 2.3.6). Indeed, holding a general victim-blaming ideology is more of a factor in blaming victims in cases of interpersonal violence ('IPV') against women than underlying attitudes towards women. Furthermore, while direct experience of IPV reduces victim-blaming in IPV, it is not associated with a reduction in victim-blaming more generally; the underlying victim-blaming ideology remains unaffected.[146] This indicates that blaming behaviours may be enduring, as well as embedded in cultural frameworks. It implies that even were people to learn to stop blaming in a particular context—e.g. blaming the EU for unrelated activities—blame in other spheres of politics would continue. This means it is vital to consider the effects of blame. But what are those effects? How do we come to *feel* that perpetrators are villainous, and undeserving of our support? This is the concern of the present research.

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[143] I.e. If blame is denied, then the ostensible 'blamee' is not vilified by the denier. See also E3: Effects and E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation, wherein Remainers find alternate blamees when confronted with blame of the EU.

[144] Becker and Tinkler, '"Me Getting Plastered and Her Provoking My Eyes": Young People's Attribution of Blame for Sexual Aggression in Public Drinking Spaces'.

[145] Eigenberg and Policastro, 'Blaming Victims in Cases of Interpersonal Violence'.

[146] Eigenberg and Policastro.

2.3.4.   Blaming in politics

In existing work on blame as a political behaviour, it is generally presumed that blame is a tool used strategically and instrumentally by elites in the process of manipulating and mobilising groups. Key texts include Kent Weaver's 1986 article, which featured a limited blaming schema for use by politicians,[147] Christopher Hood on public attitudes towards sympathetic and vindictive blame,[148] contemporary authors in the EU-blaming and -accountability fields Hobolt and Tilley,[149] and blame avoidance specialist Sten Hansson.[150] The reverse art of credit-claiming (and apportioning) is under investigation by Tom Hunter.[151]

Weaver suggests politicians undertake credit-claiming and blame-shifting behaviours in order to retain their mandate. Constituents have a negative bias, in that they prefer avoiding risk to receiving benefits—they are risk-averse.[152] To gain or retain political power, politicians are therefore more prone to blame-shifting than they are to credit-claiming, as reaping the negative consequences of blame will do them more damage than they would be benefited by the equivalent amount of credit. Meanwhile, opposition parties blame those in power to bolster their own support.[153]

Under this schema, and given politics tend to be considered a zero-sum (or even negative-sum) game by populations,[154] one party's gain is another's loss. For instance, in the US blame can be accorded to the Democratic Party *or* to the Republican Party, and success means recouping the least blame. Who is blaming and who is being blamed becomes important in the context of elections and thereby holding parties accountable.

Notably, increasing federalisation—including in the context of the EU—increases options for parties that may be blamed.[155] Tim Heinkelmann-Wild et al argue that creating additional levels of governance means there are more possible blamees, such that blame can be

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[147] Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance'. See also Weaver, 'The Nays Have It'.
[148] Hood, *The Blame Game: Spin, Bureaucracy, and Self-Preservation in Government*; Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game'.
[149] Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*; Hobolt, Tilley, and Banducci, 'Clarity of Responsibility: How Government Cohesion Conditions Performance Voting'.
[150] Hansson, 'Analysing Opposition–Government Blame Games'; Hansson, 'Defensive Semiotic Strategies in Government'; Hansson, 'The Discursive Micro-Politics of Blame Avoidance'; Hansson, 'Brexit and Blame Avoidance'; Hansson, 'Discursive Strategies of Blame Avoidance in Government'.
[151] Hunter, 'Do Governments Claim Credit for the Work of International Organizations? Evidence from EU Council Summits'. (Forthcoming)
[152] Kumlin, 'Claiming Blame and Giving Credit? Unintended Effects of How Government and Opposition Frame the Europeanization of Welfare'.
[153] Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance'.; see also Hood, *The Blame Game: Spin, Bureaucracy, and Self-Preservation in Government*.
[154] Kumlin, 'Claiming Blame and Giving Credit? Unintended Effects of How Government and Opposition Frame the Europeanization of Welfare', 577–80.
[155] León, Jurado, and Garmendia Madariaga, 'Passing the Buck?'; Heinkelmann-Wild, Rittberger, and Zangl, 'The European Blame Game'; Heinkelmann-Wild, 'Blame Shifting in the European Union'; Heinkelmann-Wild and Zangl, 'Multilevel Blame Games'.

shifted both horizontally (to colleagues) and vertically (up to the EU or down to regions);[156] Sandra León et al suggest this is partly moderated by (EU-)partisanship, and within the EU, the effect is particularly pronounced within countries that have been part of the Union for some time. Eurosceptics in countries where the EU has become a *salient* target of blame through relationship longevity are more likely to blame the EU.[157]

Hobolt and Tilley point to who is likely to be blamed when it comes to 'Europe'.[158] Given citizens tend to punish European initiatives in national elections,[159] national politicians should have strong incentive to shift blame to the EU, and possibly even to associate domestic opponents with the EU while doing so. However, research has indicated that parties in government tend to be integrationist; and, due to zero-sum understandings, when an opposition party blames the EU they make the governing party look better—the party in power is doing a good job *despite* the EU.[160] Therefore, the opportunity to refer blame upwards to the EU is disincentivized for opposition parties for domestic reasons, while governing parties have a buy-in to EU policy outcomes and may therefore prefer to avoid scapegoating the EU.[161] Other parties, however, such as 'challenger parties',[162] 'populist' groups, or anti-EU interest groups—i.e. the Leave campaign—do not have these limitations on blame, and such 'outsider parties' are rarely considered in political science research into blame to date.[163] This is redressed in the present research, which does explicitly consider such groups.

Christopher Hood meanwhile claims that "political scientists know blame is central to politics",[164] and attempts to analyse the use of so-called 'blame games' by 'rational' political actors, who are 'blame professionals' and therefore in a sense outside of the game itself.[165] The 'blame amateurs' who form the audience are, however, *not* so rational. Hood criticises Weaver for not clarifying 'negativity bias', whereby blame audiences will be affected differently according to existing biases—despite the best intentions of political actors, audiences are at least partially 'irrational'.[166] He points to the role of a sympathetic versus vindictive blamer and presumably audience, and the importance of public opinion. While politicians accord blame according to a reasoned game, "*something* other than formal

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[156] Heinkelmann-Wild and Zangl, 'Multilevel Blame Games'.

[157] León, Jurado, and Garmendia Madariaga, 'Passing the Buck?' See also discussion of blaming niches in 7.3.4.

[158] Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*

[159] De Vries, 'Sleeping Giant'; De Vries.; note that European elections results tend to reflect the popularity of the current national government Majone, 'From Regulatory State to a Democratic Default'.

[160] Kumlin, 'Claiming Blame and Giving Credit? Unintended Effects of How Government and Opposition Frame the Europeanization of Welfare'.

[161] See discussion of scapegoating in 2.4.5 Blame and fallacies: Scapegoating and 'bad-be-gone.

[162] Vries and Hobolt, *Political Entrepreneurs*.

[163] Resodihardjo, *Crises, Inquiries and the Politics of Blame*. does consider multiple actors in crises, for example in relation to disasters at festivals and parades.

[164] Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game', 15.

[165] As opposed to 'blame amateurs'. Alicke, 'Blaming Badly'.

[166] The present work does not accept the Cartesian divide between 'rational' and 'irrational'; see discussion of 'cognition' in 3.3.3.a) A word on cognition.

delegation seems to account for what makes the difference between political 'blame magnets' and 'Teflon politicians'."[167] This 'something' goes unexplained.

In a similar vein, Thomas Drabeck and Enrico Quarantelli describe the personalisation of blame, the attribution of a negative event to a particular 'person', as being driven by two separate components—a 'rational' and an 'irrational' one.[168] 'Rational' personalisation of blame is to prevent future occurrences of similar events, as in the case of the Grenfell Tower fire disaster in London, where fingers were pointed at former UK PM Theresa May specifically and her party in government more generally for policy that led to the fire as well as a poor response afterwards (Figure 4).[169] On the other hand, there are also emotional aspects to blame, such that people blame a person or group as a focal point for their fears, anxieties, guilt, anger, or horror associated with an event, to help psychologically process what has happened.[170]

Figure 4: Rapper Stormzy calls for Theresa May to "do some jail time" and "pay some damages" over the Grenfell Tower fire[171]

[REDACTED]

Given this emotional component, Drabeck and Quarantelli argue that some blamees are 'more satisfying' than others—blaming owners or public officials is satisfying, while blaming

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[167] Emphasis added. Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game', 23. Kathleen McGraw notes that popular politicians have a "cushion of support" when accounting for events. McGraw, 'Managing Blame', 1150.
[168] Drabeck and Quarantelli, 'Scapegoats, Villains, and Disasters'.
[169] "The dysfunctional, and somewhat pathetic, response of Theresa May and the Conservatives is one of the biggest government failures in modern times." MacNeish, 'Theresa May's Biggest Failure Isn't Brexit. Grenfell Is.' See also Guardian article on who is 'really' to blame at Travis, 'Grenfell Tower Fire'.
[170] Drabeck and Quarantelli, 'Scapegoats, Villains, and Disasters'.
[171] Getty Images / Gill, 'Grenfell Inquiry Petition Backed by Stormzy to Be Debated in Parliament after over 100,000 People Sign'.

social structures is not, as these cannot be brought to account. It follows that particular agents of the EU, or an agentic EU, may form satisfying targets for blame.[172]

Such personalisation of blame was seen in the 1980s AIDs crisis in the US, as documented by Renée Sabatier et al.[173] Here, the 'four H's' of homosexuals, haemophiliacs, heroin users, and Haitians were portrayed as to blame for the public health crisis, a prejudice which "foul[ed] the very channels of communication which are essential to the task of public education for AIDS prevention".[174] Haitians became acceptable recipients of blame following a 1982 Center for Disease Control statement identifying them as a potential risk group, and news media linked Haitians with the disease as a result. This led to the "victimisation of Haitian immigrants in the United States, and a collapse of Haiti's tourist industry".[175] Personalising blame for the tragedy in Haitians as villains of the crisis diverted attention from effective action, misrepresented risks, and undermined AIDS education campaigns.[176] In a similar vein, Regina Lawrence argues that using 'individualising' frames rather than 'systemising' ones "limits governmental responsibility".[177] An example of this could be framing around climate change that shifts blame from governments and corporations to individuals who are told to eat less meat, have shorter showers, and reduce/reuse/recycle.

While the above authors do write to some extent about the factors that affect *why* people blame, and how blame diverts attention from action, the underlying nature of what blame is and how it affects different audiences is not made clear—perhaps due to a reliance on process-tracing case studies rather than experimentation.[178] The place of blame in politics is acknowledged, but not fully explored beyond being a form of argument between finger-pointers who blame and counter-blame to shirk responsibility. *Specific* effects are not established, particularly as they pertain to emotions and vilification.

An exception is research from Markus Wagner, who found that "British citizens [experience] anger if they [hold] an actor responsible for a crisis";[179] however, his research uses panel data from a five-year period, wherein firstly party affiliation was established, then three years later participants attributed responsibility for the financial crisis, and nearly a year after that, participants recorded how they felt about the financial crisis. While people's emotions towards the crisis had become entrenched by the final wave of the survey, that does not mean that they were angry 'at' a particular actor, even if they thought they were responsible; the present research for example indicates that people who are pro-EU but do

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[172] See Annex: Who is the EU? for how the EU was personalised by participants in the present research.

[173] Sabatier et al., *Blaming Others: Prejudice, Race, and Worldwide AIDS*.

[174] Sabatier et al., 85.

[175] Sabatier et al., 86; 'AIDS Scare Kills off Haiti's Tourist Industry'.

[176] See also Flom and Post, 'Blame Avoidance and Policy Stability in Developing Democracies'.; policy-makers and judges in Buenos Aires avoid taking on social problems because they do not wish to accept any associated blame. Blame is intertwined with poor policy outcomes.

[177] Lawrence, 'Framing Obesity', 57.

[178] See also Leong and Howlett, 'On Credit and Blame'.; blame needs to be considered from the point of view of audiences, not just policy-makers.

[179] Wagner, 'Fear and Anger in Great Britain', 683.

not wish to *blame* the EU feel angry at a new blamee of their choosing.[180] Thus while Wagner's research provides clues, it considers emotions over the long-term rather than in specific reaction to blame. He points this out, saying "it was not possible to test the specific causal mechanism why individuals were angry about the economy when they blamed their political agents", and that "providing a clearer causal account should be a task for future research"[181]—precisely what the present research redresses, generating related theory. It thereby complements and extends the above existing work on blame in political science.

2.3.5.   Hobolt and Tilley and '*Blaming Europe?*'

Hobolt and Tilley, in *Blaming Europe?*, theorise the effects of blame to an extent, taking trust and legitimacy, clarity and accountability into account. They acknowledge several 'perceptual screens' that influence the effectiveness of blame. These include existing partisanship, such that citizens who are pro-EU interpret positive outcomes as more positive, and negative outcomes as less negative—partisanship *moderates* the effectiveness of blame, intensifying or mitigating effects.[182] The reverse applies for those who are anti-EU.[183] Another heuristic device is taking cues from the discourse of political elites, interest groups[184], trusted parties, and experts.[185] For this reason, instances of blame in the discourse of anti-EU parties—such as the Leave campaign—could become important in moulding audience perceptions. As these authors' work relates to the effects of blame in the specific case of the EU as in the current research, it is considered in some detail—though as noted, the objective of this work is to go beyond the Brexit case study to broader theoretical conclusions.

2.3.5.a)   Clarity and accountability

Hobolt and Tilley suggest identifying responsibility becomes complicated in multi-party systems, or where there are multiple levels of governance—as in the EU.[186] Politicians have the option to shift blame vertically up or down, as well as horizontally to their opposition.[187] In federal systems where different levels have clearly differentiated responsibilities, vertical blame-shifting is less successful, as constituents find it easier to ascertain which level is

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[180] See E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.

[181] Wagner, 'Fear and Anger in Great Britain', 700.

[182] This has to an extent been demonstrated by León, Jurado, and Garmendia Madariaga, 'Passing the Buck?' as described above.

[183] Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*; Wilson and Hobolt, 'Allocating Responsibility in Multilevel Government Systems: Voter and Expert Attributions in the European Union'.

[184] Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance', 383. describes interest groups as increasingly sophisticated in generating blame.

[185] Kumlin, 'Blaming Europe? Exploring the Variable Impact of National Public Service Dissatisfaction on EU Trust'.

[186] Wilson and Hobolt, 'Allocating Responsibility in Multilevel Government Systems: Voter and Expert Attributions in the European Union'.

[187] See also Heinkelmann-Wild and Zangl, 'Multilevel Blame Games'; Arceneaux, 'The Federal Face of Voting'; Arceneaux and Stein, 'Who Is Held Responsible When Disaster Strikes?'

responsible for a given action. Overlapping and shared competences make this more difficult.[188]

This links to ideas of governmental and institutional clarity.[189] According to this framework, to understand who is at 'fault', constituents have to know two things: which institution is the site of the blame, and which body within that institution is to blame.[190] If they disagree with a decision, they can hold the party responsible accountable, by voting them in or out of office.[191] Where there is a single clear figure representative of the 'government', such as the British Prime Minister or American President, they can be used as an individual recipient of blame and responsibility.[192] This helps consolidate governmental clarity. Within the EU, clarity is hampered by lack of such a distinct figure, as well as through the sharing of functional and causal responsibility within and between the EU and national governments.[193] This goes some way to explaining how the EU might be more susceptible to blaming; it is a 'blurry', salient, and convenient blamee—as a body without a head, it can have no voice with which to refute claims.[194] This reflects the personalisation of blame described above, wherein even vague bodies such as 'Haitians' can be vilified through blame.

2.3.5.b) Trust and legitimacy

Hobolt and Tilley argue that blame may erode the legitimacy of the EU by reducing trust.[195] This rests upon the notion of 'output legitimacy', which considers the resonance between outcomes and citizen values, and whether or not an outcome conforms to the community's normative principles.[196] This may be measured by 'trust', as in the Eurobarometer

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[188] Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*

[189] Hobolt and Tilley.

[190] See also discussion of causal vs functional responsibility in federal systems in Arceneaux, 'The Federal Face of Voting'. He notes that not all voters act as the federalist voting thesis—that federal systems are too complicated for voters to understand—predicts.

[191] See also Annex: Accountability in the FGIs for a discussion of what 'holding someone to account' meant for research participants. According to Weiler, 'In the Face of Crisis: Input Legitimacy, Output Legitimacy and the Political Messianism of European Integration', 830., the EU lacks a 'meaningful mechanism' for democratic accountability due to its non-partisan nature.

[192] Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance', 373–74.

[193] Wilson and Hobolt, 'Allocating Responsibility in Multilevel Government Systems: Voter and Expert Attributions in the European Union'. See also León, Jurado, and Garmendia Madariaga, 'Passing the Buck?'

[194] See also Malhotra and Kuo, 'Attributing Blame'. "[T]he use of office cues may not be evidence of extremely high political sophistication... Yet, we consider this reasoning normatively superior to partisan-based attribution, which is devoid of consideration of the responsibilities of various levels of government." (p. 131).

[195] Weaver notes that negative messaging such as blame is in turn more credible under conditions of mistrust. Weaver, 'The Nays Have It', 275.

[196] Schmidt, 'The Eurozone's Crisis of Democratic Legitimacy. Can the EU Rebuild Public Trust and Support for European Economic Integration?'

surveys;[197] trust indicates that policy is "accepted by the public as appropriate and justified".[198]

When things go badly, "voters trust the EU institutions less, … especially [when] they think the EU is responsible".[199] Blaming the EU can reduce trust by creating "negative images in voters' minds" that "can undermine confidence";[200] there is a direct link between blaming the EU and erosion of its legitimacy. A natural consequence of loss of legitimacy is a loss of support, and EU-blaming could therefore have been an effective strategy for the Leave campaign to reduce the EU's legitimacy and support in the United Kingdom, and help to support a 'Leave' vote.

However, while 'trust' suggests a relationship and/or emotions, it is not clear what these *are*. What does trust indicate? Is declining trust a good enough reason by itself to vote out? Can a trusted agent have a 'bad day', or make one angry, without losing overall trust?[201] Clearly one does not trust a villain, once that villain is established—but this explanation does not describe how the villain is *made*. This is necessarily redressed in the present research as follows:

2.3.5.c)   'Feeling' the effects?

Prescribing blame—clarity and accountability

Hobolt and Tilley argue that (1) improved information affects people's allocation of responsibility to the EU; (2) most people are not interested in politics; (3) allocation of blame to one EU institution results in similar voter conceptions for all other EU institutions; (4) there is no evidence of performance voting in European Parliamentary elections, and responsibility evaluations do not matter in those elections.[202] This appears to lead to two conclusions: most people are not interested in gaining improved information about the functioning of the EU, so clarity will not be improved; and EU blaming does not necessarily result in performance voting, so either blaming is ineffective, or does not work to enhance clarity of accountability in normal EU elections. Indeed, information is described as a 'moderator' in the attribution of responsibility[203]—mitigating or intensifying attributions—

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[197] Trust in the Parliament correlates with that in the Commission and Council, indicating trust level is shared between EU institutions. Kumlin, 'Blaming Europe? Exploring the Variable Impact of National Public Service Dissatisfaction on EU Trust'; Boomgaarden et al., 'Mapping EU Attitudes'.

[198] Schmidt, 'The Eurozone's Crisis of Democratic Legitimacy. Can the EU Rebuild Public Trust and Support for European Economic Integration?', 12. See also Leong and Howlett, 'On Credit and Blame'., who argue blame and credit need to be studied from the view of the public rather than just politicians who 'do' blame, and that this needs to be analysed vis-à-vis public legitimation.

[199] Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*, 24.

[200] Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance', 14.

[201] Trust in the EU depends on emotional attachment and utilitarian considerations. Harteveld, Meer, and Vries, 'In Europe We Trust?'.

[202] Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*

[203] Noah Carl et al have found that Leavers and Remainers alike had similar general knowledge of the EU, though on partisan questions, they are more likely to get right those questions that reflect their bias. I.e. It is not clear that further *general* information about the EU would have made a difference to referendum voting. Carl, Richards, and Heath, 'Leave and Remain Voters' Knowledge of the EU after the Referendum of 2016'.

rather than definitive, which leaves the question: what other moderators are there, and how do these elements affect outcomes?[204]

This relates to a focus on blaming as *prescriptive*, as in the legalistic sense of informed juries, whereby audiences' blaming would be improved were they required to sit and listen to an argument, and employ systematic thought which is as unbiased as possible in order to correctly allocate accountability. This does not seem to reflect the picture of the angry demagogue, or the Brexit voter: pro-Leave slogans focused on heuristic, and occasionally non-factual information such as the infamous 'side of the bus' ad,[205] while the pro-Remain campaign was nick-named 'Project Fear', not 'Project Education'. Accurately informing voters (logos) may not have been as much of a priority as persuading them emotionally (pathos). Capturing this would require a descriptive, rather than prescriptive, approach.

It is worth noting that even in perfect circumstances where we have full access to information and time to process, we are affected by our underlying 'affective' states—for instance, hungry judges make faster decisions.[206] While Hobolt and Tilley explain that citizens can judge responsibility in a broadly similar manner to political experts when called to do so[207]—noting that there is no reason to expect political experts would be immune to the effects of exogenous blame—is employing motivated systematic thinking when called to do so really the same activity that audiences undertake when listening to demagogues laying blame against a party?[208] Are blame attributions and reactions to blame well-reasoned, or are they associated with spontaneous and emotional effects?[209] The present research understands that the latter is of vital importance, hence focusing on the emotional effects of exogenous blaming of the EU in order to generate theory about the vilifying effects of blame more widely. It thereby extends the work of Hobolt and Tilley.

Feelings and 'perceptual screens'—trust and legitimacy
In *Blaming Europe?*, 'perceptual screens' are devices by which audiences filter blame, including existing biases, such as trust held in the system (as a function of output legitimacy) and in-group biases.[210] Partisanship is not the only reason for bias—"attitudes towards the different levels of government"[211] and information are moderating factors. Despite a presumable relation between trust and emotions, the role of emotions as either inputs to or

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[204] The empirical chapters of the current research will go on to show that existing knowledge *mediates*, rather than simply *moderates*, the effects of exogenous blame.

[205] That leaving the EU would mean an additional £350 million for the National Health Service ('NHS') each week. See Figure 32: The 'NHS' bus.

[206] Danziger, Levav, and Avnaim-Pesso, 'Extraneous Factors in Judicial Decisions'., though see also Bublitz, 'What Is Wrong with Hungry Judges?'; Glöckner, 'The Irrational Hungry Judge Effect Revisited: Simulations Reveal That the Magnitude of the Effect Is Overestimated'.

[207] "We demonstrate that citizens are broadly similar to political experts in their judgements of responsibility for different policy areas" Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*, 142.

[208] See also Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. on 'thinking fast' (heuristically and efficiently) and 'slow' (with increased processing and information seeking).

[209] See also discussion of effect endurance in 4.4.1 Survey-experiment.

[210] Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*, 141.

[211] Hobolt and Tilley, 141.

outputs of blame is not discussed. Additionally, the possibility of differentiated effects for distinct audiences is not evaluated, other than through the suggestion that some in-groups have different biases to others. Emphasising clarity of accountability, in-group bias and associated partisanship over emotions and other 'perceptual screens' may not tell the whole story. This limitation is acknowledged:

> "to understand citizen responsibility evaluations, it is not sufficient to look at the institutional context; we must also examine individual-level predispositions and notably in-group biases … [and p]artisanship is not the only source of such biases"[212]

The present research helps to redress this gap by engaging with audience characteristics beyond partisanship, including pre-existing emotions, personality, and select value systems as discussed further in 2.3.8 below.[213]

Who is blaming

Hobolt and Tilley's focus is on the EU and political actors in mainstream politics. They do not examine blaming by parties outside of formal government, like the Leave or Remain campaigns. This is noteworthy given they "find very limited evidence of any blameshifting by national politicians to the EU level despite analysing speeches made during an economic crisis"[214]—perhaps either blaming is not important, or blaming by national politicians is not the most (or only) important source of blame in affecting audience perceptions. Again, the present research addresses this possibility through examining the effects of blame performed by exogovernmental parties.[215] It thereby complements work on the discourses of populist parties (e.g. Vasilopoulou et al)[216] and forms a novel contribution its examination of the vilifying effects of third-party blame done by parties outside of government itself. This in turn highlights the capacity of so-called 'challenger parties'[217]—and even foreign actors—to influence political outcomes through strategic use of blame.

Implications of blame

Lastly, does *Blaming Europe*'s focus on political sanctioning via election overlook other potential implications of blame—victimisation, violence, vilification, revanchism, and above all, emotions? Hobolt and Tilley make reference to ideas of *identity* as being important—for example, the lack of a strong European identity in blame uptake regarding Europe[218]—but not as to how this may be affected by blame, or indeed, produce it. As Hobolt later argues, "vote choices are not always driven by identities or attitudes towards the issues at stake, but also by feelings about the political establishment more generally and the government in

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[212] Hobolt and Tilley, 143.

[213] See particularly E4: Blame and underlying characteristics.

[214] Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*, 143.

[215] This could be considered important in light of the rise of so-called 'challenger parties'. Hobolt and Tilley, 'Fleeing the Centre: The Rise of Challenger Parties in the Aftermath of the Euro Crisis'; Vries and Hobolt, *Political Entrepreneurs*.

[216] Vasilopoulou, Halikiopoulou, and Exadaktylos, 'Greece in Crisis'.

[217] Vries and Hobolt, *Political Entrepreneurs*.

[218] Identity as a moderator is supported by Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, '"They Did It"', 870.: "Emotionalized blame attributions have the strongest effects for citizens with weaker identity attachments."

particular"[219]—emotions are important. The present work uses the groups of 'Leaver' and 'Remainer'[220] to demonstrate that existing knowledge (including preferences) mediates who is blamed, and therefore who has negative emotions directed towards them—and ultimately becomes a villain. It demonstrates that, as for levels of blame attribution (following section), partisanship is a key mediator of the effects of exogenous blame.

2.3.6.   Blame attribution and avoidance

While Hobolt and Tilley pose theory on how blame leads to lowered trust, particularly in circumstances of poor clarity, other researchers have focused on different effects. Particularly, there has been significant examination of how exogenous blaming and varying attitudes and beliefs produce different responsibility attributions amongst audiences, occasionally extending to consideration of related voting effects. This work typically asks *how much* to blame a given party is, using Likert scales and asking participants to mark how responsible each listed party is.[221] It often uses survey-experiments—as in the present research—as opposed to qualitative case studies, in order to examine specific causal relationships.[222]

For example, Martin Sievert et al found that when public opinion favours blame, more blame is actually allocated, demonstrating the role of social pressure in producing blame amongst audiences.[223] Michael Hameleers et al have shown that blaming political elites causes Dutch voters to become more likely to vote for populist parties; that those higher in perceptions of relative deprivation are more likely to choose to read populist messages and then agree with blame if it is congruent with their existing beliefs; and that emotional blame attributions cause people with weak national identity attachment to accept and reiterate blame of the Dutch government.[224] Andrew Healy et al—amongst others—have illustrated that partisan bias is key to the allocation of blame, particularly when an official is portrayed as functionally responsible for the problem at hand.[225]   This may complement work on blame's interaction with cultural discourses, per 2.3.3.

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[219] Hobolt, 'The Brexit Vote: A Divided Nation, a Divided Continent', 1265.

[220] These are established as 'identities' in the post-Brexit UK per Hobolt, Leeper, and Tilley, 'Divided by the Vote: Affective Polarization in the Wake of Brexit'.; they continue to have salience as identities in 2021, though this is declining—however, associated 'dislike' (affective polarisation) between people who support Leave/Remain continues per Ipsos MORI. Adamson, *The Reality of Brexit*.

[221] This differs from the current research, which allows people to blame and (re)blame whomever they would like. The present research does not aim to examine 'how much' responsibility given parties have, or how the responsibility pie is divided between parties. See also Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, 'Framing Blame'., where the authors give an open-ended question to establish who is at fault and then code the blamees that arise.

[222] See also Wenzelburger and Hörisch, 'Framing Effects and Comparative Social Policy Reform', 162.

[223] Sievert et al., 'The Power of Conformity in Citizens' Blame'.

[224] Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, "'They Did It'", 893; Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, 'Selective Exposure to Populist Communication'; Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, 'Framing Blame'.

[225] See also Healy, Kuo, and Malhotra, 'Partisan Bias in Blame Attribution'; Malhotra and Kuo, 'Attributing Blame'; Tilley and Hobolt, 'Is the Government to Blame?'; Bisgaard, 'Bias Will Find a Way'; Baekgaard and Serritzlew, 'Interpreting Performance Information'.

Meanwhile, John Marvel and Amanda Girth have investigated whether outsourcing services to private contractors or the length of 'accountability chains' affect blame attributions; Kathleen McGraw finds that justifications work better to attenuate blame attributions than do excuses, while Raanan Sulitzeanu-Kenan finds public inquiries do little to defray blame attributions within the UK.[226]

While the present work does consider blame attributions in the form of (re)blaming—when an interlocutor consumes blame and then either re-blames that same party or instead counter-blames somebody else—its primary concern is not how much attributions *shift* as an outcome of consuming blame, or because people have perceptions of relative deprivation, for instance. Rather, it is concerned with the emotional, vilifying effects of the blame itself.

Kathleen McGraw conducts research in this general direction, asking participants to read vignettes containing excuses and justifications for a poor outcome. She then uses 101-point feeling thermometers to evaluate the discussed policy and representative, and Likert scales to establish how deserving of blame or credit the representative is.[227] However, while such work considers general positive/negative feelings towards representatives and policies, its focus is on excuses and justifications as ways to unravel or contest blame rather than the effects of blame itself, and it does not emerge specific emotions. For instance, does feeling positive towards a representative mean feeling love towards them? Happiness? Contentment? This is particularly important when it comes to negative emotions such as fear, sadness, or anger, which have different implications as far as mental processing and actions[228]—and as such, perhaps vilification. The multifarious and constructed nature of emotions is discussed in the following chapter, while the present work emerges precisely what emotions people say they feel after blame, allowing specific examination of vilifying effects. It thus fills an important gap in the research while complementing the projects of existing authors.

2.3.7. Blame is emotional

Vitally for the present research, psychological literature does establish that blame is associated with emotions.[229] Some authors go so far as to argue that blame *is* an emotion, with Sana Sheikh and Meghan McNamara suggesting that "certain emotion categories are in

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[226] Marvel and Girth, 'Citizen Attributions of Blame in Third-Party Governance'; McGraw, 'Managing Blame'; Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 'If They Get It Right'.

[227] McGraw, 'Managing Blame'.

[228] E.g. Kim and Cameron, 'Emotions Matter in Crisis'; Lerner and Tiedens, 'Portrait of the Angry Decision Maker'; Lerner et al., 'Emotion and Decision Making'; Frijda, *The Emotions*; Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff, 'Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism'; Vasilopoulou and Wagner, 'Fear, Anger and Enthusiasm about the European Union'; Halperin, Sharvit, and Gross, 'Emotion and Emotion Regulation in Intergroup Conflict'; Vasilopoulou and Wagner, 'Emotions and Domestic Vote Choice'; Tiedens and Linton, 'Judgment under Emotional Certainty and Uncertainty'; Rico, Guinjoan, and Anduiza, 'The Emotional Underpinnings of Populism'; Spanovic et al., 'Fear and Anger as Predictors of Motivation for Intergroup Aggression'.

[229] "Attributions exert a causal influence on the elicitation of emotions." Neumann, 'The Causal Influences of Attributions on Emotions'.

fact types of blame".[230] When we blame ourselves, we feel regret, shame, or guilt; when we blame others, we feel contempt, disgust, outrage, or anger. These emotions are "not side effects … but a necessary component of blame itself." However, while their research acknowledges that emotion is important in blaming, it essentialises and universalises emotions; their framework also doesn't allow for contestation of blame, or blame that results in different people feeling different emotions as in the present research.[231] A similar issue arises in the work of Leonhard Menges, who attempts to defend emotional accounts of blame; he claims that "we can only blame another agent if we have a kind of anger toward her"—but this conflates the effects of blame with its performance.[232] Blame does not just arise from anger: one can be disappointed, then blame the perpetrator in asking them to do better in future. Sher gives the example of blaming a loved one without feeling negative towards them.[233] Blame may also result in emotions other than anger, such as feeling sorry for the victim. Anger can even *be* blamed, as in cases of domestic violence, where anger can be at fault for the batterer hitting their partner.[234] As such it seems nonsensical that blame *is* an emotion, or that there is a 1:1 relation between blame and any given emotion. As Malle et al put it, "There is the nontrivial fact that we can say, '[they] felt anger' but not '[they] felt blame.'"[235]

That said, previous research has established apparent *tendencies* in terms of which emotions are associated with blame. Psychological research indicates three possible recipients for blame: the self ("I crashed the car"), an Other ("they pulled out in front of me"), or a situation ("the rain made the roads slippery").[236] The relation between these recipients of blame and emotions per previous research is summarised in Table 1. The current research notes that 'we as a member of a group' may also be a target for blame, potentially with unique emotional effects, thus making a conceptual contribution.

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[230] Sheikh and McNamara, 'Insights from Self-Blame and Victim Blaming', 241.
[231] There is also reason to be cautious of this paper; while interesting and embedded in existing blame literature, there are some problematic citations. For instance, they refer to a concept of "hateful derogation" from Malle et al, citing Furlong and Young 1996; Furlong and Young use this phrase and attribute it to Malle et al without citing it. The researcher could not locate an instance of the author Malle referring to "hateful derogation"; I.e. Sheikh and McNamara, following Furlong and Young, attributed an emotional concept that was not necessarily present in the works of the cited author.
[232] Menges, 'The Emotion Account of Blame', 267.
[233] Sher, *In Praise of Blame*.
[234] Henning, Jones, and Holdford, '"I Didn't Do It, but If I Did I Had a Good Reason"'.
[235] Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame', 150. Ye Sun et al find that blame is "a blend of the cognitive belief of responsibility and the affective experience of anger", though they refer to endogenous, cognitive processes, and begin from a position of expecting anger as an outcome, erasing other potential affective experiences. Sun et al., 'Mobilizing the Public in Saving the Bonneville Salt Flats', 313.
[236] Smith et al., 'In Search of the" Hot" Cognitions'; Stuewig et al., 'Shaming, Blaming, and Maiming: Functional Links among the Moral Emotions, Externalization of Blame, and Aggression'.

Table 1: Internal and external effects of blaming different agents

Blamee	Internally-facing effects	Externally-facing effects
Self	Guilt, shame[237]	Make amends; prevent event from happening again.
Situation	Sadness or fear[238]	Prevent event from happening again
Other	Anger or rage[239]	Hold agent accountable, ostensibly to prevent event from re-occurring

Other-blaming is preferable: blaming an Other rather than oneself helps preserve individual self-esteem,[240] and blaming an Other over a situation helps to re-instil feelings of control and a sense of agency over one's life.[241] Karl Aquino et al suggest this may be particularly applicable for those low in self-perceived hierarchical status, for whom those at the very bottom of a hierarchy (easy targets—'punching down') as well as those at the very top (elites/bosses—'punching up') may prove the most satisfying targets for blame and revanchism;[242] something that resounds in an age of so-called populism.[243] Quigley and Tedeschi suggest blame is a precedent to anger. Thus feeling angry may lead to blame, and blame—particularly blame of an Other—to anger.[244]

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[237] Neumann, 'The Causal Influences of Attributions on Emotions'; Sheikh and McNamara, 'Insights from Self-Blame and Victim Blaming'; Smith et al., 'In Search of the" Hot" Cognitions'; Lerner and Tiedens, 'Portrait of the Angry Decision Maker'.; though see also Stuewig et al., 'Shaming, Blaming, and Maiming: Functional Links among the Moral Emotions, Externalization of Blame, and Aggression'., who find shame correlates with externalisation of blame (as well as empathetic concern and perspective-taking)

[238] Kim and Cameron, 'Emotions Matter in Crisis'; Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff, 'Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism'. Sad people see situationally-caused negative events as more likely and situational forces as more responsible than do angry people; fear and anxiety are more likely than anger where the cause is unknown. Lerner and Tiedens, 'Portrait of the Angry Decision Maker'.

[239] Neumann, 'The Causal Influences of Attributions on Emotions'; Sheikh and McNamara, 'Insights from Self-Blame and Victim Blaming'; Aquino, Tripp, and Bies, 'How Employees Respond to Personal Offense'; Smith et al., 'In Search of the" Hot" Cognitions'; Kim and Cameron, 'Emotions Matter in Crisis'; Lerner, Goldberg, and Tetlock, 'Sober Second Thought'; Lerner and Tiedens, 'Portrait of the Angry Decision Maker'; Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff, 'Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism'; Quigley and Tedeschi, 'Mediating Effects of Blame Attributions on Feelings of Anger'; Meier and Robinson, 'Does Quick to Blame Mean Quick to Anger?'; Tangney and Dearing, *Shame and Guilt*.

[240] Brené Brown notes the work of June Tangney and Ronda Dearing, where we 'turn the tables' when we are ashamed by blaming others, and that when we blame others we experience self-righteous anger. Brown, *I Thought It Was Just Me (but It Isn't)*, 214; Tangney and Dearing, *Shame and Guilt*.

[241] See for example Tennen and Affleck, 'Blaming Others for Threatening Events'; Stuewig et al., 'Shaming, Blaming, and Maiming: Functional Links among the Moral Emotions, Externalization of Blame, and Aggression'; Drabeck and Quarantelli, 'Scapegoats, Villains, and Disasters'; Shaver, 'Defensive Attribution'; Furlong and Young, 'Talking about Blame'.

[242] Aquino, Tripp, and Bies, 'How Employees Respond to Personal Offense'.

[243] Sofia Vasilopoulou et al illustrate that populism in Greece is partially expressed via blame-shifting—specifically by blaming 'others' for the economic crisis. Michael Hameleers et al meanwhile highlight that blame is essential to populism, as it helps construct both a moral (good/bad) and a causal (active/disempowered) divide between the people and the elite. Vasilopoulou, Halikiopoulou, and Exadaktylos, 'Greece in Crisis'; Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, 'Selective Exposure to Populist Communication'.

[244] Deborah Small, Jennifer Lerner, and Baruch Fischoff argue that anger provokes more causal attributions—I.e. blaming—than the other negative emotions of sadness or fear. (Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff, 'Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism'.) See also Neumann, 'The Causal Influences of

Notably, despite Sher's argument that one can blame a loved one without feeling negatively towards them,[245] emotional effects of other-blaming beyond anger do not appear in the literature. This implies that blaming a loved one for failing to do the dishes could render them a villain—or at least, prompt a break-up, rendering personal relationships rather difficult. It seems intuitive that other-blame does not *always* result in anger, nor in the creation of villains—but this notion is not apparent in previous research, meaning it must be specifically examined.

Even with the above established, there are several further reasons to conduct the present research:

- Existing work on blame and emotions tends to have low external validity for the political sphere, as well as for the effects of exogenous blame. For example, Craig Smith et al's study includes 120 undergraduates from Vanderbilt University who read one of four vignettes, were asked to imagine themselves in the situation described and answer questions about accountability and emotions: *endogenous* blame behaviour was sought. The vignettes concerned performing poorly on an exam, missing study group, competing with a friend for an internship interview, and failing to provide transportation to friends.[246] It is not clear that results from such studies are generalisable to the political sphere, particularly given participants were asked to imagine being in the scenario and generate blame as a result. The study therefore pertained to endogenous blame, arising within the participant, rather than the effects of third-party, exogenous blaming as in the current study. This research therefore extends the validity and applicability of existing research, which is helpful for social psychology and political science alike.
- In a similar vein, existing research has almost entirely used captive undergraduate audiences, typically in the US.[247] The present research extends investigation of the

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Attributions on Emotions'; Lerner and Tiedens, 'Portrait of the Angry Decision Maker'; Quigley and Tedeschi, 'Mediating Effects of Blame Attributions on Feelings of Anger'. If blame does indeed make people angry, and angry people blame more, then blaming could become cyclical (though see E4).

[245] "We may, for example, feel no hostility toward the loved one whom we blame for failing to tell a sensitive acquaintance a hard truth, the criminal whom we blame for a burglary we read about in the newspaper, or the historical figure whom we blame for the misdeeds he performed long ago. … [B]laming is something that we can do regretfully or dispassionately and that need not be accompanied by any rancor or withdrawal of good will." Sher, *In Praise of Blame*, 88. I.e. Things like time and relationships (both stories/discourses) could mediate the emotional effects of blame.

[246] Smith et al., 'In Search of the" Hot" Cognitions'.

[247] Roland Neumann was one exception, using 29 undergraduate students at the University of Würzburg in Germany (a low sample size, and noting that observers could assess participants' verbal responses as only guilty, angry, or neither); as was Gerold Mikula in Austria who sought 'feelings of injustice' amongst female psychology and education students. Suiltzeanu-Kenan did examine effects upon UK audiences, noting that "Unlike many experiments of this type, this study did not rely on undergraduate students but rather on a varied sample of the British public"—though her work was specifically on the blame avoidance technique of appointing public inquiries. Lerner et al's 1998 study used 278 US undergraduate students; Kim and Cameron had 240 undergraduate students at a Midwestern US university; Stuewig et al involved an entirely US audience in study waves (250 college students, then 234 early adolescents, then 507 inmates, then 250 at-risk youth in middle adolescence); Henning worked with people convicted of domestic violence in

effects of blame into a UK audience, while using a more realistic audience of UK voters rather than undergraduate students to enhance ecological validity.[248] This is particularly important given the nature of emotions (and narratives in which those emotions are bound up) as embedded in *culture*.[249]

- Prior research has a risk of essentialising emotions through use of limited selectable emotions,[250] preventing the emergence of surprising emotions as a result of blame, such as compassion. Only anger as a villain-type feeling is predicted as a potential outcome of (endogenous) blame, and this is not linked to vilification. The present research's critical, abductive approach and use of mixed methods, embedded in a methodology driven by a conception of emotions as constructed, overcomes this to emerge both direct and indirect pathways for vilification of blamed others.

The present work then builds upon and extends literature on the emotional effects of blame by considering the effects of exogenous blame specifically. By synthesising findings from various fields and literatures, it acknowledges the work done on the psychology of blame and usefully translates this to blame in political contexts.

2.3.8.   The role of audiences

Per 2.1.1, in this research 'audience' means all those people exposed to a given discursive act. Discourse creates its own audience, so that interested parties go beyond the intended addressees; when a politician speaks, they are producing speech not only for their supporters or would-be supporters, but also their detractors and wider communities that could encounter that speech in global news or on social media. Audience goes beyond addressees. In the current work, that means going beyond considering what effects occurred amongst Brexiteers when Farage blamed the EU, to include a wider audience—Remainers, and the more ambivalent. For pragmatic reasons, it does not proceed to audiences outside of the UK itself, other than when briefly considering implications for other Member States of the EU in E5. The researcher herself could be considered an audience member per 1.5.2, as could readers of this thesis when consuming examples of blame contained herein. However, beyond how the Brexit campaign led the researcher to undertake the research, neither the researcher nor its examiners are the audiences under

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Tennessee. Lerner and Tiedens' 2006 study was a theoretical review, as was that of Sheikh and McNamara. Hameleers et al tend to work with Dutch voters, while McGraw again used US undergraduate audiences. Neumann, 'The Causal Influences of Attributions on Emotions'; Mikula, 'Testing an Attribution-of-Blame Model of Judgments of Injustice'; Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 'If They Get It Right', 633; Lerner, Goldberg, and Tetlock, 'Sober Second Thought'; Kim and Cameron, 'Emotions Matter in Crisis'; Stuewig et al., 'Shaming, Blaming, and Maiming: Functional Links among the Moral Emotions, Externalization of Blame, and Aggression'; Henning, Jones, and Holdford, '"I Didn't Do It, but If I Did I Had a Good Reason"'; Lerner and Tiedens, 'Portrait of the Angry Decision Maker'; Sheikh and McNamara, 'Insights from Self-Blame and Victim Blaming'; Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, '"They Did It"'; Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, 'Selective Exposure to Populist Communication'; McGraw, 'Managing Blame'.

[248] See 5.4 Who voted for Brexit? and 4.5 Reliability, replication, and validity.
[249] See 3.3 Constructing emotions.
[250] E.g. Mikula permits 'angry', 'guilty' and 'none' only. Mikula, 'Testing an Attribution-of-Blame Model of Judgments of Injustice'.

consideration. When speaking of the audience to the Brexit campaign then, the focus herein is on the British voting-aged public. But does it matter who audiences are, beyond Aristotle's argument that speakers must know their audience to be effective? Do audiences act like homogenous blobs, or is there something about groups or individuals that in some way filters, mediates, moderates, or otherwise variously interferes with the discursive effects of exogenous blame?

Hobolt and Tilley mention 'perceptual shields' as means by which audiences could potentially moderate or mediate the recipient of blame, or how much blame is accorded to a given actor. This is supported by a range of work on partisanship and blame attribution (2.3.6), as well as work indicating cultural stories influence the effects of blame.

Notably, there is an ever-growing body of work that suggests our underlying characteristics mediate or moderate in some way how we react to specific discourses. Infamously, Jonathan Haidt puts forth a range of 'moral foundations'—care/harm,[251] fairness/cheating, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation, loyalty/betrayal, and liberty/oppression. He claims that, depending on which of these foundations we have been inculcated into, we react differently to messages.[252] For instance, he posits that US Democrats are most responsive to messages focusing on the care and fairness foundations of morality.[253] While Moral Foundations Theory is not without its detractors,[254] Niemi and Young used the concept of 'binding values'—incorporating loyalty/betrayal, sanctity, and authority foundations—in their work on perceptions of victims and (endogenous) victim-blaming. They found binding values predict ratings of victims as contaminated, increase victim-blaming, and reduce focus on perpetrators.[255] Given blame has a role in creating groups—who belongs and how they may act[256]—the 'in-group value' (loyalty/betrayal) component may be particularly important, and is considered in the empirical work of this thesis (see 4.4.1).

Further, the Cambridge Analytica scandal, whereby individuals were micro-targeted with messages based on their psychometric profiles, suggests that other underlying characteristics may be important when it comes to the effects of messaging. The Cambridge

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[251] The way in which blame is minimally defined herein, as relating only to *harm*, could indicate the relevance of a care/harm foundation; however, there is no comparison made between messages containing blame-as-harm and credit-as-care, and so it is not considered further here.

[252] Arguments over whether Haidt is correct in his theory, and the origins of foundations as nature/nurture, are beyond the scope of this thesis.

[253] Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*.

[254] E.g. Suhler and Churchland, 'Can Innate, Modular "Foundations" Explain Morality?'. See also Kidd and Vitriol, 'Moral Leadership in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election'., which notes how partisans' moral foundations can shift to align better with their favoured party, saying that the moral foundations questionnaire "may be tapping a more contextualized state, rather than innate or trait dimension of personality" (p. 18).

[255] Niemi and Young, 'When and Why We See Victims as Responsible'.

[256] Ryan, *Blaming the Victim*.

Analytica ('CA') case is particularly interesting, given whistle-blower Christopher Wylie indicates that engendering emotions via targeting was a specific intention:

> "The ultimate aim is to trigger negative emotions and thought processes associated with impulsive, erratic or compulsive behaviour."[257]

One of the items targeted by CA was Just World Beliefs ('JWBs'). These are the notion that the world is essentially fair, and one gets what one deserves. CA found that those higher in JWBs "were more likely to agree with the idea that minorities were to blame for socioeconomic disparities between races."[258] This link between Just World Beliefs and blame is apparent elsewhere; per Alan Lambert and Katherine Raichle, "[m]ost introductory textbooks in social psychology hold a common assumption that just world beliefs play a major role in the process by which people blame the victim."[259] That said, Lambert and Raichle have found that JWBs are not as strong or reliable as other types of constructs in predicting endogenous victim-blaming.[260]

Cambridge Analytica also targeted people with specific personality profiles, as measured by the 'Big Five Factor' model of personality. This incorporates openness, conscientiousness (targeted by CA),[261] extraversion, agreeability, and neuroticism. Previous research on endogenous blame has indicated that lower agreeability is linked to increased re-blaming and heightened anger in response to blame.[262] Meanwhile, Eyal Gamliel et al have suggested based on studies with undergraduate Israeli students that more agreeable people are more sensitive to social issues and thus distributive justice in related scenarios—higher agreeability moderates the effects of both 'they deserve it' and 'they should be denied it' frames.[263] This complements an emerging literature on interactions between personality and framing effects.[264]

As mentioned in 2.3.6, Hameleers et al have found that emotional blame attributions cause people with weak national identity attachment to accept and reiterate blame of the Dutch government.[265] The consideration of emotions is echoed in other work, which indicates

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[257] Wylie, *Mindf*ck*, 48.

[258] Wylie, 129.

[259] Lambert and Raichle, 'The Role of Political Ideology in Mediating Judgments of Blame in Rape Victims and Their Assailants', 861. This tends to be premised on Melvin Lerner's work on innocent victims and JWBs, e.g. Lerner and Simmons, 'Observer's Reaction to the" Innocent Victim"'.; "rejection and devaluation of a suffering victim are primarily based on the observer's need to believe in a just world".

[260] Lambert and Raichle, 'The Role of Political Ideology in Mediating Judgments of Blame in Rape Victims and Their Assailants'.

[261] Wylie, *Mindf*ck*.

[262] Meier and Robinson, 'Does Quick to Blame Mean Quick to Anger?'

[263] As the Cambridge Analytica whistle-blowers had not yet published their accounts at the time of experiment design in the current research, and as conscientiousness had not appeared as related to emotional/vilifying outcomes of blame, conscientiousness is not considered further in this research. Gamliel, Zohar, and Kreiner, 'Personality Traits Moderate Attribute Framing Effects'.

[264] E.g. Anderson, 'Framing Traits'; Soutter, Bates, and Mõttus, 'Big Five and HEXACO Personality Traits, Proenvironmental Attitudes, and Behaviors'.

[265] Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, '"They Did It"', 893; Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, 'Selective Exposure to Populist Communication'; Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, 'Framing Blame'.

angry people perform more endogenous blame.[266] In addition, previous research has found that the cultural discourses to which we are subject affect the outcome of endogenous blame such that, for example, rape myth acceptance leads to great victim-blaming in cases of interpersonal assault.[267] While it is impractical to gain comprehensive data about every discourse to which one is subject in a necessarily limited doctoral project, data about how people identify, as a measure of the stories to which they ascribe importance, could be used to check for interactions between the stories we tell about the world and who we are in it (see also 4.4.1, where methodological choices are made and discussed).

Each of the above bodies of work suggests that underlying characteristics—whether existing emotions, value systems, identity, or personality—in some way influence the outcome of blame; they are perceptual shields going beyond partisanship. But is this true as far as vilification goes, and does it hold for exogenous blame? Several of the examples above relate to the effects of endogenous blame only—this may provide clues, but do underlying characteristics influence the effects of exogenous blame in the same way? Do they matter for vilification? Other work does consider exogenous blame—notably as in the claims of Cambridge Analytica—but there has been scepticism about CA's claims even from within their own parent company.[268] As these underlying characteristics and other items may in some way alter vilification resulting from exogenous blame, they are engaged with in the empirical chapters (see 4.4.1, E4). The present work then contributes to the ongoing field of research into psychometric targeting and the effects of discourse, albeit in a necessarily limited way.

Moreover, the above studies paint the picture of an audience as *passive* ; because somebody has a certain tolerance for harm, or believes in a Just World, or are angry, there is an implication that effects will be uniformly and passively received. Once you figure out what makes somebody tick, you can know exactly what effect a certain discursive practice such as exogenous blame will have upon them. Absent is the role of the audience, or individual audience members, as co-creators of effects.

Moss et al do emerge competing discourses around the emotions of Brexit, using emic data to demonstrate how emotional norms are generated ('we' are righteously emotional and our gut feelings are valid sources of information, whereas our Others are irrationally emotional)—but while that research examines the contestation of emotional norms, it does not seek to evaluate how Brexit discourses themselves are contested, as blame is contested in the current research.[269] Weaver focuses on politicians' strategies for applying and contesting blame as a type of negative messaging, discussing how these strategies could affect voter behaviour (while truncating policy options) and noting how some strategies

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[266] E.g. Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff, 'Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism'.

[267] Becker and Tinkler, '"Me Getting Plastered and Her Provoking My Eyes": Young People's Attribution of Blame for Sexual Aggression in Public Drinking Spaces'; Eigenberg and Policastro, 'Blaming Victims in Cases of Interpersonal Violence'.

[268] Kaminska, 'ICO's Final Report into Cambridge Analytica Invites Regulatory Questions'.

[269] Moss, Robinson, and Watts, 'Brexit and the Everyday Politics of Emotion'.

could 'alienate' voters.[270] Meanwhile, authors in the blame attribution field tend to use quantitative data to establish 'how much' blame is accorded, rendering invisible how audiences contest blame (e.g. Hameleers et al, Healy et al).[271] They demonstrate different effects of blame insofar as partisanship appears to mediate blame attribution, but this approach does not seek explanations of *how* audience contest the blame beyond apparent implied disagreement.

But audiences do not just passively receive—they argue, agree or disagree, and otherwise give their opinion on what they hear. Stuart Hall highlights the role of audience in decoding messages, resulting in them taking the 'dominant' position (as an ostensibly intended message, and as hegemonically appropriate), a negotiated position whereby their response is more ambivalent, and an oppositional stance where audiences use an alternate frame of reference to interpret a message.[272] Other authors working on audience response research highlight the role of 'polysemy' such that receivers in a sense rewrite the message they encounter—they are not simply victims of hegemonic forces and associated dominant messages. This implies that audiences are not simply passive, but actively construct the meanings of messages as part of a process of constructing the world around them.[273]

This is somehow obscured in existing research on the effects of exogenous blame (presumably for being out-of-scope), but is essential to understanding blame's causal power. This is because understanding audiences as actively decoding messages—like messages including blame—sheds light on reasons blame may not 'work' to create villains, with these reasons obscured in strictly quantitative or unidirectional research. Did members of the UK voting public really hear blame of the EU and uniformly vilify the EU?[274] To this end, contestation of blame is considered in explanations throughout the empirical chapters of this thesis; audiences are treated as active subjects of discourse, and not merely passive objects. This is important, given—as Healy et al point out—not knowing how perceptual shields[275] work poses issues for democratic accountability, as if we reject blame of 'our' side and endorse blaming of the other, we may not vote 'our' politicians out for bad behaviour.[276] Audiences' own contestation of blame thus becomes vital to consider in discussions of what exogenous blame is 'effective' in creating villains, and under what circumstances, as in the current research. This notion of audiences as actively contesting discourses and discursive

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[270] Weaver, 'The Nays Have It'.

[271] Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, '"They Did It"'; Healy, Kuo, and Malhotra, 'Partisan Bias in Blame Attribution'.

[272] Hall, 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse'.

[273] See discussion in Schrøder, 'Making Sense of Audience Discourses'.

[274] Spoiler: No. See E3, where Leavers consume blame of the EU and vilify the EU, while Remainers instead get angry at the text author.

[275] Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*

[276] The ongoing support for Trump seems testimony to this. See Healy, Kuo, and Malhotra, 'Partisan Bias in Blame Attribution'..

effects reappears in discussions of emotional effects and blame as discursive practice below.[277]

The current research then elucidates the effects of exogenous blame on audiences, while treating those audiences as active co-producers and subjects of discursive effects rather than passive objects, and simultaneously exploring via between-groups experimental design whether or not certain underlying audience characteristics do moderate (increase/reduce effect size) or mediate (alter effects) the vilifying effects of exogenous blame. It thus complements work on perceptual shields per Hobolt and Tilley, critically engages with that on psychometric targeting as in the Cambridge Analytica scandal, and introduces the audiences as a site of blame contestation to the literature on blame attribution and avoidance per 2.3.6. It is not just politicians who are themselves blamed who can refute or contest it; audiences can take part in this process.

2.3.9.   Section conclusion

Overall there is a general lack of research into the emotional, vilifying effects of exogenous blame, in political science or otherwise. Blame is understood as important to do and to avoid in political contexts, but the reasons *why*—the effects on audiences, beyond shifts in level of blame attribution—are not problematised nor investigated. Given the implications for affective polarisation and vilification, this is necessarily redressed in the current research.

Meanwhile, work in (social) psychology establishes that blame has a role in creating groups, and in defining what is 'good' or 'bad' within a given group—linking to ideas of morality embedded in character narratives, as discussed in the following chapter. It finds that endogenous blame of an Other can, at least in some instances, cause anger. However, it does not consider exogenous blame, as in politics; it therefore cannot relate blame and its effects to our images of public figures; and it has several issues with ecological validity. Based on existing research, anger could be one potential outcome of exogenous blame; however, this is not verified nor explored in a nuanced way. This is addressed in the present research, which speaks to how we feel about blamed parties when we are not the ones doing the blaming, and how this relates to enduring images and impressions of those parties.

Lastly, a range of existing work considers that audiences themselves—and specifically their underlying characteristics—may mediate or moderate the effects of blame. However, such work typically considers endogenous blame only, or is premature/contested; as such, the present work forms a contribution to literature on psychometric micro-targeting of political messages. It further adds the audience as active co-producers of discursive effects, rather than passive objects.[278] This in turn helps to explain how exogenous blame sometimes 'works' to create particular villains, and when effects appear to go awry.

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[277] See 2.4.2 and 3.2.6.a).
[278] See E3, E4, and E5.

This work then fills a research gap by developing theory about the ways in which exogenous blame makes villains in politics specifically, incorporating an exploration of the emotional effects of exogenous third-party blame through both quantitative and qualitative means. It (incidentally) complements work of authors such as Jane and Ryan who point out that blaming can divert attention from victims or the actual problem at hand;[279] extends the research agenda in political science from blame by politicians to consider exogovernmental third parties; supplements work on the personalisation of blame through considering how the EU's 'character' is created—as for Sabatier et al there were 'vague Haitians' to be vilified via blame, in the present work there is a 'vague EU' (converging with notions of a lack of clarity around the EU);[280] goes beyond Hobolt and Tilley's work on blaming of the EU specifically to consider who is actually doing the blaming as well as the emotions that result;[281] examines a range of 'underlying characteristics' to investigate how audiences' perceptual shields[282] mediate the effects of blame, in line with work on partisanship and blame attribution;[283] disagrees with literature that posits blame itself as an emotion[284] and concords with accounts such as those of Malle et al (whereby one can 'feel anger' but not 'feel blame')[285] while extending accounts of how blame evokes emotions by considering exogenous blame and permitting emergence of novel or 'surprising' emotions through use of qualitative data. This permits theory generation about the ways in which exogenous blame makes villains in politics specifically, while also emerging ways in which this is mediated by audiences and potentially mitigated via a range of contestation strategies beyond those used by politicians themselves as in the work of Weaver or Hood.[286] By using the lens of Brexit as a case study, it incidentally provides insight into how the discursive practice of blame was used and contested in that context and work on emotional components of Euroscepticism more generally.

2.4. Defining blame

Work on blame in the previous sections was identified via a snowball approach that commenced with searching for academic works on blame. While there were several approaches to blame and its effects identified, that work does not clearly establish what blame actually *is.* This is a notable absence, as it is necessary to know what blame is—what it looks like—to be able to *identify* it so that it may be re-created and effects established.

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[279] Jane, 'Misogyny Online'; Ryan, *Blaming the Victim*.

[280] Sabatier et al., *Blaming Others: Prejudice, Race, and Worldwide AIDS*; Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*

[281] Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*

[282] Hobolt and Tilley.

[283] E.g. Healy, Kuo, and Malhotra, 'Partisan Bias in Blame Attribution'; Malhotra and Kuo, 'Attributing Blame'; Tilley and Hobolt, 'Is the Government to Blame?'; Bisgaard, 'Bias Will Find a Way'; Baekgaard and Serritzlew, 'Interpreting Performance Information'.

[284] E.g. Sheikh and McNamara, 'Insights from Self-Blame and Victim Blaming'.

[285] Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame'.

[286] E.g. Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance'; Hood, *The Blame Game: Spin, Bureaucracy, and Self-Preservation in Government*.

This is particularly important in experimental work that is theory generating, rather than hypothesis-testing. Defining blame is then the task of this section.[287]

2.4.1.   What kind of thing is blame?

Several authors have considered what kind of thing blame is. For Bertram Malle et al, it is "a unique type of moral judgment".[288] For a 'blame judgment' to happen, there is necessarily an 'event'—something is 'done'—and there may also be information about agent causality, intentionality, reasons, obligation, or capacity.[289] Blame may be used *argumentatively*.[290]

In this vein, Sten Hansson has conducted work on blame's function as an argument, using Stephen Toulmin's model (Figure 5).[291]   In this model, an argument must have a bare minimum of a *claim*, *data*, and a *warrant* that connects the claim and data. These can be further bolstered by *backing*, additional support for the warrant; a *qualifier* that indicates the strength of the claim ("they <u>always</u> do this" is stronger than "they <u>sometimes</u> do this"), and a *rebuttal*—the exception that breaks the rule. Hansson gives examples of 'data' in blaming as evidence that a "negative event took place, how much harm was caused, whether or not a causal link exists between the negative event and the blame taker" and so on.[292] He applies this to analysing 'blame games' between, for example, British Members of Parliament, including in the particular context of Brexit.[293]

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[287] These notions are developed further in the methodology chapter.

[288] Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame', 148.. In a similar vein, Mikula refers to "judgments of injustice as a particular instance of blaming". Mikula, 'Testing an Attribution-of-Blame Model of Judgments of Injustice', 1.

[289] Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame', 151.

[290] E.g. In discussing Nazi propagandists using blame to argue that Jewish people were inhumane. Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 175.

[291] E.g. Hansson, 'The Discursive Micro-Politics of Blame Avoidance'; Hansson, 'Analysing Opposition–Government Blame Games'.

[292] Hansson, 'Analysing Opposition–Government Blame Games', 233.

[293] Hansson, 'Defensive Semiotic Strategies in Government'; Hansson, 'Brexit and Blame Avoidance'.

Figure 5: Analysing blame's argumentative function, per Toulmin/Hansson[294]
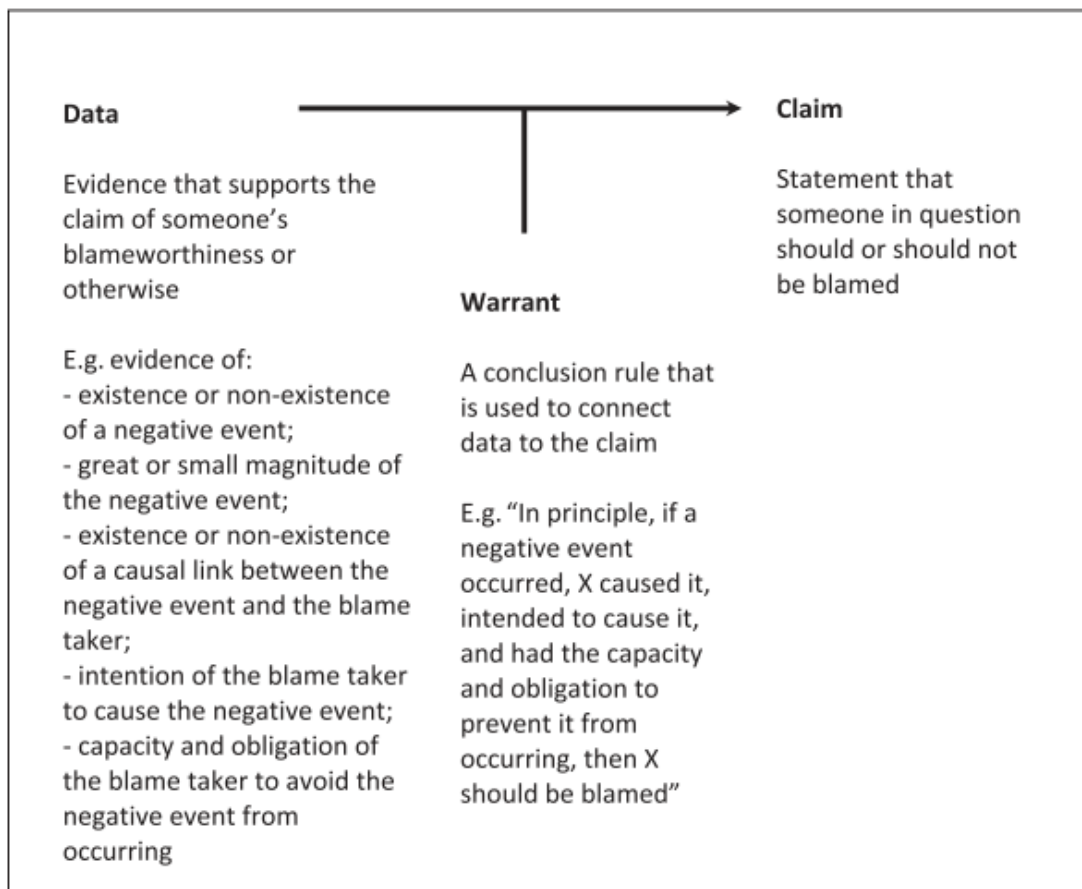
However, there are some issues in following this model of blame's role as argument, starting with the idea of the 'claim' being 'should be blamed', which conflates what blame *is* (how it looks or functions), with its outcome (as blameworthy).[295] Moreover, analysing blame as a 'logical' argument may miss the mark when the point is to be combative, and moreover to engage emotion as part of persuasion: "by zooming in on the articles' *logos*—their logical appeal—I was liable to miss some crucial aspects of their *pathos*—their emotional appeal".[296] The present research engages with precisely this emotional appeal.

It is worth noting that Toulmin's model, while useful in identifying and discussing the components of an argument, was originally developed to analyse dialectic forms of argument. Here, argument is a form of dialogue used by people of different viewpoints to establish a shared truth—it thus becomes a way of building knowledge, with one's own arguments updated as they are confronted with new ideas.[297] However, the EU can be blamed without ever 'speaking back' as part of a dialogue, and moreover, it is not clear that

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[294] Figure 1 from Hansson, 'Analysing Opposition–Government Blame Games', 232.

[295] See also Resodihardjo, *Crises, Inquiries and the Politics of Blame*, 16. on confusion between process and the outcome.

[296] Hansson, 'Analysing Opposition–Government Blame Games', 243.

[297] "We shall aim, … to characterise what may be called 'the rational process', the procedures and categories by using which claims-in-general can be argued for and settled " (Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument*, 7.) See also Van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 'A Pragma-Dialectical Procedure for a Critical Discussion'.

shared truth is necessarily the objective of blame. It could then be that "good reasons do not drive the force of argumentation".[298]

These issues are addressed by Nicholas Paliewicz and George McHendry,[299] who use issues of 'post truth' and disinformation to emerge *post-dialectic* argument. They show that, at least in the public sphere, an argument does not need to be complete, factual, truthful, or well-grounded in warrant, and can be missing the key components of Toulmin's model of argument, *and still be effective in persuading people*.[300] Their approach "challenges dialectical approaches to argument because it rejects the assumption that argument subjects are reasonable actors that strive to settle disputes through critical-rational argument exchange".[301] Argument is instead "a constellation of assemblages, affects, and forces".[302] It gains its persuasive power not through traditional Enlightenment-style 'reason', but through discursive strategies such as aesthetics.[303] '**Assemblages**' of actors are "webs or networks where multiple and different forms of rhetoric … interact and connect",[304] in the present case to lobby for or against Brexit. Such assemblages can be "uncommitted to dialectical reasoning", using "dissemination rather than dialogue for rhetorical effect".[305]

This conception of post-dialectic argument highlights the necessity of understanding the operations of discourse, whereby a discourse is "a group of statements which provide … a way of representing the knowledge about … a particular topic at a particular historical moment".[306] Discourse includes both language and practice: per Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, rhetoric may be "spoken, performed, bodily, symbolic, and material".[307]

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[298] Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, 'When Good Arguments Do Not Work', 295. See also McHendry Jr et al., 'Rhetoric and/as Argumentation'.

[299] Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, 'When Good Arguments Do Not Work'; Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, 'Post-Dialectics and Fascistic Argumentation in the Global Climate Change Debate'.

[300] "The strength of arguments in political debate and their fairness and relevance as arguments must be judged separately." Chong and Druckman, 'Framing Theory', 111.

[301] Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, 'When Good Arguments Do Not Work', 288.

[302] Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, 'Post-Dialectics and Fascistic Argumentation in the Global Climate Change Debate', 3.

[303] E.g. The climate-change denying Non-intergovernmental International Panel on Climate Change replicated the designs, formats, and bulk used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in creating a climate change denialism report, and distributed textbooks presenting 'both sides' of the climate change 'debate' to schools for teaching using typical education methods. Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, 'When Good Arguments Do Not Work', 300.

[304] Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, 291. Paliewicz and McHendry draw from Deleuze and Guattari, whereby assemblages are movements of discrete overlapping social forces. Identifying an assemblage requires finding its limits (e.g. who belongs and does not belong to the Leave side), determining the composition (who is involved), and how it relates to other assemblages (e.g. the Remain side, or interfaces with other political campaigns such as the Trump campaign). Each of these items is surfaced in 5.3 The Brexit assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari, 'A Thousand Plateaus'.

[305] Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, 302.

[306] Hall, 'The Spectacle of the Other', 72.

[307] Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, 'When Good Arguments Do Not Work', 292.

2.4.2.   Blame as discursive practice

Blame then becomes not *only* an 'argument' or 'moral judgment', but a 'discursive practice'. Discursive practices are how discourses are *done*, the rules of a particular discourse, and they help do things such as (re)create relationships or knowledge. For Stuart Hall, "[d]iscourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But it is itself produced by a practice: 'discursive practice'—the practice of producing meaning", with all practices having a discursive aspect.[308]

An example is a hand-shake, which may indicate a greeting, be done in different ways to enforce status relations (Trump's method of grabbing people during a handshake to pull them closer to him), be used to open social relations or close a deal, and is done differently in different places. For example, in Russia it is customary for men to shake one another's hands when entering the room, but not women's hands, reflecting gender norms and local social relations. Shaking hands may therefore be understood as creating (and recreating) particular relations between people, and forms of knowledge around who is included, when and why. Without being embedded in local discourses around gender, greetings, social conventions, business and so on, a hand-shake has no meaning. It is a *practice* that helps to produce (and re-produce) discourses. Blame is likewise a discursive practice, helping to constitute relations—between blamers, blamees, victims, and audiences—and create or recreate knowledge, such as what is 'wrong' in a given context and what should be felt/done about it.[309]

Understanding blame as a discursive practice does not mean it cannot function as a judgment or an argument; rather, it means recognising that blame operates within particular contexts, and an understanding of these contexts is vital to understanding how blame works.[310] Considering again the example of a handshake, say one is taught a 'secret handshake' that admits them into a particular treehouse; using this secret handshake in other venues—meeting new people, or thirty years later to seal a business deal—will not operate in the same way. It is only in the particular context of a particular group of people and a particular treehouse that it has an expected effect. In the business meeting years later, it could even backfire, as it would be the incorrect performance of a handshake in that context. In another case, should a different group come up with the same secret handshake but with a different function—for example, identifying oneself as a Freemason—using the treehouse secret handshake could result in the unintended different effect of identifying oneself as a group member. Lastly, the concept of a 'secret handshake' can be performed in even non-physical contexts, as when a 'secret handshake' is used as an essential part of

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[308] Hall, 'The West and the Rest', 86.

[309] There is no divide between emotion and decision-making; see 3.3.3.f) Predicting/experiencing emotions.

[310] As Katie MacMillan and Derek Edwards point out, "The constructive, rhetorical, and performative business of discourse is often accomplished by what the specific words are, and their particular context of use, *rather than by what grammatical category or kind of syntactic structure they are part of.*" (emphasis added). MacMillan and Edwards, 'Who Killed the Princess?'

cryptography—the function of 'identifying oneself' remains the same, but the territory (in code), execution (non-physical), and members (computers) are different.

Blame then could function as a judgment, or as an argument (or an argument for a judgment), but it is not *just* one of these things. It can operate in different contexts, and may function differently in those contexts—whether because of the people involved (speakers, audiences, objects of blame), the space (face-to-face, online), the rules (how blame is done, by whom and when), or the discursive situation (blame in relation to what, the exigence permitting blame). Blame can have different structures, roles, and effects in different contexts.

In concrete terms, this means a committed Leaver and a committed Remainer, who have consumed different news and been subject to different discourses, may interact differently with blame in a particular context (such as blame of the EU). However, they are not passive in this process; blame does not exist without its social context and exigency. Power engenders its own resistance, and in the process of consuming blame, individuals can resist (contest, disagree with,) speakers' preferred effects. Per Michel Foucault,

> "discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart".[311]

Audiences are then co-producers of effects and are subjects of discourse, not mere objects.

As a discursive practice, and as a phenomenon that exists in social reality, blame as a mechanism is always performed *by* somebody; blame itself has no agency, desire, or ability to act without being *done* by someone. Put differently, the mechanism of blame cannot be enacted without humans there to do so.[312] Such is the nature of social reality.

2.4.3. Blame for 'being' vs blame for 'doing'

There is a divide in the etymology of the word 'blame', with Fowler's Dictionary stating that it was originally used to mean 'to find fault with'.[313] It only later came to mean to censure somebody for doing something, or to "lay responsibility on for something deemed wrong";[314] there was a change from blaming for *being* (character) to blaming for *doing* (behaviour).[315]

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[311] Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 101.

[312] Note the guilt-inducing effect of puppy dog eyes when an owner takes away a dog's food. While the dog may not have a conception of 'blame', the causal mechanism is still being enacted given events are being filtered through the human's social reality. It is the human who enacts and has the felt experience of being blamed. The internal lives of animals is beyond the scope of this thesis, as is the psychology of anthropomorphism of objects by humans.

[313] Butterfield, 'Blame'.

[314] Online Etymology Dictionary, 'Blame'; Online Etymology Dictionary, 'Blameworthy'.

[315] The word can still colloquially be used in both ways, in the sense of being ("I blame the EU for being corrupt") and doing ("I blame the EU for destroying the Greek economy").

It is clear from the work evaluated above that blame research to date does not typically consider 'blaming for being'; it instead focuses on notions of accountability, responsibility, or causality—all associated with blame for *doing*. Certainly, in accordance with Aristotelian *ethos*, 'being' does affect how blaming is done: for example, Christina Mancini and Justin Pickett find that blame of women in cases of interpersonal assault is focused on their character ("she's a slut, she deserved it"), whereas blame of men in such cases is focused on their behaviour.[316]

However, while notions of 'blame for being' and 'blame for doing' can complement each other, treating them as the same practice conflates 'who someone is' with 'what that person does'. If someone does bad, they are bad; there is no room for nuance, and further, "the EU has done something bad" becomes essentially the same as "the EU is evil". Analytically, blaming becomes inseparable from name-calling.

Taken to its extremes, this would mean that every time a political actor is held to account, no matter how innocuous the matter, they immediately and irrevocably become characterologically 'bad'. It gives name-calling the same argumentative status as according responsibility, and while undoubtedly the former is a useful polemic device in small doses, it is not an effective long-term strategy tolerated on the playground, let alone in the context of political debate. For that reason, the current research focuses on blame in the sense of 'for doing', which appears to be at the core of understandings of blame in existing research.[317]

This further helps divide being 'blamed' from being 'blameworthy', which would otherwise lead to a recursive loop of "they did this so they were bad so they should be blamed so they are bad so they did it". It divides the *judgment* associated with doing something from the party's enduring personhood, and also from the blame itself.[318] There emerges a divide between blame and name-calling, scapegoating and blameworthiness as shown in Table 2.

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[316] Mancini and Pickett, 'Reaping What They Sow?'; for more on 'characterological' blame, as when whereby victims are blamed because they are 'bad' and therefore 'deserve' what has been done to them, see Henning, Jones, and Holdford, "'I Didn't Do It, but If I Did I Had a Good Reason'"; Sheikh and McNamara, 'Insights from Self-Blame and Victim Blaming'; Tennen and Affleck, 'Blaming Others for Threatening Events'. and particularly Jensen and Gutek, 'Attributions and Assignment of Responsibility in Sexual Harassment'. for a discussion on the role of victim self-esteem in self-blaming.

[317] Ye Sun et al take a similar approach, focusing on 'event-related' rather than 'characterological' blame. Sun et al., 'Mobilizing the Public in Saving the Bonneville Salt Flats', 302.

[318] See also discussion in Coates and Tognazzini, 'The Nature and Ethics of Blame'. It's "plausible to suppose that [blameworthiness] merely amounts to a judgment that the person in question is an appropriate target of blame". (p. 199)

Table 2: Blame, name-calling, blameworthiness, and scapegoating.[319]

	Doing something	Being something
Discursive practice	Blame For *doing* something E.g. "Amy did this"	Name-calling For *being* something E.g. "Amy is bad"
What is deserved	Blameworthiness Blame as deserved because the blamed party *does* something E.g. "Amy did it, so she should be held to account"	Scapegoating Blame as deserved because the party *is* something E.g. "Amy is bad, so we should point the finger at her"

2.4.4.   Definition of blame

While a dictionary definition has been noted in the preceding subsection, several authors in the blame field have provided their own ideas. For Malle et al, blame is:

> "a unique type of moral judgment [that] has four properties: It is both cognitive and social; it regulates social behavior; it fundamentally relies on social cognition;[320] and, as a social act, it requires warrant".[321]

By 'cognitive or social', Malle et al indicate that blame may happen internally—within our own minds, as a process—or externally, as when it is said, written, or otherwise performed 'out loud'.[322] Such social blame may be performed by us as individuals (endogenous blame performed socially), or by third parties (exogenous blame). The present work focuses on the vilifying effects of the latter, with consideration given to endogenous social blame in the form of 're-blaming'—where we encounter blame and either reiterate it or perhaps counter it.

While Malle et al's definition helps to site blame and describe its function, it does not help to specifically identify instances of blame.[323] What does blame look like? How is it structured?

Weaver defines blame *generating* as

> "the deliberate development and communication of negative information about some group, individual, or policy … developed by a 'perpetrator' and delivered by a

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[319] See also section 2.4.5 Blame and fallacies: Scapegoating and 'bad-be-gone.

[320] "[T]he thought processes, both implicit and explicit, through which humans attain understanding of self, others, and their environment." Moskowitz, 'Social Cognition'.. 'Cognition' is used here to reflect Malle et al's wording; it is not typically used in this thesis, which largely focuses on 'implicit' processes. See also 3.3.3.a) A word on cognition.

[321] Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame', 148.. In a similar vein, Mikula refers to "judgments of injustice as a particular instance of blaming". Mikula, 'Testing an Attribution-of-Blame Model of Judgments of Injustice', 1.

[322] "The cognitive, private side of blame is the process that leads to a judgment of blame; the social, public side is the act of expressing a blame judgment to another person." Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame', 148.

[323] Though "detecting an event that violates a norm serves as the critical first step for blame" Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 153.

> 'messenger' to some group (the 'audience') for the purpose of political and/or policy gain by a 'beneficiary'."[324]

This certainly helps with the identification of blame—there is some kind of negative information about a blamee. Different roles, including that of audience—implying exogenous blame—are apparent, and Weaver acknowledges that negative information does not need to be 'true' to be accorded to a blamee. However, 'negative information' seems to indicate that blame incorporates blame for 'being', and as he goes on to make clear, it also includes threat as information about a negative future outcome. There is a tension between this apparently inclusive concept and Weaver's description of blame avoiding as "minimising... responsibility for actions taken",[325] which suggests blame for doing something in the past. Weaver's definition is then both too *inclusive* with regard to what 'negative information' may be, and too *exclusive* in that he limits himself to exogenous blame within political/policy contexts, noting that beneficiaries may benefit in ways that are 'political' only in the loosest conception of the term. Kathleen McGraw likewise considers the political implications of blame, while helpfully giving a 'narrow conception' of blame as "an attribution of responsibility for a prior negative outcome".[326]

Jasper presents a more ambiguous case, saying that "[m]obilisation usually requires two complex constructions: a sense of threat must be built out of raw emotions like fear, dread, and hate, and some group of people must be blamed for that threat".[327] He seems to conceptualise threats as being dangerous things or "problems",[328] so that "[v]irtually anything can be seen as threatening", with some threats "embodied in technologies, industrial processes, and the built environment",[329] and threats having causes. It is at the point of *cause* that a threat may be 'blamed for'. That is, we blame for causing or potentially causing dangers—harms—whether to humans or the environment.[330]

Drawing the above ideas together, it is now possible to synthesise a minimal definition of blame. This definition is 'minimal' in that it includes only those items that all those authors defining or describing blame seem to agree upon—it does not preclude the possibility of people using the word 'blame' to mean other things, as when people could use 'blame for being' in casual discussion. [331] It is on the basis of this minimal definition as an artificial

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[324] Weaver, 'The Nays Have It', 263.

[325] Weaver, 260.

[326] McGraw, 'Managing Blame', 1149.

[327] Jasper, 'Not In Our Backyards: Emotion, Threat, and Blame', 134. He also differentiates between 'causal' and 'remedial' forms of blame, where "causing a threat differs from responsibility for fixing it", echoing discussions of accountability, causality, and responsibility in other work. Jasper, 136.; see e.g. Shaver, *The Attribution of Blame.*.

[328] Jasper, 'Not In Our Backyards: Emotion, Threat, and Blame', 120.

[329] Jasper, 116.

[330] The way Jasper speaks about 'threat' is then different to how 'threat' is discussed in this work, as a discursive practice wherein a speaker claims will do a harmful thing. In effect, he uses the word 'threat' where the current research uses the word 'harm'.

[331] As McGraw notes, "Blame is an elusive concept, and its ubiquity in common language renders its measurement quite difficult." (Emphasis removed.) McGraw, 'Managing Blame', 1149. As the present study examines the effects of blame, its bounds must first be delimited.

closure of reality that the current research is conducted and operationalised. Such definitions are particularly important in theory-generating work as in the present study.[332]

The minimal definition of blame used in this thesis is "**a discursive practice in which a speaker claims a party did, or has done, a harmful thing**". It is thus limited to social performances of blame per Malle et al.[333]

In this definition, the *speaker* is the *blamer*. Calling them the 'speaker' does not necessarily mean that blame is said out loud—it can equally be written down, or physically expressed (e.g. pointing at a broken vase on the floor, and then pointing at the perpetrator). The blamer may be an individual, group, or even an institution, as when a press release is sent out with an institutional sign-off. As indicated in 2.4.2, as a discursive practice existing in social reality, blame itself has no agency nor capacity to act; it is always done *by* somebody— the blamer. The word 'blame' is conjugated in line with normal English language rules throughout this thesis, so that there is no substantive difference between 'blame' and 'blaming' other than the grammatical one. Use of the word 'blame' in this way is consistent with prior work on blame and its effects, per every work reviewed in this chapter.

The word 'claims' is used to indicate that blame may be contested.

The *party* being blamed is the *blamee*. The word 'party' is used rather than 'agent', as the blamee may not have human agency, which implies consciousness and intention. For instance, 'climate change' may be blamed for inclement weather, but 'climate change' is not agentic. The 'party' may be an individual, group, organisation, power, system, situation,[334] and so on.

'Did' or 'is doing' is used to indicate that blame is for *doing* rather than for *being* (as above). It positions blame in the present and/or past, differentiating blame from a hypothesis about future threat (see Table 3).[335] Blame cannot be accorded for something that has not yet happened. The present perfect verb tense indicates that the harmful thing may have been done once, or taken place over a period of time, perhaps repeatedly.[336]

'Harmful thing' means the *blameworthy event*, whether or not that event is or has actually taken place. Blame is negative, as opposed to credit, which is positive. The blameworthy

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[332] See discussion of the role of definitions and hypotheses in theory-generating experiments in 4.2.3 and 4.4.1.

[333] Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame'.

[334] US Homeland Security Advisor Tom Bossert described the disastrous aftermath on Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria in 2017 as being the storm's fault, rather than that of any agent or emergency response. "The storm caused these problems, not our response to it." Allen, 'Full Text'. See also Annex: Who is the EU?.

[335] Aristotle likewise makes this differentiation: "someone listening to a speech is necessarily either an observer or a judge, and if [they are] a judge [they judge] either the past or the future." 1358a40-42, emphasis added. Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, 13.

[336] Doing nothing at all could be 'doing harm', in which case this would also be blame. Per Malle et al, "people blame agents for a variety of other events, including attempts, omissions, and cases in which a desired end is achieved by unexpected means." Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame', 168.

event is a norm breach or wrongful behaviour per Malle et al.[337] The word 'harm' implies a victim, and helps differentiate blame from criticism, which would instead be about a *bad* thing.[338] What is and what is not 'harmful' is subjective, and is embedded in local contexts and understandings. As such, the 'harm' aspect may be inferred—e.g. should the Leave campaign claim the EU has 'cut jobs', it is implied that this has caused harm to the people who had those jobs.

Table 3 shows the relation of this minimal definition of blame vis-à-vis other discursive practices, using two dimensions of time (past/present|future) and nature of outcome (harmful|helpful). Credit is the positive counterpart to blame—a discursive practice in which a speaker claims a party did, or has done, a *helpful (*rather than harmful) thing in the present/past.[339] 'Threats' refer to harmful things taking place in the future, as promises are helpful and take place in the future. Structuring these discursive practices along time/outcome dimensions helps differentiate them from one another, permitting analysis even in post-dialectic contexts, and highlights possible scope for contestation (blame could be contested via credit, for example). This typology therefore constitutes a contribution to blame, threat, credit, and promise research respectively.[340]

Table 3: Doing good and bad to others, past and future.

	Past to now	Future
Helpful (Positive)	Credit	Promise

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[337] Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame'. See also Weaver, who conceives of blame generation and assignation as requiring a 'loss-allocating activity' and the possibility for redressing the loss.   Leong and Howlett likewise focus on this 'harm' component, with an action being "blameworthy if it causes some harm as the direct result of an act and the source of the action is invariably tied, factually or not, to a designated individual actor." Daniel Ames and Susan Fiske describe harm as a starting point for blame, noting that it is a moral behaviour—that is, a form of moral judgment as in Malle et al. "[W]hen people detect harm, they become motivated to blame someone for that harm. This demonstrably powerful motivation has been variously indexed as the need to assign blame, to express moral condemnation, and to dole out punishment... [these] may represent different, but related, components of humans' moral response to harm. For convenience, we refer to these components collectively as blame motivation, and we suggest that people seek (though not always consciously) to satisfy this motivation when confronted with harm." Sievert et al describe a blamee's perceiving harm as a necessary condition to blame. Ames and Fiske, 'Intentional Harms Are Worse, Even When They're Not', 1755; Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance'; Leong and Howlett, 'On Credit and Blame', 4; Sievert et al., 'The Power of Conformity in Citizens' Blame', 55.

[338] Consider "Theo played football badly", which includes a speaker (the author), a party (Theo), doing (played football) and a bad thing (played badly). This is certainly criticism of Theo's playing, but it is not blame. Were the sentence instead "Theo let himself down by playing football badly", it would be an instance of blame because Theo has harmed himself (let himself down).

[339] This is another point of differentiation from Aristotle; whereas his epideictic rhetoric is the rhetoric of 'praise and blame', the present research posits credit, not praise, as the positive opposite of blame. While "[p]raise is speech that displays the extent of a [person]'s virtue", "we might praise someone even in the absence of good achievements" (1367b26, 30-31). I.e. Aristotle conflates praise for 'being' with credit for 'doing', which is analytically unhelpful. Praise is likely instead the opposite of *criticism*, mentioned above. A similar conflation is found in Smart and in Williams, for example. Weaver uses the word 'benefit' rather than 'helpful'. Smart, 'Free-Will, Praise and Blame'; Williams, 'Praise and Blame'; Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, 36; Weaver, 'The Nays Have It', 272.

[340] Credit and threats are discussed in the context of contesting—and potentially mitigating—blame in E5. Credit/promises have beneficiaries, as blame/threats have victims—parties who are helped/harmed.

Harmful (Negative)	Blame	Threat

Blame may incorporate further information, such as a *victim* (a harmful thing is done *to* a victim), a *beneficiary* (it is done *for* the beneficiary), *justification* (it was done *for* this reason—related to the 'rebuttal' in Hansson's Toulmin adaptation), information about *mental state* of the perpetrator (notably, in Malle et al's model, *intentionality*).[341] There may or may not be modifiers (e.g. relating to frequency, severity, or certainty;[342] intensifiers such as 'did a <u>terrible</u> thing'; and using affective expressions[343]).

Any 'warrant' may be explicit ("the EU did this bad thing, which was <u>in their area of competence and they had the responsibility to prevent it from happening</u>"), including notions such as accountability, causality, or responsibility;[344] or it may be established through (unsaid) specific topoi—Hansson adopts a *topos* of 'government as protector' to connect data to a claim of blameworthiness.[345]

Where blame is used as an argument to *persuade*, it may also have a an explicit or implied 'call to action', which may follow on from the warrant (the EU is responsible, ergo they must fix it), be based on general topoi (blamees, blamers, and victims must receive their just deserts),[346] or explicit as in "the EU did this, <u>therefore we should vote to leave</u>". This would be the 'claim' in Toulmin's model, but again, may not be explicitly stated.

Lastly, as a discursive practice, blame is understood to work in a certain way, in a certain time and space. Context is of vital importance. The audience may perceive a statement as clearly containing blame, as clearly true or false, or as potentially ambiguous—the speaker must 'know their audience' to have their desired effect. Consequently, researchers investigating blame must firstly establish and comprehend the context in which blame takes place.[347]

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[341] Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame'; Alicke, 'Blaming Badly'; Alicke, 'Culpable Control and the Psychology of Blame.'; Lagnado and Channon, 'Judgments of Cause and Blame'; Zultan, Gerstenberg, and Lagnado, 'Finding Fault'; Rogers et al., 'Causal Deviance and the Ascription of Intent and Blame'.

[342] Baron and Hershey, 'Outcome Bias in Decision Evaluation'; Hershey and Baron, 'Judgment by Outcomes: When Is It Justified?'

[343] Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame', 178. See also Hansson's use of Wodak and Reisigl's Discourse-Historical Approach, which refers to discursive strategies of intensification and mitigation (collectively, 'moderation'). Hansson, 'Analysing Opposition–Government Blame Games'; Wodak and Reisigl, 'The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)'; Reisigl, 'The Discourse-Historical Approach'.

[344] Schlenker et al., 'The Triangle Model of Responsibility.'

[345] Hansson, 'Analysing Opposition–Government Blame Games', 242. Aristotle refers to topics, or topoi (sing: topos). These can be used as 'proof'; essentially the warrant for an argument. They "support a particular conclusion in the case at hand", and may be common topoi, that can be used for arguments on any subject matter, or specific topoi that relate to a particular branch of knowledge. Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, xxxviii. "any familiar premises can be omitted, since the listener [themself] supplies them." 1357a16-17.

[346] See overview of just deserts theory in Pfattheicher, Sassenrath, and Keller, 'Compassion Magnifies Third-Party Punishment.'.

[347] See 4.3.1 Data analysis framework, E1: The Brexit context.

This conception and definition of blame is operationalised in Methodology and used throughout the remainder of this thesis.[348]

2.4.5.   Blame and fallacies: Scapegoating and 'bad-be-gone'

2.4.3 Blame for 'being' vs blame for 'doing' showed a relationship between blame and scapegoating, with scapegoating as the activity whereby somebody is blamed for what they are rather than what they have done. It is worth considering this in greater detail, particularly as there is a colloquial tendency to use the term 'scapegoating' interchangeably with 'blaming'; blame and the fallacy of scapegoating are closely related.

Weaver[349] conceptualises scapegoating as a blame-avoidance strategy whereby blame is deflected by blaming others. This is consistent with some modern definitions, including that in the Cambridge English Dictionary: "the act of blaming a person or thing for something bad that someone else has done".[350] Bo Bennett identifies scapegoating as a logical fallacy that involves

> "Unfairly blaming an unpopular person or group of people for a problem or a person or group that is an easy target for such blame"[351]

The core of the modern conception of scapegoating then involves blaming an undeserving other, because they are easy to blame. As a formal fallacy—based on form, rather than content—it may be expressed quasi-mathematically, and takes the format "Nobody likes or cares about X. Therefore, X is to blame for Y."[352]

However, 'scapegoating' has an additional meaning. It is the "the transfer and disposal of evil".[353] The scapegoat, a "person or group who innocently bears the blame for others",[354] is the symbolic recipient of 'sins', such that removal of the scapegoat banishes the sins from the group.[355] Saul Scheidlinger explains the term's origin as a story from Leviticus (16:8-10),

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[348] The definition of blame outlaid here implies multiple sites of contestation, whereby blame may be intensified or mitigated. Such sites include (a) subjects and objects (who are the blamer, blamee, victim, beneficiary; ethos as separately heroic/villainous); (b) nature of discursive practice (selection of blame/credit/threat/promise); (c) justification (it was done for good/bad reasons; it was (un)intentional); (d) warrant (true/fallacious; accountability etc); (e) meta level (blame done/not done); (f) call to action (do/don't undertake particular actions). The present work focuses only on contestation apparent in the data analysed (E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation); that chapter shows that (a) and (b) were particularly apparent in the Brexit campaign, with (d) and (e) less so. Little justification (c) was apparent, and calls to action (f) were limited to vote leave/remain rather than e.g. reforming the EU.
[349] Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance', 385.
[350] 'Scapegoating'.
[351] Bennett, *Logically Fallacious* p. 322.
[352] Bennett p. 322.
[353] Douglas, *Scapegoats*, 1. Douglas claims that this form of 'scapegoating' is "one of the most universally found forms of group event". Douglas, 190.
[354] Scheidlinger, 'Presidential Address', 132.
[355] See also definition in Merriam-Webster, "a goat upon whose head are symbolically placed the sins of the people after which he is sent into the wilderness in the biblical ceremony for Yom Kippur" 'Definition of Scapegoat'.

wherein two goats are chosen for sacrifice. One is "symbolically laden" with the "sins of the Jewish people"[356] and then sent out to be devoured by the demon Azazel (Figure 6). The second goat, without added sins, is sacrificed in the temple.[357] The goat that is sent off to be devoured is the 'scapegoat', and thanks to its sin-bearing duties, means that the 'Jewish people' are rendered 'more good'.

Figure 6: Azazel and the scapegoat[358]

The act of scapegoating is then about projecting one's ills onto an Other—and we have feelings about this Other. Either we despise them for their badness and therefore cast them out, or we see that we have the same bad qualities as the Other and pressure them to fix themselves. This latter makes for an uneasy relationship with our scapegoats, who must be sanctioned or sacrificed to defend our group from "unacceptable emotions, such as hostility, sexuality, and guilt", or as a means of dealing with a group's anger as "engendered by injured self-esteem and narcissism".[359]

This second conception of scapegoating appears in connection with blame, such that punishing or ostracising a perpetrator is incorrectly projected to fix underlying problems. This is apparent in the research of Ryan,[360] where identifying a blamee ceases attempts to resolve an underlying problematic situation.

The present research identifies this as an informal fallacy—a fallacy based on content rather than form[361]—here called 'bad-be-gone'.[362] The central idea is that **punishing/removing a**

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[356] Scheidlinger, 'Presidential Address', 132.
[357] Though as Scheidlinger points out, the fate of the 'good' goat is not discussed in the context of scapegoating
[358] Breton, *Français*.
[359] Scheidlinger, 'Presidential Address', 136.
[360] Ryan, *Blaming the Victim*.
[361] Such fallacies cannot be expressed quasi-mathematically as can formal fallacies.
[362] Per Bennett, a logical fallacy must meet three criteria: "It must be an error in reasoning, not a factual error, It must be commonly applied to an argument either in the form of the argument or the interpretation

symbolic person or group of people will resolve underlying problems—as when the cursed goat is sent off to be devoured by demons, or the Biblical myth of Christ dying to expunge people's sins.

Fallacies may have exceptions, and in this case, the exception would be where the identified person or group truly is the sole source of the problems accorded to them. In such a scenario, punishment or removal may indeed solve the problem.

Where the blamee is the EU, it seems unlikely that 'removal' would resolve problems: leaving would not improve fish stocks in the UK, fix the NHS, or eradicate the 'red tape' associated with doing business—all things for which the EU is blamed in the present research. Similarly punishment of somebody who has committed homicide will not 'undo' the murder, assuage the family's loss (though it may help give them a sense of 'justice'),[363] or address the societal conditions that led to creation of somebody who would commit murder.

The bad-be-gone fallacy is related to the fallacies of causal reductionism and oversimplified cause—though differs in that the symbolic blamee may not necessarily have any relation to the 'cause' of problems—as well as to *argumentum ad odium* (appeal to spite), wherein ill-will or hatred may be substituted for evidence.[364]

Both fallacies, scapegoating and bad-be-gone, are identified and discussed in context in the empirical chapters of this thesis.[365]

2.5. Chapter conclusion

This chapter has illustrated that while exogenous blame is understood as vitally important in the political sphere, research into what it actually *does* is generally lacking beyond how blame is avoided by individual politicians, or how it is attributed and re-attributed by audiences. Questions arise particularly in relation to the emotional, vilifying effects of blame, and how it affects us *differently*. As Niall Bolger et al put it, "heterogeneous responses to treatments are regarded as random error";[366] manifold effects and forms of contestation disappear.

Research from (social) psychology provides some clues: blame helps to constitute groups, interacts with context, and ultimately provokes emotions—particularly 'anger' when we blame Others. However, this body of work does not consider blame within the political realm, and relies on quantitative research within largely homogenous groups meaning

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of the argument, It must be deceptive in that it often fools the average adult." Bennett, *Logically Fallacious* p. 10.

[363] Per work on reconciliation and criminal mediation. Comvalius, 'Mediating Criminal Cases'; Comvalius, *Mediation in Criminal Cases*.

[364] Bennett, *Logically Fallacious*. Causal reductionism is assuming a single cause/reason when there are multiple; oversimplified cause is where something is understood as either a cause or not a cause, rather than being one of multiple contributors.

[365] Particularly E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.

[366] Bolger et al., 'Causal Processes in Psychology Are Heterogeneous.', 601.

emotions such as 'compassion' that become relevant to vilification in the present research are not emerged. Specific emotions can even be sought for, as in the case of Mikula, who examined guilt, anger, and 'no response' in relation to blame only,[367] rendering other effects invisible. Further, while existing research suggests that blame of an Other makes us feel angry towards that other, this is related to endogenous blame only. Does the effect hold when blame is exogenous, as when somebody encountered the Leave campaign blaming the EU? This is not yet clear. It is also unclear how this relates to enduring images and impressions of blamed parties, as villains or otherwise.

The current research draws these bodies of literature together to combine the concern with emotional outcomes of blame in individual and social psychology with that of exogenous blame in political science and related fields, filling an essential research gap that helps us to understand the ways in which blame works to make villains in politics. It notes the lack of attention given to the effects of blame performed by exogovernmental parties, with the present work helping to highlight that such parties—whether challenger parties such as the Leave campaign or perhaps foreign actors making use of traditional or social media—may influence political outcomes through strategic use of exogenous blame and concordant creation of villains. The particular problem of audience manipulation via micro-targeting underlying characteristics as with Cambridge Analytica is raised, with this issue uptaken in E4. Ultimately, this research supports work on the effects of exogenous blame more broadly while also generating specific findings in the Brexit case study, complementing work on constructions of the EU and concordant Euroscepticism, and the discursive tools used by critics and supporters alike.

Work on blame avoidance as a form of contestation is briefly discussed, where it is noted that this tends to focus either on the actions of individual politicians who themselves are blamed, or on individuals shifting blame to others—rather than what we as audiences to exogenous blame, or even other third-party actors, may do to contest such blame and potentially its vilifying effects. The present work extends such existing work by conceptualising audiences themselves and other parties as having the agency to contest blame and thereby helping to explain why blame does not always appear to 'work'. A related toolkit and reflections, presented in E5 and the Conclusion, are an outcome of this project.

This chapter has also given a minimal definition of blame as a discursive practice, differentiating it from other methods for vilification (e.g. name-calling) and more general criticism, with blame understood as for 'doing' rather than 'being', and for (purportedly) 'harming' rather than simply doing 'bad'. It differs from credit, threats, and promises along good|bad and past|future axes. The relation of blame to the twin fallacies of scapegoating and new fallacy 'bad-be-gone' is clarified.

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[367] Mikula, 'Testing an Attribution-of-Blame Model of Judgments of Injustice'.

With these research gaps identified and a definition of blame established, the following chapter will go on to relate blame and emotions to creation of *villains*, describing what emotions are, and permitting operationalisation and examination of the link between blame, emotions, and vilification throughout the empirical chapters.

3. Constructing villains and emotions

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter established that blame, and specifically the vilifying effects of exogenous blame, are under-researched to date. Further, while blame is somehow associated with emotions, there has been little discussion of the implications of this on the political stage, or satisfying explanation for the ways in which blame makes villains in politics.

This chapter begins to redress this gap, firstly by reviewing literature on characters, where it becomes evident that 'villains' are intertwined with 'victims'; villains *harm* victims, which may be expressed via blame. This section makes a contribution by adding 'emotions' experienced by audiences to existing character typologies that incorporate morality, strength, and activity level, permitting a more complete explanation of how villains are constructed and effective vilification can be identified. This is specifically linked to blame, enabling operationalisation of the research in the following chapter.

The concept of 'villain-type feelings' then necessitates an investigation of emotions. This research uses the Theory of Constructed Emotions ('TCE'),[368] whereby emotions are 'made' when certain affect (embodied information) is experienced in a certain context against a background of certain knowledge (emotion concepts). This theory is introduced to the political sciences (including international relations) to bolster existing work on emotions as constructed, through clearly linking the individual body with larger 'feeling structures' that circumscribe and inform emotions in a given group or culture. As TCE has not been used in political science to date, its central concepts are iterated. Particular attention is given to the nature of 'affect' and 'concepts', including 'emotion concepts', and how emotions are predicted and actively constructed by the brain rather than passively received (or 'rationally' decided upon). This is necessary context for the succeeding elaboration of how emotions may be recognised. Implications for research design are discussed, and developed in Methodology. Notably, TCE enables an understanding of how emotions—and therefore villains—become *entrenched*, with implications for polarisation against that villain. It highlights that blame, and how it makes us feel, *matters*.

Overall, this chapter develops theory that permits examination of the vilifying effects of blame in politics, which is operationalised in the following chapters.

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[368] Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

3.2. The art of character work

Extant literature on blame suggests it has emotional effects on audiences,[369] as discussed in 2.3.7 Blame is emotional.[370] Therefore, when investigating the effects of blame, it is not enough to ask how the blamed party is 'incorrect', or 'responsible';[371] it is necessary to use a word that incorporates the visceral, emotional effects of blame. The word 'villain' captures these elements.[372] However a 'villain' is also a 'public character'[373] embedded in a cultural narrative,[374] rendering it necessary to engage with existing literature on characters to highlight what villains are, how they are 'made', and how this relates to blame. This is important when considering affective polarisation,[375] where we *feel* we are, and have to be, against the blamee.

> "Villainy is more than buying black leather ensembles and kidnapping fair maidens."[376]

This section draws together existing literature on the character of a villain, from cultural and literary studies through psychoanalysis and cognitive linguistics. It starts by explaining what characters are and that narratives composed of characters act as lenses for understanding the world; it then goes on to describe how characters are classified. The relationship of characters to culture and circumstances under which characterisation takes place are considered, with characters tending to be treated as *a priori* in international relations to date. Characters are separated from the process of characterisation, and the relationship between characters and emotions is explored, before attention is given to the contested status of victimhood.

Ultimately, this section provides a framework embedded in existing literature by which effective vilification can be identified, with a 'villain' as somebody who is bad, strong, and active,[377] *and* whom we feel negatively towards. Whereas the first of these three conditions can be identified discursively (and located directly in blame), this research adds the fourth condition of 'villain-type feelings'. It is through examining audience emotions that effective, actual vilification of an actor can be identified—as there is no villain without villain-type feelings.

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[369] 'Audience' refers to all receivers of the blame, whether those people are the intended audience or not. See 2.1.1 Aristotle, audiences, and proofs.

[370] E.g. Lerner and Tiedens, 'Portrait of the Angry Decision Maker'.; see 2.3.7 Blame is emotional.

[371] See discussion of responsibility in 2.3.5 Hobolt and Tilley and 'Blaming Europe?'.

[372] See also discussion of emergence of the research question in 4.2.5 The research spiral.

[373] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*.

[374] E.g. Klapp, 'The Creation of Popular Heroes'; Lakoff, *The Political Mind*.

[375] Polarisation against people (we dislike those people), not policies (we disagree with those policies). E.g. Hobolt, Leeper, and Tilley, 'Divided by the Vote: Affective Polarization in the Wake of Brexit'; Broockman, Kalla, and Westwood, 'Does Affective Polarization Undermine Democratic Norms or Accountability?'

[376] Nichols, *Geoffrey P. Ward's Guide to Villainy*, 8.

[377] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*.

The strategy of emerging[378] audience[379] emotions to verify vilification, rather than searching for *explicit* characterisation via labelling ("they're the wicked witch!") or metaphor[380] is a practical contribution. This is because 'villain-type feelings'—emotions—pre-empt explicit labelling, and may be more socially acceptable to express. It allows greater nuance in discussion and analysis of characters in politics; it also highlights 'affective polarisation'—emotional polarisation 'against' somebody—as a phenomenon that relates to overall cultural narratives of heroes and villains rather than simply in-group identities.

Furthermore, the roles of 'villain' and 'victim' are intertwined; victims are harmed by perpetrators. We feel compassionate towards victims, and recent work by Pfattheicher et al shows that in some circumstances this compassion can result in *turning against* the perpetrator—they become the target of 'villain-type feelings' and therefore a villain.[381] This 'compassion backhand' emerges from the present research as an indirect pathway for vilification via blame, discussed further in following chapters.[382]

3.2.1.   What are characters?

Characters are tropes, stereotypes; they are roles embedded in a cultural narrative, "created and assigned by collective processes".[383] Per Jasper et al, a character is "a recurrent, simplified package of intentions, capacities, and actions that we expect to fit together", and may be perceived in individuals, animals, organisations, or nations alike.[384] They include heroes, villains, fools, underdogs, and wise-people, amongst others.

In fiction, as a source for cultural narratives, villains are part of a story; they pose a challenge to heroes, and a threat to victims. They may be one-dimensional—Voldemort in *Harry Potter*, Cruella de Vil in *101 Dalmatians*, and the aliens in the film *Independence Day* are unrelentingly and uncomplicatedly evil, whether in their attempts to kill high-schoolers, turn puppies into a coat, or simply blow everybody up. Villains may also be more nuanced— Severus Snape poses a constant obstacle to the children in Harry Potter, yet turns out to be driven by love; Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* demands his pound of flesh, yet draws sympathy when facing public humiliation at the end of the play; John Hammond becomes a villain via hubris in the *Jurassic Park* novel, despite his sympathetic love for his grandchildren

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[378] The word 'emerging' is used rather than 'eliciting' to emphasise that emotions are located in the audience; the researcher simply creates the conditions whereby they can be surfaced. See discussion in 4.3.5 Recognising emotions and 4.4.2 Focus groups and interviews.
[379] Jasper et al note that "Ordinary people are often the primary audiences for characterization efforts".
[380] E.g. By calling the villain a 'bad guy', or comparing them to a cultural trope such as 'wicked witch' or even famous fascists. 'Character' refers to the narrative role such as villain/victim; 'characterisation' is how that character is *portrayed* in text.
[381] Pfattheicher, Sassenrath, and Keller, 'Compassion Magnifies Third-Party Punishment.'. See also Simas, Clifford, and Kirkland, 'How Empathic Concern Fuels Political Polarization'.
[382] It is 'secondary'/indirect in that unlike emotions experienced directly towards a blamee, audience members must feel compassion towards the victims *and* be unable to help those victims *and then* turn against the erstwhile villain.
[383] Klapp, 'The Creation of Popular Heroes', 58.
[384] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*, 7.

and scientific progress (Figure 7). Meanwhile, Robin Hood is a hero despite moral ambiguity over stealing.[385]

Figure 7: A complicated villain[386]

Martin Del Campo argues that characters have become more complex and ambiguous since the late nineteenth century, such that:

> "The new villain is an answer to the joke we played on ourselves by killing God. Modern heroes are flawed, often deeply, and they toe the line between being virtuous and falling into darkness."[387]

Christopher Vogler suggests that adding desirable traits to an otherwise maleficent character enhances their 'badness':

> "They are even more deliciously sinister because of their dashing, powerful, beautiful, or elegant qualities."[388]

However, while characters can be complex if one has a full book or movie franchise to convey nuance and associated moral dilemmas, Jasper et al argue that this is not the case on the *political* stage, where flat characters rule the day—and not just flat, but taken to their extreme.[389] This is because nuanced characters are not as effective in rousing emotions.

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[385] Orrin Klapp, who researched the 'folk hero' in the mid-20th century, identified 'clever heroes' such as Robin Hood as closer to villains than other types of hero. Such heroes tend to be smaller and weaker than their opponents; in this case, the Sherriff of Nottingham. Klapp, 'The Folk Hero', 1949.

[386] Hernando, 'Richard Attenborough's Most Memorable Movie Moments'.

[387] Del Campo, 'Sympathy for the Devils', 10.

[388] Vogler, *The Writer's Journey*, 67.

[389] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*. This is not to say that flat characters do not appear in popular culture; Carina Chocano highlights the way in which Glenn Close's character in *Fatal Attraction* is

"Political villains must be a little more evil, victims a little more pure, in order to mobilize outrage and sympathy. … More complicated stories—even if more accurate—dull the emotions that current leaders desire from their audiences."[390]

This means simple narratives involving characters such as heroes and villains are used by political players to rouse emotions; it is how we feel about characters that is important. However, existing explanations presume that characterisation *precedes* emotional experience. This is counter-intuitive, as it implies we 'know' somebody is a villain prior to experiencing feelings towards them; the current research instead argues that our emotions towards the blamee and thus their characterisation as a villain are constructed simultaneously.[391]

3.2.2.   Character narratives as a lens for the world

Do audiences think in terms of such stories of heroes and villains? Multiple authors claim so, as most clearly expressed by cognitive linguist George Lakoff. He speaks of narratives into which we are socialised that become deeply embedded in our thought patterns such that we frame all kinds of situations with reference to those narratives. Narratives become a frame for understanding the world.[392] One such narrative is a 'Rescue narrative' of heroes and helpers saving vulnerable victims from villains; there is a clear storyline, a 'hero's journey',[393] and mutually constitutive relationships between heroes, victims, and villains. Inspired by Émile Durkheim, Orrin Klapp says that characters are "collective symbols with important functions for group organization and control";[394] Jasper et al agree that the character work undertaken in politics helps impose *meaning* on the world. By saying that one political actor is a villain and another a hero, we can quickly understand a situation, what to do about it, and what to feel. A villain—such as the EU or a shadowy elite—is bad, whereas those that would emancipate us as victims—Nigel Farage, Boris Johnson, or Donald Trump—can be heroes.[395] We comprehend what they are and how to act towards them and their opposing villains.[396]

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written and re-written to become unambiguously unhinged, so that her cheating husband may be rendered a hero in comparison. Flat characters remove moral ambiguity. Chocano, *You Play The Girl*, 82.

[390] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*, 18.

[391] See the latter half of this section.

[392] Lakoff, *The Political Mind*. This is consistent with notions of the world as predicted and constructed, per 3.3.3.e) The predictive brain.

[393] Vogler, *The Writer's Journey*.

[394] Klapp, 'Heroes, Villains and Fools, as Agents of Social Control', 62.

[395] Per Spencer and Opperman, the Leave campaign was characterised by romanticism: a sentimental story full of brave heroes locked in dialectic battle with evil, powerful foes Spencer and Oppermann, 'Narrative Genres of Brexit'. Other characters might also exist, with Remainers as villains or minions of those villains as circumstances dictate. Villains and victims as blamee and victim of a harmful situation are however the focus of the present piece.

[396] The nexus between villain-hero-victim is identified by Stephen Karpman in his interdependent 'drama triangle', though he argues that people can switch between roles from situation to situation—this does not speak to the 'stickier' characters in politics. (See also Karpman's drama triangle in Adema, Reijerkerk, and Waart, *Models for Mediation*, 66; Karpman, *A Game Free Life*.). While characters may be relatively enduring over time, they can change; politicians may struggle to avoid being recast from 'folk heroes' to 'folk devils',

3.2.3.   Classifying characters

This research focuses on villains, but what *are* they? Mariam Kushkaki notes that in the classical Greek storylines that continue to influence narratives today, there "is no quintessential villain … but rather, hostile forces", while modern villains are the bad flipside of the heroic 'coin'.[397] This latter reflects Jungian conceptions of a 'shadow archetype', as our suppressed 'dark side'.[398] Meanwhile, Klapp defines a villain as "an anti-heroic personage of great power who unfairly oppresses, threatens, bullies, or otherwise persecutes a victim"; villains do bad things (which may be attributed to them via blame).[399]

This recurrent notion of good/badness is one of three dimensions along which Jasper et al array characters: morality (good/bad), strength (strong/weak), and activity level (active/dormant). This is consistent with other authors, whereby a villain is always bad and a hero always good, and both are strong while victims are weak.[400] 'Activity' matters because a person who is 'good' and 'strong' but does not actually *do* anything is not a hero. Thus a hero is good, strong, and active; a villain is bad, strong, and active; a victim is good and weak; a minion is bad and weak.[401] This typology allows for multiple characters and adds nuance to Lakoff's Rescue narrative in terms of describing the *properties*[402] of particular characters rather than just the narrative role those characters play. Table 4, from Jasper et al, shows several modern 'main characters' arrayed along the strength and morality dimension, including heroes, victims, and villains.

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as they inevitably cannot achieve everything they promised to do—Matthews Flinders and Wood give the example of demonisation of Tony Blair and Barack Obama. Flinders, 'The Demonisation of Politicians'; Flinders and Wood, 'From Folk Devils to Folk Heroes'. Characters may be Jungian archetypes, and "when these archetypes are represented in a story, they have a universal quality to them … instantly recognizable and understood." Rohleder, 'The Shadow As Hero In American Culture', 9.

[397] Kushkaki, 'Unmasking the Villain', 11.

[398] Rohleder, 'The Shadow As Hero In American Culture'; Vogler, *The Writer's Journey*; Jung, *The Practice of Psychotherapy*.

[399] Klapp, 'The Folk Hero', 24. He describes multiple types of villains: traitors who betray the good, persecutors who persecute the weak and good, "mores-flouters" who "take a perverse pleasure in outraging decency and rebelling against order and authority" and "fiends" as "incalculable monster[s]". (p. 59)

[400] E.g. Kushkaki, 'Unmasking the Villain'; Klapp, 'Heroes, Villains and Fools, as Agents of Social Control'; Li-Vollmer and LaPointe, 'Gender Transgression and Villainy in Animated Film'; Faria, 'The journey of the villain in the Harry Potter series'; Del Campo, 'Sympathy for the Devils'; Klapp, 'The Folk Hero'; Klapp, 'The Creation of Popular Heroes'. There is some ambiguity for 'rogue' villains and 'clever' heroes each of whom may be weaker than others of their type and each of whom may be more flexible as to morals; there is also increasing ambiguity around villains in popular culture, especially as they may help us 'grow' through embracing a Jungian 'shadow self', while heroes are too flat and perfect to enable us to learn from them. Del Campo, 'Sympathy for the Devils'; Rohleder, 'The Shadow As Hero In American Culture'.

[401] "Heroes are strong and well intentioned, even when it takes some time to find or motivate them. Villains are malevolent and strong enough to menace others, lending some urgency to a situation. We feel warmly enough toward victims to want to aid them, since they are too weak to save themselves. We are contemptuous of minions, who are malevolent but too weak to be much of a threat until they hook up with a villain; they remain a cowardly mob until a demagogue whips them up." Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*, 8.

[402] I.e. Characteristics; the word 'properties' is used to enhance readability.

Table 4: "Main Characters with Related Minor Characters"[403]

	Strong	**Weak**
Benevolent	Heroes Martyrs Saints (start … as victims) Judges Donors Converts (start … as villains) Friends Allies	Victims Good clowns Sympathetic bystanders Followers Supporters Sidekicks
Malevolent	Villains Outside agitators Traitors (start … as heroes) Foes	Minions Scoundrels Bad clowns Losers Cowardly Bystanders

While morality is about ends, and strength the ability to achieve those ends, activity relates to whether an actor "follows through" on their intentions.[404] This is interesting in light of work on intentionality in blame research, whereby perpetrators who *intend* to perform a harmful action are judged more blameworthy.[405] Heroes have 'active' projects to protect others,[406] so villains' active projects might include items such as self-aggrandisement or harming others. Under this understanding of activity, choosing *not* to act, where so doing enables one to achieve their overall goals, would still be understood as active villainy.[407]

Notably, 'badness', 'strength', and 'activity' can each be discursively located in blame: an actor who is blamed is 'bad' because they have done a harmful thing, are 'strong' enough to

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[403] Table 1.2, Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*, 9. Orrin Klapp likewise provides lists of hero, villain, and fool stereotypes. He discusses heroes (other than 'clever heroes') and villains (other than 'rogues') as strong, while both villains and fools are bad but fools are weak when compared to villains. That listing is not reproduced here due to racist and homophobic inclusions. Klapp, 'Heroes, Villains and Fools, as Agents of Social Control', 56.

[403] It could be that there are 'good' martyrs who die for 'us', and 'bad' martyrs who die for the 'other side'. Character work is deeply subjective, and culturally informed.

[404] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*, 9.

[405] Malle and Knobe, 'The Folk Concept of Intentionality'; Lagnado and Channon, 'Judgments of Cause and Blame'; Guglielmo and Malle, 'Enough Skill to Kill'. The same logic appears in the criminal justice system, with *mens rea* requirements for some offenses (knowledge or intent to commit a crime), or divisions of culpability according to intentionality, recklessness, negligence, carelessness and so on. As Elle Woods infamously put it in *Legally Blonde*, "there is a complete lack of 'mens rea', which by definition tells us that there can be no crime without vicious will." Luketic, *Legally Blonde*.

[406] Ibid.

[407] Note that in none of the documents analysed in E2: Blame campaign did "inactive", "haven't done", "aren't doing" or similar phrases appear. While notions of the EU as failing do appear separately, these images and descriptions are not done in conjunction with blame. That is, while the EU may be failing, it is not blamed for doing so. This does not prohibit successive paragraphs with descriptions of the EU failing, followed by examples of the EU being blamed for doing something, despite the implied tension between a failing EU that is still successfully achieving (harmful) things. This reflects the similar discourse of the UK simultaneously being portrayed as a weak victim of the EU, while still being a change-maker *within* the EU and being exceptional enough to be able to extricate even better benefits from the EU once it had left.

have done so, and were 'active' in accomplishing their goals—whether the harm was incurred by actually acting or by choosing not to act.[408]

Actors can occupy new roles, such that the EU is able to *become* a villain, but could also become a hero (good/strong/active), minion (bad/weak/active), or straight-up irrelevant (bad/strong/inactive); the 'heroes' of the Brexit movement could fall,[409] particularly given they are just one little 'good' away from 'villain' as it is; and victims can be emancipated and thereby become the heroes of their own story. To this end it is worth noting that character work is subjective; it involves perspective. We might paint ourselves victims of a situation, or heroes of our own stories, irrespective of our goodness or badness, strength or weakness. When discussing vilification of the EU in the Brexit case study, then, this is taken to be from the perspective of UK voters, rather than from the perspective of 'the EU', its constituent parts or staff.

3.2.4.   Characters and culture

Jasper et al's typology subsumes other binaries such as natural/unnatural, wild/civilised, or woman/man under good/bad. This is because characters are grounded in a particular culture and its ideas of 'goodness', at a particular time and place—a cowboy murdering Native Americans in old Westerns may have been seen as a hero, while modern 'heroes' might be racially sensitive; historically women were pure victims or evil villains, but can now be heroes (Figure 8).[410]

Klapp's work from the mid-20th century is a fantastic illustration of how characters are culturally contingent. He lists typical heroes, villains, and fools, and while many heroes are familiar—underdogs, champs, and even "he-man"—he gives examples of villains that include racist terms and conceptions that would be unacceptable today, while his examples of 'fools' include homophobic slurs.[411] While LGBT people continue to be persecuted today—and Disney has been accused of queering its 'bad' characters to indicate they are evil[412]—it is not clear that LGBT people are typically characterised as 'stupid' as required of the 'fool' role. Rather, this role could be applied to their detractors.

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[408] In the case of the EU specifically, this may imply a warrant of the EU as responsible, or accountable, etc; as highlighted in 2.3.5 Hobolt and Tilley and '*Blaming Europe?*', the lack of clarity around the EU's role might make such warrants less tenuous than they would otherwise be.

[409] On falls from grace, or as the authors put it, going from "hero to zero", see Flinders and Wood, 'From Folk Devils to Folk Heroes'; Flinders, 'The Demonisation of Politicians'.

[410] All heroes given by Klapp, writing in the mid-twentieth century, were men, and film critic Carina Chocano notes that Disney villains, bar *Frozen*'s Prince Hans, are "almost exclusively women, and never young. Princesses suffer at the hands of evil stepmothers, wicked queens, and malevolent fairies consumed with envy and rage. Experience makes them powerful, but exile makes them mean." Chocano, *You Play The Girl*, 219; Klapp, 'The Folk Hero'; Klapp, 'The Creation of Popular Heroes'; Klapp, 'Heroes, Villains and Fools, as Agents of Social Control'.

[411] Klapp, 'Heroes, Villains and Fools, as Agents of Social Control'.

[412] Li-Vollmer and LaPointe, 'Gender Transgression and Villainy in Animated Film'.

Figure 8: From Sleeping Beauty to Captain Marvel. 'Sleeping Beauty' is a hapless and innocent victim awaiting rescue by a charming prince; Captain Marvel is a strong and resilient hero in her own right.[413]

3.2.5. The circumstances of characterisation

Klapp suggests *heroes* may emerge in certain circumstances: situations of interest, crisis, or drama (such as Brexit).[414] He argues that likely candidates occupy classic 'heroic' roles that suit them—a physically imposing candidate makes for a better 'conquering hero' and a witty one a better 'clever hero'; do something to stand out from the crowd—performing particular behaviours (as Nigel Farage's relatable alcoholism)[415] or having particular appearances (as for Boris Johnson's wild hair); and have personal traits consistent with being a hero—for example, historically, being a straight white male—though "actions have a permanent advantage over traits in commanding interest and attention".[416] There should likewise be stories and rumours about the actor consistent with the role (Farage facing down Bob

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[413] Film sources: Sleeping Beauty and Captain Marvel; images from Little, 'Higher, Further, Faster'; Peterson, 'The Sleeping Beauty Problem'.

[414] A "politician who is sensitive to the issues which are temporarily arousing people or *who can create crises* is in a position to make [themselves] a hero." Klapp, 'The Creation of Popular Heroes', 136. Emphasis added; note Brexit as a 'crisis' or point of rupture as discussed in 4.2.6 Case study selection, and the 'migration' and 'global financial' crises discussed in 5.2.4 Concurrent issues.

[415] Banks and Oakeshott, *The Bad Boys of Brexit*.

[416] Klapp, 'The Creation of Popular Heroes', 138.

Geldof in a fight on the Thames);[417] publicity (as available to campaigns); and organised popular reactions to the character (as with pro-Leave, pro-Farage, and pro-Johnson Facebook groups and social media campaigns).[418] Heroes can be destroyed when they show weakness, treachery, persecution, or are witless.

Where villains are complementary to heroes, do these properties and behaviours indicate a villain? Less attention has been paid to villain creation, though Klapp suggests 'scapegoating' may be involved and that they are 'detested and punishable', hinting at an emotional component.[419]

Rather than using the language of 'crisis', Matthews Flinders and Wood prefer to speak of 'moral panic', such that deviant 'folk devils' feared by society emerge during "intense, disproportionate, and dramatic manifestation of shock, anxiety, and hatred within society" through a process of "symbolization, framing, and discursive commentary".[420] Strong emotions are important, as are words and other strategies in creating the folk devils; though the specific effects of such strategies, or how they may affect us differently, is out of scope for those papers. They point to a "need to refine and develop the analytical tools through which we examine both folk devils and folk heroes",[421] the first of which is specifically addressed in the present research. Flinders critic Domonic Bearfield suggests that folk devils can be variously categorised as law breakers, rule breakers, immorals, and unfaithfuls, each of which involves doing something 'bad'.[422] This again hints at blame, as 'doing bad' may be captured by blame.

In the title of their book, Jasper et al describe characterisation as relating to the "politics of reputation and blame", but go on to conflate blame with invective,[423] and describe additional techniques by which characters are created—stories about an actor's strength/weakness and goodness/badness, and micro-discursive devices such as priming.[424] The specific effects of each of these is not investigated. They give little analytical insight into the process of how public characters are created—or, for that matter, how they *fail* to be created.[425] It is simply

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[417] Banks and Oakeshott, *The Bad Boys of Brexit*.

[418] Klapp, 'The Creation of Popular Heroes'.

[419] Klapp, 'Heroes, Villains and Fools, as Agents of Social Control', 61.

[420] Flinders and Wood, 'From Folk Devils to Folk Heroes', 645. Punishing such a folk devil causes panics to subside (p. 642). See also Bromley-Davenport, MacLeavy, and Manley, 'Brexit in Sunderland'., which notes the role of political discourse in "creating a 'moral panic' around Freedom of Movement rules" during the Brexit campaign (p. 802).

[421] Flinders and Wood, 'From Folk Devils to Folk Heroes', 652.

[422] Flinders, 'The Demonisation of Politicians', 5; Bearfield, 'Debating Flinders'.

[423] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*, 41. They conclude a section on praise and invective by saying that "How we allocate praise and blame is the core of our moral visions." The following section goes on to use Donald Trump as an exemplar, when ridiculing Jeb Bush as "weak, ineffective, phony, and pathetic". While these may undermine claims to heroism, they do not indicate blame per se. See also 2.4.3 Blame for 'being' vs blame for 'doing'.

[424] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, 92.

[425] The same applies to Lakoff, who argues that patterns of behaviour become embedded in our brains, and we then identify those 'metaphors' elsewhere; villains are 'spotted'—predicted and confirmed—more than made. Lakoff, *The Political Mind*. See also 3.3.3.e) The predictive brain.

that villains draw blame and ire (for example) as heroes draw credit and love, with little allowance for variation, or explanation of directionality: do villains draw blame, or does blame create villains? Do villains draw negative emotions, or negative emotions help create villains?[426]

Each of these schemas suggests that there is some kind of link between emotions—whether *of* the crowd, or *for* characters—and words in creating characters, but it is not clear (a) which, if any, of the strategies mentioned are effective, (b) at what point emotions, words, and characters are linked, or (c) how we can identify that vilification has taken place—i.e. that villains have been made. This is partly because of the form of explanation, as when Klapp and Flinders and Wood spot villains in discourse after they have already been made, with the process of vilification deconstructed after the fact, and partly because of conflation between *being* a villain and the *process* of vilification, as in Jasper et al. Villains somehow 'just are', without us knowing how or when they 'became'. Tami Jacoby posits that such acceptance of characters as *a priori* and external to analysis in this way poses a "serious challenge to International Relations theory" as it renders invisible how some characters rather than others become politically salient; it is necessary to establish precisely how political characters are created.[427] As this research focuses on blame, the remainder of this section will focus on links between emotions, blame, and characters; and how we can identify that vilification has taken place. Considering another character—that of a victim— provides further clues.

3.2.6.   Creating a victim

In Jacoby's 'theory of victimhood', she separates the role of victim (character) from how one becomes a victim (process). The bare minimum requirements for creation of a victim are (a) an act of harm being done to them ('victimisation'), and (b) an agent who has committed that harm.[428] Such situations are described via *blame*. It is not simply that 'Angela has no raisins'—while we might feel sorry for Angela, she is not a 'victim'. However, if Angela has no raisins because Tony took them from her, Angela is Tony's victim (Figure 9). Her victimhood is only possible via the 'act of harm' of Tony taking her raisins away. In other words, there must be a blame-incurring event—at least allegedly—and for a blamee to be identified, before victim status has the possibility of realisation.

Figure 9: Blamees harm victims

Tony took away Angela's raisins.
[blamee]   [act of harm]   [victim]

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[426] In a similar vein, Kathleen McGraw claims that politicians' accounts of how events came to be—for instance, justifying their behaviour—have "predictable and substantial impact on judgments of political character". McGraw, 'Managing Blame', 1150.

[427] Jacoby, 'A Theory of Victimhood', 511.

[428] Jacoby, 511. See also Leong and Howlett, 'On Credit and Blame'. and section 2.4 Defining blame.

Note: In this research, 'victim' is used to speak only of the party that has harm rendered unto them. This means that other than in situations of victim-blaming described in this chapter, 'blamees' are not referred to as 'victims'.

3.2.6.a)   Feeling for victims

We have feelings for true victims. Jasper et al and Lakoff alike describe particular emotions as being associated with victims—sympathy, empathy, 'worry about' and 'feeling sorry for' them.[429] (There may be different emotions associated from the victim's perspective, e.g. nemetic anger, associated with injustice and revenge.)[430]

Per Jamil Zaki, 'empathy' may refer to 'cognitive empathy' (I know what they feel), 'emotional empathy' (I feel what they feel) and 'emotional concern' (compassion/sympathy; I feel *for* them).[431] The present work does not attempt to investigate cognitive/emotional empathy as out-of-scope; however, compassion becomes important as a drive to help the victims of blameworthy events.

Compassion is "concern for others' suffering and motivation to help",[432] with the 'core theme' as "being moved by another's suffering and possessing concerned feelings that are elicited in response to this suffering".[433] Olga Klimecki suggests that while empathy can be constructive or destructive, compassion in conflict is 'constructive' (admittedly with a question mark).[434] Certainly, compassion is sold as a panacea for the world's ills;[435] however, it also has a dark side. Stefan Pfattheicher et al have convincingly demonstrated that where we feel compassion for a victim but are unable to assist them, we turn on and punish the perpetrator.[436] Compassion can therefore be associated with *escalation* of conflict through polarising us against the perpetrator, which could explain why "those who display the most concern on behalf of others are also the most socially polarised".[437] This is referred to elsewhere in this thesis as the 'compassion backhand', and emerged as a new effect of blame during the empirical work.

However, not all victims are created equal. They can be *accepted* (yes, they are a victim) or *contested* (e.g. they brought this on themselves; there was no real harm here). Consider again Angela's raisins, and how an audience witnessing the situation might feel towards Angela as a result:

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[429] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*; Lakoff, *The Political Mind*.

[430] "Nemesis was the goddess of righteous anger and divine retribution against those guilty of hubris" (Potegal and Novaco, 'A Brief History of Anger', 10.); nemetic anger would then relate to retributive justice. See also 'Nemesis'. This specific type of anger is posed by the researcher.

[431] Zaki, *The War for Kindness*.

[432] Klimecki, Cloke, and Lack, 'Mediating in a Multilateral World', 96.

[433] Pfattheicher, Sassenrath, and Keller, 'Compassion Magnifies Third-Party Punishment.', 1.

[434] Klimecki, Cloke, and Lack, 'Mediating in a Multilateral World', 95–96.

[435] E.g. The Dalai Lama and Vreeland, *An Open Heart*.

[436] Pfattheicher, Sassenrath, and Keller, 'Compassion Magnifies Third-Party Punishment.'

[437] Simas, Clifford, and Kirkland, 'How Empathic Concern Fuels Political Polarization', 260. Further, "those high in empathetic concern may also be more susceptible to partisan bias in blame attribution" Simas, Clifford, and Kirkland, 267.

Table 5: Angela as (not) a victim

Situation	Victimisation	Example audience emotions	Victimhood?
(1) Angela has no raisins	No perpetrator, no act of harm—ergo, no victimisation	Feel sorry for Angela	Angela not a victim
(2) Tony took away Angela's raisins	ACCEPTED—Tony harmed Angela by taking away her raisins	Feel sorry for Angela, and annoyed at Tony	Angela a victim
(3) " "	CONTESTED. E.g. Angela stole the raisins and Tony was taking them back to the store; Angela deserved it for misbehaving	Admire Tony, feel Angela has received her 'just deserts'	Angela not a victim

Table 5 presents three variations of a situation. In (1), there is no perpetrator and no act of harm (and therefore no blame); while we might feel compassion towards Angela, she has not been victimised and cannot be a victim. In (2), there is clear victimisation: Angela has been harmed and is a victim. In (3), the victimisation is contested: Angela is not experiencing harm, or perhaps she deserved it—she is not a victim. Audiences are interpreting—co-producing—the situation, to different effects.

Importantly, there is a difference in the *emotions* experienced amongst an audience—for example, Angela's friends or a teacher hearing about the event afterwards—when the victimisation is accepted or contested. When victimisation is accepted, emotions such as 'feeling sorry for' (empathetic concern/compassion) are associated with Angela. When it is *contested*, such emotions are less evident. This is because our narratives of characters and our emotions are inseparable, as eloquently put by Lakoff:

> "Our moral narratives have two parts, both of which are physically in our brains. The first is the dramatic structure of the narrative, with roles like hero, villain, victim, helper, and so on performing actions and undergoing effects. The second is the emotional structure, ... linking the dramatic structure to positive and negative emotional circuitry. They provide the emotional texture of simple narratives. **Because they are neurally bound, the emotional structure of the narrative (anger, fear, relief) is inseparable from the dramatic structure** (villainous action, battle, victory)"[438]

Klapp stresses that character 'typing' is spontaneous, with "little reflective thought, as in the laughter at a clown at the circus". Furthermore, "rational procedures only certify *ex post facto* a hero or antihero who has already been chosen by the public".[439] We 'feel' there are characters before we rationalise *why* they are characters.

The present work therefore posits that by identifying the *emotions* an audience experiences, it is possible to understand whether they accept that Angela is in fact a victim (compassion,

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[438] Lakoff, *The Political Mind*, 93.
[439] Klapp, 'Heroes, Villains and Fools, as Agents of Social Control', 60.

as a 'victim-type feeling') or contest/reject this idea (other emotions).[440] Audience emotions are a clue to understanding whether victim roles have been successfully conveyed to third parties, that is, whether a victim has successfully been created in the view of the audience. A victim is good and weak per Jasper et al,[441] *and* we feel compassionate towards them.[442] All these elements must be present for us as audiences to *construct* a victim, and for researchers to *identify* victim construction amongst audience members. In short, emotions occur at the point of victim creation, meaning they are inseparable from the other constitutive properties of a given character.[443] Audiences are active subjects and co-creators of characters, via their interpretation and emotions, and not passive objects.

3.2.7.   Creating and identifying villains

As being a victim is separate to the process of victimisation, being a villain is separate to the process of vilification. Unlike a victim though, a villain may be 'made' in multiple ways.[444] This could include—but are not necessarily limited to—blame ('for doing'), name-calling ('for being'),[445] threats about what the actor *will* do or be in future, or use of metaphor and juxtaposition[446] (e.g. Figure 10 and Figure 11 below).[447] It is through such practices that a villain's evil underlying actions or motives, and therefore their character, may be known.[448]

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[440] The empirical chapters show that blame diverts people's attention from victims towards blamees, while it prompts yet other people to 'unmake' the villains by rendering their harm invisible or inconsequential.

[441] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*.

[442] This may differ from how the victim feels about themselves; see 3.2.8 The tension in victimhood below.

[443] See also discussion of the predictive brain in 3.3.3.e) The predictive brain below; prediction means that emotions and narratives are actively and simultaneously constructed, in line with Lakoff.

[444] Culpeper, 'Textual Cues in Characterisation'. highlights ways in which characters may be created in text, including via implicit cues such as speech mannerisms. A key difference is that detractors from the EU are not able to decide what the EU says, and there is the possibility that attempting to insert one's own words or actions, in satirical performances or otherwise, could backfire—as when Donald Trump infamously mocked a reporter's physical disability. (Arkin, 'Donald Trump Slammed After Mocking Disabled Reporter'.) Perhaps it is for this reason that Klapp stresses characters' deeds above presentational aspects. Klapp, 'The Creation of Popular Heroes'.

[445] E.g. Rousseau and Baele, '"Filthy Lapdogs," "Jerks," and "Hitler"'; Nyambi, 'A Divided Nation?' See also 2.4.3 Blame for 'being' vs blame for 'doing'.

[446] E.g. Dore, 'Metaphor, Humour and Characterisation in the TV Comedy Programme Friends'; Hall, 'The Spectacle of the Other'; Lakoff, *The Political Mind*; Arcimavičienė and Macaulay, 'Self and Other Metaphors as Facilitating Features of Populist Style in Diplomatic Discourse'.

[447] See also Hecht, 'How to Make a Villain'.; environmentalist Rachel Carson's image was placed next to pictures of children with malaria, though this could equally be considered a form of blame. Catherine Bouko notes that visual symbols and tropes can be used against collective cultural backgrounds to "make emotion circulate between objects and signs", as with the storm and EU flag shown in Figure 11. Bouko, 'Emotions through Texts and Images', 227.

[448] The factors that contribute to emergence of heroes per Klapp, as outlined above, could potentially be reversed such that for vilification of the EU, crisis (Brexit), standing out from the crowd (ambiguous), traits consistent with the role of villain (as with the visual metaphor shown above, though again this ambiguous), stories and rumours (as captured via blame, name-calling, and threats), publicity (pro-Leave campaign materials), and organised reactions (again per public pro-Leave events and social media groups) were important to constitution of the EU as a villain. The present research focuses on just one strategy (blame as part of 'stories and rumours') and how it contributed to vilification. The effectiveness or relevance of these other strategies could be investigated in further research, though note that per Klapp, "actions"—as captured in blame—"have a permanent advantage over traits in commanding interest and attention". This

While Brexiteers used each of these strategies regarding the EU, the present research focuses on just one—blame. Effects of these other means of vilification are out of scope.

Under Jasper et al's typology, whereby a villain is bad/strong/active, vilification should involve portraying the target as having these qualities. Blame implies all three, which may be discursively identified: the blamee was 'strong' enough to have done something, 'active' in that they did it (or chose to allow it to happen), and 'bad' in that they caused harm. However, as for victims above, attempted vilification may not remain uncontested; blame is not always 'successful' in creating villains.[449] This research argues that audience emotions are key to understanding whether characterisation as a villain is successful amongst audiences.

Figure 10: The EU is called 'evil' and portrayed as death or a ghoul[450]

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means it is vital to evaluate the contribution of blame specifically. Klapp, 'The Creation of Popular Heroes', 138..

[449] See discussion of blame as having 'causal power', rather than being 'a cause', in Methodology. Language is simplified here to facilitate reading.

[450] Richardson, *David Icke - European Union of Evil - Truth about EU (New)*.

Figure 11: A Leave.EU poster using the visual metaphor of the EU associated with a bad (dark, scary, chaotic) storm and the UK flying safely away into a sunny, bright horizon[451]

3.2.7.a)   Feeling about villains

Per existing research, we experience negative emotions towards villains.[452] Examples of such 'feel bad' emotions include—but are not necessarily limited to—hatred, fear, anger, dislike, disgust, or distrust. As already discussed above, emotions towards a character are inseparable from the other properties of a character. This means minimal conditions for constructing and identifying a villain are (a) badness, (b) strength, (c) activity in carrying out their projects, and (d) negative emotion towards the ostensible villain. The first three of these are already implied by blame, and may be identified discursively. Emerging audience emotions becomes the 'missing link' in identifying successful vilification via blame.

Consuming blame may engender an assortment of audience emotions, not all of which indicate creation of a villain—including in the present research, 'sadness', 'sympathy' (associated with victims), 'confusion', 'happy', 'understanding', and 'indifference'.[453] This indicates that vilification via blame is *not* uniformly accepted as implied by prior

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[451] Leave.EU, 'Leave.EU Posters'.

[452] E.g. Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*; Lakoff, *The Political Mind*. The empirical chapters will show that annoyance and anger are pre-eminent amongst the villain-type emotions experienced by audiences as a result of blame; fear and hatred are less apparent. It could be that these relate to other discursive practices, such as 'threat'.

[453] See 7.4 Why we feel that way.

characterisation research:[454] as in the situation with Angela's raisins, blame may be contested.[455] Despite blame having 'happened', the blamee does not have 'villain-type emotions' directed towards them, and therefore cannot be a villain.[456] The present research extends existing research on villains and character work by considering when blame 'works' to make a villain, and when it does not, through discussions of mediation and contestation in the empirical chapters.

3.2.8.   The tension in victimhood

Before moving to the next section, it is necessary to briefly return to victims. As the empirical chapters will find, and as already alluded to above with references to the 'compassion backhand', victims play an important role in blame and any vilification that arises from blame.

Note: this subsection contains references to and descriptions of sexual violence. Descriptions are in footnotes.

Blameworthy events—whether or not the event in question actually occurred—may have victims, and victim status is important for self-identity, for perceptions of the self by others, and for expectations around how a victim should be treated. Criminology and victimology tend to focus on victim precipitation—what a victim did that led to their becoming a victim—which is important in the context of crime reduction.[457] Victim precipitation is also understood in individual psychology, where people holding specific beliefs or values such as Just World Beliefs ('JWBs'), when called upon to systematically decide who is at 'fault' for a given event, allocate more blame to victims of violent crime than those who do not hold such views. JWBs are essentially the understanding that the world is 'fair' and 'unbiased', and if something bad happens, then the victim must have done something unusual that led to the event.[458] Group-based values are likewise associated with victim stigmatisation.[459] This suggests that people with JWB or group-based values perceive victims as at least partially at fault for their negative circumstances (see also 2.3.8 and findings in E4: Blame and underlying characteristics).

This victim-blaming tendency may be seen in a variety of contexts. Cassandra Cross's research indicates that despite increasing awareness of the dangers of online fraud such as

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[454] Blame research does indicate that blame doesn't always seem to 'work', per 2 Blame and its effects. E.g. Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*; Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game'..

[455] See for example on blame avoidance Hansson, 'The Discursive Micro-Politics of Blame Avoidance'; Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance'. See also E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.

[456] These 'villain-type feelings' are precursors to any explicit characterisation—one 'feels' a blamee is a villain before they 'call' them one.

[457] Turvey, *Forensic Victimology*.

[458] Shaver, 'Defensive Attribution'; Hayes, Lorenz, and Bell, 'Victim Blaming Others'; Lerner, Goldberg, and Tetlock, 'Sober Second Thought'; Dawtry et al., 'Derogating Innocent Victims'.

[459] Niemi and Young, 'When and Why We See Victims as Responsible'. In-group victims are threatening to JWBs. Aguiar et al., 'Justice in Our World and in That of Others'. Both JWBs and in-group values tend to be associated with conservative political beliefs. Hayes, Lorenz, and Bell, 'Victim Blaming Others'; Niemi and Young, 'When and Why We See Victims as Responsible'.

'Nigerian Prince' scams, victims who fall prey to fraudsters are constructed as "greedy and gullible", and are blamed for their own victimisation.[460] This victimisation is reinforced by victims themselves as well as by their social networks, with occasionally devastating consequences. One victim in Cross's study explained that:

> "I dare not tell anyone because they will turn and say well you are a stupid idiot and they will walk away from me and I don't want that" [461]

The victim blames themselves and fears potential blame from others; they are constructed as 'gullible' and 'defrauded'—weak—as opposed to an infallible 'us' who would never fall for it.

Lisa Frohmann is also concerned with victim images, though from a different perspective. In examining prosecutorial accounts for rejection of sexual assault cases, Frohmann noted that where a victim did not fit an existing 'ideal victim' type, their case would not be prosecuted.[462] This is consistent with Klapp's notion that characters must appropriately 'perform' their role to be accepted.[463] Ideal-type victims are credible; without ulterior motives; with no discrepancies in their stories; consistent, sincere, and a 'good witness'. 'Reasons' to reject cases included discrepancies between records, and between the report and 'normal' features of crimes;[464] contextual knowledge (e.g. portraying where an event happened as dangerous); personal descriptions or portrayals of victims as drug users, having unstable home lives, or being homeless. A victim's demeanour is also important; they must *seem* believable. Any victim who does not abide by these requirements is in some way complicit in their crime—they are blamed for not being victim *enough*, and effectively punished for precipitating their victimisation.[465] Only cases that comply with dominant stories are prosecuted, reinforcing existing discourses of victims and crime. An outcome of only prosecuting the 'most likely' cases is that the prosecutor's office is upheld as the "community's legal protector", an heroic institution beyond criticism.[466]

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[460] Cross, 'No Laughing Matter'.

[461] Cross, 200.

[462] Frohmann, 'Discrediting Victims' Allegations of Sexual Assault: Prosecutorial Accounts of Case Rejections'. See also Alderden and Ullman, 'Creating a More Complete and Current Picture'.; police officers may not pursue cases where the victim was intoxicated, where there is a delay in reporting, or inconsistency in victim statements.

[463] Klapp, 'The Creation of Popular Heroes'.

[464] "[T]he only act she complained of was intercourse, and my experience has been that when a rapist has a victim cornered for a long period of time, they engage in multiple acts and different types of sexual acts and vary rarely do just intercourse"; "All three times he is grinding his penis into her butt. It seems to me he should be trying to do more than that by the third time." Frohmann, 'Discrediting Victims' Allegations of Sexual Assault: Prosecutorial Accounts of Case Rejections', 217.

[465] Women of colour are less likely to have their cases pursued, per Rozee and Koss, 'Rape'.; they are not accepted as victims in the same way as are white women in the US. Racism, as a discourse, can thus intersect with character narratives.

[466] Frohmann, 'Discrediting Victims' Allegations of Sexual Assault: Prosecutorial Accounts of Case Rejections', 215.

On the one hand, victims are innocents who are above reproach and deserving of heroes' assistance, with images of a victim consistent across groups.[467] On the other hand, *being* a weak and powerless victim is undesirable: it may be traumatic and associated with social sanctions or disparagement.[468] Victims of interpersonal crime are taught to frame themselves not as victims but as *agents* to whom something was done, as this is a path to self-esteem and overcoming trauma.[469] Reframing away from being a victim and towards being an 'agent', the hero of one's own story, becomes important.

The tension within 'victimhood' leads to divergent impulses: (a) being framed as a victim is desirable insofar as it renders a group above reproach and just in their cause; (b) being framed as a victim is undesirable as it indicates lack of agency, and action must be taken to escape victim status. This means that groups such as 'the people of the UK' can be portrayed via blame as the victims of elites, Remainers, or the EU, and acting against those figures could be a path towards victory and status restoration.[470] Similar notions can be seen in the US political context. It both enhances the utility of blame for in-group consolidation and encourages action against blamees as villainous perpetrators.

3.2.9.   Section conclusion

Previous character research's answer to how blame makes villains in politics can be briefly summarised: 'it just does'.[471] If somebody is blamed, then of course they will become a villain (if they are not one already);[472] the process of vilification is conflated with the end

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[467] Nicole Rader, Gayle Rhineberger-Dunn, and Lauren Vasquez posit that media socialises people have an ideal 'victim type'—in America, good victims are young white females who do not know their attackers. Christina Mancini and Justin Pickett note 'missing white woman syndrome', whereby more attention is given to cases of missing or kidnapped young, white women from middle classes and above than for other groups. Rader, Rhineberger-Dunn, and Vasquez, 'Victim Blame in Fictional Crime Dramas'; Mancini and Pickett, 'Reaping What They Sow?'

[468] Ian Marsh (Marsh, Cochrane, and Melville, *Criminal Justice*, 127.), cited in Cross, 'No Laughing Matter', 189., finds that fraud victims "share many of the same … outcomes as their counterparts who have suffered a serious violent crime", even leading to suicide.

[469] Swann and Jetten, 'Restoring Agency to the Human Actor'; Pemberton, Aarten, and Mulder, 'Beyond Retribution, Restoration and Procedural Justice'; Van Dijk, 'Free the Victim'; Stringer, *Knowing Victims*. Zarakol suggests that 'misbehaviour' is one means by which a victim can regain agency. Zarakol, 'What Made the Modern World Hang Together'.

[470] See findings in Miglbauer and Koller, '"The British People Have Spoken"'., where British interviewees present the "EU referendum as enabling [them] to move from being a victim to being an agent" (p. 99).

[471] E.g. Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*. "[P]olitical scientists and political psychologists have … not paid much attention to exploring the sources of discrete emotional reactions". Wagner, 'Fear and Anger in Great Britain', 684.

[472] See also work on stigmatisation. For instance, Rebecca Adler-Nissen points out norm breakage is associated with 'stigma', and states can recognise, reject, or counter such stigmatisation, in an echo of what actors can do vis-à-vis received blame. Adler-Nissen, 'Stigma Management in International Relations'. Stigma is about shaming others and receiving shame oneself, akin to self-blame as discussed in 2.3.7 Blame is emotional. It is not about how we come to dislike/hate/feel negatively towards villainous others, and may not be able to explain the EU-UK relationship where the EU and its supporters become despised by Leavers. For a start, it is not clear that the EU, whatever the EU may be, was 'shamed' as a result of blaming by the Leave campaign. Likewise, there was little of shaming the UK in Leave's campaign materials; rather, the UK was elevated as a 'global power' with an illustrious past and future alike.

result. It is not clear how villains in political life are accepted or *contested*, including in the specific context of blame.

The current research builds on literature, positing that vilification via blame can be located through emerging audience emotions as the final 'missing link' in villain creation. Villains are bad, strong, and active[473]—each of which may be discursively identified and is already implied by blame—*and* audiences experience negative, 'villain-type' emotions towards them. These four conditions are necessary to villain construction. Emerging negative audience emotions towards blamees can then be used to verify whether a villain has been made. The present research refutes the notion of audiences divorcing their perceptions of a villain from their feelings about that villain, which is relevant in light of emotions being predicted as discussed in the following section.

This focus on emotions is particularly important in light of 'affective polarisation', noting that the present research speaks of this as emotional polarisation against a villain. This differs from affective polarisation literature that tends to deal with how followers of one party increasingly dislike followers of the other party.[474] However, by comprehending a larger narrative of good heroes and victims, evil villains and their minions, these phenomena are linked together. Followers of the 'other side' are disliked *in connection with* the villain they support, rendering it necessary to consider what villains are created. This is supported by Bryan McLaughlin et al, who find affective polarisation is linked to candidates.[475] To this end, for a vote 'Remainer', the EU could be a hero, and the Leave campaign and its leaders villains; Remainers are victims and Leavers the minions of the Leave campaign, which is why they deserve to be detested. The reverse could apply for a Leaver, as supported in the present research.[476]

Overall, existing research seems under-nuanced in describing the link between blame and vilification. Meanwhile, the properties of characters are limited to morality, strength, and activity, as in the work of Jasper et al.[477] Existing researchers such as Klapp portray emotions as inevitably entangled with characters, but it is not clear how. The current research makes the link more explicit by including emotions towards characters as an

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[473] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*.

[474] E.g. See review in Broockman, Kalla, and Westwood, 'Does Affective Polarization Undermine Democratic Norms or Accountability?'; and Duffy, 'Feelings, Not Facts, Are Dividing Britain'. Sara Hobolt et al find that "significant political events can generate affective polarization by causing people to identify with others based on a shared opinion on a specific issue"; the present research instead focuses on overarching narratives. Hobolt, Leeper, and Tilley, 'Divided by the Vote: Affective Polarization in the Wake of Brexit'.

[475] They point out that it is "important to consider the source of an emotion response, not just the type of emotion"—it's not just about disliking each other, but where that comes from. McLaughlin et al., 'Emotions and Affective Polarization'. See also James Druckman et al, who find that "polarization intensifies the impact of party endorsements on opinions, decreases the impact of substantive information and... stimulates greater confidence in those—less substantively grounded—opinions". This points to affective, and not purely ideological, commitment. Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus, 'How Elite Partisan Polarization Affects Public Opinion Formation'.

[476] See also 6.4.3 Victimisation of Leavers.

[477] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*.

essential fourth component of characterisation. This helps to divide when blamees become villains from when they do not, permitting elucidation of how different groups interact with blame and providing better explanations for how exogenous blame makes villains in politics.

As identifying vilification via blame relies on locating negative *emotions* towards blamees— and, as an outcome of this research, compassionate emotions towards victims—the next section focuses on emotions and how they are made.

3.3. Constructing emotions

The role of emotions is to keep us alive. They are embodied knowledge that ensures the right resources are allocated to the right bodily systems at the right time, so that we are prepared for our next action, whether that is running from tigers or taking a nap.[478] When we get changed into gym clothes to exercise and accordingly start feeling 'pumped', our body is allocating resources to muscles so that we are ready to work out. When we are scared by a tiger, cortisol is released so we are ready to flee or fight or hide behind a bush.[479]

Without prior knowledge of what a 'tiger' is and what it represents, it is not clear *which* course of action to take when we see a tiger. Are we to fight, flee, hide, or laugh hysterically? Are we to turn our back and hope it does not see us? Perhaps it is actually a fluffy toy tiger, a tiger on-screen, or behind bars, in which case we may not experience fear at all. What we ultimately 'feel' and therefore do accords with our prior experience and existing knowledge of what to do in a given context. Emotions are inseparable from knowledge and context.[480]

Emotions are essential in the present research, as highlighted in the previous section: part of what makes a villain, and what is examined in the present work, is 'villain-type' feelings. It is therefore necessary to consider what emotions 'are' and how to recognise them so that the research may proceed.

This section begins with approaches to emotions in political science to date, justifying selection of the Theory of Constructed Emotions ('TCE')[481] as the emotional framework for the present work. The second subsection explains how TCE works, before the third subsection considers the ramifications for recognising emotions in others. It concludes with implications for the present research.

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[478] Barrett refers to a 'body budget' that emotions help us 'balance'. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.
[479] This latter highlights that there is no 1:1 relationship between any emotion and behaviour; 'appropriate' behaviours are learned.
[480] In line with authors working on emotions as constructed, the present work refers to 'knowledge' and not 'cognition'. Emotions relate to what is 'known', not necessarily what is reasoned, judged, or imagined in the moment. See also definition of 'cognition' in American Psychological Association, 'Cognition'.: "all forms of knowing and awareness, such as perceiving, conceiving, remembering, reasoning, judging, imagining, and problem solving."
[481] Associated with Lisa Feldman Barrett. E.g. Barrett, 'The Theory of Constructed Emotion'.

3.3.1.   Emotions in political science

There have been several schools of thought regarding emotion in political science and international relations, largely reflecting developments in psychology. The present research understands emotions as constructed, but it is worth explaining why these other, more established, approaches were not used.

To start, attitude theory describes 'affect', 'cognition' (what we think/know about a target), and 'behaviour' (what we do about the target).[482] 'Affect' is measured along one dimension, from strong like to strong dislike, as in feeling thermometers. If a stimulus is liked, people should approach it, while avoiding things they dislike.

While on the face of it, this might be quite helpful in identifying villains as those parties that are 'disliked', the overall approach is limited: it does not consider the (now) more typical features of emotions in psychology, including valence (positive/negative, from 'feels good' to 'feels bad'—here perhaps conflated with 'affect') or arousal (high energy to low energy). As such, it struggles to deal with emotions such as 'anger', which 'feels bad' but can be associated with avoidance *and* approach.[483]

Under cognitive appraisal theories, emotions flow from a 'sequence of cognitions'[484] about threats and opportunities, including evaluations of positive/negative, certain/uncertain, controllable/uncontrollable.[485] The final result is one of several discrete emotions, each of which triggers an 'action tendency'.[486] In principle, people's emotions would only change as they re-evaluate something (e.g. moving from 'uncertain' to 'certain' about the outcome of something). Emotions are categorised according to their evaluations, meaning they are essentialised to a set list; further, there is a requirement for cognition in the sense of reasoned evaluation prior to experiencing an emotion.[487] This is not consistent with psychology nor neuroscience research, where the same target may be associated with

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[482] Division in approaches inspired by overview from Marcus et al in Marcus et al., 'Applying the Theory of Affective Intelligence to Support for Authoritarian Policies and Parties'.

[483] E.g. Harmon-Jones et al., 'Anger and Approach-Avoidance Motivation'.

[484] Marcus et al., 'Applying the Theory of Affective Intelligence to Support for Authoritarian Policies and Parties'.

[485] Smith and Ellsworth identify dimensions of certainty, pleasantness, attentional activity, control, anticipated effort, and responsibility. (Smith and Ellsworth, 'Patterns of Cognitive Appraisal in Emotion.') Jackson et al demonstrate that valence and arousal are the best explanation for differentiating emotions across language families, with other items such as 'certainty', approach/avoid, sociality, and dominance being generally poor explanations. Jackson et al., 'Emotion Semantics Show Both Cultural Variation and Universal Structure'.

[486] Frijda, *The Emotions*.

[487] As Mercer puts it, "[i]n the appraisal view, one cannot experience an emotion without first understanding how one is implicated in that situation: emotion without cognition is either impossible or is not really an emotion but more like instinct." Mercer, 'Emotional Beliefs', 4.

multiple emotions, where *conscious* reasoning does not precede emotion,[488] and where the experiences of emotions vary with individual knowledge and culture.[489]

Returning for a moment to psychology, there is also the possibility of emotions being 'constructed', meaning they retain the function of keeping us alive and are experienced in the body but are not necessarily universal or 'natural kinds' as in cognitive appraisal theories. If emotions are universal/natural kinds, then they should be performed or displayed in the same way, and possibly located at specific locations within people's brains.[490] This 'natural kinds' approach is criticised by founder of the Theory of Constructed Emotion ('TCE'), Lisa Feldman Barrett.[491] In summary:[492]

1. There is good reason to believe there is no specific place or set of neurons in everyone's brain that may be 'discovered' to be the source of any given emotion. This is because neurons do not perform just one activity; likewise, one activity may be performed by multiple neurons. An instance of joy may fire off neurons in quite different areas of the brain from instance to instance. Therefore work that understands that an emotion such as love is 'real' and must therefore have brain circuitry is akin to understanding that 'some people like ice hockey, therefore there is brain circuitry specific to liking ice hockey'.
2. There is also no 1:1 relationship between any emotion and a given behaviour, or vice versa; people cry from happiness, sadness, fear, and anger. The physical presentation alone is not enough to know what somebody is feeling; social context and background knowledge are essential.[493]
3. There have been attempts made to identify the 'universal emotions' that every human can both feel and recognise. Studies in this area have been problematic—for example, showing a set of six faces with 'emotion archetypes' on them, providing

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[488] The role of prediction and simulation is discussed below in 3.3.3.e) The predictive brain. Where 'cognition' is understood as 'unconscious', this shortcoming of cognitive appraisal theories is removed.

[489] Mesquita, 'Emotions Are Culturally Situated'; Potegal and Novaco, 'A Brief History of Anger'; Lim, 'Cultural Differences in Emotion'; Jackson et al., 'Emotion Semantics Show Both Cultural Variation and Universal Structure'.

[490] E.g. The amygdala is popularly known as the 'fear centre' of the brain; it seems to instead be involved with processing of novel information. Barrett, *Seven and a Half Lessons about the Brain*; Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

[491] Barrett refers to the 'natural kinds' approach as the 'basic emotions' approach; 'natural kinds' is instead used here to avoid value judgments over the word 'basic'. Note that she relates her work back to the 'father of psychology', William James.

[492] Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*; Barrett, 'The Theory of Constructed Emotion'; Barrett, 'Emotions Are Real.'; Barrett, 'Are Emotions Natural Kinds?'

[493] Paul Ekman is a leading figure in the 'natural kinds' school, authoring several books on how people's specific emotions (anger, contempt, disgust, enjoyment, fear, sadness, and surprise) may be identified from facial expressions. E.g. Ekman, *Emotions Revealed*. His work was the inspiration for the TV show 'Lie to Me', where the detective uses people's 'micro-expressions' to gain insight into what they are feeling and therefore thinking. Paul Ekman International, 'Lie To Me'. See meta-analysis of the (lack of) co-occurrence between facial expressions and Ekman's six basic emotions in Durán and Fernández-Dols, 'Do Emotions Result in Their Predicted Facial Expressions?'.

matching words, and asking people to say which emotion is which.[494] When these emotion word cues are taken away, "it is possible to disrupt emotion perception even in a sample of homogenous undergraduate students".[495] People with semantic dementia, i.e. reduced capacity to retain 'concepts' such as emotions, have been shown to divide piles of emotional faces into pleasant/unpleasant/neutral rather than the six piles of distinct emotions that unaffected groups sorted the faces into.[496] When a similar exercise was performed with speakers of the Herero language in an African Himba tribe, participants sorted faces in a similar way to each other, but in a way that was very different to how English speakers did it. That is, they understood the activity—sorting faces by displayed emotion—but did not have the same *conceptual* cues as did the English speakers.[497]

4. The 'same' emotion may also have different associated targets and actions across languages; consider English 'shame' that is internally focused (I've let myself down) and requires improving yourself, and Spanish *vergüenza* that focuses on the external audience (I've let them down) and requires making amends. Emotions are not objective, but rather subjective categories that change from place to place, and only by having shared 'emotion concepts', embedded in contextual knowledge, are we able to label and recognise emotions in a similar way to one another.

This criticism suggests that understanding emotions as constructed would provide more valid results than frameworks based on emotions as universal/natural kinds; it also requires particular attention to research design, which will be considered below. Grouping emotions into natural kinds may be helpful when conducting purely quantitative research, as Likert scales or drop-downs can be used when asking people how they feel (and thus identifying levels of known 'villain-type feelings'). Certainly, several of the papers referenced in the current work take exactly this approach.[498] However, this may also *prime* responses, and is unhelpful when generating theory due to obscuring differences and nuance (e.g. 'happy' as 'delighted' rather than 'glad' or 'content').

This is not to say that there are no schools of thought on emotions as socially constructed in political science and IR. For instance, Jonathan Mercer notes that "Emotion is part of reasoning", and speaks of emotions that are produced by and produce groups. [499] In a recent volume on 'The Power of Emotions in World Politics', Simon Koschut describes 'strong' and 'weak' constructivist theories of emotions alike as comprehending emotions as culturally appraised/socially embedded, such that "the individual is not the origin of feeling,

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[494] Study by Paul Ekman described in Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.
[495] Barrett, 'Emotions Are Real.', 416.
[496] Lindquist et al., 'Emotion Perception, but Not Affect Perception, Is Impaired with Semantic Memory Loss.'
[497] Lindquist, Satpute, and Gendron, 'Does Language Do More than Communicate Emotion?'; Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.
[498] E.g. Vasilopoulou and Wagner, 'Emotions and Domestic Vote Choice'.
[499] Mercer goes back to William James, who appears to have been an inspiration for Feldman Barrett (Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 35.), in his discussion whereby emotions are a source of information much like other thoughts. "Emotion is a part of reasoning and not a distraction upsetting a coldly rational process" (Mercer, 'Emotional Beliefs', 5.). See also Mercer, 'Feeling like a State'; James, 'Discussion'.

but it is the thickness of the social that makes emotion meaningful".[500] Emotions come from the outside in, and are learnt, rather than innate. They have social functions and help to regulate social behaviour, assigning "emotional meaning to rules and norms" while "restraining undesirable attitudes and behaviour".[501]

While there is a lot to agree with here, Koschut links emotions and their intersubjective meanings to power, but not to the body, erasing the individual's experience of emotions. Bringing in TCE allows the connection of society and its emotion/power structures—its 'structures of feeling'[502]—to the body, while permitting emotions to be constructed rather than of natural kinds. The present research therefore helps to bolster and extend existing research into emotions as constructed in political science and IR.

3.3.2.   Feeling structures

Per Catherine Lutz, "Talk about emotions is simultaneously talk … about power and politics".[503] This is because emotions are embedded within societies, intertwining with institutions and stories to "produce particularized social identities".[504] Emotional governance takes place at two levels: a macro-level 'feeling structure', and micro-level 'feeling rules', as follows.[505]

Raymond William coined the term "structures of feeling" in 1954,[506] arguing that regularised (and regulated) emotions are available in art and language alike. "Feeling structures" are an "institutionalised set of emotions", provided by culture, "that show a regular pattern that constrains and compels the affective experience of subjects, thereby producing and solidifying hierarchies".[507] They circumscribe 'what' people are able to feel (e.g. anger, shame), and are bound up with cultural stories such as that of heroes and villains.[508] Changes in feeling structures take place when new experienced feelings or ideas are

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[500] Koschut, *The Power of Emotions in World Politics*, 327.

[501] Koschut, 8.

[502] Matthews, 'Change and Theory in Raymond Williams's Structure of Feeling'.

[503] Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions*, 6. cited in Koschut, *The Power of Emotions in World Politics*, 3.

[504] Pribram, *Emotions, Genre, Justice in Film and Television*, 2.

[505] Head, 'Contesting Emotional Governance – Empathy under Fire in the Israeli Public Sphere during Operation Protective Edge', 114.

[506] Oxford Reference, 'Structures of Feeling'.

[507] Koschut, *The Power of Emotions in World Politics*, 16.

[508] E.g. Sasley describes Greek ministers as "[c]hallenging the European feeling structure" when they invert the story of "Northern saints|Southern sinners" in the context of the 2008 financial crisis. Greece becomes heroic via nobility in the face of illegitimate if not 'evil' European creditors, and can therefore feel "indignation and anger" at their treatment. Sasley, '"On Monday, Our National Humiliation Will Be over. We Will Finish with Orders from Abroad" – Status, Emotions, and the SYRIZA Government's Rhetoric in the Greek Sovereign Debt Crisis'. They would not be permitted those emotions if they were not playing the underdog/awaiting hero role, in accordance with feeling rules. (See also Lakoff on the role of (cultural) metaphor and emotion in Lakoff, *The Political Mind*.)

compared with other or older ones;[509] emotions and how they are organised can and do change, meaning they cannot be universal 'natural kinds'.[510]

At the interpersonal level, "feeling rules" govern what emotions may be expressed, how, and when. They circumscribe 'appropriate' emotional response.[511] People at different positions in hierarchies have different restrictions upon what emotions they can perform.[512] For instance, women and people of colour have historically been described as 'overly emotional' when compared to so-called 'rational' white men, while being permitted to express emotions in ways forbidden to those men. Arguing emotionally—as when 'railing against injustice'—discredits one's case as irrational, non-conforming, and potentially pathological. This can equally be extended to Leave voters who are portrayed as angry and/or irrational for their Brexit vote choice, [513] Trump supporters in the US, Black Lives Matter activists, or "feminist killjoys" per Sara Ahmed. With this in mind, the present research helps to emerge emotions resulting from blame to help understand the blame-vilification link, without sidelining any emotions as 'invalid'.

3.3.3.　　Making emotions

With the overall commitment to emotions as constructed justified, this subsection will outline the Theory of Constructed Emotions, following the argument presented by Lisa Feldman Barrett and her team.[514] In short, emotions are 'made' when particular *affect* is combined with particular *knowledge* (emotion concepts) in a particular *context*.

3.3.3.a)　　A word on cognition

While cognitive appraisal theories centralise 'cognition' as a series of reasoning and 'thinking' processes, the term is not used henceforth. This is because 'cognition' is a loaded term that reflects an Enlightenment division between 'rational' (cognition/reason) and 'irrational' (emotional).[515] This notion has been debunked; rationality "depends on emotion"[516] and even our most 'rational' decisions are founded in emotions. This is exemplified by Jonathan

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[509] Matthews, 'Change and Theory in Raymond Williams's Structure of Feeling', 189.; see also Hoemann et al., 'The N400 Indexes Acquisition of Novel Emotion Concepts via Conceptual Combination'. on successfully generating new emotions via 'conceptual combination'.

[510] See 3.3.4.a) Culture and acculturation.

[511] Sasley, '"On Monday, Our National Humiliation Will Be over. We Will Finish with Orders from Abroad" – Status, Emotions, and the SYRIZA Government's Rhetoric in the Greek Sovereign Debt Crisis', 76. See also footnote 27 on page 1; feeling structures are comprised of emotion discourses.

[512] Koschut, *The Power of Emotions in World Politics*, 14.

[513] E.g. "[R]aging is all the poor dears can do", Cohen, 'Leavers Are Angry, for Their Lies Will Return to Haunt Them'. See also Moss, Robinson, and Watts, 'Brexit and the Everyday Politics of Emotion'., who find a tension in emotion regimes (rules) governing the Brexit vote—'gut feelings' are appropriate evidence for our own voting choices, but *inappropriate* when used by those of the opposing viewpoint. Thus "a 'correct' vote [in the referendum] could be used as a proxy for assessing the rationality of others" (p. 849).

[514] E.g. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*; Barrett, 'The Theory of Constructed Emotion'; Barrett, 'Emotions Are Real.'

[515] Damasio, *Descartes' Error*.

[516] Mercer, 'Emotional Beliefs'.

Haidt's metaphor of a rational rider driving an immensely more powerful emotional elephant—the rider cannot go anywhere the elephant does not also go.[517]

Even if they are not *superior*, 'cognition' implies that thoughts are somehow different to feelings' but this is not always the case. For instance, while many Westerners "experience thoughts and emotions as fundamentally different and sometimes in conflict";[518] for Balinese and Ilongot cultures and some Buddhist groups, no distinction is made. Rather, Balinese and Ilongot groups use a word that combines the two as 'thought-feeling'.[519]

In line with other work that employs the Theory of Constructed Emotion, this research instead uses the word 'knowledge' as something that is *known*[520] but not necessarily *thought* or reasoned as implied by 'cognition'.

3.3.3.b)   What is 'affect'?

'Affect' means bodily information that is available to us, including subconsciously.[521] It includes information gathered via senses (sight, hearing, touch etc) as well as interoceptive information that tells us about the current state of the body such as aches and pains, heart rate, and breathing rate. Affect informs emotions, but does not have social information attached to it. It refers to purely physical information that is directly experienced by the perceiver. It may be interpreted as 'feel good' ('positive valence') and 'feel bad' ('negative valence') sensations that we link to emotions, as well as 'high arousal' (energy) and 'low arousal'. Through affect, information about the inner workings of our body is available to us.[522]

Affect is more colloquially known as 'mood'. If one is in a 'grumpy mood', it is not that they experience just one emotion (grumpiness) for hours at a time. Rather, 'mood' is a "simple accounting of how you're doing" at the level of the body.[523] Having slept poorly leads to feeling physically bad (affect), and one is more likely to construct negative emotions as their body tries to address the issue.[524] The 'mood' is the body's state, not a particular emotion or set thereof.

As emotions are always 'felt' due to their affective component, the word 'feeling' is used in the present research both to indicate physical feelings (affect) and emotions. Emotions are clearly labelled with their names.

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[517] Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*.

[518] Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 280.

[519] Barrett, 'Balinese and Ilongot Conception of Emotion'. It is likewise unclear that 'Westerners' always separate thought/feeling; consider the use of the phrase "I feel like..." to mean "I think". Indeed, attempting to disentangle these two is a challenge posed in non-violent communication. Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication*.

[520] And therefore 'predictable'; see 3.3.3.e) The predictive brain below.

[521] See *Cultivating Wisdom*.

[522] Barrett, 'The Theory of Constructed Emotion', 17.

[523] *Cultivating Wisdom*.

[524] See section 3.3.3.f) Predicting/experiencing emotions below.

3.3.3.c)   What are 'concepts'?

Affect must be combined with emotion 'concepts' to become an instance of emotion.[525] But what is a concept?

A concept is in some sense an *idea* and a *category*.[526] 'Bird' is a concept, but there are some birds that are more 'birdy' than others. For some people, the 'birdiest bird' might be a sparrow; for others it might be a stork, or a peacock. Most people would agree that all three are birds. They may also agree that a penguin, a phoenix, an emu, or a cross-stitch of a bird are less 'birdy' than their 'birdiest bird'.

Concepts are thought to revolve around *ideal types* (the 'birdiest' bird), ranged on an ideal *dimension* (more or less 'birdiness').[527] Despite having little in common, a range of creatures can be understood by 'bird' and may be more or less 'birdy' in different contexts, as shown in Table 6. Differences between 'birds'—within-concept differences—are minimised.

Table 6: What is the birdiest bird?

Context	'Birdiest' bird?	Characteristics
Picnic grounds	Sparrow	Small size, fluffy plumage, wings, hops, cheeky
Seaside	Seagull	Broad wings, steals chips, white, pronounced beak
Park	Ibis	Long legs and beak, white, black face, walks in water, raids rubbish bins
Pond	Duck	Medium body, brown or coloured feathers, followed by a line of baby ducks
Lake	Flamingo	Tall, pink, long legs, eats prawns

While within-concept differences are minimised, between-concept differences are exaggerated. Both ducks and flying fish have wings, can glide through the air, live in/around the water, eat small water creatures, have mouths, and require oxygen, but one is definitely a bird, and one is definitely a fish.

Concepts are not just limited to physical beings, but can be *goal-based*.[528] The concept 'things you can use to <u>make a fire</u>'[529] can contain very different objects—from a lighter to paper, a magnifying glass, rocks or lightning. Individual people may have slightly different concepts, and have different 'ideal types' according to their experiences and thus what they know;[530] a smoker might find a lighter more relevant than matches for making fire. Broad concepts are however shared through socialisation—people learn from one another what tool is best in a given context.[531] Without children's cartoons about being lost and needing to make a fire in the forest, or a friend's proclivity for frying ants, or news about glass from broken bottles starting yet another Australian bushfire, 'magnifying glass' might be an

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[525] Note: This continues to be an iteration of Feldman Barrett's theory. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

[526] Harnad, 'Categorical Perception'; Barrett, 'Emotions Are Real.'; Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

[527] Voorspoels, Vanpaemel, and Storms, 'A Formal Ideal-Based Account of Typicality'.

[528] Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

[529] 'Making a fire' is the goal.

[530] Costello and Keane, 'Efficient Creativity'.

[531] This does not mean that what is learned is 'correct' or 'optimal'.

unlikely member of the fire-maker concept. Concept knowledge is thus shared via language and practice.[532] Sharing within groups ensures concepts are conveyed without people having to learn the same concept individually—it is not that everyone needs to taste a poisonous plant to establish whether it is harmful; the group can let them know.

3.3.3.d)   Emotions as concepts[533]

Like 'things for making fire', emotions are goal-based concepts that can be shared within a culture, and learning them is important for ongoing survival.[534] Take the example of a child complaining of a tummy ache: one might ask them whether they felt sick, or needed to go to the bathroom, or had hurt themselves—or if they were nervous, or upset, or if somebody had made them angry. Over time, the child learns that certain physical symptoms or sensations (affect) are associated with an emotion (nervousness, upsetness, anger) in a certain social context (eating too much at lunch, being hit, having their favourite toy taken away). The 'correct' emotion in a given situation prescribes action to alleviate the symptoms, hastening a return to 'normalcy'.

Context is essential: the child wouldn't feel 'nervous' every time they have a tummy ache, as having that physical symptom is not exclusive to nervousness; but if they have a stomach ache consistently in the same context—e.g. the night before a big test—they can learn to categorise the experience as 'nervousness' and act accordingly. This might be by taking deep breaths, or spending time with friends—certain behaviours are learned as 'appropriate' for a given emotion within a culture,[535] and are ultimately related back to keeping oneself alive.

Emotions are *concepts* because they, like 'bird', have minimised within-concept differences and exaggerated between-concept differences; there is no 'angriest anger', as there is no 'birdiest bird'.[536] Perhaps the child gets a stomach ache before a test, *and* gets shaky walking by a house with a large dog: but they are nervous in both situations despite different context and affect.[537] The same child might *also* get a tummy ache when they are furious, but this is not called 'nervousness'. What unites an emotion concept is *goals*—what it gets people to do. Goals of general anger may include protecting oneself from an offense; acting against injustice; wanting to win a competition or negotiation; wanting to appear powerful or signal dominance; changing someone's mind; wanting to be aggressive; desiring

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[532] I.e. Discourse. See discussion in 2.4.2 Blame as discursive practice, and footnote 509 on page 1.
[533] See e.g. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*; Barrett, 'The Theory of Constructed Emotion'; Barrett, 'Emotions Are Real.'; Gendron and Barrett, 'Emotion Perception as Conceptual Synchrony'; Barrett, 'Are Emotions Natural Kinds?'; Barrett, 'Solving the Emotion Paradox'.
[534] Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.
[535] I.e. 'Feeling rules'.
[536] "[E]motion categories exhibit high cross-category similarity in addition to high within-category variability." Hoemann, Gendron, and Barrett, 'Mixed Emotions in the Predictive Brain', 4.
[537] As William James infamously put it, "'Fear' of getting wet is not the same fear as fear of a bear." James, 'Discussion', 506.

to lash out when frustrated or feeling a threat to self-worth; feeding[538] or defending oneself.[539]

Emotion concepts, taken together, form the basis of[540] a 'feeling structure' as discussed above: what emotions 'can' be experienced, with their contexts and behaviours, and as upheld through practices and institutions.[541] Note though that individuals can continue to learn emotion concepts as they are exposed to them: for instance when learning a new language; living in a new environment or joining a new group; through education; via popular culture including art, books, movies, or television; or as transmitted via media including social media.[542]

3.3.3.e)   The predictive brain

As there is no 1:1 relationship between an emotion and a given situation, how do we come to feel one emotion and not another? To understand this, it is necessary to consider the role of prediction in the brain.

Prediction is an essential efficiency measure for the brain. Rather than having to gather *and* process all information about the world around us simultaneously—a high-intensity and therefore high-resource task—our brain is in the constant process of 'predicting' what will happen, based on our past experiences in similar contexts.[543] This allows us to 'ignore' what we already know is there so that we can instead focus on—and devote our processing power to—what is new, different, or salient in a given context.

Consider the example of walking down the same hallway three times every day. Simply processing what is there each time we walk down it would involve spatial calculations, temperature data, visual data, physics data such as understanding how gravity acts upon the body as we raise and lower our legs, and it would need to be done near-instantaneously so that we didn't crash into a wall while in the process of trying to figure out where it was and how are our legs are supposed to work. Instead, our brain *predicts* that a hallway is one

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[538] As in 'hanger', hunger-anger.

[539] Barrett, 'Goals of Anger'. Note that 'anger' may also be 'divided' (as 'bird' is divided into 'penguin' and 'aardvark') so that one 'general' emotion does not appear to relate to multiple 'goals'. See also 3.3.4.c) Language and priming.

[540] Open language ('the basis of') is used here because any given individual may belong to subgroups and be acculturated in slightly different ways, meaning that despite overall 'feeling structures' existing at high levels—e.g. at the level of 'being English' or 'British' or 'European' or a 'Westerner', this does not mean that every single person experiences identical emotions or has identical emotion concepts.

[541] Consider reduced sentences for 'crimes of passion'; people's unusual 'emotional states' may be recognised and related back to prison sentences in legal institutions.

[542] E.g. The emotion concept 'fernweh', borrowed from German and now increasingly common in English, has been popularised on Instagram and other social media as the need to travel, the 'longing for far-off places', and the opposite of homesickness. 'Fernweh'. There is a wonderful discussion of hypocognition, introducing feeling-words such as 'figital' and 'shoeburyness', at Wu, 'Hypocognition'. See also 3.3.4.a) Culture and acculturation below.

[543] E.g. Gendron and Barrett, 'Emotion Perception as Conceptual Synchrony'; Barrett and Simmons, 'Interoceptive Predictions in the Brain'; Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*; Barrett, *Seven and a Half Lessons about the Brain*; Hutchinson and Barrett, 'The Power of Predictions'.

possible outcome of walking through a door, so prepares relevant information; as we walk down this *particular* hallway regularly, it is even more likely that our predictions based on past information will be correct, freeing up the brain to focus on new information such as a person walking towards us. 'Person walking towards me' is a frequent thing to happen in a hallway, so predictions will likely be prepared for this, and we will be able to pass by them without crashing; 'person jumping out at me in the hallway' is less frequent, so less likely to be predicted, and may be a shock; 'person walking out of the solid wall in the hallway' is unlikely to be predicted at all, and would result in using the body's resources to process additional data, *learning* so that predictions of hallways are more accurate in future.

Our brains prepare multiple predictions at all times using Bayesian models of probability, and a prediction 'wins' as it is confirmed by sensory data. Where there is a mismatch between a 'winning' prediction and sensory data, either the incoming data is ignored, or new information is learned.[544]

3.3.3.f)   Predicting/experiencing emotions

Vitally, emotions, like other information, are predicted.[545] When walking home at night through a 'bad area', a person's brain may generate predictions including being mugged or attacked—it is prepared to produce emotions such as 'fear', or 'defensive aggression', and internal resources are pre-allocated.[546] If somebody leaps out, the additional sensory data confirms the prediction that 'fear' is the correct emotion to feel in the context, and the person enacts the behaviour they have learned best fits the context. The 'decision' on 'what to do' forms part of the prediction of the emotion concept. If the fearful person runs away, it is not because they have felt fear and then decided what to do; their brain predicted potential fear, pre-allocated resources, and the person was ready to run the moment the fear was engendered (i.e. as the fear prediction won).[547] Emotions and concordant behaviours are part of the same 'package' and have already been 'predicted' for best fit even as the action is unfolding.[548]

In the example above, there could have been alternate explanations for the situation—for example, the 'mugger' could have simply been exiting their front door rather than 'leaping out'—but because the fearful person's brain has already predicted 'being attacked|fear|run', the latter is the winning prediction. Predictions can be affected by beliefs or prejudices, as when perceiving an area as a 'bad area' provokes certain emotions; likewise, perceiving a person of colour as more likely to attack would mean the person is

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[544] E.g. Hutchinson and Barrett, 'The Power of Predictions'; Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

[545] E.g. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

[546] E.g. Fridman et al., 'Applying the Theory of Constructed Emotion to Police Decision Making'.

[547] This does not preclude later contemplation of the situation in a different context, as in therapy or debriefs (in a different and more positive affective scenario). In that context, the person may not feel the same fear they experienced at the time, instead possibly feeling a bit silly or embarrassed for their reaction. They may also learn alternate behaviours to undertake when afraid—the purpose of drilling in military training. See also how emotions and physiological activity vary in Hoemann et al., 'Context-Aware Experience Sampling Reveals the Scale of Variation in Affective Experience'.

[548] E.g. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

more likely to perceive themselves as being attacked by a person of colour, highlighting problems with witness testimony.[549] A prediction doesn't need to be 'true' in any 'objective' sense to be a person's winning prediction for a given situation, as 'blame' does not need to be 'accurate' to produce instances of emotions such as 'anger'.

An emotion, then, is actively constructed, not passively received—they are "**constructions** of the world, **not reactions** to it."[550] To use a supply chain metaphor, they are an 'ahead-of-time' rather than 'just-in-time' resource.

Notably, the more successful a prediction has been in the past, the more likely it is to be predicted in future.[551] This means that emotions can become 'entrenched' over time. If we walk through the woods every day, over time developing a regular route, that route becomes easier to walk (the grass is worn down and a path is formed), and we may take it *because* it is easier to walk. A similar effect occurs with emotions: by walking the same emotional 'path' on a regular basis, we learn that that emotion is an appropriate response to a given context, that prediction becomes 'stronger', and we are more likely to predict that emotion in similar situations in future. This means that when blame engenders particular emotions in its audience, that audience is more likely to predict similar emotions in future. I.e. When blame makes audiences 'feel' the blamee is a villain, they are more likely to feel that party is a villain in future.

<div align="center">❖</div>

Emotions then consist of three components: affect, knowledge, and context. 'Affect' is information from the body; 'knowledge' refers to 'emotion concepts', whether learned individually or from other people; 'context' refers to a particular situation. They are not generated in response to a particular stimulus; rather, they are predicted—prepared ahead of time.

> "[Emotions] are not triggered; you create them. They emerge as a combination of the physical properties of your body, a flexible brain that wires itself to whatever environment it develops in, and your culture and upbringing, which provide that environment. Emotions are real, but not in the objective sense that molecules or neurons are real. **They are real in the same sense that money is real—that is, hardly an illusion, but a product of human agreement**."[552]

3.3.4.   Recognising emotions

If emotions are not natural kinds in the sense that every human feels the same set of emotions, then how may we recognise them in others? The previous subsection showed

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[549] See also discussion of 'affective realism' in Fridman et al., 'Applying the Theory of Constructed Emotion to Police Decision Making', 5.
[550] Emphasis added. Barrett, 'The Theory of Constructed Emotion', 16.
[551] This also logically applies at a 'group knowledge' level, as successful predictions survive and are shared. I.e. Sharing of emotion concepts is in a sense a social evolutionary process. E.g. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.
[552] Introduction in Barrett. Emphasis added.

that emotions are comprised of affect, knowledge, and context. This 'knowledge' can be learned from groups—how? And how may we understand the emotions of others? Particularly, given the researcher is from a different culture (Australia) to her research participants (UK), how may she recognise their emotions? To explain why the researcher chose to focus on explicitly-named emotions in data collection, this subsection discusses 'acculturation' into the emotion concepts of others, 'synchrony' as interpreting others' emotions, and language as a perceptual guide.

3.3.4.a)   Culture and acculturation

Emotion concepts are embedded in cultural knowledge: by sharing stories, traditions, and practices, emotion concepts are shared through space and time, with "the ultimate consequence of optimising prediction within that cultural context."[553] Per Batja Mesquita, "emotion is not separate from culture but rather is constituted by it".[554] That is, culture is not just limited to production and exchange of 'ideas', but also associated "feelings, attachments and emotion"[555] inextricably tangled with those ideas.

Cross-cultural interpretations of emotions, where emotion concepts are not necessarily shared, inevitably take place through the lens of one's own system of representation.[556] An example is how grief is experienced and expressed: it might be internal and private, or conveyed using wailing; wearing white to a funeral might be inappropriate viewed through a Western lens, but ideal in several East Asian countries. '**Acculturation**' is the means by which 'foreign' concepts may be communicated and learned, including emotion concepts.[557]

Consider the US-originated popular culture embedded in Hollywood films. Popular culture is one of the most visible locations of emotions,[558] conveying what to feel, when, and what to do about it. More than 70% of the US film industry's box office is generated overseas, with attempts made to reach the largest audience possible; further, "[f]ilms that succeed in the US market also tend to succeed in foreign markets."[559] This means American films and television, with their embedded popular culture and therefore emotion concepts, can reach wide audiences. Audiences thus subjectified could be expected to find the emotions embedded in US popular culture more comprehensible than, say, those embedded in

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[553] Hoemann, Gendron, and Barrett, 'Mixed Emotions in the Predictive Brain', 2.

[554] Mesquita, 'Emotions Are Culturally Situated', 415.. Deidre Pribram argues that emotions exist as "accultured affect, tamed through stabilisation into signification". Pribram, *A Cultural Approach to Emotional Disorders*, 8.

[555] Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, 2.

[556] Gendron and Barrett, 'Emotion Perception as Conceptual Synchrony'.

[557] Gendron and Barrett.

[558] Per Raymond Williams, "it is in art, primarily, that the effect of the totality, the dominant structure of feeling, is expressed and embodied." Williams and Orrom, *A Preface to Film*, 21. cited in Matthews, 'Change and Theory in Raymond Williams's Structure of Feeling'.

[559] Scott, 'Hollywood in the Era of Globalization'. This is not because 'foreign markets' are necessarily culturally like that in the US; "Europe prefers sex to shootouts, while Asia and the Middle East are rapt by action and violence. Italians recoil at science fiction, Argentines drift toward the intellectual, Russians adore 'Minions' but are cool to interracial love stories, and one distributor described American dramas as 'the big dirty word in our business.'" Fleishman, 'Not All American Films Travel Easily.'

Mongolian culture, because they have learned what the American concepts are called, how they are expressed, and what behaviours should be associated with them. That is, it is possible to learn the emotion concepts of other groups and cultures.

3.3.4.b)   Recognising emotions in others

To have a shared emotion concept, people involved must agree in principle that a certain emotion concept exists, with a certain function or set of functions. To attempt to 'recognise' what emotion somebody is experiencing, a perceiver must firstly have a good knowledge of what 'symptoms' may be associated with that emotion—a knowledge grounded in shared emotion concepts. Conveying and recognising an instance of emotion is therefore a culturally-grounded form of communication.[560]

'**Synchrony**' is the mechanism by which people communicate an emotion from one to another and back again. It is informed by context and culture, and created through processes of prediction and correction as follows.[561]

During an interaction between two people, one person experiences an instance of emotion (the 'feeler'). The brain of the other party (the 'observer') has been making predictions about what the feeler is feeling, based on the situational context and their own experience and knowledge. 'Emotion signals'—the feeler's facial expressions, body language and reactions, words, voice, and other faces[562]—reach the observer, and their brain's predictions are adjusted in accordance with pre-existing knowledge.[563] I.e. The sensory data we receive acts as a precision signal that helps us recognise emotion in others—but this is not infallible, as perceptions are coloured by our past experiences. We apply our own emotion concepts to interpreting a situation, even subconsciously at the level of prediction.

> "We perceive others as happy, sad, or angry by applying our own emotion concepts to their moving faces and bodies."[564]

People can learn emotion concepts from other groups through emotional acculturation,[565] and without this knowledge, potential recognition of others' emotions will be biased in favour of the observer's own cultural framework, with 'emotion signals' misinterpreted. "[D]iversity in cultures" therefore poses a potential challenge for synchrony.[566] Even where emotion concepts are broadly shared, an instance of emotion may 'look' different and prescribe different practices in different contexts: anger may be associated with striking

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[560] Emotion labelling facilitates the process of linking faces to emotions amongst children. Ogren and Sandhofer, 'Emotion Words Link Faces to Emotional Scenarios in Early Childhood'.

[561] Gendron and Barrett, 'Emotion Perception as Conceptual Synchrony'.

[562] Barrett, Lindquist, and Gendron, 'Language as Context for the Perception of Emotion'.

[563] This also means that the person's own internal state is affected—when their emotions are updated via observing the feeler, their body prepares for associated actions. They are essentially 'primed' by what the other person is feeling. Synchrony isn't just about 'recognising', but is a lived experience. Gendron and Barrett, 'Emotion Perception as Conceptual Synchrony'; Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

[564] Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, 51.

[565] Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

[566] Gendron and Barrett, 'Emotion Perception as Conceptual Synchrony', 106.

somebody, frowning, smiling, or clapping; with yelling or whispering, making eye contact, or looking away, using formal language, or swearing. While in the present project, the researcher spent several years living and working in England, has consumed British popular culture from an early age and been educated via British universities,[567] it is still possible there could be mismatches in synchrony and thus in identifying emotions in others. For this reason, only emotions that are explicitly labelled, rather than any performance of emotion (yelling etc), are used in analysis.[568]

Emotions are individual

It is necessary to add that emotions are constructed, and therefore experienced, by individuals. It is nonsensical to speak of a 'group' emotion, as a population cannot experience the biological-construction link that an individual can—a group does not have one physical body.[569] However, through the mechanism of synchrony, group effects can be perceived.

Take the example of a football match. When some people watching the game see their team winning, they may experience particular emotions (e.g. joy) and exhibit particular practices (e.g. clapping or cheering). If others who are subject to similar emotion concepts but who have never been to a football game before or do not care about the team see the clapping and cheering, their brains are more likely to predict joy. If a supporter of the other team misses seeing the latest goal, but sees people on the other side of the stadium clapping and cheering (context), their brain predicts sadness. If somebody in the crowd spots an axe-wielding clown, they may start to practice fear, and those around them will have their predictions (and therefore emotions) updated to respond to the danger and prepare them to act, increasing their likelihood of experiencing and exhibiting fear in turn. This is the phenomenon elsewhere described as 'emotional contagion'.[570] The population— the crowd at the football match—itself never experiences an emotion, but the multiplicity of bodies that constitutes it may. Such 'contagion' may also be cued by language.[571]

3.3.4.c)   Language and priming

As 'culture' can prime us to identify and interpret particular emotion signals, using 'emotion words' such as 'happy' or 'sad' primes us to search for evidence of that emotion.[572] That is, using emotion words helps people locate those emotions in themselves and in others, by

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[567] See 1.5 Researcher positionality.

[568] See also 4.3.5 Recognising emotions.

[569] Mercer argues convincingly that some emotions such as 'shame' and 'pride' are 'social', as they require a social environment to be experienced. Mercer, 'Feeling like a State'. Those emotions are still, of course, experienced in the individual body.

[570] Mercer.

[571] See e.g. Kramer, Guillory, and Hancock, 'Experimental Evidence of Massive-Scale Emotional Contagion through Social Networks'. on 'emotional contagion' (synchrony) via emotional Facebook posts.

[572] "Morphed faces depicting an equal blend of happiness and anger are encoded as angrier when those faces are paired with the word 'angry', and they are encoded as even angrier when participants are asked to explain why those faces are angry." Barrett, Lindquist, and Gendron, 'Language as Context for the Perception of Emotion', 5.

priming their predictions.[573] (It follows that having a broader emotional 'vocabulary'—greater emotional 'granularity'—enables people to more clearly differentiate between their own emotions, as well as improve their identification of emotions in others.)[574]

Constructions are also affected by priming—feeling unpleasant and being primed for 'fear' induces people to act more fearfully than control groups primed with 'anger' or nothing at all.[575]

These effects were considered when undertaking data collection for this research. Particular attention was given to avoid priming research participants with emotions, for example by not presenting emotion words when conducting focus groups and interviews.[576]

3.3.5.   Section conclusion

This section has outlined in brief the Theory of Constructed Emotions,[577] according to which emotions are a form of embodied knowledge. Emotions are constructed of affect, knowledge (emotion concepts), and context, and are actively *predicted* rather than passively received. The reasons for selecting TCE rather than alternate emotion theories were outlined. This research positions itself alongside other work on emotions as constructed in political science, including that of Koschut et al.[578]

It is clear that understanding emotions as constructed has research implications. Per the previous chapter, existing work points to particular emotions being associated with blame,[579] and particular emotions being associated with particular practices or behaviours.[580] This blame research is not necessarily invalid—using a different mechanism to understand how emotions work does not mean that the 'measured' emotion always differs. However it is important to consider that

- any results of previous studies may have been affected by cultural norms around what is 'appropriate' to feel and express;[581]
- if emotions are 'grouped' so that, for example, a participant selects the emotion 'closest to' what they are feeling, their emotions may be primed; they make take cues from the research design as to what they are 'expected' to feel; and more granular emotions (e.g. 'miffed', 'put out', 'frustrated') would be obscured by more general emotions (e.g. 'anger').

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[573] The words we use "ground [concept] acquisition and function like conceptual glue" Barrett, Lindquist, and Gendron, 3..

[574] See for example on granularity Barrett et al., 'Knowing What You're Feeling and Knowing What to Do about It'.

[575] Lindquist, Satpute, and Gendron, 'Does Language Do More than Communicate Emotion?'

[576] See Methodology.

[577] Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

[578] Koschut, *The Power of Emotions in World Politics*.

[579] E.g. Lerner and Tiedens, 'Portrait of the Angry Decision Maker'; Ask and Pina, 'On Being Angry and Punitive'; Mikula, 'Testing an Attribution-of-Blame Model of Judgments of Injustice'.

[580] E.g. Barrett, 'Goals of Anger'.

[581] I.e. Feeling structure and rules.

The present research therefore extends existing research on blame and emotions (see 2.3.7) by using open-ended questions to establish how people say they feel, rather than drop-down lists, thermometers, or scales. Priming is avoided, and only explicitly-named emotions are utilised in analysis to avoid misinterpreting the data.[582]

Importantly, the better our predictions are, the more we predict them, such that certain predictions—and emotions—become entrenched. This means that if people 'feel' a certain blamee is a villain, they are more likely to feel they are a villain in future. Their negative feelings towards a blamee can become entrenched over time—it *matters* if we are angry or fearful towards a blamee. The villains we create via blame in politics become everyday villains—and we polarise against them and their supporters alike.

3.4. Chapter conclusion

This chapter began by building on existing work to establish the difference between *being* a villain and the process of vilification. It demonstrated that characters are constituted not just along the dimensions of morality, strength, and activity,[583] but are simultaneously constructed by what is felt towards that character. Emotions therefore become a clue both to the construction of characters such as villains, and evidence of successful vilification. As blame already implies that an actor is bad, strong, and active, audience emotions—and specifically, negative emotions towards a blamee—can therefore verify that blame has been successful in making a villain. This allows for a nuanced investigation of the effects of blame, while permitting consideration of the role of audiences in mediating or mitigating such effects. It makes a contribution in that it indicates ways in which audience emotions themselves may be used as evidence of successful characterisation, and not simply explicit words.

Further, focusing on the negative 'villain-type' emotions engendered via blame and how the character of *villain* is concordantly constructed helps to explain how the EU and its supporters (or the Leave campaign and its supporters) become not just 'wrong' but *disliked* in the Brexit case study; they are the 'other side' and cannot be supported. This speaks to affective polarisation between domestic audiences in the UK and potentially elsewhere, as well as having had implications for the EU in the form of a successful 'Leave' vote.

Given the key role of emotion, the chapter also introduced the Theory of Constructed Emotions ('TCE') as an explanatory framework for how emotions work, and how they may be recognised and therefore operationalised. By bringing this theory into political science and IR, it connects notions of emotions as constructed and comprising feeling structures with the individual body as the site of emotions but which is otherwise rendered invisible.

Notably, under TCE, emotions are actively predicted rather than passively received, and the more a particular prediction turns out to be 'accurate' based on bodily information received

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[582] See also Methodology.

[583] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*.

from the world, the more likely we are to predict it in future. This is at the heart of blame-based vilification, as when blame makes us feel angry at the blamee, or compassionate for their victims, we turn against the blamee as a villain; and these feelings become increasingly entrenched over time, meaning the blamee becomes ever-more villainous. It is then unsurprising that Brexit has been an emotionally-charged affair.

With blame defined, villains and vilification clarified, and emotions explained, the following chapter operationalises the present research. It discusses the critical research design and abductive approach applied, before developing a data analysis framework that permits for identification of blame, emotions, and hence characters per the current chapter. This enables investigation of the effects of blame in the empirical chapters—and vitally, the ways in which blame makes villains in politics.

4. Methodology

4.1. Introduction

Uncovering the ways in which blame makes villains in politics necessitates establishing the effects of blame, and particularly the emotional effects. Blame and its effects showed that the effects of exogenous blame are under-theorised in political science and (social) psychology alike and defined blame, while Constructing villains and emotions explained that identifying villains requires locating audience[584] emotions and established the nature of emotions as constructed.

However, not all blame appears equal: some politicians have blame 'stick' to them, while others are "Teflon politicians";[585] blame towards ourselves makes us feel guilty or ashamed,[586] while at least some endogenous blame towards others makes us feel angry.[587] Sometimes we blame people more than others, with implications for how we feel and act towards those people.[588] Blame can then have *differentiated* effects. To elucidate this further, it is necessary to establish a research design and methods that enable investigation of such effects.

The concepts used in previous chapters, including 'discourse' as language and practice and the notion of emotions as constructed, suggest that at least part of what is experienced as everyday 'reality' is subject to change and renegotiation. Under such circumstances, how can the effects of something such as blame be examined? Can blame, or its effects, ever be 'real'? The first section of this chapter argues that this is the case. It introduces critical realism as an ontology and epistemology that understands the social world as stable enough for the examination of a social reality full of 'mechanisms' that underlie everyday empirical experience. It goes on to discuss the place of experimentation and mixed methods in critical realist research and describe the key role of abductive reasoning. The steps taken in research are then described using a visual 'research spiral', whereby continual cycling between theory and data informs theory generation, before Brexit's choice as a case study is justified. This section prepares the ground for the data analysis framework that follows, and describes data sources necessary to conducting the research.

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[584] Audiences are the people who observe, hear, or otherwise consume blame. This research is concerned with the effects on audiences, whether they are intentional audiences or not. See 2.1.1 Aristotle, audiences, and proofs.

[585] Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game'.

[586] Sheikh and McNamara, 'Insights from Self-Blame and Victim Blaming', 241.

[587] Lerner and Tiedens, 'Portrait of the Angry Decision Maker'; Quigley and Tedeschi, 'Mediating Effects of Blame Attributions on Feelings of Anger'.

[588] E.g. Becker and Tinkler, '"Me Getting Plastered and Her Provoking My Eyes": Young People's Attribution of Blame for Sexual Aggression in Public Drinking Spaces'; Alicke, 'Blaming Badly'; Guglielmo and Malle, 'Enough Skill to Kill'.

The second part of the chapter makes a contribution in the form of a data analysis framework that coheres with critical realist principles and enables close examination of discursive effects. This framework shows the need to identify context, performance (of blame), effects, and contestation, all of which are important to understanding blame's causal powers in the specific case of the Brexit campaign and more generally. Relating the framework back to the research question and design, this section drills down further to describe how blame, villains, victims, emotions, and contestation are each identified, then describing reading and coding processes and how quote selection is done to reflect what research participants themselves might have wished to convey.

The third part of this chapter describes the data sources for the present research, as aligned with the data analysis framework. It describes how and why a survey-experiment and focus groups/interviews were developed and conducted to measure audience reception, including how the latter were adapted in light of COVID-19. The role of contextual data is briefly discussed, before use of articles and commentary from the free newspaper 'The Metro' and campaign materials from both the 'Leave' and 'Remain' sides of the referendum campaign is justified in light of the research design. The chapter then moves on to consider reliability, replicability, validity, and how limitations were mitigated. Lastly, the structure for the following empirical chapters is presented in accordance with the data analysis framework.

4.2. Research design

4.2.1.   Multiple realities

In Blame and its effects, blame was defined as a 'discursive practice', and reference is made to poststructuralist conceptions of 'discourse'. The present work, like that of poststructuralists, understands discourse as both language and practice. The 'structures of feeling' described in 3.3.2 Feeling structures are labelled 'discursive formations', such that emotions named, experienced, and practiced become a kind of structure that is upheld by institutions and practices that are 'done' in the world. However, while it embraces accepted poststructuralist terminology around discourse, this research does not use a poststructuralist research design, which struggles to explain cause, effects, or change. Rather, it is embedded in a critical realist ontology and epistemology that can engage with each. What does this mean for 'discourse'? To establish this, the basic tenets of critical realism must first be iterated.

The 'realism' of critical realism maintains that there is a reality that exists, independent of human knowledge: when somebody leaves a room, the room does not cease to exist. For Roy Bhaskar, there are three ontological domains for reality: the empirical, actual, and real.[589] 'Empirical reality' is that which may be experienced—for example, seeing a stove in a room. 'Actual reality' is where events actually happen, whether or not they are experienced—a tree that falls in the woods makes a noise whether or not somebody is

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[589] Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*, 2.

there to experience it as a 'sound'. 'Real' reality is where events are produced—it is where mechanisms exist (see Figure 12).[590] For instance, the gender pay gap may be experienced (and observed) in the empirical world; it would exist as an event in the actual world whether or not it was experienced by any one person; and it is due to patriarchy in the real world that the gap comes about. Patriarchy in the 'real' domain cannot be observed directly, but its effects can—and theory may therefore be generated about its existence and operation.

Figure 12: The three domains of reality[591]

	Domain of Real	Domain of Actual	Domain of Empirical
Mechanisms	✓		
Events	✓	✓	
Experiences	✓	✓	✓

To this end, reality is mediated by ideas (theory); without knowing what a room is and what function it serves, it becomes meaningless. Theory is what enables people to know that cooking is typically done in the kitchen, rather than in a basement or bedroom. Particular spaces gain meaning that is upheld by particular practices (e.g. cooking), and which can also be conveyed directly via language. The empirical world becomes theory-determined (without theory, a 'kitchen' does not exist) but not theory-dependent (the physical room containing a stove exists whether or not somebody knows what meaning that indicates). This has implications for research design, as the concepts used by the researcher—the theory they identify—will partially determine the outcome of the research, through selecting what to observe and in what way. There is no possibility for 'objective' research, nor for value-neutral research in the social world.

Science is then *done*, as a practice: without theory, the empirical world cannot be measured or have meaning. Science is about 'doing', rather than generating knowledge. It is fallible, as it depends on imperfect theory;[592] however, some theories are better in that they are demonstrably closer to 'real' reality than are others.[593]

Science has both a transitive and an intransitive dimension: conducting an experiment may generate temporary (transitive) effects, but it does not affect the underlying (intransitive) mechanisms that caused those effects: adding ice to tepid water may prevent it from boiling, but it does not stop the underlying process of molecular excitation that causes liquid

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[590] As José López puts it, "Events are the effect of reality, but not exhaustive of reality itself.". López, 'Critical Realism: The Difference It Makes, in Theory', 77.

[591] Image from Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*, 2.

[592] This may be understood as counter-phenomenality; a tension between appearance and reality. Without this tension, things could be understood by simply looking at appearances—the world is the way it is because it is the way it is, and it will never be any different. Separating the empirical from actual and real domains of reality therefore opens opportunity for transformation. Collier, *Critical Realism*..

[593] Per Justin Cruikshank, "As knowledge claims are fallible, the best we can do is improve our interpretations of reality, rather than seek a definitive, finished 'Truth'." Cruickshank, 'Introduction', 2.

to boil. Something may have '**causal powers**' whether or not effects are apparent. 'X' may not always lead to 'y', but 'x' always has the *potential* to lead to 'y'.[594] The underlying mechanism continues to exist, but it may not be evident in a given circumstance; blame may not always lead to vilification, but that does not mean that the capability is not there.[595] The present research recognises blame as 'relatively' stable and 'relatively' intransitive in that while it may have effects 'for now', as part of the social world, it exists only for as long as it is employed and known as a concept.[596]

Language has a special role in critical realism: it is how the world may be conveyed and described. Meaning is also communicated "by means of traditions, rites, rules, gestures, specific actions"[597] and so on. That is, meaning is communicated both by language in the sense of organised words, and by practice—discourse in the sense used earlier in this thesis, including discursive practices. As for poststructuralists, discourse is subject to change and reinterpretation;[598] it is supported by institutions in the world; and it may have different implications for different people. However, unlike poststructuralism, critical realism acknowledges a real reality that exists independent of meaning generated about it in the empirical world; it identifies both agents and structures as 'real' (though only agents can 'act'); and crucially, it allows for identification of causes.[599] For Berth Danermark et al, explaining phenomena "by revealing the causal mechanisms which produce them" is "the fundamental task of research."[600] The present research is therefore concerned with causal mechanisms, and specifically, the ways in which blame makes villains.

<div align="center">❖</div>

Unlike poststructuralism, with its aversion to causes, critical realism permits experimentation. It is possible to posit an idea, and then seek evidence in the "world of appearances"—to design and conduct an experiment.[601] Elements in a situation may be separated and controlled—insofar as possible—to further understand the relations

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[594] Per Amber Fletcher, "in the open systems of the social world, patterns are never fully invariant: there will always be exceptions, resulting from situations in which a causal mechanism has either not been triggered at all or its effects have been altered/cancelled out by counteracting mechanisms." Fletcher, 'The Reality of Gender (Ideology)', 211. See also Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*, 65. and discussion around 'inefficient causation' in Lebow, 'Inefficient Causation'.

[595] "[T]he discursive effect 'of treating certain persons as if they were x, can in varying degrees, depending on the situation, succeed in making them x'." Sayer, *Realism and Social Science*, 45. quoted in Banta, 'Analysing Discourse as a Causal Mechanism', 391.

[596] "Even as discourse is shaped by the words and actions of many agents over time, at any one time it is relatively intransitive to those studying it or even being affected by it." Banta, 'Analysing Discourse as a Causal Mechanism', 390.

[597] Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*, 27.

[598] Per Banta, "discourse is always relatively altered as it acts in social events. Even relative stabilization of a discourse is only accomplished through constant articulations that contribute to its reproduction" Banta, 'Analysing Discourse as a Causal Mechanism', 391.

[599] Banta argues that a key problem with poststructuralist discourse theory is that "one must avoid any pretence to claims of having found some relatively vital causal relationship within a phenomenon, or any meaningful role for extra-discursive 'reality'". Banta, 380.

[600] Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*, 1.

[601] Banta, 'Analysing Discourse as a Causal Mechanism', 389.

between things, and the structures that underlie those relations.[602] Indeed, experiments may often be necessary, given the deeper 'real' world of mechanisms cannot be observed directly; experimentation permits 'manipulation' of events to produce results.[603] Information about the real world may also be accessed via other methods, for instance through individuals' stories and as evidenced in texts. Taking the example above, of patriarchy as an explanation for the gender pay gap, it is not clear what kind of experiment would emerge this mechanism—though counterfactuals could help. Rather, it becomes apparent through collecting data from people's personal histories, documents, and analysis of numerical data.[604]

While positivist epistemology suggests we can measure the raw materials of the world to understand reality, and interpretivism that the world can only be 'interpreted'—inviting charges of relativism—critical realism knits together the 'real' with the 'discursive' to examine causal mechanisms and envisage other ways of being. It implies a pragmatic approach, whereby reality should be examined by whichever tools seem best suited to do so. This has inspired the mixed methods used by the present research.

4.2.2.   Methodological pluralism

Mixed methods research uses a range of methods in investigating the same underlying phenomenon. It is particularly helpful in theory development,[605] and may use both quantitative (extensive) and qualitative (intensive) data collection and analysis, to provide an in-depth answer to a question while also allowing for the generalisability of results.

Consider examination of geographic changes in Australia. Australian Aboriginal oral traditions see stories passed down through generations, and by listening to these stories, researchers learned of sea level rises that took place some 10,000 years and 400 generations ago.

> "Then Garnguur, the seagull woman, took her raft and dragged it back and forth across the neck of the peninsula letting the sea pour in and making our homes into islands."[606]

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[602] Experiments enable "a closure that rarely exists in the natural world". López, 'Critical Realism: The Difference It Makes, in Theory', 76.

[603] Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*, 20.. Notably, while natural scientists study those things that are "naturally produced but socially defined" Danermark et al., 16. the social world is both socially defined and socially *produced*. This creates different conditions for research, particularly given that the 'objects' of social science research are creating meaning at the same time as the researcher does, and the social world is an 'open' system wherein it is difficult to isolate particular items and hence implement 'controls' as in the natural sciences. However, the social world, as socially produced, is also subject to more ready change as an outcome of research (see also theory-driven reflections and impact planning in Conclusion).

[604] There is a role for 'transcendental questions' of the sort "What must be true to make this possible?". See discussion in Collier, *Critical Realism*; Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*; Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*. and footnote 1407 on p. 1.

[605] Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*.

[606] Paraphrased in source. Reid and Nunn, 'Ancient Aboriginal Stories Preserve History of a Rise in Sea Level'.

The stories tell of communities living where the Great Barrier Reef now stands, or of Port Phillip (Melbourne), which used to be land grazed by kangaroos. These stories as qualitative data are complemented by quantitative data on sea level rise. Both sources speak to changes in Australia's geography and coastline, and while the quantitative data conveys geographic, botanical, and zoological changes, the qualitative data tells us of people's way of life and how this was affected by the changes. They explain not just *what* happened, but how it was *experienced*, enriching the overall data.[607]

The central premise of mixed methods research is that "the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone."[608] The primary reason for selection of mixed methods in this research is pragmatism, where the "focus is on the consequences of research, on the primary importance of the question asked rather than the methods, and on the use of multiple methods of data collection to inform the problems under study."[609] While quantitative research struggles to emerge individual meaning, qualitative research is so individualised that results may not be generalisable. The present research cannot be adequately addressed within either tradition by itself—purely quantitative data could only point to population-level effects of blame, whereas qualitative data helps highlight how blame operates differently. For this reason, a mixed methods approach is used, with results from each form of analysis triangulated for greater "nuance, context, and understanding".[610] The methods employed include content analysis of campaign and other materials (e.g. articles from the free newspaper 'The Metro'), focus groups/interviews, and a survey-experiment. These are expounded in 4.4 Data sources below.

4.2.3. Abductive reasoning and a critical approach

The present research is ultimately *theory generating* more than testing, applying a predominantly *abductive* mode of inference to identify the ways in which blame makes villains in politics. While inductive reasoning moves from observation to conclusion, and deductive reasoning derives conclusions from accepted premises, abductive inference looks for what is 'surprising',[611] aiming to "understand something in a new way by observing and interpreting [it] in a new conceptual framework".[612] It incorporates a process of

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[607] Reid and Nunn; Upton, 'Ancient Sea Rise Tale Told Accurately for 10,000 Years'; Nunn and Reid, 'Aboriginal Memories of Inundation of the Australian Coast Dating from More than 7000 Years Ago'.
[608] Creswell and Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research.*, 5. Note that authors also refer to mixed model, mixed method, multiple methods, multimethod and so on; 'mixed methods' is used for simplicity.
[609] Creswell and Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. loc 1765-1766.
[610] Eckert, 'What Do Teaching Qualifications Mean in Urban Schools?', 79., quoted in Creswell and Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. loc 991.
[611] Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, *Interpretive Research Design*, 27.
[612] Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*, 80. While abductive inference's central issue is "What meaning is given to something interpreted within a particular conceptual framework?", retroductive inference asks "What qualities must exist for something to be possible?". Retroduction is used when considering 'contestation' of blame per E5, as induction is used when reading focus group/interview data, and

reinterpretation and redescription, moving in an iterative and ever-expanding process through cycles of theory, design, collection, and analysis.[613] Tensions between concepts and evidence are identified, and new explanation generated, *ad infinitum*. For this reason, abductive reasoning has no natural end point: research may continue to expand and emerge new stories and ways of being. The researcher must select the stopping point. In the present research, that point is limited to the case study, and to select specific effects of blame only.[614] Abduction allows the researcher to move from a limited understanding of the effects of blame per existing research, to a "more developed" and "deeper conception".[615]

Theory generating work, even where it uses experimental methods, may have a different relationship to hypotheses than positivist work. As Bhaskar put it:

> "An experiment may now be understood, quite simply, as an attempt to trigger or unleash a single kind of mechanism or process in relative isolation, free from the interfering flux of the open world, so as to observe its detailed workings or record its characteristic mode of effect and/**or** to test some hypothesis about them."[616]

This research is exploratory, meaning it does not set up hypotheses to be tested; rather, the social object under consideration—blame—is defined,[617] and this definition and the researcher's own subjective concerns with affective polarisation and vilification inform and delimit what effects may be emerged. This approach allows the researcher to answer the research question as it is generated in the course of research, while continuing to permit the possibility of 'surprise' and new findings.

Danermark et al[618] present a model for social science embedded in critical realism that moves from the concrete, to the abstract, and then returning to the concrete. They stress however that the model "should be seen as a guideline" rather than a template, acknowledging that research processes can be structured differently and with steps in a different or non-chronological order. It bears distinct resemblance to the recursive process established by Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl for conducting a critical discourse study. Given this latter is more clearly iterated and intuitive in application, and that Banta has established the coherence of critical realism with critical discourse studies,[619] Wodak and Reisigl's process was used to guide the present research as follows.[620]

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deduction when generalising results from the Brexit case study in the research to the wider world in Conclusion. Abductive inference however dominates.

[613] See also Reisigl and Wodak: critical work "necessarily moves recursively between theory and empirical data" and may therefore be associated with a 'complex' research strategy. Wodak and Meyer, *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*, 32.

[614] See also discussion of areas for further research throughout empirical chapters and in Conclusion.

[615] Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*, 91.

[616] Emphasis added. Bhaskar, *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation*, 35.

[617] On the need to define social objects, see Bhaskar, 'On the Possibility of Social Scientific Knowledge and the Limits of Naturalism'..

[618] Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*, 109.

[619] Banta, 'Analysing Discourse as a Causal Mechanism'.

[620] Wodak and Reisigl, 'The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)', 33.

4.2.4.   Eight steps for conducting a critical study[621]

1. Activation of preceding theoretical knowledge This was conducted via a literature review. The 'guiding star' of 'the effects of blame' was used to identify appropriate literature, with 'villains and victims' and 'emotion research' added once this became necessary per (4) and (8) below and the abductive processes of reiteration and expansion.[622]

2. "Systematic collection of data and context information" See 4.4 Data sources, below. Per (5), the researcher was partly subject to related context.

3. **"Selection and preparation of data for specific analyses"** See 4.3 Data analysis, below.

4. "Specification of the research question/s and formulation of assumptions" The research question was iterated and reiterated over the course of research. At the outset, it was more open-ended, asking—in the specific context of the EU—how blame could affect audience understandings or attitudes towards the role of the EU. Through (1) and (5), it became apparent that emotions were vital to understanding the effects of blame. It was then necessary to find a word to demonstrate this emotionalised relationship towards, or with, the blamee. Coming to see a blamee as 'wrong' or 'incorrect' does not capture that emotional aspect, and most of the words otherwise used are rather too explicit for a thesis. As such, both an authors' group on Facebook[623] and the subreddit /r/logophilia, populated by word-lovers,[624] were consulted. Reddit user /u/crmacjr suggested the literary term of *villain*, noting its use in characterisation. From here, the research question was refined, moving from "how" to "in what ways", with the implication that there are also ways in which blame does *not* make a villain—its causal powers might be mediated or mitigated. The final research question became "In what ways does blame make villains in politics", permitting theory generation that goes beyond the exemplifying Brexit case. Given how the word 'villain' was introduced, emotions became core to the question and thus any possible conclusions.

5. "Qualitative pilot analysis, including a context analysis, macro-analysis and micro-analysis" The researcher initially wrote a paper on blaming the EU during her Masters degree,[625] wherein existing frameworks from Kent Weaver and Sara Hobolt and James Tilley were used to analyse text for blame and project effects on voting behaviour—rather than vilification—in the lead-up to the Brexit referendum.[626] This initial analysis informed the present research. Moreover, I as the researcher was embedded in the context of the EU

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[621] From Wodak and Reisigl, 33.

[622] "The back and forth takes place less as a series of discrete steps than it does in the same moment: in some sense, the researcher is simultaneously puzzling over empirical materials and theoretical literatures." Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, *Interpretive Research Design*, 27. See 2.2 Locating blame in literature.

[623] This is a private group ("We Like Them Short") moderated by the researcher, who edited and authored an anthology in which all authors took part.

[624] thelauramay, 'Looking for a Non-Offensive Way to Say "We Think They're a D***/Four-Letter Word"'.

[625] Skillen, 'Leave.EU's Blaming Strategies and Implications for Their "Brexit" Campaign'.

[626] Work from Weaver, Hobolt and Tilley is considered in Blame and its effects. See particularly Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*; Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance'.

referendum, while at a British university in Brussels during the campaign. I was subjected to campaign materials, examined them academically and with reference to my UK friends and colleagues, and discussed the campaign and its implications with UK friends in the UK and Brussels alike. This informed my initial view of the Brexit campaign. At that time I likewise became aware of the earlier referendum, and in general terms, of the history of the EU-UK relationship.

6. "Detailed case studies" of a "range of data, primarily qualitatively, but part also quantitatively" The present research uses one detailed case study (Brexit; see below) due to limitations of time and money.[627] Ideally the present research would be bolstered through testing the generated theory (on the ways in which blame makes villains in politics) in further case studies. A range of data is used in the course of research.

7. "Formulation of a critique" This is largely addressed in E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation, where areas in which blame may not make villains are considered through identification of points of 'contestation' and application of retroductive inference. Retroductive reasoning involves conceptualising transfactual conditions, asking transcendental questions along the lines "what needs to be true for this to be possible?".[628] It complements abductive reasoning, which always spirals *outwards* to encompass more theory and more data, by turning *inwards* to question what makes a thing happen in one way and not another.[629] In this way it connects to contestation—which may ultimately result in mitigation of blame's causal powers to create villains. The Remain campaign specifically is referenced as exhibiting a 'way of doing' that does not incorporate blame.

8. **"Practical application of analytical results"** See Conclusion.

4.2.5. The research spiral

Critical realism implies incompletion: theory merely approximates the 'real world' and may be displaced by ever-more accurate theories. Starting concepts in the empirical world will inform the reality that is tested and perceived. Abductive reasoning and the eight steps outlined above highlight this sense of incompletion: research is a process of simultaneous puzzling over theory and data. Research is not linear, but 'spirals' between theory and data in ever-widening circles in attempts to locate reality, with the researcher selecting what seems an appropriate end point for the spiral. Beyond this point, they call for 'further research' to continue expanding the spiral and therefore what is known.

Figure 13 shows this recursive research process as a spiral. It illustrates how the project was conducted per the 'eight steps' above, including continuous iteration of the research question as new concepts were identified and incorporated. The bottom half of the spiral (dark blue) focuses on 'puzzling over theory', while the top half puzzles over data. It shows

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[627] And staff!

[628] Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*; Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*.

[629] Abductive inference then moves outwards, and retroductive inwards; they are complementary modes of inference, as are deductive (down) and inductive (up) reasoning.

four full cycles of theory development, data collection, and (re)analysis. It also indicates the turn to inward-facing retroductive inference that questioned the conditions under which blame does and does not work to make villains (yellow).

Figure 13: The research spiral
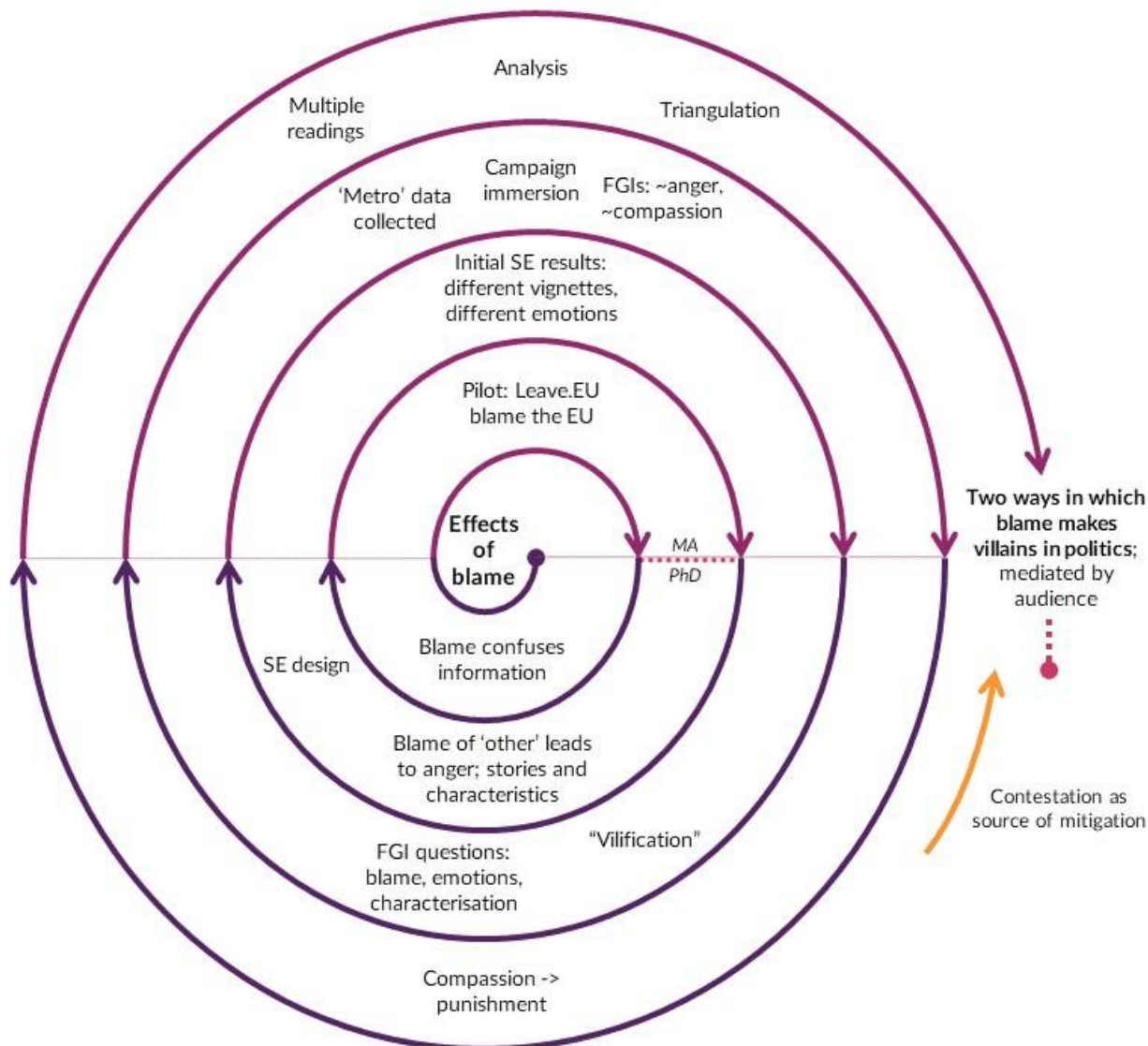
At the centre of the spiral is the central concept of 'the effects of blame', with the Brexit referendum campaign used as a case study. During her MA, the researcher drew extensively from Hobolt and Tilley's concepts outlined in 'Blaming Europe?',[630] where the effects of blame relate to information, and particularly confusing information over clarity of accountability and responsibility. This is shown as the first item in the spiral. The next item is empirical work undertaken during the researcher's MA, which found that the campaign Leave.EU consistently blamed the EU. A divide is then shown to indicate a move to the doctoral research described in this thesis, which commenced with a literature review. Work on victim-blaming indicated that (endogenous) blaming of an Other leads to anger, and that

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[630] Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*

stories (such as rape myth acceptance) and underlying characteristics (such as agreeability) mediate people's blaming behaviour. This informed design of a survey-experiment ('SE'), which gathered data about underlying characteristics and voting preference data to indicate stories. The SE used alternate vignettes, containing blame of the EU, UK, 'ourselves', or no blame, so that each participant saw only one vignette. Initial results showed different vignettes were associated with different emotions, confirming emotions were an effect of blame.[631]

Per 4.2.4 Eight steps for conducting a critical study, at this point a word was needed to convey an emotionalised relationship between audiences who 'feel' things because of blame, and any blamee they feel things towards. This led to 'villain'/'vilification', and a return to theory regarding characterisation. This informed design of focus group/interview ('FGI') questions, which concerned blame, emotions, and characterisation. Articles from the free newspaper 'The Metro' were collected and read for the first time, following which the researcher spent a month reading and re-reading campaign materials, granting improved contextual knowledge of the referendum campaign prior to conducting the FGIs. Next, during FGIs, compassion emerged as a secondary mechanism for vilification via blame, meaning a return to literature. The final intensive stage of data processing and analysis included multiple readings of all data, analysis, and triangulation, in accordance with the data analysis framework and processing outlined below. This incorporated both explanations of the effects of blame and the conditions under which it appears to 'work', and counterfactual questioning of how it could be done (or not done) differently. Ultimately, the present research found two ways in which blame makes villains in politics (directly via villain-type feelings towards the blamee and indirectly via compassion for their victims), that this is partially mediated by audience's existing knowledge, and that there are a range of contestation strategies that could potentially mitigate effects. At this point, 'puzzling' was terminated.

This recursive process does mean that there is no 'correct' order in which to describe the data collection, processing, and analysis conducted for this thesis, as the data sought and consumed continued to expand and be reprocessed as research took place. The data analysis framework is presented prior to data sources below to provide a comprehensible structure and point of reference. First however, Brexit as a case study is justified.

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[631] Word clouds of responses were used to come to this finding; as they were used as preliminary indicators only, those word clouds are not included here. More complete emotion data for SE responses is discussed in E3: Effects.

4.2.6.   Case study selection

For Bhaskar, periods of crisis are ideal for examining reality, as underlying mechanisms become more visible.[632] Brexit has certainly posed a crisis and period of transition;[633] the effects of blame resultingly became more visible in the empirical world, thus providing an excellent case study for examination of reality. Case studies enjoy a particular advantage in exploratory work and in identifying causal mechanisms, as in the present research.[634] Anna Dubois and Lars-Erik Gadde highlight the power of single case studies in abductive research, noting that "[a]n abductive approach is fruitful if the researcher's objective is to discover new things—other variables and other relationships", as in the current study.[635] They further point out the fallacy that conducting multiple case studies is necessarily better, given case studies do not rely on *statistical* inference, but rather analytical inference. There is therefore an obligation to conduct deep, well-structured, and bounded analysis that posits a clear argument, including by triangulating data as applicable. This is the approach taken in the current research to generate theory that goes beyond the singular Brexit case.

A case study is "an in-depth study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon) where the scholar's aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena".[636] Brexit was selected due to the rupture, and the 'common knowledge' that British politicians blame the EU.[637] It is 'exemplifying'[638] not because it is exceptional—which would limit generalisability and render it an unhelpful case—but rather because it provides a suitable context for addressing the question:[639] the Brexit campaign both contained blame as a 'normal' behaviour in politics, and is relatively bounded both in time (from the start of the campaign to the referendum vote and eventual departure from the EU), language, culture, and geography. It is a case *of* blame,[640] that permits tracing of the process from pre-referendum performance of blame through the vilification of the EU that ensued and thereby an intensive examination[641] of the effects of blame. Process tracing in a case study involves "uncover[ing] the relations between possible causes and observed outcomes", linking blame with vilification; can be used in theory development as in the present research

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[632] "[I]n periods of transition or crisis generative structures, formerly opaque, become more visible … [T]hough it never yields quite the epistemic possibilities of a closure, [this] does provide a partial analogue to the role that experimental activity plays in natural science." Bhaskar, 'On the Possibility of Social Scientific Knowledge and the Limits of Naturalism', 20.

[633] Krzyżanowski, 'Brexit and the Imaginary of "Crisis"'.

[634] Gerring, 'What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?'

[635] Dubois and Gadde, 'Systematic Combining', 559.

[636] Gerring, 'What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?', 341. Audie Klotz notes that "usually a case is equated with a country, and there is often an implicit presumption that some sort of history will be traced"—in this case, in a sense a 'history' of how blaming during the Brexit campaign led to the EU being seen as a villain. Klotz, 'Case Selection', 56.

[637] This perception is borne out by the present research; see 9.2.3 Naming and shaming blame.

[638] Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 70.

[639] Bryman, 70.

[640] Kotz points out that case studies are always cases *of* something. Klotz, 'Case Selection'.

[641] Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 67.

as well as in theory testing; and enables use of a range of methods[642] as in the present research to explore "both the causal 'what'"—blame—"and the causal 'how'."[643] Use of Brexit as a case of blame thus allows the researcher to generate theory and address the wider questions of "in what ways does blame make villains in politics", rather than being limited to only understanding how the Leave campaign's blaming of the EU rendered it a villain in the Brexit campaign. The Brexit case forms a lens for generating wider theoretical conclusions.

Pragmatic reasons included that data was available in the researcher's native tongue of English, removing the need for translation, and that the proximity of the UK permitted access to archival materials. The fact that the researcher used to live in the UK and presently lives in Brussels as the heart of the EU meant she was able to experience the campaign as a 'quasi-insider'.[644] This facilitated research and analysis, as did her existing networks amongst UK voters and residents. Furthermore, Brexit was of ongoing salience: at the time of commencing research, the referendum vote had taken place, but—until the onset of coronavirus—Brexit continued to dominate headlines. The UK had not yet left the EU, there were calls for a second referendum, the 2019 General Election was understood as a second-order Brexit referendum, and negotiations with the EU were ongoing. This meant that potential interlocutors[645] continued to be immersed in Brexit-related discourses and presumed blame, allowing for data collection with specific regard to blame of the EU, both in the form of a survey-experiment and in the form of interviews/focus groups. The drawback to choosing Brexit as a case study is that the referendum had already taken place when research commenced; ideally, data collection would be conducted prior to, during, and after a crisis event such as the referendum. The role of timing is considered further in 7.1.3 Time and data.

The present research identifies blame performed during the Brexit campaign, then triangulates that with voters' descriptions of their emotions about the EU and characterisation of the EU as a villain, and survey-experiment data that shows the (differentiated) effects of blame. It shows that blame leads to creation of a villain where people experience villain-type feelings including annoyance and anger towards the blamee or compassion for their victims (though this is mediated by the audience and potentially mitigated via contestation strategies). This indicates EU-blaming during the campaign is likely to have led audiences to feel the EU was a villain, meaning they could not support it, and leading to a greater 'Leave' vote.

The conclusion to this thesis considers whether there are particular constraints in the Brexit case that would make it an outlier when considering the ways in which blame makes villains in politics, ultimately establishing that extrapolation is possible and further research desirable. That is, while the present research takes advantage of the Brexit crisis to more

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[642] Case studies may use a range of data, both qualitative and quantitative, and using "all types of methodological tools" per Klotz, 'Case Selection', 56; Vennesson, 'Case Studies and Process Tracing'.
[643] Vennesson, 'Case Studies and Process Tracing', 471–72.
[644] See also 1.5 Researcher positionality.
[645] I.e. Interviewees, focus group participants.

closely examine reality, the object of analysis is not blame in the UK per se, but rather exogenous blame and its vilifying effects.[646] Ultimately, the Brexit case provides insight into the vilifying effects of blame in politics more generally, with findings applicable in a similar way to similar audiences. This means audiences with similar emotion concepts,[647] and possibly shared language; results from the present research are therefore anticipated to have particular relevance for audiences in Ireland, the US, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, or South Africa in the first instance, and less relevance for other audiences as in Japan or Kazakhstan. This is due to shared histories and language (with shared embedded emotion concepts), and particularly shared media and popular culture from the UK and USA that help pattern emotions and modes of behaviour in similar ways.[648]

4.3. Data analysis

4.3.1.   Data analysis framework

As the compatibility between critical realism and critical discourse studies has been established per Benjamin Banta,[649] the present research draws from work in that tradition to synthesise a framework that permits the analysis of discursive *effects* as the outcome of a particular mechanism such as blame.[650]

Sten Hansson utilises Wodak et al's Discourse Historical Approach ('DHA').[651] In this approach, it is necessary to identify main topics, consider context, identify the macrostructure (what is 'physically' included in an article) and microstructure (identifying discursive strategies of nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivisation, mitigation and intensification).[652] There is a particular focus on context, which as highlighted in 2.4 Defining blame, is vital to consider when discussing blame: audiences may draw their own conclusions about blame based on context, thus altering potential effects. However, the DHA cannot examine the *effects* of blame, simply locate it within text. Norman Fairclough's approach, which "can be seen as a variant of Bhaskar's 'explanatory critique'",[653] suffers the same ailment. It can assist in identifying a 'discourse' in the form of a 'social wrong', but not the effects of a specific discursive practice.

Turning to work in rhetoric, George McHendry and Nicholas Paliewicz use 'assemblage' theory in analysing how a particular type of 'fascistic' argument that generates particular

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[646] Per Pascal Vennesson, "A case study is a research strategy based on the in-depth empirical investigation of one, or a small number, of phenomena in order to explore the configuration of each case, and to elucidate features of a larger class of (similar) phenomena, by developing and evaluating theoretical explanations". Vennesson, 'Case Studies and Process Tracing', 466.

[647] See 3.3.3.d) Emotions as concepts.

[648] See discussion of emotional acculturation in 3.3.4.a) Culture and acculturation, and 3.3.2 Feeling structures.

[649] Banta, 'Analysing Discourse as a Causal Mechanism'.

[650] Blame as a discursive practice acts as a mechanism and has causal power to produce effects. See also 4.2.1 Multiple realities.

[651] Hansson, 'The Discursive Micro-Politics of Blame Avoidance'.

[652] Wodak and Reisigl, 'The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)'.

[653] Fairclough, 'A Dialectical-Relational Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis in Social Research', 91.

'hostile affects' works.[654] This involves charting an assemblage—essentially, the network of bodies making a certain claim—and selecting a node/s of that assemblage (a particular person or organisation). The researcher then seeks indication of items such as argument 'aesthetics' (limiting possible acceptable arguments, controlling what is thinkable and reasonable) and 'affect'. The framework points to the power of the speaker (assemblage) in a certain space (territory) and how bodies are co-opted into discourse (some can speak and are normalised; others are excluded and pathologised). It permits the analysis of emotions as part of an argument. However it again does not permit for analysis of effects beyond the 'spread' of a certain discourse, and how that discourse operates within text.[655]

Jean Carabine takes a genealogical approach to establish a 'history of the present': how did *this* discourse become *this* way in *this* time?[656] It requires identifying context (the background to the issue and power/knowledge networks of the period); identifying the themes, categories, and objects of discourse; looking for evidence of an inter-relationship between discourses; identifying discursive strategies and techniques employed; looking for absences and silences, resistances and counter-discourses; examining the effects of the discourse; and considering the limitations of discourse. Strengths of this framework include looking for absences and silences, resistances and counter-discourses (as sites of potential contestation, important in a critical project), explicitly identifying the need to consider limitations, and above all, considering the *effects* of the discourse.[657]

Due to the lack of a 'perfect' fit for analysing a discursive practice under a critical realist ontology, let alone the effects of that practice, the present research develops its framework from the above as follows. It draws most significantly from Carabine, given their inclusion of effects, while removing those items irrelevant for analysis of a particular *practice*[658] and incorporating the strengths of other major approaches taken above:

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[654] Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, 'Post-Dialectics and Fascistic Argumentation in the Global Climate Change Debate'.

[655] Personal correspondence with the authors indicates they are continuing to work on analysis of post-dialectic and fascistic argument, and anticipate that blame could be one such type of argument. As the area of post-dialectic argument research is very new, frameworks of analysis are in their nascent stages.

[656] Carabine, 'Unmarried Motherhood 1830-1990: A Genealogical Analysis'.

[657] Carabine's framework is not as well-known as those of Wodak (Discourse Historical Approach) or Fairclough, for example. However, as of March 2021, it did have 654 citations per Google Scholar's 'cited by' function, including work in political science (e.g. Eräranta and Kantola, 'The Europeanization of Nordic Gender Equality'.).

[658] I.e. 'Themes', as blame can't have a 'theme', simply appear in conjunction with certain discourses; 'looking for evidence of an interrelationship between discourses', as blame is not a discourse and it is unclear how discursive practices would interact—noting that the other *appearances* of blame in its 'social good' role do appear in the proffered framework; and 'identify discursive strategies and techniques employed', as blame itself is presumed to *be* the 'discursive strategy'.

1. **Identify context**. This includes the background to the issue[659] and the assemblages involved.[660] For the present research, it includes EU–UK relations, concurrent issues in the lead-up to the referendum, the campaigns and how they relate to one another, and who voted Leave/Remain. This is the topic of E1.

2. **Identify performance**. This means identifying how and where blame is performed, and is considered in E2.[661] Additionally:

    A) In which discursive contexts is it used? By whom?[662] In the Brexit campaign, were Leave and Remain blaming in the same way, or talking about the same things? What is blamed 'for'?

    B) Who are the subjects and objects of the practice?[663] What roles are created, and who is accorded those roles? (E.g. blamee, victim, beneficiary, blamer.)

3. **Identify effects**.[664] What does exogenous (third-party) blame *do* to its audience?[665] Given this research focuses on vilification, and that this relates to what people 'feel' as a result of blame, investigation of effects is centred on what people feel after consuming blame. As indicated in 4.2.5 The research spiral, in the course of research, victim identification as an effect of blame became necessary to understanding the secondary pathway for vilification. Endogenous blaming or counter-blaming (collectively, '(re)blaming') in response to consuming exogenous blame 'from the outside' is also considered, as it has implications for the spread of blame and therefore potential spread of vilification.[666] Effects are considered in E3 and E4.

4. **Identify points of resistance and contestation**.[667] Particularly, what counter-techniques appear (e.g. rebuttal/contestation, credit)? This is essential to consider in light of 'causal powers' as described in 4.2.1 Multiple realities. Blame may have the 'potential', the causal power, for vilification, but other mechanisms can act to mediate or mitigate this so that expected vilification does not appear. Whose perspectives are apparent, and whose are not?[668] Contestation is the topic of E5.

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[659] Per Carabine and also the DHA, Wodak and Reisigl, 'The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)'..

[660] Per Paliewicz and McHendry Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, 'When Good Arguments Do Not Work'; Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, 'Post-Dialectics and Fascistic Argumentation in the Global Climate Change Debate'; Deleuze and Guattari, 'A Thousand Plateaus'.

[661] The notion of what a practice prescribes or allows could be included as part of performance—as a handshake can be used to 'seal a deal' or 'begin a relationship', what is blame 'supposed' to do? This would be reflected in 'calls to action'. However, given there was a clear and consistent call to action for blame in the present research—the EU is to blame, and therefore people should vote out of the EU to get away from it—it was considered both a distraction and out-of-scope when considering the vilification that precedes such a vote.

[662] Per Carabine, the themes/categories/objects of discourse; the DHA (identifying topics of text).

[663] Per Carabine; note also that this relates to nomination and perspectivisation per the DHA.

[664] Per Carabine; experimentation as anticipated under critical realism.

[665] Effects on 'speakers' as the parties that 'do' the blame (blamers) are not considered, due to lack of access to internal mental states of campaigners. See also 2.1.1 Aristotle, audiences, and proofs.

[666] This spread reflects Paliewicz and McHendry's concerns.

[667] Per Carabine; this incorporates limitations. It implies retroductive inference and the formation of critique per 4.2.4 Eight steps for conducting a critical study.

[668] This incorporates absences and silences, per Carabine. See discussion of Steven Lukes' second face of power—setting the agenda—in E5.

This framework necessitates the collection of several types of data: that which will illustrate *context*, data wherein *performance* can be identified, data that helps to produce and/or examine *effects*, and data where points of resistance and contestation can be identified. Data sources selected were therefore existing research, campaign materials, text from 'The Metro' free newspaper, a survey-experiment, and focus groups/interviews. This was aligned to each step of the research framework as shown in Table 7. See also source justification in 4.4 Data sources, below.

Table 7: Data framework and sources used

Step	Data sources
Identify context	• Historical and educational texts, existing research • Campaign materials
Identify performance	• Campaign materials • Metro newspaper • Survey-experiment ('SE') • Focus groups and interviews ('FGIs')
Identify effects	• SE • FGIs
Identify points of resistance and contestation	• Campaign materials • Metro newspaper • SE • FGIs

❖

With the overall data analysis framework established, there is still the need to be more specific. This research makes extensive use of coding for both conducting quantitative content analysis and identifying qualitative themes, and in some cases the process is obvious: the person 'speaking' is coded with their name (e.g. Arron Banks, Nigel Farage) or role (MetroTalk—pro-Remain commenter). Talk about 'the economy' is coded as 'economy' and so on.[669] In other cases it is less obvious: how may the performance of blame per (2), effects per (3), or contestation per (4) be identified? As these are central to the research, the process of identification is considered in some detail here.

4.3.2.   Recognising blame

Blame in this research is understood as a discursive practice in which a speaker makes a claim that a party has done (or is doing) a harmful thing.[670] Identifying blame therefore means identifying, at a minimum, the 'harmful thing' and the 'party' (blamee). The former must always be present for an instance of blame—if it is a *helpful*, rather than *harmful*, thing, it would instead be an instance of credit.

In discussing blame's function as an argument, Hansson notes that parts may be left implicit, with the audience an active participant in drawing their own conclusions based on

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[669] See codebook at Annex: Codebook.
[670] 2.4.3 Blame for 'being' vs blame for 'doing'

their shared context.[671] Key parts of the argument, including data or warrant, may be absent.[672] He therefore points to the need for "non-linguistic contextual knowledge" to understand blame; blame is embedded in a wider discursive context.[673]

Given this role of contextual information in completing blame and that the researcher is not herself British, only the most explicit instances of blame are used in analysis. Note that the harmful thing must belong to the present or past—a harmful thing taking place in the future is here considered an instance of 'threat' rather than 'blame'.

Examples

> 1: Mr McCluskey and his allies are intent on turning the Labour Party into a grassroots resistance movement to fight Tory cuts and union laws.[674]

In this example, it is not certain that "turning the Labour Party into a grassroots resistance movement" is definitively a bad thing; further, it is ambiguous whether this is something that is happening *now* or something that may happen as future. As such it is not considered blame.

> 2: We received approximately £433 million in agricultural subsidies and structural funds during the 2014/15 financial year, leaving a net shortfall of approximately £67 million. This gap will widen as other countries receive a greater share of EU support.[675]

There is a negative event—the shortfall of 67 million—but no definite perpetrator, partly facilitated by the passive construction of the sentence. However, the context of the statement is a pro-Brexit/anti-EU pamphlet, in which case it could be understood that the unmentioned perpetrator is the EU. To avoid analytical problems around ambiguous statements, such instances were coded separately as 'implied blame'. The blamee in this scenario would therefore be 'implied EU' rather than simply 'EU'.[676]

> 3: the EU has gone to great lengths to conceal chapters of the TTIP agreement from the public[677]

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[671] "[A]nalysts may need a lot of non-linguistic contextual knowledge to grasp what kind of common ground with the audience at hand the arguer presumes, and how this knowledge can be exploited for the purposes of persuasion". Hansson, 'Analysing Opposition–Government Blame Games', 234.

[671] There may be a lack of explicit data (1), warrant (2), or assignation of blame (3). E.g. (1) "We all know who was *really* behind our current situation, don't we?" (The current situation is presumed to be both 'bad' and 'known'; the 'who' is presumed to be known and easily produced by the audience.); (2) and (3) "There was a broken glass on the floor, and then I look out the window to see Andy playing innocently outside." (There is the data of 'broken glass', and of 'Andy playing outside', but no warrant explicitly connecting the two, and no explicit claim of culpability; however, it can be concluded that Andy is likely to be questioned in the matter…!)

[671] Hansson, 242.

[674] Hall, 'Why Union Bosses Are Walking into a Trap'.

[675] Leave.EU, 'Northern Irish Case'.

[676] See Annex: Codebook.

[677] Leave.EU, 'All Quiet on the TTIP Front'.

Here, 'concealment' of the TTIP chapters is understood to be a harmful thing the EU has done; thus it is an instance of blame.

> 4: Once upon a time, a bright spark (no pun intended) in Brussels was sold the concept of Diesel engines being both more fuel efficient and less polluting, namely the dreaded carbon dioxide. Europe's car manufactures took on board the challenge. And they all lived happily ever after! Well not exactly … Diesel may help save the planet in a century's time, but for now, a standard engine's noxious fumes pose a lethal threat.[678]

Here, there is a clear bad event (diesel standards creating a lethal threat), and perpetrator (the 'bright spark' in Brussels). It is an instance of blame.

> 5: As a consequence of EEC accession, the last 40 years has seen a decimation of the British fishing industry[679]

Again this is a clear instance of blame, in this case of the European Economic Community that preceded the EU; it is at fault for the "decimation of the British fishing industry".

Instances of blame were coded according to who was blamed, so that (2) above in its entirety would be coded 'implied EU' and (3) as 'EU'. Where two or more parties were blamed for a given thing, each party was coded as a blamee, so it would be counted as an instance of blame against each party. Where multiple harmful things were accorded to a party, e.g. "[Brussels imposes] excessive **costs** and **regulations**",[680] it was coded for 'blame' as well as 'costs' and 'regulations'; i.e. what the blame was 'for' is captured through cross-referencing blamees with discourses in which that blame appears.[681] Additional information may also be present, for example about the speaker (blamer), any victims of the harmful act (victims), or beneficiaries (those who have benefited from the harmful act), and these were likewise coded.

4.3.3.　　Recognising (un)victims

As illustrated in 4.2.5 The research spiral, it became apparent in the course of research that 'victims' were important to understanding vilification via blame. Later still it became apparent that participants in the survey-experiment were proactively 'uncreating' victims, where they would acknowledge something harmful was happening, but this did not matter or they did not care. They were *proactive* in delegitimising victims or their suffering, thus in a sense arguing against—contesting—the blame through 'unmaking' the 'harm'.

Victims were simple to identify in blame, through noting whom the 'harmful thing' was being done to. In example (5) above, "As a consequence of EEC accession, the last 40 years has seen a **decimation of the British fishing industry**", the British fishing industry suffers and thus would be coded as victim.

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[678] Leave.EU, 'Die-Sell a Lie'.
[679] Leave.EU, 'Fishy Business'.
[680] Emphasis added. Hope, 'Arron Banks' Leave.EU Referendum Campaign Launches Formal Bid to Merge with Rival Vote Leave'.
[681] This is described further in 6.2.2 What did the campaigns talk about?.

Victim uncreation was more challenging: either the 'harm' or the 'victim' must be unmade. The harmful consequences embedded in blame and related possibility of victimisation must be noted, in conjunction with a statement of uncaring ("My area does not suffer from flooding, so indifferent": the victim does not deserve socially prescribed compassion),[682] or victim blaming ("people choosing to buy homes near flood plains are deciding upon that risk for themselves": they are not victims, because they chose it), or erasure through comparison ("Doesn't feel to close to home and it's worse in other countries": they are not victim *enough* to be worthy of the status).

4.3.4.   Recognising vilification

The present research posits a villain as somebody who is bad/strong/active, and whom we feel negatively towards.[683] None of this requires that a villain is explicitly *labelled* a villain: people can have 'villain-type feelings' towards a party without ever calling them 'the bad guy'. Labelling can and does take place—as with the 'Axis of Evil' post-9/11—but it is not necessary.

Identifying vilification then, the creation of a villain, means identifying the elements of 'bad', 'strong', 'active', and 'negative feelings towards'. The first three of these are already implied by blame: the 'harmful thing' is 'bad', and the blamee is 'active' in doing it and 'strong' enough to have done so. This leaves 'negative feeling towards'.[684] This already limits the emotions that can be associated with vilification, as emotions do not always take clear agentic 'others' as objects in English; one can feel angry 'at', dislike 'towards', or fear 'of' somebody, but not content 'at' somebody.[685]

Recognising a *villain* created via blame then means identifying a blamee toward whom people experience a negative emotion. In the present research, this is described as the 'direct' path of vilification; where blame immediately incurs a negative emotion towards the blamee, they become a villain. It is emerged during focus groups/interviews ('FGIs'), and examined using the survey-experiment ('SE').

During the FGIs, a secondary mechanism for vilification via blame, whereby people feel compassion towards victims and then turn against the blamee, is identified. Locating this

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[682] See 7.4 Why we feel that way, 3.2.6.a) Feeling for victims.

[683] See 3.2 The art of character work and Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*.

[684] 'Negative' emotion means an emotion with negative 'valence'—it 'feels bad' to experience. Examples include anger, fear, hatred, dislike, and worry.

[685] It is not clear that 'content with' is other-oriented, and it does not indicate agency (activeness) as needed of a villain. 'Content with his behaviour' is contentment with a non-agentic object; 'content with him' appears to diminish the object. 'Guilty' does not take an Other as a direct object. Daniel Batson et al make a related observation for 'empathetic concern', referred to as compassion in this thesis. (See also Zaki, *The War for Kindness*..) It must have a certain 'other-orientedness' such that it "involves feeling *for* the other". Sorrow, distress, and concern can be felt with or without such other-orientation; sorrow in general or for ourselves, versus sorrow for another's circumstances. Batson, Lishner, and Stocks, 'The Empathy–Altruism Hypothesis', 2. See also discussion in Shargel, 'Emotions without Objects', 833.; he points out that "it is one thing to say that a person made you angry, and another to say that your anger is in any meaningful sense directed at that person". This thesis does establish the requisite 'angry at' (etc), in 7.4 Why we feel that way.

'compassion back-hand' as an indirect mode of vilification requires that a participant (a) identifies a victim (b) expresses compassion for that victim (c) expresses negative feeling towards the blamee or 'turning against' them as a result. While this mechanism is visible and accessible in people's descriptions during the FGIs, it was not specifically examined using the SE. This highlights a benefit of critical methodological pluralism, as mixed methods help to emerge mechanisms that might not otherwise be visible.

Note that while labelling is not *necessary* to identify a villain, it may help *substantiate* it. If somebody 'feels' a party is a villain, then when asked to characterise that party, they may use characterological terms such as 'bad', 'evil', or 'fascist', or cultural 'villain' tropes such as 'wicked step-parent'. Such labelling was noted in FGIs to help substantiate the vilifying effects of blame during the Brexit campaign.

4.3.5.   Recognising emotions

People experience different emotions for different reasons in different contexts, and they express those emotions differently.[686] Given the nature of emotions as constructed, it was not considered appropriate—or feasible—to take a physiological approach to identifying emotions, for example, by measuring heart rates.

Koschut poses two broad strategies for studying emotions in discourse—contextualising emotions, or examining 'affective potential' in texts. Contextualising emotions "moves from interpreting the meaning of single or multiple emotion words or phrases to contextualizing their meaning by looking at how those expressions are directed at and resonate with particular audiences".[687] It incorporates methods such as examining emotional othering, stigmatisation and naming and shaming, and non-verbal and non-linguistic forms of emotion discourse. The first of these start from the premise that discursive practices are, by themselves, evidence of emotions—inappropriate in the current context, where there is an attempt to problematise the relationship between blame and emotions; the latter relies on interpretation of images, which is not the focus of the current research. Koschut's alternate strategy, identifying affective potential, includes options such as identifying emotion terms (e.g. 'happy', 'happily'), emotional connotations (e.g. for the words 'genocide' or 'terrorist'), or emotion metaphors/comparisons/analogies (e.g. 'floods of refugees', 'dark abyss'). While the latter two are certainly interesting when considering feeling structures and rules, they require the researcher to interpret the words of others—"looking behind the words".[688] It is this *interpretation* that is taken to indicate a speaker's feelings (or intentions in performance). As such, the first method—identifying emotion terms—was considered the most appropriate method in the current work. This avoids the researcher's own emotion concepts affecting data processing and therefore interpretation.[689]

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[686] See 3.3 Constructing emotions.

[687] Koschut, *The Power of Emotions in World Politics*, 10.

[688] Wiggins, *Discursive Psychology*, 4.

[689] Simon Koschut points out that "affective experience in and of itself is not directly observable"; emotions can be indicated directly (explicit) and indirectly ("I want to rip his head off"). Koschut, *The Power of Emotions*

As such, only explicitly labelled emotions in the data are used in the present research—for example, where a focus group or survey-experiment participant says "it scares me", "it's scary". This enables a more objective identification by the researcher, while not circumscribing the subjective experiences of research participants by limiting what they can say and therefore validly 'feel' (e.g. by choosing from a drop-down list) or re-interpreting what interlocutors 'appear' to be feeling through the researcher's own cultural lens.[690] It is only 'more' objective in that participants are expressing emotions to the researcher and thus there is an element of performance; however, given emotions are experienced within individuals, it is only through language that we can come to gain an indication of what people feel.[691] To this, note that survey-experiment participants were assured of their privacy and confidentiality, and as such presumably had little incentive to be disingenuous about their emotions—there was little disciplining effect from the presence of the researcher, and the purpose of the survey-experiment was obscured to limit performativity. One limitation could be where the participants themselves do not know what they feel, though there was no reason to expect at the outset of the research that there would be general differences in emotional intelligence between groups.[692] Another limitation is that there could have been increased performance effects where focus group and interview interlocutors were interacting with the researcher or other participants directly.

Each emotion identified was coded with its name.[693] Different forms of the same word were collected, such that 'frustrated' and 'frustrating' are both considered to refer to the same emotion, as do 'afraid', 'fearful' and 'fear' (but not 'scared').

Note though that emotion concepts may be related, per Joshua Conrad Jackson et al, who used colexification analysis to illustrate how emotion concepts are related in different languages.[694] Consider the respective positions of 'surprise' and 'joy' in the language families shown in Figure 14, or the presence of shame in the Austroasiatic figure but its absence in the Indo-European map.

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in World Politics, 36. He further says that indirect indications "reveal an implicit theory of emotional reactions" embedded in "larger social understandings". The researcher wished to avoid interpolation of her own social understandings to improve internal validity of the research. See also 3.3.4 Recognising emotions, and discussion of self-report methods in Mar et al., 'Emotion and Narrative Fiction'.

[690] See also discussions of emotional expressivity at 7.4.7 Are Remainers just emotional snowflakes?.

[691] Discursive psychologists argue that "there are no mental states that we can access *without language*, … as soon as we might try to represent or identify thoughts, feelings and so on, they become produced (or interpreted) through language." Wiggins, *Discursive Psychology*, 25.

[692] See 7.4.7 Are Remainers just emotional snowflakes? and 10.4.2 Emotional granularity and improving 'emotional intelligence'.

[693] See Annex: Codebook, and also discussion in Margarete Sandelowski at all on quantitising data rendering edges between objects. Sandelowski, Voils, and Knafl, 'On Quantitizing'.

[694] Jackson et al., 'Emotion Semantics Show Both Cultural Variation and Universal Structure'.

Figure 14: Colexification of emotion concepts in Austroasiatic and Indo-European languages, from Jackson et al[695]
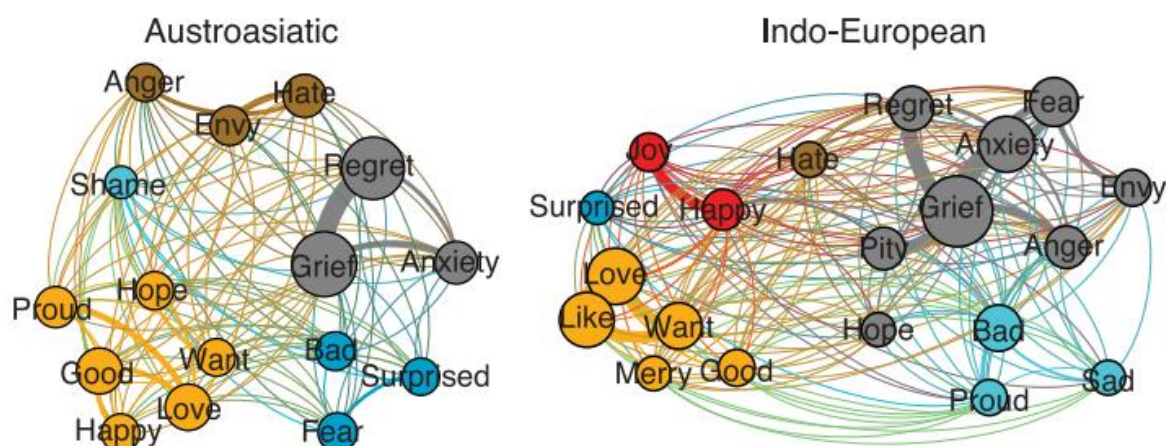
As suggested by the above figure, wherein emotions are organised in regular and predictable ways within a given language family, relations between emotion concepts can best be understood by somebody acculturated into a particular culture or language. The researcher, who previously lived in the UK, has used this as justification for some very limited emotion grouping in the current research, as shown in Table 8. This grouping was performed only where the researcher understood words as broadly synonymous (happy, glad), intimately related (surprised as a slightly more positive version of shocked), or part of an escalating scale ('annoyed' as meaning 'a bit angry').[696] Any grouping is indicated in the research using a tilde (~), and occasionally in tables with use of all capital letters and a + symbol.

The researcher preferred to leave emotions ungrouped wherever possible, to more accurately reflect participants' experiences; however, this was not always realistic when it came to conducting quantitative forms of analysis due to the small sample sizes that would be involved.

Identifying villains via identifying blamees towards whom people had negative feelings could therefore be conducted by analysing text for intersections of blamees and negative emotions. People's own descriptions of when they felt a certain way could be used to give further context, to both 'direct' vilification and the 'compassion backhand'.

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[695] Jackson et al., 1518.
[696] See also codebook at Annex: Codebook and 7.1.2 Anger and annoyance.

Table 8: Researcher emotion groupings for survey-experiment responses, with the number of instances indicated

Group name	Inclusions	Group instances
~Annoyed[697]	Annoyed (110), angry (63), exasperated(4), frustrated (42), irritated (20), miffed (1), narked (1)	241
Apathetic[698]	apathetic (13), ambivalent (18), don't care (6), disinterested (5), don't/won't/wouldn't feel anything (7), neutral (44) , indifferent (86), meh (13), nothing in particular (2), not bothered (7), not interested/uninterested (6), unconcerned (4), undecided+ambivalent (1), unmoved (2)	214
~Compassion	Empathetic (11), have-tried (80),[699] sad (111), sorry (17), sympathetic (12)[700]	231
~Good	Fine (80), good/great (73), nice (4), okay (43), positive (13)	213
~Happy	Happy happier happiest (96), content (44), glad (13), pleased (16)	169
~Relieved	Relieved (60), reassured (6)	66
~Scared	Scared (6), afraid (1)	7
~Surprised	Surprised (20), shocked (9)	29
~Worried	Worried (61), anxious (25), cautious (1), concerned (65), nervous (1), panicked (1), uneasy (1)	156

4.3.6.   Resistance and contestation

'Contestation' is understood per its dictionary definition, "the action or process of disputing or arguing".[701] There are however multiple ways in which contestation of blame can be done, including direct methods of arguing and more indirect contestation.

The present research locates three forms of contestation: direct contestation, indirect contestation, and contestation by changing subjects and objects. The first of these is clearest to identify: (a) people refer to the blame and (b) they indicate disagreement with it. This takes the form of counter-blaming (blaming somebody else), rebuttal (saying it is untrue), and naming and shaming blame as an inappropriate activity.

Indirect contestation can take place where, instead of using blame, an actor uses an opposing practice. In 2.4.3 Blame for 'being' vs blame for 'doing', Table 3 shows that blame is harmful and in the present/past, while a threat is harmful in the future, and credit refers to helpfulness in the present/past. Where a discursive practice that varies from blame along

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[697] 'Annoyed' was more frequently expressed (110) than any other member of this group, including angry (63) and frustrated (42).

[698] This is not indicated with a tilde (~) as grouping was conducted from the outset when performing initial coding per Annex: Codebook, rather than after coding had been completed. (Researcher error.)

[699] Includes contributed/contributing, have helped, taken action, done something, achievement, accomplishment, helpful, made a difference, did my part/bit, doing my best, useful, and have tried/am trying, per the codebook at Annex: Codebook.

[700] 'Have-tried' and 'sad' may or may not relate just to victims; one can feel like they 'have tried' if they stop people throwing rubbish into canals in the blame-selves condition, for example. Likewise, people can feel generally sad—for instance about 'climate change'—rather than sad for victims specifically. 'Concerned' is included in the ~worried group, as 'concern' did not appear to predominantly relate to victims.

[701] 'Contestation'.

one dimension (time/helpfulness) is used, it is here understood as indirect contestation: the 'space' for blame is instead occupied by something else. 'Credit' and 'threats' are therefore identified in the same way as blame.

Lastly, inspired by Steven Lukes' conception of 'limiting the agenda' as a way of limiting what is said and therefore effective,[702] the research considers contestation by changing subjects and objects of blame. This requires, particularly, identifying who speaks (as blamer/agenda-setter) and who does not, vis-à-vis the Brexit assemblage deemed necessary by the data analysis framework;[703] 'no-blaming', such that a harmful thing is done but no blamer is identified (removal of subject); and victim uncreation, so that the harmful thing is invalidated (removal of object).

Contestation of blame is understood as a way to potentially *mitigate* its effects, by removing or displacing the blame itself, or rendering its contents invalid or meaningless.

4.3.7.   Reading process and quote selection

4.2.5 The research spiral shows that reading and re-reading of materials gathered was conducted throughout the course of research. This was essential both to establish context, and to generate increased empathy with Brexiteers such as focus groups/interview ('FGIs') participants (see discussion of method in 4.4 Data sources below). This empathy was necessary for the qualitative forms of analysis conducted in the present research,[704] which combined an initial 'first-person' perspective during data coding with later 'third-person' perspective.[705] A 'first person' perspective aims to see the data—in the case of the FGIs, what is said—from the point of view of the interlocutor. By immersing herself in information from the Metro and campaign materials, particularly the pro-Leave materials of Leave.EU and Farage, the researcher was able to get closer to the data and pro-Leave perspectives.

'Reading' here refers to 'traditional' reading materials (campaign materials, The Metro), but also FGI transcripts and survey-experiment responses. It thus encompasses all data sources used for the present research. The reading process moved from the general to the specific, while extracting data from texts moved from the specific to the general as follows.

4.3.7.a)   Reading, from the general to the specific

A deep familiarity with texts is necessary to conduct analysis of them,[706] and so all texts were read multiple times. Reading of any given text was done in three phases: skimming,

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[702] Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*. Note the connection to 'agency' strategies outlined in Hood, whereby one method of avoiding blame is selecting institutional arrangements that reduce opportunities for blame. Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game'.
[703] See 5.3 The Brexit assemblage.
[704] Per Kathy Charmaz, "a deep understanding of studied life means entering it". Charmaz, 'Premises, Principles, and Practices in Qualitative Research', 980.
[705] Watts, 'User Skills for Qualitative Analysis'; Watts, 'Analysing Qualitative Data'.
[706] Wodak and Reisigl, 'The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)'; Carabine, 'Unmarried Motherhood 1830-1990: A Genealogical Analysis'; Watts, 'User Skills for Qualitative Analysis'.

scanning, and reading for deeper meaning—from the general to the specific.[707] The initial 'skim' involves reading for general structure and keywords, notably those used in the heading(s) for the piece, granting initial understanding. 'Scanning' is the first full read-through, wherein all text in the piece is read and considered from the perspective of a 'normal reader'—no attempt is made to consider how the text connects to other texts, persuasiveness, contestation etc. This is instead the task of the third phase, 'reading for deeper meaning'. Data processing takes place at both the scanning (e.g. blame) and deeper meaning (e.g. shared topics, recurrent imagery, connection to other texts) phases.

For the FGIs, the 'skimming' phase was omitted, as the text was created in process with the researcher. For these, multiple readings were (i) initial interview/focus group (verbal), (ii) transcription (each text listened to approximately twice), and (iii) two full read-throughs, employing scanning and reading for deeper meaning, of the typed transcript. For the survey-experiment, skimming and scanning were conducted after the first approx. 500 responses were received,[708] and then all three phases of reading were performed on the full cleaned data set.[709]

4.3.7.b)   Data processing: from the specific to the general

To gain a deep contextual understanding of the Leave campaign and what blame may or may not have appeared, what was and was not spoken about, what blame appeared in those discourses, and how this compared with the Remain campaign, the 223 texts from the 'News' section of Leave.EU and then 25 'Britain Stronger In Europe' documents were selected for deeper review.[710] These texts were processed extensively, not looking just for 'blame' or vilification, for example, but coding *all* recurrent topics, images, topoi, motifs, and speakers using MaxQDA. This permitted for an initial understanding of interdiscursivity, in that the researcher could see how discourses on, for example, the economy, intersected with blame—identifying that the economy was blamed 'for'. It also had the effect of allowing the researcher to engage with any existing biases, by essentially reading to the point of indoctrination. This permitted her to generate greater empathy with participants in focus groups/interviews. Once this improved understanding had been reached, this intensive level of processing was applied to the 25 texts from the Remain campaign for comparison purposes. Thence onwards, coding for the text-based data and SE responses focused on those items necessary for the present research, per the data analysis framework: blame, including topics of blame and subjects and objects; emotions; and contestation.

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[707] The researcher used to work as an English as a Second Language teacher, and this terminology was learned during her Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) course.
[708] See 4.2.5 The research spiral and 4.4.1.d) Participant recruitment.
[709] Data cleaning is discussed at 4.4.1 Survey-experiment.
[710] Given the extensive overlap between what was posted on the Leave.EU 'News' and 'Media' sections of its website, it was considered legitimate to select texts from just one of these locations. Leave.EU's materials were specifically part of the Leave campaign, and were more accessible than those of Vote Leave; see 4.4 Data sources.

This is essentially the process of qualitative (ethnographic) content analysis, which requires familiarising oneself with the context in which texts are produced, becoming familiar with a small number of documents, generating categories (codes), testing them, and refining those codes as work continues. It permits codes to emerge out of data, rather than approaching data with a pre-existing set of ideas, and recognises the significance of context; in short, it is highly suitable to critical and abductive research designs.[711]

Codes were grouped as shown in the codebook at Annex: Codebook. For example, the parent group of 'EU' as blamee could include child codes 'EU institutions', 'EU regulations', specific EU personnel, and so on. This allowed for speaking in general terms (the EU was blamed for….) as well as more specifically (EU regulations are a particular problem…). Where applicable, the same group and code names were used across data sources, to facilitate comparison.[712] Grouping is clearly marked throughout the empirical chapters.

4.3.7.c)   FGI data: from the first person to the third

As above, data analysis moved from the first-person to third-person perspective, firstly reading from the perspective of the speaker before returning to process what they had said from the perspective of theory. It is necessary to empathise, and to consider what elements participants might want the researcher to use to ensure that their overall viewpoint is communicated.[713] Data selection is primarily guided by what the participants themselves may have wished to convey, rather than a framework set by the researcher: in keeping with abductive process, the point is to emerge others' lived experiences, rather than substantiate an existing theory.[714] This is highlighted in 4.2.5 The research spiral: the FGIs emerged anger[715] and compassion as relevant to vilification, through the researcher's employing empathetic listening to better understand what was said from the point of view of the participant. These findings inspired a return to theory before analysis recommenced from a third-person perspective.

4.3.7.d)   Quote selection

Per 4.3.4 Recognising vilification, the FGIs offered an opportunity to examine post-referendum characterisation of the EU, helping substantiate that it was perceived as a 'villain'. To this end, the researcher followed Simon Watts' process: identify 'what' the participant is talking about and 'how' they are understanding/constructing that item, so that themes may be drawn out.[716] The researcher therefore examined transcripts for mentions of the EU ('what'), and how it was constructed (e.g. as a bureaucrat, as a wicked step-parent,

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[711] Altheide and Schneider, 'Process of Qualitative Document Analysis'; Altheide and Schneider, 'Ethnographic Content Analysis'.

[712] Data was stored in three separate MaxQDA files: text-based data including Metro, MetroTalk, ads, and campaign materials; SE data; and FGI data.

[713] Watts, 'User Skills for Qualitative Analysis'.

[714] Watts.

[715] Amongst other villain-type feelings; see 7.2 Making villains: the FGIs.

[716] Watts, 'User Skills for Qualitative Analysis', 6.

as an abusive lover). Themes in constructions were then drawn out (e.g. as unwanted family), and a "purposive sample" of quotes used to illustrate those themes.[717]

This same process is used for quote selection throughout the thesis, including when selecting quotes from survey-experiment responses, and when identifying what was blamed 'for' in FGI responses. Whenever quotes are used, all themes are represented, and quotes selected not just to *support* the researcher's argument; rather, extracts are also sought that qualify, question, or contradict the researcher and existing literature.[718] Discussion of quotes adds value to the data, so that "meanings and understandings already implicit" are "unpacked, drawn out and amplified".[719]

<div align="center">❖</div>

This section has developed a data analysis framework embedded in existing research and consistent with the tenets of critical realism. It permits examination of effects and thereby underlying mechanisms that exist in the 'real world', rather than simply the empirical world, and crucially permits for experimentation so that such mechanisms can be closely examined. This framework, built around identifying context, performance, effects, and contestation, is then iterated in greater deal and aligned to the research topic of vilification as an effect of blame in politics. Specific steps to identify blame, victims (and unvictims), vilification, emotions, and contestation are each elaborated. This identification is effected through reading and 'coding' text, in preparation for quantitative and qualitative analysis alike. Qualitative analysis makes extensive use of a 'first-person' perspective to emerge themes and identify quotes for selection; software tools used for quantitative forms of analysis based on identified codes are described in-context in the empirical chapters. The next section describes how sources were selected, and data collected.

4.4. Data sources

As shown in Table 7 above, a range of data sources were used for the present research. In line with the critical, abductive research design, each stage of data collection was informed by theory and previous steps in the research. This meant materials were gathered and read throughout the course of research.

A total of four ethics reviews were conducted and have been attached at Annex: Ethics Review Forms. These include an ethics review for two versions of the survey-experiment, plus for the focus groups and interviews. MaxQDA, a piece of software explicitly designed for mixed-methods research, was used to code and analyse all data, occasionally supplemented by Excel for cleaning of survey-experiment results and SPSS for in-depth statistical analysis.

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[717] See 7.2 Making villains: the FGIs, and full data at Annex: Suppose the EU was a person.
[718] Watts, 'User Skills for Qualitative Analysis', 7.
[719] Watts, 8.

This section will not reiterate the recursive process of data collection already discussed in 4.2.5 The research spiral, nor the reading process per 4.3.7 Reading process and quote selection. It instead focuses on *how* particular data was collected and *why*, with particular reference to the research design. It firstly considers the survey-experiment, then focus groups and interviews, contextual data, The Metro, and campaign materials.

4.4.1. Survey-experiment

Experiments are important, if not necessary, for critical realist research. They generate "a closure that rarely exists in the natural world",[720] enabling improved investigation of mechanisms and causal power.[721] Per 4.2.3 Abductive reasoning and a critical approach, the intention of the survey-experiment used in the current research was to generate, rather than test, theory; as such, there were no set hypotheses. Work was instead guided by curiosity and by the abductive processes indicated in 4.2 Research design.

The difference between theory generating and theory testing work, and the role of hypotheses in each, can be captured in the example of kicking a door. On the one hand, there is "let's see what happens when I kick this door" (exploration; theory generation) and on the other, "if I kick this door, my foot will hurt" (a hypothesis subject to verification; theory testing). Even in theory generation, there still might be certain effects that are under examination: pain experienced in foot, damage to door, and so on. The researcher commences the experiment with certain concepts, and certain foci, in mind, but is open to seeing what happens. In the present research, after carefully delineating the 'blame' that is under examination using the minimal definition of blame in 2.4.4, the effects of blame are subject to exploration. Given the researcher's own concern with vilification, effects explored are those associated with vilification: primarily emotions, but also victim (un)creation and (re)blaming, as emerged during the research spiral (see 4.2.5). Theory *testing* work might instead start with a hypothesis along the lines "when we hear blame from third parties, we feel angry"—but this occludes other affective experiences and explanations necessary to identifying the ways in which blame makes villains in politics.

A survey-experiment, rather than natural experiment, was selected as a straight-forward, implementable, and relatively inexpensive way of collecting data for the purposes of theory generation. Per Gaines et al:

> "The survey experiment is easy to implement and avoids many problems associated with cross-sectional and panel survey data. It clearly distinguishes cause and effect. When used with representative samples, therefore, survey experiments can provide firmly grounded inferences about real-world political attitudes and behavior."[722]

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[720] López, 'Critical Realism: The Difference It Makes, in Theory', 76.
[721] Experimental research "engenders considerable confidence in the robustness and trustworthiness of causal findings", helping ensure strong internal validity. Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 50.
[722] Gaines, Kuklinski, and Quirk, 'The Logic of the Survey Experiment Reexamined', 2. See E1.

This is far from the first time survey-experiments have been used in social science research, with a well-established history in communication and public opinion studies,[723] as well as specifically when researching the effects of blame.[724] Typically, effects under examination concern 'how much' blame is attributed to various actors after respondents consume blame or read about a harmful event, using Likert scales and questions along the lines "how responsible is party X in this situation".

For instance, Michael Hameleers et al used survey-experiments to verify that blaming political elites leads Dutch citizens to become more likely to vote for populist parties; that those higher in perceptions of relative deprivation are more likely to choose to read populist messages and then agree with blame if it is congruent with their existing beliefs; and that emotional blame attributions—for example, "Dutch citizens outraged about worsening Labour market situation caused by EU's failing policy"—cause people with weak national identity attachment to accept and reiterate blame of the Dutch government.[725] Working with German university students, Martin Sievert et al find that public opinion in favour of blame leads to higher blame attributions, positing a role for social pressure.[726]

Andrew Healy et al used a survey-experiment with 1015 American participants to help understand how blame was attributed for the US response to 9/11, showing that partisan bias is key to the allocation of blame even where partisanship should ostensibly not matter, and that this attribution is greater when the official is portrayed as functionally responsible for the problem at hand. Similarly, Neil Malhotra and Alexander Kuo found that giving SE respondents officials' party affiliations led them to attribute blame to the other side. James Tilley and Sara Hobolt likewise find that partisanship acts as a 'perceptual shield' when establishing who is to blame. Healy et al point out that this poses issues for democratic accountability, as even if 'our side' does something bad while in office, they may not be punished for it.[727]

Several other authors investigate the effectiveness of blame avoidance strategies using survey-experiments. John Marvel and Amanda Girth explore whether outsourcing services to private contractors or the length of 'accountability chains' affect blame attributions, with

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[723] E.g. Gross, 'Framing Persuasive Appeals'; Wagner, Mitchell, and Theiss-Morse, 'The Consequences of Political Vilification'; Siegel and Badaan, '#No2Sectarianism'.

[724] Georg Wenzelburger and Felix Hörisch note that entirely qualitative explanations of blame make it "rather difficult to assess the explanatory power" of blame avoidance strategies—as it is for isolating the effects of blame itself. Wenzelburger and Hörisch, 'Framing Effects and Comparative Social Policy Reform', 162.

[725] Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, '"They Did It"', 893; Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, 'Selective Exposure to Populist Communication'; Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, 'Framing Blame'.

[726] Sievert et al., 'The Power of Conformity in Citizens' Blame'.

[727] Healy, Kuo, and Malhotra, 'Partisan Bias in Blame Attribution'; Malhotra and Kuo, 'Attributing Blame'; Tilley and Hobolt, 'Is the Government to Blame?'; Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?* See also Kathleen Donovan et al, who note the increasing relevance of partisanship on presidential approval in the US: "current levels of polarization are strong enough to negate what has traditionally been one of the primary movers of leadership evaluations: subjective evaluations of the economy". Donovan et al., 'Motivated Reasoning, Public Opinion, and Presidential Approval', 1213.

mixed results; Kathleen McGraw finds that justifications work better to attenuate blame attributions than do excuses, while working with UK audiences, Raanan Sulitzeanu-Kenan finds public inquiries do little to defray blame attributions to the initiating party.[728]

However, while the present work does consider blame attributions in the form of (re)blaming—when an interlocutor consumes blame and then either re-blames that same party or instead counter-blames somebody else—its primary concern is not how much attributions shift as an outcome of consuming blame as in the above studies.[729] Rather, it is concerned with the emotional, vilifying effects.

With that in mind, work by Kimberly Gross and Lisa D'Ambrosio becomes particularly interesting. They used different 'frames'[730] around the Los Angeles race riots to consider whether different framing would lead to different emotions. Their survey-experiment included a vignette recounting the riots (a 'descriptive' frame), and then the same vignette followed by a section on 'causes of the unrest'. This section either focused on perpetrators ('dispositional' frame) or situational causes such as unemployment and poverty ('situational' frame).[731] Following the vignette, they asked participants to rate how they felt, in the form "while reading the article did you feel [emotion]", with the list of emotions consisting of 'angry', 'sympathetic', 'disgusted', 'pity', and 'afraid'. They found some non-significant differences, such as fewer respondents feeling angry in response to the situational frame.[732]

Breaking down their results by measures of racial resentment and political ideology, Gross and D'Ambrosio found that racially resentful respondents were less likely to experience disgust after the descriptive and situational frames, but not after the dispositional frame that tied the riots to (predominantly Black) authors. They had several other findings, for instance that politically liberal participants were angrier, including in response to the situational frame.

However, Gross and D'Ambrosio's work, while illustrative and interesting, does differ in several key ways from the present study. Firstly, they do not isolate blame; even the descriptive article contains blame. It opens with "For residents... it's been two days of vandals and looters roaming the streets, carloads of young men attacking pedestrians and uncounted fires burning out of control" then explains the riots were caused by white police officers beating a Black motorist, before going on to say that the riots had resulted in 38 dead, more than 1000 injured, and city blocks in ruins—even referring explicitly to 'victims of

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[728] Marvel and Girth, 'Citizen Attributions of Blame in Third-Party Governance'; McGraw, 'Managing Blame'; Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 'If They Get It Right'.

[729] It does take a similar approach to Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, 'Framing Blame'., where the authors give an open-ended question to establish who is at fault and then code the blamees that arise. Hameleers et al follow this question by presenting potential blamees and asking for each blamee's level of responsibility, which the present study does not do.

[730] See Chong and Druckman, 'Framing Theory'.

[731] Jane gives a practical example of this, illustrating that the internet is framed "as a place that is inherently dangerous" (situational) "rather than a place where some humans go and commit harmful deeds" (dispositional). Jane, 'Misogyny Online', 80.

[732] Gross and D'Ambrosio, 'Framing Emotional Response'.

violence' (p. 22). Effectively, this means there is no 'no-blame' vignette that could act as a control to isolate the effects of blame specifically, despite that study wishing to investigate how different causal attribution frames function. Further, the 'dispositional' frame, other than containing (intentionally) racist arguments, gives a multitude of potential blamees (immigrant groups, Blacks, inner city residents) *and* presents situational causes (a lack of economic opportunities), though later shutting this down. Thus the study is related to, but not as specific as, the current work.

Additionally, the authors may have primed emotions by giving a set of closed questions,[733] noting that this also limited their ability to identify new possible emotional outcomes as in the present study. While they ask people why they feel a certain way, they code this information with explanations (e.g. violation of behaviour or political norms) rather than whom emotions are *at*—necessary to understanding vilification. As such, there is still a need for the present research.

The present research then makes a contribution by locating multiple vilifying effects of exogenous blame, through a survey-experiment designed to capture both boundless emotional effects and the meaning given to those effects by participants. It extends the research agenda for work on blame and supports that on framing per Gross and D'Ambrosio.

4.4.1.a)   Design

There are several potential pitfalls in use of survey-experiments, as highlighted by Brian Gaines et al. These are addressed as follows:

- They note the necessity for a control group, as it is only by "[c]omparing the decisions, judgments, or behaviors of the respondents in the treatment group to those in the control group" that the "causal effects under investigation" can be revealed. As such, the current study includes a control group that is exposed to a vignette with no blame.[734] The 'treatment' vignettes contain blame.
- Survey-experiments do not tend to capture the *duration* of effects. They capture a moment in time, while in politics, results "depend crucially on how long the effects last, with relevant periods measured in weeks, or months, not minutes."[735] It is for this reason that the present research triangulates data from the transitory survey-experiment with focus groups and interviews that help capture longer-term outcomes.[736]

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[733] See Barrett, Lindquist, and Gendron, 'Language as Context for the Perception of Emotion'. and discussion in 3.3.4.c) Language and priming.

[734] Gaines, Kuklinski, and Quirk, 'The Logic of the Survey Experiment Reexamined', 4.

[735] Gaines, Kuklinski, and Quirk, 6. See also discussion of competing frames and effects over time in Chong and Druckman, 'Framing Theory', 118.

[736] Another option would have been to run variations of the survey-experiment with a panel over time, though this would risk socialisation effects. For example, by continuing to read vignettes containing blame and then reflect on how they feel about it—and why—there could be mindful/metacognition effects that

- Survey-experiments present 'one shot' treatments, often using "exceedingly overt manipulations" that make it difficult for respondents to miss what the experimenter actually wants them to see and do.[737] The present work uses clear blame, but the vignette is drawn from realistic (pro-Leave) materials rather than being created for extreme effect. There is a risk that people who did not already lean towards Leaving would not have chosen to read an article containing in blame in this way;[738] however, E2 reveals that blame was present even in ostensibly neutral media—the Metro— and not just in pro-Leave materials. The treatment condition is therefore considered realistic.
- There may be an essential problem in that "either there is a likelihood of contamination from real-world experience or the survey experiment explores a non-existent or politically irrelevant phenomenon".[739] In the current study, it is understood that participants will have been exposed to a great deal of content on the Brexit campaign already, and most likely have an existing position. For this reason, more than one treatment vignette is designed, so that there is not only an 'Other' blaming vignette in the form of EU-blame, but also UK-blame. This allows for comparison between other-blaming vignettes to verify effects, as well as with a third vignette that contains blame of a non-other. What's more, people's own explanations for how they felt are sought using open questions, permitting explanation.
- The survey-experiment environment can be "artificially clean", in that treatments are "easier to receive than in real life, where cues, frames, and communications can be misunderstood or missed entirely despite unambiguous exposure".[740] To make the present survey-experiment more realistic—less 'clean'—a distraction task in the form of breath-holding was incorporated.

The survey-experiment for this research was built online using SurveyMonkey. It collected data about the participant,[741] then showed them one of four randomly-assigned vignettes, followed by questions designed to emerge the effects of blame on the participant. The 'vignettes' contained a "concrete and realistic scenario"[742] based on existing articles including blame that members of the public as 'audience' to blame might be exposed to.[743] Text was predominantly drawn from a Leave.EU article blaming flooding in the UK on the EU,[744] modifying it to update the floods from those occurring in 2015 to 2019[745] and incorporate

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would change how participants consume and therefore react to the blame. See also Mutz and Reeves, 'The New Videomalaise', 12.

[737] Gaines, Kuklinski, and Quirk, 'The Logic of the Survey Experiment Reexamined', 7.

[738] Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, 'Selective Exposure to Populist Communication'.

[739] Gaines, Kuklinski, and Quirk, 'The Logic of the Survey Experiment Reexamined', 12.

[740] Gaines, Kuklinski, and Quirk, 15.

[741] Participants represented the 'audience', as people who might read or otherwise consume blame like that done during the Brexit campaign.

[742] Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 479.

[743] This improved ecological validity; see 4.5 Reliability, replication, and validity.

[744] Banks, 'This Unnatural Disaster Was Made in Brussels Thanks to EU Flooding Policies'.

[745] Weiss, 'The UK's Big Flooding Problem Is Only Going to Get Worse'.

information showing the 'entire' UK was affected, not just those areas that had been flooded.[746] The vignettes blamed the EU (per the original Leave.EU article), the UK, 'ourselves', or did not contain any blame. Blame was therefore manipulated to see how it affected audience responses, with the 'no blame' vignette acting as an experimental control—like the studies noted above, the present work uses a between-subjects design to investigate causal relationships. The changing parts were not distinguished in any way in the survey-experiment, and the vignettes were kept as similar as possible to enhance internal validity[747] and reduce the possibility of confounding factors. The vignettes are analysed in 7.3.1 Analysing the vignette, and may be viewed in full at Annex: Vignettes.

Once the respondent submitted the SE, a secondary survey was automatically launched to collect optional contact data, should the participant wish to participate in focus groups. Contact data was stored separately, so that SE responses could not be matched to individual participants.

4.4.1.b)   Questions

Per 2.3.8 The role of audiences, previous research has indicated that the effects of blame may be mediated by underlying personal characteristics such as Just World Beliefs or agreeability, pre-existing emotions, or existing knowledge and discourses, and so related measures were included in the survey-experiment. This was to ensure that any effects were truly the effect of exogenous blame, and not, for example, of a particularly grumpy person's bad mood. Measures were selected on the premise that if these items interact with the effects of endogenous blame, they might do similarly for exogenous blame. Whether or not this is the case is explored in E4: Blame and underlying characteristics.

Note that at the time the SE was designed and carried out, whistle-blower reports detailing specific methods used by Cambridge Analytica in conducting psychometric (personality) micro-targeting had not yet been published.[748] As such, only those personality or value items which had previously been described as affecting the outcome of endogenous blame in some way were incorporated into the present study.[749] To this was added items such as education level which are taken to divide Leavers and Remainers, per 5.4.1 Portrait of a Leaver: existing research.[750] Again, this was on the premise that any observable variation in the effects of blame could end up relating to underlying educational or other differences.

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[746] Foresight programme, 'Future Flooding'.
[747] See also 4.5 Reliability, replication, and validity.
[748] Chris Wylie's 'Mind*ck' was published 8 October 2019, and Brittany Kaiser's on October 22 2019. Kaiser, *Targeted*; Wylie, *Mindf*ck*.
[749] Additional specific discourses, such as 'level of populism' or 'perceptions of relative deprivation' were not included. As for discussions of rape myth acceptance and victim-blaming in situations of interpersonal violence, it was understood that discursive subjectivity may affect whom people blame—heavily engaged with in the present research—but this is not the same as the psychometric and value system variables that are the focus here.
[750] See for example Jump and Michell, 'Education and the Geography of Brexit'.

Table 9 shows the resulting SE question topics, sequence, and justification. The full SE can be viewed at Annex: Ethics Review Attachments.

The SE was conducted in two rounds, with the first (v1) commencing 23 August 2019 and designed to close October 31 2019 (ostensibly 'Brexit day'), and the second (v2) following announcement of the General Election ('GE') in late October and closing the day before the December 12 election.[751] There were some slight differences: the bulk of questions designed to capture people's 'underlying characteristics' were removed from the second round of the survey to cut down on time taken and thereby encourage complete responses, and two additional questions were asked as marked below. V1 of the SE took approximately nine minutes to complete, and v2 took four.[752]

Responses lacking an answer to at least one of the open-ended 'key questions' (in bold below) were discarded as incomplete. These questions established the effects of blame by emerging—or giving the space to emerge—participants' self-identified and labelled emotions, victim (un)creation, endogenous (re)blame, and contestation.

Table 9: Survey-experiment questions

#	Item	Note
1–2 *	Educational attainment[753] and area of greatest interest[754]	Leave/Remain voters were divided by education level, so it was necessary to exclude this as a potentially mediating variable.[755] Area of interest was included to separate education level from what is studied, in case of differences. Per the Theory of Constructed Emotions, those exposed to more emotion concepts should have improved emotional granularity and therefore regulation, and the researcher considered there might be differences in exposure depending on area of interest.[756]
3–4 *	Health and mental health[757]	'Feeling bad' (affect) should be associated with construction of more negative emotions under TCE. Hence it was necessary to preclude the potentially intervening effects of feeling physically/mentally bad.
5–8	Referendum voting behaviour (a) when it happened and (b) were it to be held again 'today'	Establishing voting behaviour and preference (Leave/Remain/other). This was on the premise that Leavers and Remainers might interact differently with blame of the EU, per existing work on partisanship and blame.

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[751] Two question pilots were conducted prior to roll-out, including one pilot on mTurk. Pilot responses were not included in analysis.

[752] These times are on the bases of SurveyMonkey's inbuilt 'estimated time to complete' function as well as the actual average times taken to complete each version of the SE.

[753] Per UK Regulated Qualifications Framework. Office for National Statistics, 'Qualifications Notes'; Cheary, 'Levels of Education'.

[754] From Elcom Technology, 'Areas of Study'.

[755] Jump and Michell, 'Education and the Geography of Brexit'.

[756] E.g. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.. See 3.3 Constructing emotions and 10.4 Theory-driven reflections on disrupting the blame|vilification link.

[757] From the US General Social Survey. Smith et al., 'GSS Data Explorer', 2018; Smith et al., 'GSS Data Explorer', 2018.

#	Item	Note
9–10 *	Sense of Agency[758]	Just World Belief ('JWBs'; following question) is the notion that the world is essentially fair. This means people have less control over what happens to them. Sense of Agency, as a measure of having control over one's life, was included to engage with this notion. These two measures were negatively correlated in the present research (-0.297, p=0.000); see Annex: Correlations between psychometric, educational, and health data.
11–12 *	Value system (group-based vs individuating)[759] and Just World Beliefs[760]	Previous research indicated that holding group-based values or JWBs is associated with propensity to blame and reblame.[761]
13 *	Agreeability[762]	Previous research indicated lower agreeability was linked with increased reblaming and heightened anger in response to blame.[763]

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[758] Questions were adapted from the Sense of Agency Scale. Adam Tapal et al found the measures "I am in full control of what I do" and "Things I do are subject only to my free will" are most strongly associated with a sense of positive agency, while "My actions just happen without my intention", "My movements are automatic—my body simply makes them", and "Nothing I do is actually voluntary" are associated with a sense of negative agency. Tapal et al., 'The Sense of Agency Scale'. In the present research, two sliding scales were used to measure Sense of Agency, with a 'positive' measure at one end and 'negative' at the other. The above were selected as measures, with "My movements are automatic…" removed given there was no clear logical opposite. One scale was adapted to speak of people in general ("Things people do are subject only to their free will" vs "People are just instruments in the hands of somebody or something else") and the other stayed true to the original wording ("I am in full control over what I do in life" vs "Nothing I do is actually voluntary").

[759] In-group values per the abridged Moral Foundations Questionnaire Moral Foundations, 'Questionnaires'. In Niemi and Young's work, they use 'binding' values, which also incorporate the authority and purity questions. Niemi and Young, 'When and Why We See Victims as Responsible'.

[760] Three of seven questions used from Lipkus, 'The Construction and Preliminary Validation of a Global Belief in a Just World Scale and the Exploratory Analysis of the Multidimensional Belief in a Just World Scale'. Abridged versions used to shorten the survey and encourage a greater number of complete responses.

[761] E.g. Lerner and Simmons, 'Observer's Reaction to the" Innocent Victim"'. Niemi and Young found that binding values, which include in-group values, predict ratings of victims as contaminated, increase victim-blaming, and reduce focus on perpetrators (Niemi and Young, 'When and Why We See Victims as Responsible'.). JWBs and in-group values were correlated in the present research, at 0.465 p=0.000. See Annex: Correlations between psychometric, educational, and health data.

[762] From the International Personality Item Pool. International Personality Item Pool, 'Administering IPIP Measures, with a 50-Item Sample Questionnaire'.

[763] Meier and Robinson, 'Does Quick to Blame Mean Quick to Anger?'

#	Item	Note
14	Identity[764]	Participants were asked to finish the sentence "I am (a/n)…" with up to five options, to give an indication of the person's identity. This was on the premise that what people feel strongly about and/or identify with might alter the effects of blame, like rape myth acceptance changes how people blame victims.[765]
15	(Ordering)	(new page) Participants were asked to rank the answers they gave to (14) from most to least important. Any extra items ranked 6+ were discarded.
16 *	Existing emotional state[766]	Participants were asked how they were 'feeling' for six emotions (happy, sad, angry, anxious, content, scared), using a 5-point Likert scale from 'much less' to 'much more' than usual. Previous research has indicated that people who already feel angry blame more;[767] additional emotions were included to reduce potential priming through referring to 'anger'.
-	(Vignette)	(new page) Participants asked to hold their breath then read the vignette. Breath-holding was intended to act as a natural timer and/or attention load, so the person would read the vignette 'quickly' and trigger heuristic rather than systematic thinking. This was on the premise that this is similar to skimming headlines or articles as on social media. The approach of using breath-holding in this way was initiated by the researcher, though it was not un-grounded: following Daniel Gilbert and Michael Gill, Stephen Goldinger et al point out that people in such circumstances of distraction "initially process information in a heuristic manner, then make rational adjustments if they have adequate time and mental resources".[768] That is, where time is not constrained as by breath-holding, they would be more likely to switch from 'system one' (heuristic) to 'system two' (information-seeking) modes of processing.[769] Vignettes were randomly and proportionally displayed.

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[764] Possible responses were informed by a prior informal 'Emotion Concepts Survey' run by the researcher, which included the question "Where are you from? What would you say is your culture? Be as general or specific as you like." Responses were complemented by: Simple Politics, 'Who Are the Parties and What Do They Stand For?'; Robinson, 'Which Generation Are You?'; Office for National Statistics, 'Ethnic Group, National Identity and Religion'; Office for National Statistics, 'Guidance for Questions on Sex, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation for the 2019 Census Rehearsal for the 2021 Census'.

[765] Niemi and Young, 'Blaming the Victim in the Case of Rape'; Krahe, 'Victim and Observer Characteristics as Determinants of Responsibility Attributions to Victims of Rape'.

[766] Emotions selected were the top five mentioned in responses to an 'Emotion Concepts Survey' (footnote 764) plus 'scared'. The latter was included due to the notion of the Remain campaign as 'Project Fear', noting that UK responses to the researcher's prior survey preferred 'scared' over 'afraid' or 'fearful'.

[767] E.g. Neumann, 'The Causal Influences of Attributions on Emotions'; Lerner and Tiedens, 'Portrait of the Angry Decision Maker'; Quigley and Tedeschi, 'Mediating Effects of Blame Attributions on Feelings of Anger'; Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff, 'Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism'.

[768] Goldinger et al., '"Blaming the Victim" under Memory Load', 84; Gilbert and Gill, 'The Momentary Realist'.

[769] Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Kuklinski et al note that support for political groups' activities tends to rest on gut reactions rather than "considered thought"—and that this latter may even lead to *less*

#	Item	Note
17–20	Effects of the vignette – open-ended questions	17. How do you feel after reading the above text? 18. What should be done about the situation? 19. What could you personally do to ensure these actions are taken? 20. How will you feel after these actions are taken?
17b **	"	'Why do you feel that way?' inserted after (17) so people could explain their own feelings and minimise researcher conjecture.
21 **	General Election top voting priority[770]	Indication of important values/salience of vignette.
22 ***	mTurk	People recruited via mTurk using TurkPrime were asked to insert their 'worker ID' for payment.
* = included in SE v1 only ** = included in SE v2 only *** = included for mTurk respondents only		

4.4.1.c) Cleaning the data

SE responses were firstly collated in Excel, and any responses for which a blame vignette had *not* been read or at least partially responded to per the 'key questions' were removed. For the identity question 14/15, selections ranked 6+ were removed, as the question asked for five selections only. 'Area of greatest interest' was normalised: if somebody selected 'other' as their area of greatest interest but wrote in a custom answer that did match one of the provided options, it was replaced with that option. The same applied for the general election voting question.[771] Sense of agency, in-group values, JWBs, and agreeability were scored using the relevant marking scheme.

The resulting spreadsheet was imported into MaxQDA as survey data, whereupon responses to questions 17–20 (including 17b) were hand coded by the researcher. Coding focused on emotions per 4.3.5 Recognising emotions and blame per 4.3.2 Recognising blame. The latter noted who was blamed, so that reblaming (blaming the same blamee) and counterblaming (blaming an alternate blamee) could be identified. Victim (un)creation per 4.3.4 Recognising vilification and points of contestation per 4.3.6 Resistance and contestation were also marked.[772]

4.4.1.d) Participant recruitment

SE participants were members of the UK voting public.[773] They were recruited using several methods: posts on Reddit (/r/samplesize, /r/england, /r/scotland, /r/wales, /r/northernireland, /r/cornwall), the researcher's networks, and paid participants via

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tolerance. Further research on how much time people spending consuming blame and what types of difference this could make vis-à-vis vilification would certainly prove interesting. Kuklinski et al., 'The Cognitive and Affective Bases of Political Tolerance Judgments'.

[770] Adapted from issues used for YouGov polling, with an 'other' option given. YouGov, 'Political Trackers'.

[771] E.g. 'Brexit' would be replaced with the item 'Relationship with the EU'.

[772] See also Annex: Codebook.

[773] And hence 'audience' consuming blame during the Brexit campaign, ensuring consistency throughout the research.

Amazon Mechanical Turk (mTurk).[774] A mixture of paid and volunteer participants meant the SE reached a broader audience, improving external validity (generalisability) of results.[775] TurkPrime[776] was used to refine paid participants to people with a high task pass rate and who were more likely to be in the UK, reducing spoofed results.

Initially, the researcher sought just 500 participants, using a snowball approach to obtain an essentially random sample. Following initial analysis of this early data, there was a clear deficit of 'Leave' voters when compared to 'Remain' voters, so the number of desired responses was increased to 1000, and pro-Leave subreddits and Facebook groups were targeted (convenience sampling).[777] Pro-Leave subreddits included /r/british, /r/brexitpartyuk, /r/tories/, /r/RightWingUK, /r/ukipparty, /r/The_Farage, /r/moggmentum, and /r/UKIP, and Facebook groups included those dedicated to Brexit, UKIP, Nigel Farage, and conservative think-tank groups (e.g. the Bruges Group).[778] Facebook group names are subject to frequent change, hence non-inclusion of specific group names.

Once the 2019 General Election was announced, SE v2 was released and the number of desired responses increased to 1500. mTurk participants from v1 were prevented from undertaking v2.

1572 responses were received per Table 10, of which 1368 were 'complete', responding to the key questions.

Table 10: Survey-experiment response numbers and sources

SE version	Organic responses	mTurk responses	Total
V1	698	424	1122
V2 (shortened)	322	128	450
Total	1020	552	1572

4.4.2.   Focus groups and interviews

Focus groups bring together small groups of individuals to "discuss a series of open-ended questions",[779] with data generated through conversation and interactions between

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[774] See ethics reviews at Annex: Ethics Review Forms.

[775] Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 55. Per Ralph Rosnow and Robert Rosenthal, "it is conceivable that [a] person's special status as a volunteer participant may impose limitations on the generalisability of the research results." Rosnow and Rosenthal, *People Studying People*, 90. Payment of research participants is mainstream practice.

[776] Litman, Robinson, and Abberbock, 'TurkPrime. Com'.. TurkPrime has since been renamed 'Cloud Research'; the former name is used for consistency.

[777] Bryman, Social Research Methods, 201.

[778] It seems likely that such groups would have attracted the most passionate and ideologically extreme Leavers. Yet focus group and interview participants did not appear to be entirely extremists; one person had changed their preferences from voting Remain in the referendum, and while perhaps half of the participants seemed quite virulent in their beliefs, this was not the case for all of them (see discussion in 6.4 Post-referendum performance of blame). Even had participants for the survey-experiment been more extreme, it is unclear this would have had any effect on results; if anything, Leavers were less emotionally expressive than Remainers (see 7.4.7 Are Remainers just emotional snowflakes?). Both groups demonstrated ideological commitment, per E3: Effects and E4: Blame and underlying characteristics.

[779] Cyr, 'The Unique Utility of Focus Groups for Mixed-Methods Research', 1038.

participants. The researcher is therefore able to "capture nuance and tension surrounding potentially contested or highly contextualised subjects"—in this case, blaming in the context of Brexit. Jennifer Cyr argues that focus groups are of particular use in mixed methods research, especially in combination with survey-experiments, as they allow for greater nuance and improved internal validity. Participant-centric, open processes like focus groups emerge 'emic data',[780] incorporating subject perspectives rather than that of the observer, meaning they are an important inclusion in critical research.[781]

This research joins other work demonstrating the usefulness of emic data in the context of Brexit. Jonathan Moss et al used people's anonymous written reflections on the EU referendum and Brexit to help emerge emotions and discourses surrounding Brexit; Harry Bromley-Davenport et al conducted both semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 35 older white men in Sunderland to emerge motivating factors behind the Brexit vote, noting an emerging story of white victimhood and using the language of moral panic;[782] Eleni Andreouli et al conducted focus groups that enabled them to identify how notions of prejudice were constructed (nine focus groups, 38 English participants) and the differing constructions of Brexit as a nationalistic or democratic project (an additional three focus groups, consisting of men only).[783]

The present research was originally designed to use focus groups and no interviews. COVID-19 meant this approach had to be adapted, resulting in one in-person and one online focus group and nine supplementary interviews as follows.

4.4.2.a)   COVID-19 adaptations

Focus groups were scheduled for March and April 2020. The first focus group was able to go ahead in London on March 8, with several withdrawals due to fear of the virus; on March 11, the World Health Organisation announced COVID-19 a pandemic. The researcher had to return to Belgium prior to lockdown, noting it would have been unethical to continue bringing groups together in the context of the virus.

At the time, there were mixed perceptions in the UK over whether coronavirus really was a problem, or whether it was 'just a flu' such that business would continue as normal. Due to this uncertainty, participants felt unable to schedule a focus group even online 'just in case'. Only one 'mini' focus group was able to go ahead, with two attendees from Scotland.[784]

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[780] Cyr, 1039.

[781] See also 4.3.7 Reading process and quote selection.

[782] See also discussion of character creation in 3.2.5 The circumstances of characterisation, and Jasper, 'Not In Our Backyards: Emotion, Threat, and Blame'.

[783] Moss, Robinson, and Watts, 'Brexit and the Everyday Politics of Emotion'; Bromley-Davenport, MacLeavy, and Manley, 'Brexit in Sunderland'; Andreouli and Nicholson, 'Brexit and Everyday Politics'; Andreouli, Greenland, and Figgou, 'Lay Discourses about Brexit and Prejudice'.

[784] This was still considered a 'focus group' in that participants interacted with each other, directly and by responding to what the other said, instead of with only the researcher as in an interview. Two others who had signed up for the group dropped out last-minute due to COVID-related anxiety. The researcher did not expand the group to include other parts of the UK, given Scotland voted to stay in the UK and then Remain in the EU, and participants may have had slightly different perspectives that could be emerged.

However, the researcher was successful in recruiting nine participants for supplementary in-depth interviews, conducted online via Zoom.

The FGIs typically lasted 1–1.5 hours. It was deemed unnecessary to continue to recruit further participants given the richness of the data and untenability in the face of international lock-downs and people's general insecurity. Further, 'Brexit' became less salient and disappeared from headlines in favour of the pandemic. Regardless, the ~15 hours' content, representing 104,000 words of transcribed data, was considered sufficient to investigate participants' experiences. Previous research indicates that a majority of themes may be identified within a first focus group,[785] and that 5–6 interviews are enough to establish most concepts—with the present research conducting nine.[786] Results were additionally supported via the survey-experiment.

Overall, switching from in-person focus groups to online and interviews does not appear to have negatively affected the research.[787] There were some minor differences: in the London focus group, conversation was more spontaneous, as participants would react to one another. This made it more challenging to guide the conversation to ensure that themes related to the research were emerged. This did not present in the interviews, meaning they resulted in slightly richer data. The methods were complementary, and both succeeded in emerging characterisation of the EU, discussions of blame, and connected emotions—permitting investigation of vilification via blame in the Brexit case study.

4.4.2.b)   Design

The focus groups were designed to be participant-driven, with prompts from the researcher. The in-person focus group was held in a comfortable setting, sitting around a table to facilitate discussion and openness.[788] The researcher had no control over online participants' surroundings, though gave them plenty of warning as to when the relevant event would take place, and let them choose the date and time so that they would be as comfortable as possible.[789]

One challenge with the online FGIs was the use of Zoom; while the researcher was highly familiar with the software and the participants seemed comfortable downloading and using it, in the initial phases of the coronavirus pandemic Zoom's servers—as well as internet services generally—were under unprecedented strain. This led to occasional drop-outs in the conversation, though this was rarely problematic from a substantive data point of view;

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[785] Namey, 'Riddle Me This'.
[786] Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, 'How Many Interviews Are Enough?'
[787] Note that Bromley-Davenport et al do not seem to have considered this—or the compatibility of data—an issue. Bromley-Davenport, MacLeavy, and Manley, 'Brexit in Sunderland'.
[788] Moore, *The Mediation Process*, Ch. 9.
[789] The interviewer may have to intervene more during online focus groups and meetings in asking for participant to speak, given the lack of body language; hence it can be less organic conversation. On the other hand, participants can take part from a place where they are physically and emotionally comfortable and 'safe', at a time when it suits them, with the knowledge that there are no repercussions for what they may say. They allow access to otherwise inaccessible audiences—as during the initial phases of COVID-19.

more challenging was the ability to retain an empathetic space between the interviewer and interviewee in the face of an unreliable online connection. This was handled with humour and grace by the participants.

Interviews are interesting in that they lack the 'disciplining' effects of focus groups; there is not the same need to conform to what the group is saying, and thus the conversation can be potentially more free-flowing or open. Key to this is creating empathy and a sense of safety between the interviewer and interviewee, and the researcher applied the principles of non-violent communication[790] to generate this quickly, while using ice-breakers and a manner that ensured the interviewee knew they were speaking to a sympathetic ear—even if that ear was occasionally taken aback by some of the things being said! The same questions and flexible approach were used for the interviews as for the focus groups. The resultant 'semi-structured'[791] interviews reflected what happened in the focus groups in terms of members questioning and leading one another, meaning the interview was actually advantageous in getting at most of the benefits of a focus group while also allowing for increased expression by the interviewee.

FGIs were recorded using the researcher's phone and/or Zoom, then transcribed using SimonSays.ai and manual work by the researcher. This gave the researcher a deep familiarity with the transcripts. Names were changed, and transcripts were imported into MaxQDA software as 'focus groups'.

A privacy statement was used for the FGIs, with printed copies signed by participants in London, and the statement sent via email and in calendar invitations for all online engagements. The calendar invitation for London event participants initially mistakenly showed email addresses of participants, but this was amended after the fact. Participants received a 15GBP Amazon or Waterstones voucher for their participation, with in-person participants also having snacks and drinks paid for.[792]

4.4.2.c)   Managing conflict

The focus groups were designed to minimise conflict by including only one 'side' of the Brexit debate. It was intended that where conflict appeared, I as the researcher would monitor and intervene with necessary. I have been trained in mediation, dialogue, and non-violent communication, and have taught the (peace) negotiation and mediation course at my university. As such I considered myself equipped to identify issues and quickly de-escalate situations should it become necessary, using basic techniques such as mirroring, reframing, and rule-setting.[793] I appeared to be effective in generating a 'safe space' for discussion—emotions at the London focus group ran high, with one person crying when recounting a story of national pride, and two others tearing up when discussing deeply-held

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[790] Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication*.
[791] Per Alan Bryman, semi-structured interviews may vary question sequence and/or permit additional of questions in response to "what are seen as significant replies". Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 212.
[792] See Annex: Ethics Review Forms.
[793] E.g. Moore, *The Mediation Process*; Beer, Packard, and Stief, *The Mediator's Handbook*.

beliefs in relation to the UK and its history. This was not considered problematic, as the individuals did not appear distressed; rather they seemed relieved to be in a space where they could 'finally' share and be heard by people sympathetic to them.[794] No conflict arose during the focus groups, or between myself as the researcher and any participant in the FGIs.

4.4.2.d)   Questions and emotions

Questions were designed to flow naturally, starting with a welcome and opener/ice-breaker to generate quick connection and comfort for the participant/s. Next was an 'introduction' to the topic area, a transition to get to the main area of blame, 'key' questions investigating the nature of blame and how it affected participants, 'extra time' with more open questions, then an 'ending' section that ensured participants had had the opportunity to share everything they would like to and finished on a positive note. Structure was informed by Richard Krueger's *Developing questions for focus groups*.[795]

The introduction included the question "You voted to 'Leave' the EU. Suppose that the EU was a person; tell me what this person would be like." This helped emerge FGI participants' images of the EU as a character.[796] Questions in the 'key' section focused on (a) what the EU was blamed for, (b) how the participant/s felt about that, (c) how they felt about the EU as a result, and (d) whether it was important to their decision to vote Leave. Where a question had been answered by an existing response, that question was skipped. The full list of questions can be seen at Annex: FGI questions.

Throughout the FGIs, the researcher avoided priming emotions, such as by making suggestions or observations about what the person might be feeling.[797] This occasionally posed a challenge: one interview participant, Todd, appeared reluctant or unable to label his emotions beyond 'concerned', despite appearing extremely angry as he spoke. For this reason, towards the end of the interview, and given he had mentioned 'Project Fear' (a name for the Remain campaign) a number of times, the researcher asked "did Project Fear make you feel fearful?". Todd immediately disagreed ("No, it made me feel angry") and began explicitly labelling his emotions. Following this experience, where participants had not explicitly labelled their emotions, up to two questions were inserted in the closing phases of the interview:

- "The Remain campaign was sometimes known as 'Project Fear'. Did it make you feel fearful?", followed by

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[794] Moss et al note that Leave voters are more likely than Remainers to report self-suppression of their views. Moss, Robinson, and Watts, 'Brexit and the Everyday Politics of Emotion', 849.

[795] Krueger, *Developing Questions for Focus Groups*.

[796] A similar opener was used by Eleni Andreouli et al when conducting focus groups on Brexit; they started groups by inviting participants to perform an association exercise with the word 'European', forming a stimulus for discussion. Andreouli, Greenland, and Figgou, 'Lay Discourses about Brexit and Prejudice', 321.

[797] See also discussion in 3.3.4.c) Language and priming.

- "If the 'Remain' campaign was known as 'Project Fear', what would have been a good name for the Leave campaign?" (none of the participants responded with 'Project Anger', as the Leave campaign was occasionally known in the press).

Todd and a further three people were asked this set of questions, which were successful in eliciting explicit emotions, importantly in relation to the Leave campaign. As the only emotion primed in connection with this is 'fear', and empirical results show FGI participants did not connect blame with 'fear', these questions are not anticipated to have skewed results.[798]

4.4.2.e)   Participant recruitment

Potential participants were identified through the secondary survey associated with administration of the survey-experiment. Those who had voted 'Leave'[799] were emailed to ensure they had ongoing interest in participating, then mapped according to their postcode to ensure geographical diversity and more easily identify 'clusters' to meet in a group. This incidentally verified that the survey-experiment drew respondents from all over the UK (Figure 15). Clusters were emailed an invitation to join a focus group, noting that their friends, colleagues, or family who had voted Leave were welcome to join.

The researcher also printed and put up recruiting signs in London in pubs near the venue (with the permission of owners), as well as at a conservative club and via posts on Reddit. No participants eventuated from these signs. However, two of the London participants brought a friend or family member with them, for a total of seven people at the in-person event, staged in a privately-booked room at a I near Kings Cross Station. All participants either voted Leave or said they were pro-Leave. This was done with the intention of avoiding people from blaming each *other* during the course of the focus group, with negative fall-out for the participants themselves, and because "focus groups composed of individuals with shared backgrounds and/or experiences are better at eliciting data on sensitive or vulnerable topics"[800] Furthermore, as discussed in E2: Blame campaign, the Remain campaign did not blame the EU in the way the Leave campaign did, so it was anticipated that blaming of the EU was more relevant for Leave voters (including those who potentially voted Leave as an outcome of exposure to blame).

The 18 participants were diverse, including several immigrants (from the Commonwealth), a wide age range, different socio-economic backgrounds, different political standpoints, different education levels, different parts of the UK (including Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland), men and women, gay and straight, though with only one person who was visibly non-white British.[801] Two had been involved in pro-Brexit campaigns, and a further person had previously stood for government. Using online methods to supplement the in-person

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[798] See 7.2 Making villains: the FGIs.
[799] On the basis that earlier stages of research had revealed blame was apparent in the 'Leave' campaign.
[800] Cyr, 'The Unique Utility of Focus Groups for Mixed-Methods Research', 1041. citing Liamputtong, *Focus Group Methodology*.
[801] Per 5.4 Who voted for Brexit?, Leavers were more likely to identify as white than were Remainers.

focus group seems to have been highly effective in gathering views from a broad variety of UK citizens, enhancing external (generalisability) and ecological (realism) validity despite the small sample size, and producing particularly rich data.[802]

Figure 15: Map of SE participants who indicated interest in follow-up research. It reflects UK population density.

4.4.3.   Sources: Context

Per 4.3.1 Data analysis framework, contextual information was needed to site the research, including socio-political and historical information about the relationship between the EU and UK, concurrent issues that might constitute 'blameworthy' topics, and the Brexit assemblage (people and bodies involved). Referendum voter characteristics were gathered to help ensure the broad representativeness of this research; results were not being skewed

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[802] See further details about participants at Confidential Annex: Focus group and interview participants.

because of an unusual audience. Contextual data was drawn from the researcher's existing knowledge of British politics (undergraduate readings via the London School of Economics drew extensively on UK materials), additional readings on the history of the relationship between the EU and UK, and focused reading on the Brexit campaign itself. Sources included academic works, including books and peer-reviewed articles, and incidentally included newspaper columns, discussions on social media groups and so on, as encountered in the course of research.[803] These, in conjunction with campaign materials, allowed for mapping of the Brexit assemblage, and meaningful discussion of the constraints and context surrounding the Brexit campaign and EU-blaming. This in turn permitted translation from the specific case study to more general theoretical findings about the vilifying effects of blame. A timeline with major campaign dates is included at Annex: Brexit timeline. Contextual data is presented in E1: The Brexit context.

4.4.4.   The Metro

Articles and public commentary surrounding Brexit and the EU was collected from the free metropolitan newspaper "The Metro". It had the third-largest circulation in the UK at the time of the referendum, per Figure 16. Unlike the paid newspapers The Daily Mail and The Sun, each of which had higher circulations at that time, The Metro makes claims to political neutrality, including with regard to the referendum.[804] It was therefore selected as a relatively neutral location for observing blame and identifying context around the Brexit campaign. The Metro could then act as a data point for what might be a 'normal' performance of blame around a politically salient issue.

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[803] To this extent, the researcher was subjectified to similar materials to UK voters.
[804] Ponsford, 'Who Says Millennials Don't Read Newspapers?'

Figure 16: UK daily newspaper average circulation per issue per month, 2000-2020 (million)[805]
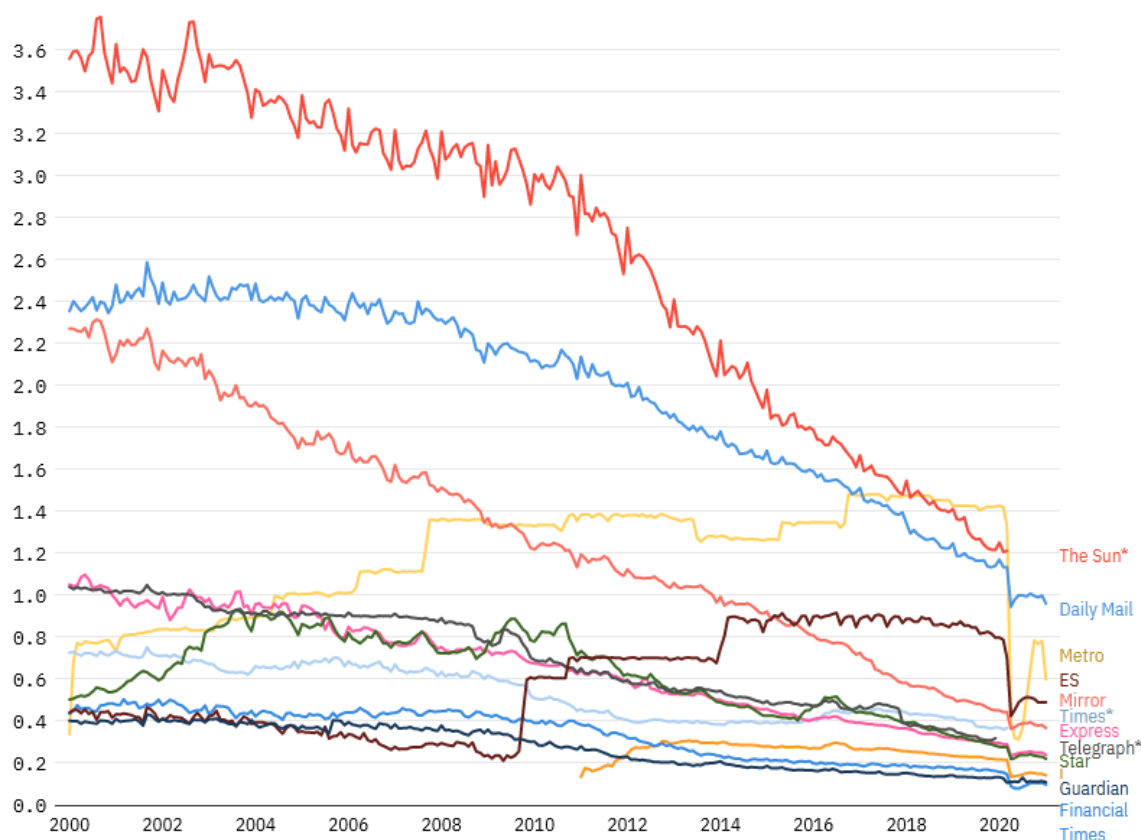
*The Telegraph last reported print circulation figures in December 2019. The Sun and The Times last reported in March 2020
Chart: Press Gazette • Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations

Another thing that made The Metro interesting for analysis purposes is that it solicits comments on articles about current events and publishes them in its section 'MetroTalk' in ensuing days. This meant it was possible to examine a sample of blaming performed by the public during the time of the referendum, in addition to examining blame published in articles.[806]

Data was collected in September 2019 using the archives of the British Library in London, for the period 1 April to 23 June 2016 (the day of the Brexit referendum). This is a total of 84 days, including 60 days on which the paper was circulated. It was anticipated that this would be sufficient content to reach 'saturation' for analysis purposes, particularly given that the closer the referendum drew, the more it dominated headlines—the most salient content would be available directly before the referendum. Every article and MetroTalk comment that concerned the EU or Brexit was photographed, individually (one text) and in context (the entire page). Optical Character Recognition ('OCR') was used to automatically extract text from MetroTalk comments and some articles. It was not used for articles that included several columns of text, as the OCR could not 'read' these. This meant that coding of blame

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[805] Image from Tobitt and Majid, 'National Press ABCs'.
[806] This improved ecological validity by examining 'real' materials for performance of blame by the public, rather than relying entirely on responses prompted by the researcher.

and the other items necessary per the data analysis framework took place on text and images of text, occasionally limiting what software-based forms of analysis could be used as noted in empirical chapters. As all text was hand-coded, rather than using software-based search tools, this did not pose an issue for coding blame, victims, emotions, etc.

4.4.5.   Campaign materials

Campaign materials were necessary to identifying context and performance of blame in the Brexit campaign. They connect the effects of blame noted in FGIs and the SE with what was actually done in the lead-up to the referendum, showing that blame made a villain of the EU in the specific case study of Brexit.

Pro-Leave parties were the focus of data collection as likely exemplars of anti-EU blaming during the campaign.[807] Data from the pro-Remain campaign, Britain Stronger in Europe ('BSIE', Stronger In), was also collected as the 'other side' of the debate, to shed light onto contestation in particular. Sources included texts from Leave.EU's website, BSIE's official website, articles written by former UK Independence Party ('UKIP') party leader Nigel Farage, and pro-Brexit social media advertisements collected by the Information Commissioner's Office ('ICO') in the course of their "Investigation into data analytics for political purposes" inquiry.[808] These included Facebook ads from the officially designated Leave campaign, Vote Leave. Vote Leave's website did not receive the bare minimum of internet traffic required to be archived by the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine until after the referendum had already taken place, suggesting that articles on their website did not reach a wide audience, reducing their priority.[809] As the objective of this research is to uncover how blame makes villains, it is considered that the collected materials are sufficient to demonstrate performance, even without Vote Leave articles.[810]

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[807] This was borne out during empirical work, where pro-Leave parties performed blame and the Remain campaign did not; see E2: Blame campaign. See also 2.3 What does blame do?, which highlights the need to research blame by actors outside of 'government'.

[808] Information Commissioner's Office, 'Investigation into the Use of Data Analytics in Political Campaigns'.

[809] It is also possible that Vote Leave built the website to prevent content from being crawled; it is not clear why this would be done for a public political campaign, as the same activity would prevent search engines from indexing material so that people could search and find the website or its content.

[810] Interestingly, the researcher checked for availability of data on Vote Leave's website using the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine in 2019 and early 2020, at which point no archived news was visible. As of 6 March 2021, archives of news articles as at 24 June 2016 are visible, and there is a news section on the live website at http://voteleavetakecontrol.org/news.html. Per the Internet Archive, "sometimes a web site owner will contact us directly and ask us to stop crawling or archiving a site. We comply with these requests." Internet Archive Wayback Machine, 'FAQs'; Internet Archive Wayback Machine, 'Wayback Machine General Information'. It is possible that the news archives were suppressed for an unknown reason, whether generally or when accessing from Brussels; I as the researcher can provide little other explanation for how I did not see the articles on previous visits. The lack of archives prior to June 24 2016, the day after the referendum, suggests that the campaign's online materials had little reach when compared to those of Leave.EU, whose materials *were* available. It could be that Vote Leave blamed slightly more or less than Leave.EU, or even for slightly different things: but this would not affect investigation of the causal powers of blame per se.

4.4.5.a)   Texts from Leave.EU

Pro-Brexit group Leave.EU had the explicit intention of using polemic to affect how people 'feel' about the EU and thus lead them to vote out.[811] As such they are an example of people 'trying' to make the EU a villain, necessitating inclusion and analysis in the present research.

Leave.EU was not the official Brexit campaign nominated by the British Electoral Commission, but was notable for the amount of money it put into grassroots and social media campaigning.[812] It described itself as "the people's campaign" and claimed to have and some 750,000 supporters and donors by March 2016.[813] It had a large reach, and any blame done by the campaign is important to consider.

Leave.EU content collected was that present, or linked to, on the News and Media sections of the Leave.EU website as of 24 June 2016. The Internet Archive's Wayback Machine was used to 'travel back' to this date, ensuring that any items since deleted or made unavailable were able to be captured. This was important, as at some point between January 2016 and March 2019, Leave.EU's website was rearranged and much content removed, including all news from prior to February 2016.[814] The earliest piece was from June 2015, meaning the entire campaign and then-Prime Minister David Cameron's renegotiation with the EU were captured by the researcher.

It is understood that publishing on the website constituted an endorsement of the content by the campaign, and that statements made by Leave.EU's representatives were made freely. Some pieces were hosted directly on Leave.EU's site, while others were linked to, and both types were included in collection. Articles behind paywalls, not being available to the public at large, were not included in analysis. Where a piece was both linked and briefly introduced on the site, only the full article was collected. There was no clear separation of what was 'news' and what was 'media' on the website, with both sections including local and externally-hosted content. Videos and other media recordings were not collected (or collectable in most cases), and hence were not analysed; additional booklets and pamphlets were collected where possible (e.g. Leave.EU pamphlets and booklets linked from the News pages). This gave a total of 287 texts analysed, ranging in length from two paragraphs to 32 pages. Most pieces were 1–1.5 pages.

4.4.5.b)   Articles by Nigel Farage

UKIP's long-standing campaign to leave the UK focused on 'town halls', meetings, and door-knocking, none of which are available in text format.[815] Additionally, news and blog posts on

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[811] Arron Banks: "'facts don't work' and that's it. The remain campaign featured fact, fact, fact, fact, fact. It just doesn't work. You have got to connect with people emotionally." Booth, Travis, and Gentleman, 'Leave Donor Plans New Party to Replace Ukip – Possibly without Farage in Charge'. See also Banks and Oakeshott, *The Bad Boys of Brexit*. (location 1552 on Kindle).

[812] Waterson, 'Anti-EU Campaign Has Already Spent at Least £200, 000 on Facebook Ads'.

[813] Leave.EU, 'Arron Banks'.

[814] The website is unavailable as of March 2021, as once they left the EU, UK organisations were no longer able to use .eu domain names.

[815] Goodwin and Milazzo, *UKIP*.

UKIP's website are sparse. For that reason, content authored by then-leader Nigel Farage was collected from Breitbart.com as another example of texts aiming to persuade people to leave the EU. 43 articles were collected in December 2019, covering the period June 2015 through May 2016. This proved to be one of the only places in which significant UKIP content was 'published', with Farage's speeches and other public presentations otherwise rarely documented.

4.4.5.c)   Social media advertisements

Social media advertisements surrounding Brexit have been subject to an inquiry and on-going scandal. Cambridge Analytica infamously used advanced targeting to advertise to audiences based on specific psychometric profiles, in attempts to persuade them to vote Leave,[816] Russia allegedly provided support for the Brexit campaign, including via social media posts;[817] and funding for social media advertisements has been associated with breaches of both privacy and campaign finance laws.[818] These ads were important enough to break laws for—and given the attempts to manipulate people via microtargeting (discussed in 5.3 The Brexit assemblage and E4: Blame and underlying characteristics), were considered relevant for the present research.

In the course of the official Information Commissioner's Office ('ICO') inquiry, social media ads from pro-Leave parties and related audience data were made briefly available and were collected.[819] UKIP's ads were not provided to the ICO due to an ongoing court battle, and so were not included.[820] Ads available were primarily from or paid for by Vote Leave, as well as from the Democratic Unionist Party ('DUP'), a Northern Irish party, and other groups/pages including BeLeave, 50 Million, and Veterans for Britain (each connected to Vote Leave) and Brexit Central.

4.4.5.d)   Texts from BSIE

Britain Stronger in Europe were the official Remain campaign, and materials were collected for comparison purposes: after all, perhaps they too blamed the EU, or cast the EU in a similar light to the Leave campaign—or perhaps they contested blame and thus mitigated its causal, vilifying power. The website was still live, seemingly in its entirety, until early 2020.[821] Data was collected in December 2019–January 2020.

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[816] E.g. Wylie, *Mindf*ck*; Kaiser, 'Written Evidence'. See 5.3 The Brexit assemblage.
[817] E.g. Field and Wright, 'Russian Trolls Sent Thousands of Pro-Leave Messages on Day of Brexit Referendum, Twitter Data Reveals'; Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 'Disinformation and "Fake News": Final Report'.
[818] Cambridge Analytica, 'Select 2016 Campaign-Related Documents'; Electoral Commission, 'Investigation'; Information Commissioner's Office, 'RE: ICO Investigation into Use of Personal Information and Political Influence.', 2 October 2020; Graham-Harrison, 'Leave.EU Donor Arron Banks Loses Data Breach Appeal'.
[819] Facebook, 'Vote Leave 50 Million Spreadsheet'; Facebook, 'Vote Leave 50 Million Ads'; Facebook, 'Brexit Central BeLeave Ads'; Facebook, 'Brexit Central BeLeave Spreadsheet'; Facebook, 'DUP Vote to Leave Ads'; Facebook, 'DUP Vote to Leave Spreadsheet'.
[820] Marzouk, 'UKIP Appeals against the ICO's Demand for Election Data Details'.
[821] The website has since been redirected to a page collecting email addresses; investigations on Wayback Machine suggest this happened between February and April 2020.

Campaign materials for BSIE seemed richer than those for Leave.EU; there were series of images and facts throughout the website, leaflets and reports on the campaign materials page, and news articles. The researcher collected 10 of 35 pages of news articles, then skimmed and scanned the 42 articles posted immediately before the referendum. The news articles typically replicated brochure content and images and were not significantly different in style, so were not formally coded.[822] Instead, the images and reports, which had wide reach due to being leveraged elsewhere to support the Remain campaign (e.g. on social media and in newspaper articles), were collected for analysis. This resulted in 25 texts from BSIE (164 pages; mode length 2 pages), including campaign posters; leaflets for workers' rights, the renegotiation, farmers, myths, and family; an 'easy read' accessible leaflet; ten 'condensed reports'; and the full 'Get the Facts' and 'What the experts say' website pages (37 and 75 pages respectively). This was considered sufficient material for the purposes of comparison.

<div align="center">❖</div>

With data collection explained and justified against the data analysis framework, the final part of this chapter turns to points of potential critique: particularly reliability, validity, and limitations.

4.5. Reliability, replication, and validity

Alan Bryman gives reliability, replication, and validity as the most important criteria for the evaluation of social research.[823] Of these, reliability relates to result stability, so that for example a measure generated in the course of research—an IQ test, or perhaps a 'moral foundations' test[824]—would give consistent results over time and space, including with the same audience. Replicability indicates results may be reproduced. Lastly, validity, "in many ways the most important criterion of research",[825] considers the integrity of research conclusions. Each of these is discussed below.

4.5.1.   Reliability

This research aims to generate theory (not generate *a* theory) that gets closer to 'real', relatively stable social reality, not create a specific new construct or measure. However, effort was made to ensure within-case reliability. While payment of a third party for the purpose of checking data was beyond the means of the researcher, measures were taken to ensure consistency across time, documents, and data collection stages as outlined below.

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[822] There were many videos posted as news articles, for instance videos with 'experts' or thought leaders—including Bear Grylls (!). These videos were not collected due to the additional layer of complexity in the face of what was already substantial data collection for this research. Videos for Leave.EU were not collectable.

[823] Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 46.

[824] E.g. Atari, Graham, and Dehghani, 'Foundations of Morality in Iran'. identified the need for an additional measure when researching 'moral foundations' in Iran.

[825] Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 47.

Note that data was stored in three separate MaxQDA files: 'text-based' data, FGI, and SE responses. This was partly due to the processing power constraints of the researcher's laptop, and partly to enable approaching each type of data with 'fresh eyes' that would see coding based on what is *present* rather than on what is *expected*.

4.5.1.a)   Consistency across time

As indicated in 4.2.5 The research spiral, the researcher had previously coded blame in several months' data from the Leave.EU campaign during her MA. This data was stored separately. After the researcher had coded all instances of blame in the present research, which included a new collection of Leave.EU data, it was possible to compare recognition of blame for the same texts across the different projects. In this way, the 'past' version of the researcher was able to act as a coding check on the 'present' researcher, verifying consistency and intracoder reliability.

4.5.1.b)   Consistency within and across documents

Once all texts within a data file had been processed per the data analysis framework, codes were checked for consistency using MaxQDA's "Overview of Retrieved Segments" tool. This shows all text and images coded with a given code. This permitted more fine-grained coding where applicable (e.g. re-coding blame from 'general EU' to 'EU regulations'), and was used to ensure consistency across all codes within all documents, such that for example all instances of 'blame' were compared next to one another, and likewise for blamees, victims, emotions, discourses, and all other information present. This helped ensure data had been coded in the same way everywhere it appeared, and inconsistencies—that could give rise to flawed results—removed.

4.5.1.c)   Consistency across data types

Each MaxQDA data file was processed at a different point of time—text-based data from December 2019 through February 2020, the survey-experiment in March and April 2020, and the FGI data in May.[826] Once all data had been processed, June was spent ensuring consistency across documents, so that items were labelled in the same way (e.g. 'angry' used in all projects rather than 'angry' in one and 'anger' in another) and codes were applied consistently across documents. For example, blame identified in SE responses was compared side-by-side to blame in the text-based data, ensuring blamees were identified, named, and grouped in the same way. This is reflected in the codebook at Annex: Codebook.

4.5.2.   Replicability

It is understood that some parts of this research are more replicable in the first instance than others (e.g. analysis of campaign materials, by using Wayback Machine to access them, or referring to archives). As the salience of Brexit passes in time, it would be difficult if not impossible to replicate the focus groups or survey-experiment vis-à-vis the specific case of

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[826] This is in addition to initial readings and analysis as indicated in 4.2.5 The research spiral.

EU-blaming in the Brexit campaign. However, it is anticipated that for as long as similar conditions exist, that relate certain types of blame to certain emotions, the general principles underlying this research will be replicable. This includes outside of the UK itself, per 4.2.6 Case study selection, and would be a useful area for further research.

4.5.3.   Validity

Bryman describes four main types of validity,[827] three of which are considered below. As the present research does not aim to construct a measure,[828] measurement validity is not discussed.

4.5.3.a)   Internal validity

Internal validity assesses whether causality is apparent, which is particularly necessary vis-à-vis the survey-experiment. As described above,[829] the key part of the survey-experiment that 'changed' was the vignette containing blame. All elements bar the 'blamee' were kept consistent, and a control in the form of a 'no blame' vignette included. The possibility for contrast allows for conclusions to be drawn about the effects of blame, through comparing effects between subjects[830] and across the different vignettes—for example, examining the emotions participants describe themselves as experiencing after reading the 'no blame' vignette with those resulting from the 'EU blame' vignette.[831] Such experiments are vital in identifying the causal mechanisms underlying 'real' reality per 4.2.1 Multiple realities above, as they enable an artificial and ethical 'closure' of the social world.[832] Experimental research "engenders considerable confidence in the robustness and trustworthiness of causal findings", helping to ensure strong internal validity.[833]

Later, results from FGIs are triangulated with those from the SE, allowing consideration of whether interlocutors are vilifying the EU as a post facto justification for a Leave vote rather than a contributor.[834] This triangulation helps deliver insight that is both broad and deep, improving internal validity through examination at multiple levels.

4.5.3.b)   Ecological validity

Ecological validity is concerned with whether findings are applicable to natural, everyday social settings.[835] This research addresses ecological validity through:

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[827] Bryman, Social Research Methods, 90.
[828] E.g. A measure of 'susceptibility to blame', or a personality measurement such as 'agreeability'.
[829] See 4.4.1 Survey-experiment.
[830] Such designs are suitable for communication experiments such as the present one. Oeldorf-Hirsch, 'Between-Subjects Design'. This is particularly relevant in E4: Blame and underlying characteristics, which compares effects between subjects based on their underlying characteristics.
[831] Discussed in E3: Effects.
[832] López, 'Critical Realism: The Difference It Makes, in Theory'.
[833] Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 50.
[834] 7.4.2.a) Does the 'compassion backhand' actually happen?
[835] Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 48.

- Drawing vignettes in the survey-experiment from actual published news sources and information
- Analysing naturally-produced discussion in the form of MetroTalk opinions
- Bolstering findings via use of mixed methods, including focus groups and interviews

Regarding the FGIs specifically, a risk is that participants might not say what they would say 'in the real world'. In the focus groups, this could be because of disciplining effects (peer pressure, performativity), or in interviews, deception or performativity. This was addressed through generating empathetic spaces where people could feel safe and heard as described in 4.4.2 Focus groups and interviews. Notably, several participants reached out after the groups or interviews were complete offering to help further in whatever way they could, suggesting they did feel safe, heard, and supported.

4.5.3.c) External validity

External validity—generalisability—is addressed several times during data collection. It is noted that results are expected to bear out similarly in similar discursive formations, but may not be generalisable to radically different ones. This is because vilification via blame happens when people experience 'villain-type feelings' towards the blamee. As discussed in Blame and its effects and 3.3 Constructing emotions, 'emotion concepts' can vary from person to person, and are deeply intertwined with culture. As such, they can operate differently in different cultures, and potentially different languages, as implied in 4.3.4 Recognising vilification.[836] Blamees could also be omitted from descriptions of harm through changing from an active voice (they did it) to a passive voice (it was done).[837] This means that, for the present research to be generalised beyond the UK, people must have similar emotion concepts, and potentially similar linguistic structures. For that reason, the present research is most generalisable to broadly similar cultures where English is used in the first instance.[838]

Note that there are different ways to 'feel' towards blamees, per previous research where endogenously blaming the 'self' has been associated with guilt or shame rather than anger;[839] this implies that the emotions of blame interface with stories and the roles available in those stories. In the present research, the main story is the villain/hero/victim metaphor (a 'Rescue' narrative);[840] it is at least possible that other metaphors could exist. That said, the present research uses 'villain' because it is an agent towards whom we feel negatively, and it is this idea that should be translated into future research.[841]

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[836] Certain emotions (such as 'angry') and not others (such as 'content') can take direct objects in English; which emotions can and cannot take objects could vary in other languages.

[837] See discussion in E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.

[838] Vasilopoulou, Halikiopoulou, and Exadaktylos, 'Greece in Crisis'. indicate that blaming might be performed differently in Greece.

[839] 2.3.7 Blame is emotional

[840] Lakoff, *The Political Mind*.

[841] Note for example Imke Henkel's discussion of the EU as a 'bully'. Henkel, *Destructive Storytelling*.

Generalising within the UK is facilitated by the mixed methods research strategy that combines quantitative (scale) and qualitative (deep) data. FGI and SE participants were drawn from all over the UK, ensuring the research wasn't, for example, about 'blame in London', but was rather generalisable to the UK. This grants greater external validity in the specific case study of Brexit, permitting the degree of analytical inference necessary to generate theory based on this case.

4.6. Limitations and mitigation

This subsection considers the methodological limitations of this research and how they have been mitigated.

4.6.1.   Incompleteness and the role of the researcher in mixed methods research

Freshwater criticises mixed methods research as too "focused on fixing meaning",[842] arguing that researchers need to adopt a "sense of incompleteness",[843] and that the use of the 'objective' third-person in writing hides that theory is "always for someone, and for some purpose".[844] The present research takes a critical, abductive approach that accepts theory as an unfinished approximation of reality, such that meaning is only 'fixed' for the meantime, in the specific way described, and only until a better explanation comes along. Mixed methods are used simply to get closer to that reality.[845]

To the latter criticism, the present research avoids exclusive academic language where possible, and notably in the empirical chapters, to make it more available and therefore open to generation of new meanings; it severally acknowledges the role of the researcher and uses the first-person 'I' when speaking specifically from her perspective;[846] and recognises that alternate interpretations and ways can exist, as in the form of alternate 'cultures' with differing metaphors and emotion concepts. While the researcher's role in generating the research is noted in this chapter, she is decentred in favour the perspectives of study participants.

4.6.2.   Breath-holding (survey-experiment)

It is possible that having a person hold their breath to read the vignette in the survey-experiment could cause them to feel physically worse than they otherwise would, and thereby skew results towards negative emotions. It is also possible that a participant would be so distracted by holding their breath that they would write only about this in the questions following the vignette. This was mitigated by (a) reassuring the person that it is

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[842] Freshwater, 'Reading Mixed Methods Research', 137.

[843] Freshwater, 138.

[844] Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders'.

[845] See 4.2 Research design.

[846] E.g. 1.5 Researcher positionality.

okay if they do not manage to hold their breath (b) designing the vignettes around average reading speed and average length an adult can comfortably hold their breath. The comparison between different vignette conditions allows for consideration of effects.

It could have equally been that allowing people as much time as they would like to read the vignette, and thereby engaging information-seeking 'System 2' behaviours,[847] would have resulted in more thoughtful responses. However, per 4.4.1 Survey-experiment, it is not considered likely that the public at large typically read news texts 'for deeper meaning', spending a large amount of time thoughtfully engaging with a piece. If the natural timer of breath-holding were *not* used, this might have reduced ecological validity. Further research could evaluate the relative frequency of vilification when people have limited, or unlimited time to consume blame, to establish whether thoughtfulness intervenes with blame's causal powers.

4.6.3.   'Why do you feel that way?' (survey-experiment)

In the original survey-experiment, four questions were asked following the vignette, starting with "how do you feel after reading the above text?".[848] This meant that while emotions were explicit, it would have been up to the researcher to consider *why* the participant was feeling a particular way. This became apparent after analysis of initial results per 4.2.5 The research spiral: Remainers were 'annoyed' following the vignette, though it was not clear why or at whom. Thus in the second edition of the survey, an additional question ("why do you feel that way?") was added to ensure the researcher was not interpolating her opinion into the data; these results were triangulated with those from the initial survey to permit generalisation and meaningful interrogation/interpretation of the data.[849]

4.6.4.   Between focus groups and interviews

Per 4.4.2.a) COVID-19 adaptations, due to the coronavirus pandemic, it was necessary to switch from in-person focus groups to online forms of data collection, predominantly interviews. The approach, including structure and questions, was kept as similar as possible. As discussed above, it seems as though in both the focus groups and the interviews, participants felt safe to freely share their opinions and ideas. It is possible that doing entirely focus groups would have shed light into person-to-person disciplining effects (e.g. "don't say things like that", or encouraging/dismissing body language). However, this was not necessary to the present research, and it appears that both methods were successful in gaining the requisite data. Limitations of conducting data collection online have already been acknowledged, and did not appear to create a significant barrier to collection.

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[847] Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*.
[848] See questions in 4.4.1 Survey-experiment.
[849] Participants did sometimes say why they felt a certain way regardless.

4.6.5.   Researcher subjectivity

Per 1.5 Researcher positionality, the researcher has previously been subjected to UK discourses, including emotion concepts. However, not being exclusively subject to UK discourses and emotion concepts might lead to a mismatch between how the researcher would perceive emotions and what participants or speakers are 'actually' feeling. For this reason, only explicitly-labelled emotions are used in analysis per 4.3.5 Recognising emotions.

4.7. Roadmap for empirical chapters

This chapter has established the critical realist research design for the present research, shedding light into how blame may be examined as a relatively stable phenomenon in the social world. Vitally, it focused not on 'causes', but rather causal *power*, whereby a given mechanism such as blame always has the capability to affect audiences (e.g. by generating villain-type feelings towards blamees), but that these effects may not always be visible due to intervening mechanisms.[850] This highlights the need to consider 'contestation' of blame in the present research as a means by which its effects could be mitigated.

Next, the abductive approach was introduced, explaining the ever-widening 'spiral' of research through a visual 'research spiral' that shows interaction between theory and data, and ongoing reiteration of research design in order to get ever-closer to a 'true' theory of the ways in which blame makes villains in politics. This was linked to experimentation and pragmatic application of mixed methods as a means by which such theory—as a description of 'real' reality—may be emerged. The case study of Brexit was selected for the campaigns' use of blame as a 'normal' political behaviour, and because causal mechanisms become more visible during periods of crisis.[851]

A data analysis framework was developed that draws from existing work in critical discourse studies but that allows examination of 'effects' of a particular discursive practice, in this case blame, and drills down to give specific methods for identifying items key to the present research: namely blame, victims, villains, emotions, and contestation. The reading process, echoing the abductive approach, was outlined, and quote selection explained.

4.4 Data sources described and justified data sources against the data analysis framework. These included 104,000 words of focus group and interview transcripts, 1368 complete survey-experiment responses, 60 issues of the Metro including several hundred articles about the EU or Brexit and public commentary therein, 287 texts from Leave.EU, 43 from Farage's series for Breitbart, 25 from Britain Stronger in Europe as the Remain campaign, and over a thousand pro-Brexit ads collected by the Information Commissioner's Office.

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[850] Fletcher, 'The Reality of Gender (Ideology)', 211.
[851] Bhaskar, 'On the Possibility of Social Scientific Knowledge and the Limits of Naturalism'.

Following chapters present the results of analysis per the steps of the data analysis framework as follows:

The first empirical chapter (E1) establishes the 'context' for blame in the Brexit campaign. This includes a brief history, description of the Brexit assemblage, and considering 'who voted Leave/Remain' vis-à-vis participants in the present research.

E2 addresses the second part of the data analysis framework: identifying performance. It focuses on the text-based data produced prior to the referendum, establishing the key role of blame for the Leave campaign. It then introduces the focus group/interview data, in which blame performed is very similar to that from during the campaign.

The third component of the data analysis framework, 'identify effects', is considered in two chapters. E3, the key effects chapter, establishes how villains were made in the FGIs and SE alike. It engages with potential critique and alternate explanations, and highlights how blame spreads and may therefore create additional villains. E4 shows that the vilifying effects of blame are not closely correlated to people's underlying characteristics. That is, any 'vilification' is not happening because people are disagreeable or angry, but because of blame itself. Existing knowledge and preferences—as captured in voting preference—appears to mediate the effects of blame.

Lastly, per the final section of the data analysis framework, E5 identifies forms of contestation that may help mitigate the causal powers of blame, with implications for how 'blaming' campaigns may be redressed in future.

5. E1: The Brexit context

5.1. Introduction

This first of five empirical chapters focuses on the context surrounding the Brexit referendum. The need for a level of contextual understanding has been highlighted by previous research; for instance, Hansson points out that "[A]nalysts may need a lot of non-linguistic contextual knowledge to grasp what kind of common ground with the audience at hand the arguer presumes, and how this knowledge can be exploited for the purposes of persuasion".[852] Hence 'identify context' is the first component of the data analysis framework laid out in Methodology.

This chapter first gives a brief history of Brexit that outlines relations between the UK and EU prior to the referendum. The UK's high level of Euroscepticism, as alluded to in 2.3.1 Blame and Euroscepticism, is highlighted. Concurrent issues are raised, and particularly the 'migrant crisis' and 'global financial crisis' that construe 'blameworthy events', as highlighted in the following chapter. Understanding concurrent issues helps provide context to what is blamed 'for' and informs particular images: for instance, of Greeks as 'victims' to an extractive EU.[853]

Next, the Brexit 'assemblage' is discussed.[854] This is the network of people present as subjects and objects in Brexit discussions, as emerged in the course of reading. Per Methodology, assemblages help explain how a particular discourse 'spreads'—in this case, how blame as a discursive practice spreads. This pre-empts discussion of subjects and objects in E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation, where it becomes clear that despite being 'present' as an object of blame, the EU itself is 'voiceless'—an effect also experienced by other objects, such as migrants. Understanding the assemblage is thus important contextual information for the present work. Representative voices from that assemblage are identified, with their works presented and analysed in E2: Blame campaign.

The third part of this chapter focuses on the audience in the Brexit context: UK voters, who the campaigns attempted to influence via blame. As well as illustrating an important part of the Brexit assemblage, this section compares people who voted Leave/Remain per previous research with those who prefer to Leave/Remain in the current research, indicating ecological validity of the sample and enabling the researcher to speak meaningfully of vilification of the EU as an outcome of blame in the Brexit case study. Thanks to the questions asked in the survey-experiment, further novel information becomes apparent—

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[852] Hansson, 'Analysing Opposition–Government Blame Games', 234.
[853] See also E3: Effects.
[854] See discussion in 2.4.1 What kind of thing is blame?. 'Assemblage' is used, per Paliewicz and McHendry, to mean "webs or networks where multiple and different forms of rhetoric (spoken, performed, bodily, symbolic, and material) interact and connect". Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, 'When Good Arguments Do Not Work', 291. See also Deleuze and Guattari, 'A Thousand Plateaus'.

Leaver attachment to local geographies (e.g. 'Northerner') rather than simply 'England' or 'Britain', and higher levels of Just World Beliefs and in-group values amongst Leavers. This section provides context, establishes sample validity, and contributes new information about Brexit voters, while pre-empting discussion in E4 of whether underlying characteristics such as age, health, or psychological factors mediate the villain-making effects people experience when exposed to exogenous blame.[855]

Overall, this chapter achieves the first part of the data analysis framework in identifying essential context, and provides a necessary knowledge base for comprehending data in the following chapters.

5.2. A brief history of Brexit

5.2.1.　Joining the EU

The UK was invited but did not join the European Coal and Steel Community ('ECSC') when it was instituted with the Treaty of Paris in 1951. They likewise did not join the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) nor the European Economic Community ('EEC') in 1957, even joining a rival 'European Free Trade Association' founded in 1960.[856] There was a dislike for the supranational element, a perceived possibility of damaging Commonwealth relations, and a preference for an alternate economic system.[857]

The UK applied to join the EEC in 1961, under Conservative Prime Minister Macmillan, but it was vetoed by French President de Gaulle who publicly "doubted the UK's political will". There was a perceived desire to prevent English becoming the common language of the Community.[858] De Gaulle likewise blocked the second British application in 1967, under Labour PM Harold Wilson. In this time, Euratom, the EEC, and ECSC were combined into one body, the European Communities.[859]

A third application to join the now-EC was submitted under Conservative PM Edward Heath, and accepted. Heath signed the Accession Treaty in 1972;[860] the UK became a member in January 1973.[861] Wilson again became PM in 1974, renegotiating the country's membership then staging a referendum on continuing membership in 1975.[862] 'Remain' won 67% to

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[855] E4: Blame and underlying characteristics shows that 'demographic' factors do not seem to mediate the effects of blame, while existing beliefs do. This enhances generalisability of the present research.

[856] UK in a Changing Europe, 'A Brief History of the EU'.

[857] UK in a Changing Europe, 'Why Did the United Kingdom Not Join the European Union When It Started?'

[858] '1973'.

[859] UK in a Changing Europe, 'A Brief History of the EU'.

[860] UK Parliament, 'Into Europe'.

[861] '1973'.

[862] The National Archives, 'The EEC and Britain's Late Entry'.

33%.[863] In 1984, Conservative PM Margaret Thatcher negotiated a rebate on Britain's contribution to the EC budget.[864]

5.2.2.   History of Euroscepticism[865]

The UK's joining the EU, as it later became, was contentious.[866] Domestic support was divided, and there were suspicions over the 'supranational agenda' of preceding institutions.[867] Eurobarometer data[868] shows the UK was consistently amongst the countries with lowest public support for EU membership: per Figure 17, UK perceptions of membership as "a bad thing" reached peaks of 28-48% in 1980, 1996, and 2010, compared to a record peak of just 19% for the EU as a whole in 2011 following the Global Financial Crisis (Figure 18). As a result of this more Eurosceptic attitude, the UK negotiated several 'opt-outs', meaning it was not part of the Schengen borderless zone (1985), euro currency agreement (2002), or area of freedom, security and justice.[869]

Figure 17: UK opinions on EU membership, 1973-2011. Opinion on EU membership peaked as "A good thing" in 1991, with over 40 points' advantage over "A bad thing". For most of the period 1973-2011, there were less than 20 points' difference between "A good thing" and "A bad thing".

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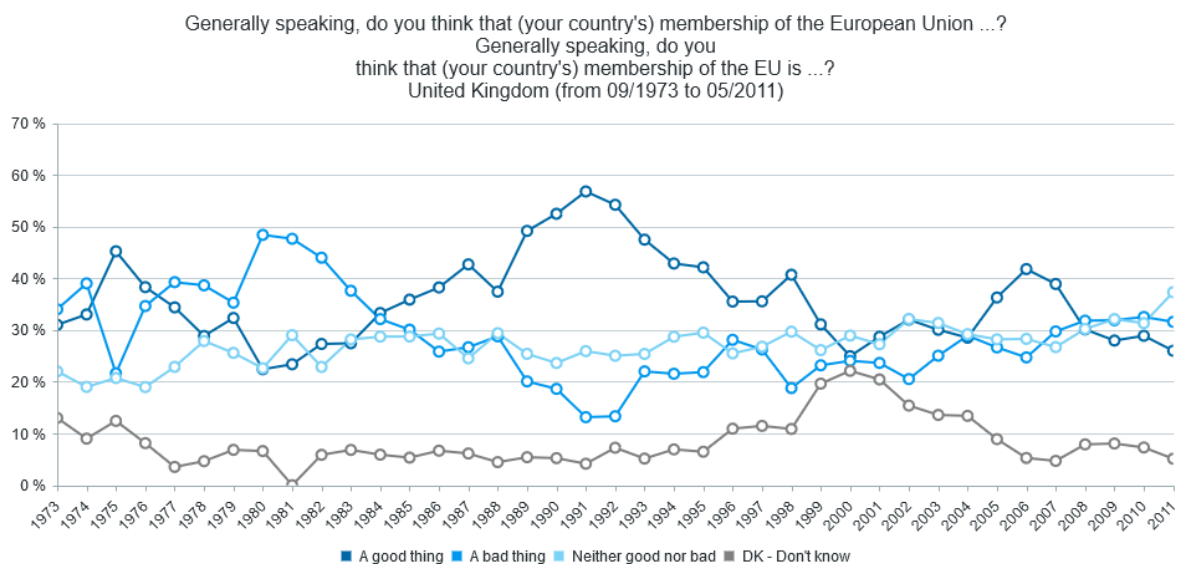
[863] UK in a Changing Europe, 'A Brief History of the EU'.
[864] UK in a Changing Europe.
[865] See also 2.3.1 Blame and Euroscepticism.
[866] "Domestic opinion was strongly against membership and there was strong concern over whether the terms negotiated were good enough for Britain." UK Parliament, 'Into Europe'.
[867] The National Archives, 'The EEC and Britain's Late Entry'.
[868] European Commission, 'Eurobarometer Interactive'.
[869] UK in a Changing Europe, 'A Brief History of the EU'.

Figure 18: European Union overall opinions on EU membership, 1973-2011. Membership as "A good thing" is 30-60+ points higher than "A bad thing".
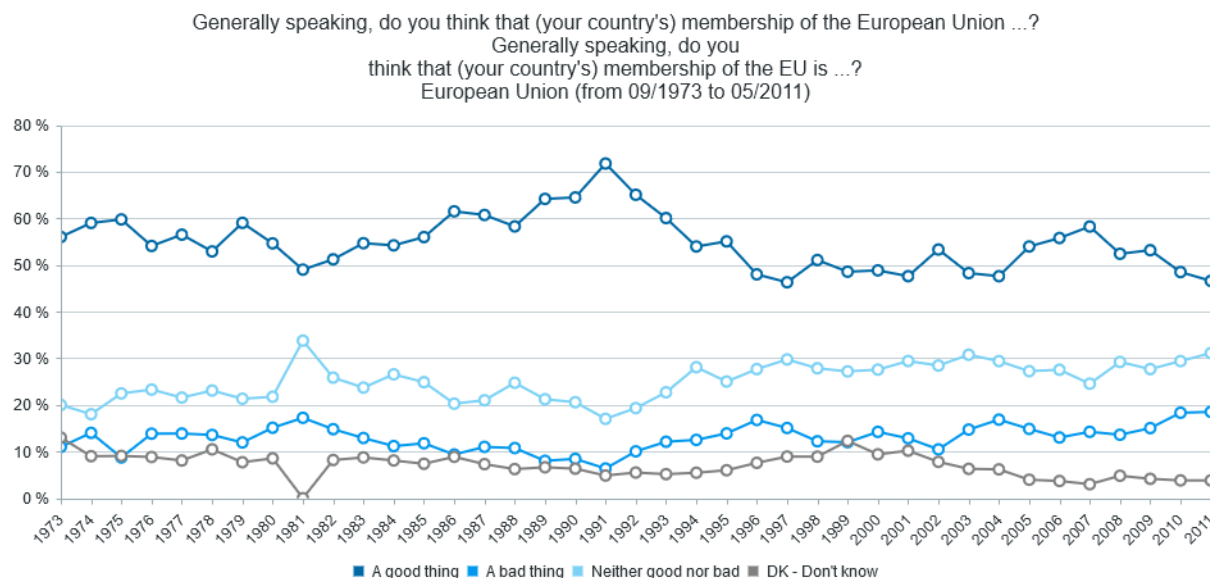
Opinion polls illustrate the divide in domestic support (Figure 19). Preferences fluctuated, with pro-Remain sentiment winning out in 2015 prior to the Brexit campaigns. In the YouGov polls directly preceding and proceeding the referendum, desires to Leave and Remain were equal, though Remain sentiment has grown since. An increase in pro-Leave sentiment after years of downward trending seems to correlate with the institution of the Leave campaigns (see next).

Figure 19: Referendum preferences[870]
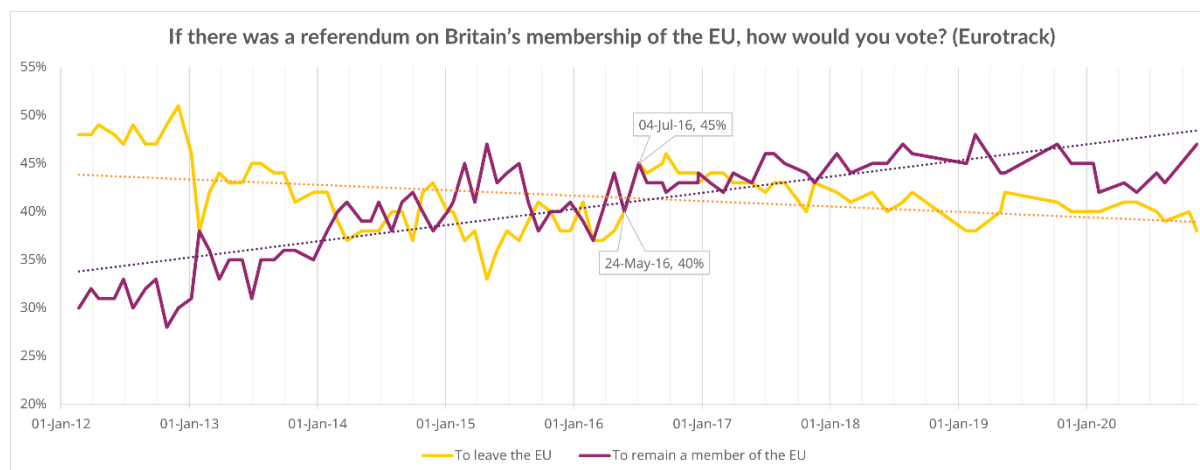
The UK had—and continues to have—several loudly Eurosceptic parties: the British National Party declared itself against the EU[871] and UKIP, the single-issue United Kingdom

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[870] YouGov data courtesy of What UK Thinks, 'If There Was a Referendum on Britain's Membership of the EU, How Would You Vote?'

[871] Though the BNP was careful to specify that this did not mean it was against 'Eastern Europeans' as the bogeymen of the day. British National Party, 'British National Party Language and Concepts Discipline Manual'.

Independence Party, officially founded in 1993 and originating in the Anti-Federalist League that campaigned against the Maastricht Treaty.[872] Nigel Farage led UKIP 2006–2009, and from 2010 until after the 2016 referendum, and has since founded the Brexit Party (now 'Reform UK').[873] Matthew Goodwin and Oliver Heath noted in 2016 that Euroscepticism within the UK has both "widened and narrowed" in recent years, in that it is "more widespread" but also more closely tied to education level.[874]

5.2.3.   Leaving the EU

With the Conservatives haemorrhaging support to UKIP,[875] PM David Cameron promised a renegotiation then referendum on the UK's continued membership of the EU, as with Wilson decades earlier. He began renegotiations in 2015, announced the deal—with measures for deportation of EU migrants and limitations on bringing family to the UK—in February 2016, and scheduled the referendum for 23 June 2016.[876]

Several campaign groups formed in preparation for the referendum. Leave.EU was founded in July 2015 as 'The Know'[877] then relaunched as Leave.EU in September;[878] Vote Leave was founded in October 2015, and was designated as the official pro-Leave campaign by the Electoral Commission in April 2016;[879] Britain Stronger in Europe was formed as a cross-party pro-Remain campaign in October 2015.[880]

The campaigns—discussed further below—were marred by infighting between the competing Leave campaigns,[881] and the murder of pro-Remain MP Jo Cox in mid-June. The campaigns agreed to refrain from campaigning for several days following the murder.[882]

Voter turnout for the referendum was 72.21%, and went for 'Leave' 51.89% vs 'Remain' 48.11%.[883]

Following the referendum results, David Cameron resigned; Theresa May became Prime Minister until defeat in the 2019 General Election. Boris Johnson has been Prime Minister since.

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[872] BBC, 'Q&A'.

[873] The Brexit Party, 'About'; The Brexit Party, Farage, and Tice, 'ReformUK'.

[874] Goodwin and Heath, 'The 2016 Referendum, Brexit and the Left Behind'.

[875] Goodwin and Milazzo, *UKIP*.

[876] Kuenssberg, 'Cameron Calls EU Referendum for June'.

[877] Leave.EU, 'Be in The Know'.

[878] Banks and Oakeshott, *The Bad Boys of Brexit*.

[879] Stone, 'Vote Leave Has Been Designated the Official EU Referendum Out Campaign'.

[880] BBC News Service, 'EU Referendum'.

[881] E.g. Leave.EU, 'Arron Banks' Leave.EU Referendum Campaign Launches Formal Bid to Merge with Rival Vote Leave'; BBC News Service, 'EU Referendum: "No" Campaign Group Attacks Rival'.

[882] BBC News Service, 'EU Referendum Campaigns Suspended until Sunday after Jo Cox Attack'; Cobain, Parveen, and Taylor, 'The Slow-Burning Hatred That Led Thomas Mair to Murder Jo Cox'. See also Annex: Brexit timeline.

[883] Electoral Commission, 'EU Referendum Results'.

5.2.4.   Concurrent issues

Several major 'crises' were affecting the EU during the Brexit campaign. These became important campaign issues and were amongst the things the EU was blamed for,[884] per the following chapter.

First and foremost was the so-called 'migrant crisis', an influx of refugees from countries including Syria due to regional instability and violence. German Chancellor Angela Merkel was 'sinking the ship' of Europe by welcoming refugees (Figure 20), and Farage used images of refugees and migrants at the Hungarian border in UKIP campaign materials (see Figure 21). Anti-migrant headlines were common in newspapers such as the Daily Mail and Daily Express (Figure 22). Under the EU-Turkey Statement and Action Plan, Turkey received large number of migrants as well as EU funding to take in more migrants, thereby easing the pressure on Europe;[885] the Plan included visa liberalisation, and there were rumours the UK would therefore soon see a mass influx of Turkish and Middle Eastern migrants (Figure 23).

Figure 20: Angela Merkel as 'Ms Migration' steers the ship underwater. The text underneath reads "All under control!??"[886]

Figure 20 caption text in image reads: ALLES IM GRIFF!??

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885 Corrao, 'EU-Turkey Statement & Action Plan'.
886 Canusapatriots, 'Mad Mother Merkel Pits Nationalist Euro-Nations Against Each Other Over Migration'.

Figure 21: Farage in front of his/UKIP's 'Breaking Point' poster showing migrants, all of whom are young men, ostensibly entering Europe. "The EU has failed us all."[887]

Figure 22: Front page anti-migrant headlines in the Daily Express and Daily Mail in the lead-up to the referendum in 2016[888]

Figure 23: A Vote Leave ad showing that up to '76 million' people from Turkey would be immigrating to the UK, along with people from neighbouring Syria and Iraq. This ad was shown on Facebook from parent page

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[887] Image by Stefan Wermuth/Reuters. Hall, 'How the Brexit Campaign Used Refugees to Scare Voters'.
[888] Compiled by @gameoldgirl on Twitter and found at Ghattas, 'Tweet: Visual Reminder of How Immigration Played in Leave Camp Narrative...'

https://www.facebook.com/voteleave/ alongside text calling to leave the EU, and was seen by 1.4–3.2 million times by people within the UK.[889]

A second major crisis was the 2007-2008 Global Financial Crisis ('GFC'.) The GFC coincided with an increase in Euroscepticism,[890] and one focus group/interview participant argued that without the GFC, there would have been no Brexit referendum.[891] Particularly noteworthy for the following chapters is the effect on southern European states, such as Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Greece; as they are in the eurozone, they could not adjust their currency to reduce the strain of the GFC on their economies, and were thus subjected to austerity measures by the European Central Bank.[892] Greece was a particularly visible victim (Figure 24).

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[889] Ad impressions are given in ranges in the parent document. Facebook, 'Vote Leave 50 Million Spreadsheet'; Facebook, 'Vote Leave 50 Million Ads'.

[890] Hobolt and de Vries demonstrate that impact of the crisis helps explain 'defection' to Eurosceptic parties in the 2014 European elections (Hobolt and de Vries, 'Turning against the Union?'). Serricchio et al, somewhat conversely, argue that the 'most pronounced increase' in Euroscepticism occurred in those countries most affected, but that economic factors themselves were not the source of such Euroscepticism. This points to the ways in which economic discourses were leveraged to generate Euroscepticism—for instance, through use of blame per the present research. (Serricchio, Tsakatika, and Quaglia, 'Euroscepticism and the Global Financial Crisis'.)

[891] See also 6.4.2.a) Creating economic disasters.

[892] Matthijs, 'Mediterranean Blues'; Zamora-Kapoor and Coller, 'The Effects of the Crisis'. See Cavero, 'The True Cost of Austerity and Inequality: Greece Case Study'. for a summary of austerity measures and implications.

Figure 24: The EU tells a naked, starving Greece that it needs to tighten its non-existent belt via further austerity measures[893]

These two broad issues—migration and the economy—are discussed extensively in the context of blame in the campaign in the following chapter. It is not possible to know whether the EU were blamed for these things because they were perceived as genuinely 'at fault', or whether they were two 'harmful' things that, because of their harmful nature, became salient for blaming. What does become clear is that concurrent issues of the day are reflected in blame attribution discussions.[894]

5.3. The Brexit assemblage

Identifying context for EU-blaming in the Brexit campaign necessitates identifying the Brexit 'assemblage'—the players and bodies associated with the referendum campaign.[895] This provides context for the blaming that took place, and informed data selection. The assemblage was identified in processing pro-Leave materials and wider reading by and about the actors indicated. This again indicates the abductive, iterative approach used and

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[893] Image credit Chappatte in *NZZ am Sonntag* Zurich, Hill, 'Cartoon'.

[894] Per Klapp, characters are liable to be created in crises; crises are also ideal for examination of the mechanisms underlying reality, as they become more visible. Klapp, 'The Creation of Popular Heroes'; Klapp, 'Heroes, Villains and Fools, as Agents of Social Control'; Bhaskar, 'On the Possibility of Social Scientific Knowledge and the Limits of Naturalism'.

[895] See also 4.3.1 Data analysis framework.

indicated in 4.2.5 The research spiral; reading informed data selection, which informed reading, until an assemblage emerged.

Brexit figures have here been gathered into seven groups: UK political parties, referendum campaigns, EU-related actors, international political actors, media, the 'elite', and regular 'people'/the public. Particular attention is paid to 'high-level' or public actors, who can use their platforms to reach a wider audience; their blame can affect more people.

5.3.1.   UK parties

This group includes UK political parties and their figures: then-Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, whose ambiguous approach towards 'Remain' was oft-noted;[896] then-UKIP leader Nigel Farage; former PM David Cameron, and Theresa May and Boris Johnson who followed him; fellow Tories Michael Gove (Lord Chancellor at the time, and briefly campaign manager for Boris Johnson's bid to become PM) and George Osborne (then-Chancellor of the Exchequer). David Cameron, following his renegotiation and referendum declaration, became de facto figurehead of the Remain campaign. Johnson, since elected Prime Minister, was based in Brussels as a journalist for many years and known for writing inflammatory articles about the EU, including blaming it for regulations over the bendiness of bananas and condom sizes.[897] He became de facto figurehead for Vote Leave. Material from the campaigns and Farage is analysed in the following chapter.

5.3.2.   Campaigns

Three major campaigns may be identified: Britain Stronger in Europe ('BSIE', 'Stronger In') as the official Remain campaign; and Vote Leave and Leave.EU, as candidates to become the official Leave campaign.

Pro-Brexit group Leave.EU had the explicit intention of affecting how people *feel* about the EU and thus lead them to vote out:[898]

> "It was taking an American-style media approach," said Banks. "What [our campaign strategy team] said early on was 'facts don't work' and that's it. The remain campaign featured fact, fact, fact, fact, fact. It just doesn't work. You have got to connect with people emotionally. It's the Trump success."

As such they are an example of people *trying* to make the EU a villain, necessitating inclusion and analysis in the present research (see also 6.1.1).

Leave.EU was founded by insurance millionaire Arron Banks and Richard Tice; Liz Bilney was chief executive, Andy Wigmore head of communications, and Jack Montgomery lead writer and content adviser. Liz Bilney is a director of Westmonster, a far-right publication co-

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[896] E.g. Leave.EU, 'Whitewash'; Leave.EU, 'Labour GO Respond to Corbyn's pro-EU Speech'.
[897] Rankin and Waterson, 'How Boris Johnson's Brussels-Bashing Stories Shaped British Politics'; Brunsden and Oliver, 'Fact or Fiction?'
[898] Booth, Travis, and Gentleman, 'Leave Donor Plans New Party to Replace Ukip – Possibly without Farage in Charge'.

owned by Arron Banks and Nigel Farage's former press officer.[899] Bilney and Banks had further relations, including being co-directors of Better for the Country Ltd (Brexit donor), for which Bilney, Wigmore, and Banks were on the Board. Bilney is director of Eldon Insurance, Banks' company (accused of sharing data with Leave.EU)[900], and of Big Data Dolphin,[901] a data company set up by Banks and Wigmore after meeting with Cambridge Analytica.[902] Peter Hargreaves and Jim Mellon were important Leave.EU funders.[903] Tice, Wigmore, Farage, and Banks have been referred to as the 'Bad Boys of Brexit'.[904]

Vote Leave was founded by Matthew Elliott (chief executive) and Dominic Cummings (campaign director) and included Conservative and Labour MPs, notably Priti Patel and Boris Johnson, and MEPs Daniel Hannan and Lord Lawson. Michael Gove served as Co-Convenor with Gisela Stuart (Labour).[905] Vote Leave was selected as the official Leave campaign by the Electoral Commission, and was later fined for breaking electoral spending laws.[906]

A report by Martin Moore and Gordon Ramsay indicates that "almost two-thirds of all front-page print leads were published by newspapers backing Leave", indicating that the Leave campaign received disproportionate media attention.[907] This in turn implies that the vilifying effects of blame used by that campaign may have been far-reaching.

BSIE had fewer recognisable figureheads, with David Cameron becoming the de facto face of 'Remain' as indicated above.

The present research focuses on materials from Leave.EU as the 'people's campaign' (see 4.4 Data sources), as well as BSIE documents and ads from Vote Leave.[908]

5.3.3.   EU

The EU is an 'international political actor', but has been separated from the others due to its role vis-à-vis the Brexit campaign. The EU was largely an object during the campaign, whether considering its benefits (Remain) or detractions (Leave). Important related figures were then-European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel—herself not 'part of' the EU as an institution, outside her role in the Council, but frequently depicted alongside Juncker, and described as 'running' the EU.[909] The EU did

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[899] Bad Boys of Brexit, 'What about the Bad Girls of Brexit?'

[900] Bad Boys of Brexit; Information Commissioner's Office, 'ICO to Audit Data Protection Practices at Leave.EU and Eldon Insurance after Fining Both Companies for Unlawful Marketing Messages'.

[901] Information Commissioner's Office, 'Investigation into the Use of Data Analytics in Political Campaigns'.

[902] Bad Boys of Brexit, 'What about the Bad Girls of Brexit?'; Wylie, *Mindf*ck*.

[903] Banks and Oakeshott, *The Bad Boys of Brexit*.

[904] Banks and Oakeshott.

[905] Vote Leave, 'About the Campaign'.

[906] Electoral Commission, 'EU Referendum'; Electoral Commission, 'Investigation'.

[907] Moore and Ramsay, 'UK Media Coverage of the 2016 EU Referendum Campaign', 21.

[908] According to notes taken by whistle-blower Brittany Kaiser at a UKIP meeting, UKIP saw Leave.EU as the "one to put their weight behind", with Vote Leave "off the mark completely". Cambridge Analytica, 'Select 2016 Campaign-Related Documents', 208.

[909] See also Annex: Who is the EU? and 9.4 Changing subjects and objects.

not participate in the Brexit campaign—which Juncker 'regrets'—and so none of the materials analysed in this thesis were produced by the EU.[910]

5.3.4. International political actors

International political actors include President Obama, who met with David Cameron during the campaign and suggested the UK would go to the 'back of the queue' in making trade deals with the US if it were to vote out;[911] the Trump campaign; and Cambridge Analytica ('CA'), a political lobbying group/data firm who used micro-targeting and in-person tactics to sway elections.

Steve Bannon, former Chief Strategist and Senior Counselor to Donald Trump, was the co-founder of Breitbart News (partially owned by Robert Mercer).[912] Farage attended Trump campaign rallies in 2016 and 2020[913]—there is an ongoing relationship between pro-Brexit and pro-Trump campaigns. (These close links speak to the generalisability of the present research: if the campaigns cooperated such that similar strategies worked in the US and UK alike, then similar contestation strategies may also be effective. See E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.)

CA was the British branch of SCL Group. Using 'psychometrics' (psychological profiling), part of their suite of services included "[creating] advanced models that predict voter behavior in a number of different areas, ranging from likelihood to turn out on Election Day to how they might vote on a specific ballot initiative or their propensity to donate."[914] Its CEO was Alexander Nix;[915] the two whistle-blowers were Christopher Wylie from the data side and Brittany Kaiser from the marketing side. It was partly owned by the Mercer family,[916] received funding from Facebook board member and surveillance firm 'Palantir' founder Peter Thiel,[917] and was approached to provide services for Leave.EU, UKIP, and Arron Banks' insurance company.[918] Its Canadian branch AggregateIQ worked on the Vote Leave campaign.[919]

Leaked email correspondence indicates that CA were to receive data from UKIP, combine it with external data to produce a series of supporter profiles and 'ideal messaging' per group, and return this data to UKIP to be shared with Leave.EU.[920] The project for Leave.EU was to

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[910] Gotev, 'Juncker Regrets Not Intervening in Brexit Referendum Campaign'.

[911] Referenced by both the Leave.EU and BSIE campaigns. Banks, 'Keep Sending Obama Over'; Edwards, 'Huw Edwards'; Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Top 10 Rebuttals'.

[912] Stone and Gordon, 'FBI's Russian-Influence Probe Includes a Look at Breitbart, InfoWars News Sites'.

[913] Farage, *Nigel Farage Speaks at Trump 2020 Campaign Rally.*

[914] Cambridge Analytica, 'Select 2016 Campaign-Related Documents', 7.

[915] Since banned from running limited companies. The Insolvency Service, '7-Year Disqualification for Cambridge Analytica Boss'.

[916] E.g. Stone and Gordon, 'FBI's Russian-Influence Probe Includes a Look at Breitbart, InfoWars News Sites'.

[917] Morse, 'Facebook Board Member Peter Thiel Helped Fund Cambridge Analytica's Work'.

[918] Leave.EU, 'The Science Behind Our Strategy'.

[919] Observer Editorial, 'The Observer View on the Information Commissioner's Cambridge Analytica Investigation'.

[920] Cambridge Analytica, 'Select 2016 Campaign-Related Documents', 166–67.

be focused on mobilising voter turnout.[921] CA was heavily involved in 2014 US political races as well as Ted Cruz's then Trump's presidential campaigns.[922]

Note that Cambridge Analytica's method of 'psychometric targeting' may not have been effective, even if it were used:

> "while the models showed some success in correctly predicting attributes on individuals whose data was used in the training of the model, the real-world accuracy of these predictions—when used on new individuals whose data had not been used in the generating of the models—was likely much lower. Through the [UK Information Commissioner's Office]'s analysis of internal company communications, the investigation identified there was a degree of scepticism within [CA's parent group] SCL as to the accuracy or reliability of the processing being undertaken. There appeared to be concern internally about the external messaging when set against the reality of their processing."[923]

This is engaged with in E4: Blame and underlying characteristics.

Cambridge Analytica closed in the wake of the 2018 scandal where its use of micro-targeting on Facebook to manipulate people towards a particular party—or away from voting at all— was made public. SCL's other operations continue, apparently with access to the same data set that Cambridge Analytica had.[924] CA has been essentially replicated as Emerdata, with similar owners and leadership.[925]

Russia and CA are both included as 'international political actors' due to whistle-blower allegations,[926] and because of recent US Senate Intel reports that indicate a link between former Trump campaign chair Paul Manafort, Russian intelligence, and Arron Banks business partner Frank Mermoud.[927]

While international actors are understood as part of the Brexit assemblage, specific materials are not analysed. This is because whistle-blower reports have focused on the role of such actors in *amplifying* campaign materials rather than producing their own.

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[921] Cambridge Analytica, 208.

[922] Cambridge Analytica, 19–25; Burke, 'Trump '16 Campaign, PAC Illegally Coordinated'.

[923] Kaminska, 'ICO's Final Report into Cambridge Analytica Invites Regulatory Questions'.

[924] Siegelman, 'Chart'; Wylie, *Mindf*ck*.

[925] Siegelman, 'Chart'.

[926] CA whistle-blower Wylie alleges that Russia was involved in both the Trump and Leave campaigns; researchers Bastos and Mercea point to the suspicious bot behaviour on Twitter in the lead-up to the referendum promoting Leave, and suggest potential use of a 'bot net' (a technique associated with Russian operations); and The Guardian has documented an extensive relationship between Arron Banks of Leave.EU and the Russian government. The British Information Commissioner's Office has found that CA was not involved in the Brexit referendum and referred allegations of Russian interference elsewhere, as they "fall outside the remit of the ICO." Bastos and Mercea, 'The Brexit Botnet and User-Generated Hyperpartisan News'. Cadwalladr and Jukes, 'Arron Banks "Met Russian Officials Multiple Times before Brexit Vote"'. Information Commissioner's Office, 'Letter to Mr Julian Knight MP Re ICO Investigation into Use of Personal Information and Political Influence', 2 October 2020.

[927] Cadwalladr and Jukes, 'Arron Banks "Met Russian Officials Multiple Times before Brexit Vote"'; Cadwalladr, 'Thread by @carolecadwalla'.

5.3.5.   Media

Media include traditional media such as the Metro newspaper, alternative media, and social media. 'Alternative media' includes platforms such as Breitbart News or Stormfront—right-wing and extremist blogging platforms that make no attempt at journalistic neutrality. Farage wrote a series for Breitbart in the lead-up to the referendum. Breitbart Facebook and user data was made available to Cambridge Analytica via UKIP, as well as data from Farage.[928]

Arron Banks describes Richard Desmond (owner of the Express newspapers) as his "most powerful media ally", and Simon Heffer (Telegraph columnist) as seeing "eye to eye" with himself and Wigmore "on almost everything."[929]

Facebook was used by Cambridge Analytica in targeting campaigns, and retains active pro-Brexit groups including 'We are the 17.4 Million (Leave Voters)' (https://www.facebook.com/groups/17.4Million/; 12.2k members), 'We support independent Britain' (https://www.facebook.com/groups/716541045463761/, 5.7k members), 'UK And Ireland Unite Against The EU' (https://www.facebook.com/groups/2059502337621581/, 1.4k members), 'The Bruges Group' (https://www.facebook.com/groups/bruges.group/, 13.3k members) and many more.[930]

Materials analysed include Farage's pieces for Breitbart, content from the Metro, pieces from each of the authors and publications preferred by Arron Banks,[931] and Facebook ads.

5.3.6.   Elite

Who is 'elite' is subjective. It is understood that this group members of this include upper-class British citizens, such as aristocrats; international businesses; academics; and the rich. BSIE's board included several peers; Vote Leave was run in large part by MPs; Leave.EU was founded by multi-millionaires. Both Leave and Remain campaigns refer to 'elite' in justifying their campaigns; the 'elite' acts as a topos of authority.[932] International business figures such as Richard Branson wrote pieces in favour of Remain.[933]

5.3.7.   People

These include migrants to the EU (important for the referendum given the 'migrant crisis' described above); the UK public (including voters and non-voters, and EU citizens resident in the UK), and social media groups such as Facebook groups.

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[928] Cambridge Analytica, 'Select 2016 Campaign-Related Documents', 208.
[929] Loc 135, Banks and Oakeshott, *The Bad Boys of Brexit*.
[930] Facebook groups and membership numbers accurate as of December 2020. Reddit did not appear extensively used during the Brexit campaign (in comparison to its use for the 2016 US Presidential campaign). While there is the possibility of astroturfing on Twitter, Facebook was a preferred data source due to its use by CA.
[931] As part of Leave.EU 'news and media'; see also 4.4 Data sources.
[932] See also 9.4 Changing subjects and objects.
[933] E.g. Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Richard Branson on Why He's Voting Remain'.

5.3.8.   Depicting the assemblage

These seven groups are shown in Figure 25. Select relations are depicted using lines.[934]
David Cameron is linked to BSIE, due to his de facto figurehead role; and Obama, because
Cameron asked him to make a statement dissuading people from voting Leave.[935] Boris
Johnson is associated with Vote Leave due to his de facto figurehead status. Nigel Farage is
linked to Leave.EU due to his behind-the-scenes support for the campaign;[936] Trump's
campaign as outlined above; and alternative media due to publishing on Breitbart. Angela
Merkel is linked to migrants due to the depiction of her 'opening the gates of Europe' to
them. BSIE is linked to the elite group due to references to these audiences as 'experts'
when justifying their arguments.[937] Leave.EU is linked to the UK public as the 'people's
campaign', and to Cambridge Analytica. Cambridge Analytica forms a hub, with links to
Leave.EU, Vote Leave, Trump's campaign, UKIP, social media, social media groups, and
Russia. Russia is linked to social media and alternative media due to their use and
amplification of platforms such as Breitbart,[938] and role of Russia's 'Internet Research
Agency' and for-hire consultants in 'astroturfing' social media platforms to control campaign
narratives.[939] The campaigns, shown at the centre of the diagram, are the primary source of
pre-referendum materials discussed in the following chapter.

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[934] Relations are limited in order to retain readability of the diagram; other figures and relations already
mentioned in the text, or with lower presumed relevance, or not included.
[935] Foster, 'Cameron Asked Obama to Make Brexit Warning'.
[936] E.g. Banks and Oakeshott, *The Bad Boys of Brexit*.. The Vote Leave campaign was seen as ineffective (ibid)
and Cambridge Analytica, 'Select 2016 Campaign-Related Documents', 208.
[937] See 9.4 Changing subjects and objects.
[938] Stone and Gordon, 'FBI's Russian-Influence Probe Includes a Look at Breitbart, InfoWars News Sites'.
[939] Greenberg, *Sandworm*.

Figure 25: The Brexit Assemblage
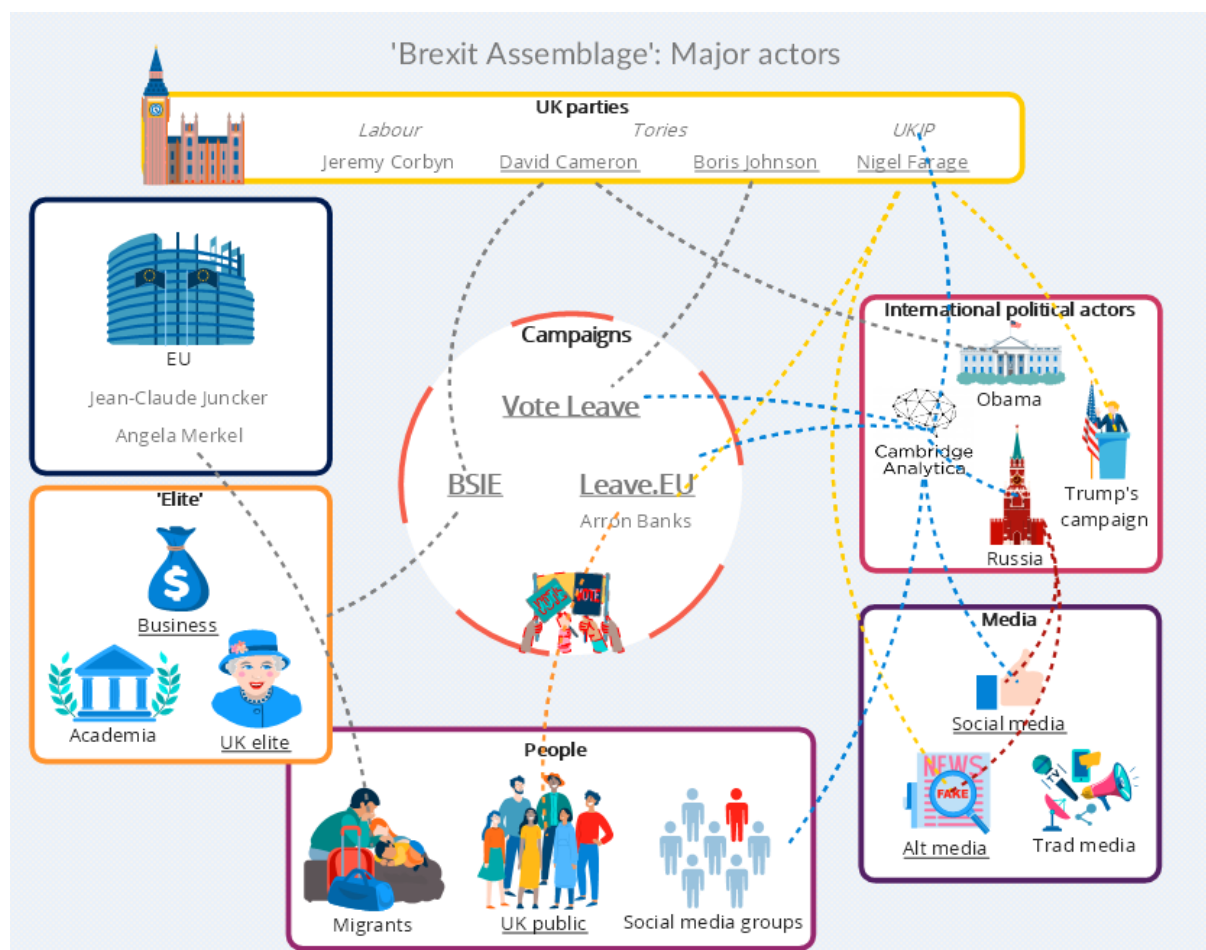
5.4. Who voted for Brexit?

With the overall socio-political, historical, and network context for Brexit established, this section achieves four functions: (1) identifying who voted for Brexit, giving additional insight into the 'UK public' part of the Brexit assemblage; (2) comparing who voted for Brexit per previous research with those in the current research, establishing ecological validity; (3) presenting new information about Leavers/Remainers identified in the present research; (4) pre-empting E4, where the interface between people's 'underlying characteristics' and 'blame' is discussed, by showing how Leavers and Remainers differed in the present sample.

5.4.1.　　Portrait of a Leaver: existing research

Several existing studies have established tendencies in who voted for Brexit. Lord Ashcroft conducted a referendum-day voter poll (N=12,369);[940] Sascha Becker et al compared local area district data with voting behaviour to explain why a given area voted Leave/Remain;[941] Eleonora Alabrese et al combined individual and regional data in the form of the UK-wide 'Understanding Society' survey (N=13,136) to identify differences between people who voted

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[940] Ashcroft, 'A Reminder of How Britain Voted in the EU Referendum - and Why'.
[941] Becker, Fetzer, and Novy, 'Who Voted for Brexit?'

Leave/Remain;[942] educational attainment is highly correlated with Brexit voting patterns, to the point Robert Jump and Jo Mitchell found education level alone could correctly classify over 90% of local authorities.[943] Harry Garretsen et al identified 'regional clusters' of psychological traits, and then interpreted those regions' Leave/Remain vote in terms of those traits;[944] Alex Macdougall et al identified a need for justice and reduced feelings of threat, plus a greater sense of control, as associated with a Leave vote amongst 158 participants in the Greater Manchester area.[945]

Findings from those works is summarised in Figure 26, with measures used in the present research explored in Table 11 below. Note that this 'summary' does not necessarily describe all Leave voters, and any given Leaver may not have most (or any!) of the characteristics shown. It is a population-level average only, indicating that—based on previous research—Leave voters were more likely to have the characteristics shown than were Remainers. Leave voters are the focus of this section, given this research draws primarily from pro-Leave sources.

Figure 26: Portrait of a Leaver, based on the previous research outlaid above.[946] Characteristics are loosely grouped into demography, work and benefits, how they live their lives, geographical then political identification, and psychological profile.

Portrait of a Leaver

white; Christian; man
below lower-middle class
older; poor health
area with long hospital wait times

not working, retired; works in manufacturing; benefits
area with manufacturing, construction, finance employment

owned home, in council housing
education to secondary school
low life satisfaction
reader of Daily Mail, Sun, Express
area with fast growth in education level
infrequent use of smartphone/internet

English, more English than British
born in the UK
area with fiscal cuts

UKIP or Tory supporter
non-progressive
politically apathetic

low trait openness
lower trait agreeableness
higher trait conscientiousness
higher sense of control
collective narcissism
right wing authoritarianism
social dominance orientation

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[942] Alabrese et al., 'Who Voted for Brexit?' They noted it was harder to distinguish voters in socio-economically disadvantaged areas.
[943] Jump and Michell, 'Education and the Geography of Brexit'.
[944] Garretsen et al., 'Brexit and the Relevance of Regional Personality Traits'.
[945] Macdougall, Feddes, and Doosje, "'They've Put Nothing in the Pot!'"
[946] I.e. Ashcroft, 'A Reminder of How Britain Voted in the EU Referendum - and Why'; Becker, Fetzer, and Novy, 'Who Voted for Brexit?'; Alabrese et al., 'Who Voted for Brexit?'; Jump and Michell, 'Education and the Geography of Brexit'; Garretsen et al., 'Brexit and the Relevance of Regional Personality Traits'; Macdougall, Feddes, and Doosje, "'They've Put Nothing in the Pot!'"

5.4.2.   Survey-experiment participants

One of the key methods used in the present research was a survey-experiment ('SE'), which had 1368 complete responses. Per Methodology, the SE consisted of a number of questions about voting behaviour, educational attainment, psychological profile, and identity, then presented one of four vignettes featuring blame.[947] The participants then answered questions about their reactions to their vignette. Responses from UK voters were received from all over the UK, per 4.4.2 Focus groups and interviews.

The data collected does not aim to be completely representative of the UK population, and indeed, people with voting preference 'Remain' were more common than 'Leavers'.[948] What it *does* aim to achieve is emerging those items that previous research has suggested moderate or mediate blame (discussed in E4) and voting preference, to help understand the differentiated effects of blame in E3: Effects. It compares the Leave voters in this research to Leave voters in previous research, and similarly for Remain voters. It shows that the audiences to pre-referendum material discussed in the following chapter *and* the participants in the current research are similar, permitting discussion of vilification of the EU via blame in the specific case study of the Brexit campaign.

5.4.2.a)   Voting preference in this research

SE responses were grouped by voting preference ('VP'), per a question on how participants would vote were the referendum to be held 'today'.[949] This gave five groups: VP Leave ('VPL', 402), VP Remain ('VPR', 845), VP Unsure (72), VP Would not vote (25), and VP Would rather not say (18).[950] 'Leavers' and 'Remainers' in this section refers to voting preference.

5.4.2.b)   Identification—I am a(n)...

This research approached data collection differently to preceding research, specifically as it related to 'identity'. Per 4.4.1 Survey-experiment, participants were asked to finish the sentence "I am (a/n)..." with up to five of 78 possible options, which included gender, sexuality, race, geo-attachment, religion, generation, political affiliation, and class. They

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[947] Complete responses included participant answers to questions following the vignette. Questions establishing psychological agreeability, value system, Just World Beliefs, sense of agency, health and mental health, education were asked in the first round of the SE only, per 4.4.1 Survey-experiment. This was to shorten the survey and encourage complete responses. The first round of the survey had 1122 total responses, vs 450 in the second round. People with voting preference Leave were more apparent in the second round (31.8% vs 23.6%). 1040 of the 1368 complete responses were from the first round of the survey. There is no reason to anticipate that the remaining 328 participants would have differed significantly on any of the measures to people participating in the first round of the survey.

[948] For all responses, including incompletes (N=1572), 62.2% responded that they would vote Remain were the referendum held today, as opposed to 29.5% who would vote Leave.

[949] Voting preference at the time of the SE was used, not Leave/Remain identity or actual referendum voting behaviour.

[950] A minority of participants had changed their voting preference since voting in the referendum, with 5.2% of VP Remainers having voted Leave, and 9.0% of VP Leavers having voted Remain.

were then asked to order those five items from most to least important.[951] This means that, unlike in previous research, it is not possible to know the exact breakdown between men/women/other, Conservative/Labour/etc supporters, white English/Irish/Caribbean and so on. This was done because previous research suggests that what people strongly identify with or believe in can interfere with the effects of blame, such that rape myth acceptance affects how people blame victims of interpersonal violence.[952] It shows what is most *important* to people.

How may this be compared to previous research? Take the example of gender: 69.5% VP Leavers giving a gender identity were men, versus 65% of VPR Remainers. Leavers were 4.5% more likely to identify as men than Remainers, which is consistent with previous research showing men were 4.7% more likely to vote Leave.[953] That is, the VPLs and VPRs people who gave their gender showed a similar divide to Leavers and Remainers in previous research. There is no reason to believe that people who did not centralise gender in their identity would skew towards men or towards women, or that people who did not centralise gender in their identity would skew towards Leave/Remain *and* a particular gender. The data collected is considered on its own merit and compared to that in previous work to establish a level of similarity.

Inconsistent and ambiguous data were removed during analysis—for example, where somebody indicated they were both Muslim *and* Christian, or a Labour *and* Conservative supporter.

5.4.3. Consistency with prior research and preparing for E4

The following table compares Leavers/Remainers in prior and this research and indicates consistency.

Table 11: Data collected in this research compared with that from previous research

Item	Previous research	This research	Consistency
Age	Older voters (45-54, 56%; 55-64, 57%, 65+ 50%).[954]	The sample was dominated by younger age groups. Millennials were mainly Remainers. (12.5% VPR vs 5% VPL).[955]	Some consistency between existing research and the present research, with Millennials tending Remain; however, the sample skews young.

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[951] Where participants listed more than five responses to the question, only the first five answers per their own ordered ranking were included.

[952] Niemi and Young, 'Blaming the Victim in the Case of Rape'; Krahe, 'Victim and Observer Characteristics as Determinants of Responsibility Attributions to Victims of Rape'.

[953] Becker, Fetzer, and Novy, 'Who Voted for Brexit?'

[954] Ashcroft, 'A Reminder of How Britain Voted in the EU Referendum - and Why'. Supported by Alabrese et al., 'Who Voted for Brexit?'.

[955] Only 12.9% of VP Leavers and 18.3% VP Remainers included a generational name in their self-identification. 56.1% of those were Millennials, compared to 18.3% Gen Z and 16.7% Gen X. 4.5% identified as Baby Boomers, and 1.9% as Silent Generation.

Item	Previous research	This research	Consistency
Class	Below middle class. 64% of C2DE voted Leave.[956] C2 signifies skilled working class, D working class, and E non-working.	VP Leavers were more likely to present themselves as working class (C2D), while VP Remainers were more likely to identify as (lower) middle class.[957] Non-working (class 'E') was not included as a selectable class identity.	Consistent with prior research; Leavers were more likely to identify as working class than Remainers.
Education	Lacking education beyond secondary school.[958] Lower education levels, and areas that have experienced fast growth in education levels.[959]	VP Leavers had a lower mean level of education per the Regulated Qualifications Framework than did VP Remainers. The mean VP Remainer had the equivalent of a foundation degree, whereas the mean VP Leaver had A levels. See Annex: SE education levels for complete results.	Consistent with prior research; Leavers had a lower level of education than Remainers.
Gender	Men (4.7% more likely to vote Leave).[960]	Leavers were more likely to identify as men. 69.5% of VPLs giving a gender identity were men, vs 65% of VPRs.[961]	Consistent with prior research; Leavers were more likely to identify as men.

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[956] Ashcroft, 'A Reminder of How Britain Voted in the EU Referendum - and Why'.

[957] 46.5% VPLs and 46.2% VPRs included class as part of their identity. Of those, 57.6% of Leavers identified as working class or skilled working class vs 49.8% of Remainers; 18.6% of Remainers identified as lower middle class vs 9.7% of Leavers. Middle class: 25.2% VPL, 24.9% VPR; upper middle class: 7.5% VPL, 6.5% VPR; upper class: 0% VPL, 0.2% VPR.

[958] Ashcroft, 'A Reminder of How Britain Voted in the EU Referendum - and Why'.. See also Hobolt, 'The Brexit Vote: A Divided Nation, a Divided Continent'.: while around a quarter of those with post-graduate degrees voted Leave, two thirds of those with no post-secondary school qualifications voted Leave. Lower education finding likewise supported by Alabrese et al., 'Who Voted for Brexit?'.

[959] Becker, Fetzer, and Novy, 'Who Voted for Brexit?'

[960] Becker, Fetzer, and Novy.

[961] It appears that overall, there were fewer women respondents to the survey-experiment, or identifying as a woman was not as important to women's identity as identifying as a man is to being a man. This research does not presume that gender biases blame behaviour, per previous research. E.g. Anderson and Lyons, 'The Effect of Victims' Social Support on Attributions of Blame in Female and Male Rape'. find that *beliefs* around gender roles are more important than gender per se, in the specific context of gender-based violence. This is supported by Becker and Tinkler, '"Me Getting Plastered and Her Provoking My Eyes": Young People's Attribution of Blame for Sexual Aggression in Public Drinking Spaces'; Burt and DeMello, 'Attribution of Rape Blame as a Function of Victim Gender and Sexuality, and Perceived Similarity to the Victim'; Garland et al., 'Blaming the Victim'; Krahe, 'Victim and Observer Characteristics as Determinants of Responsibility Attributions to Victims of Rape'.

Item	Previous research	This research	Consistency
Geo-attachment	In England: Exclusively or predominantly English rather than British (39% of Leavers vs 18% of Remainers). In Scotland: Predominantly British rather than Scottish.[962]	Leavers identified more as British, English, British and English, Northerner, English and Northerner, or British and Northerner. Remainers identified more as Scottish, European, Irish, European and British, City person, and Welsh. See Annex: SE geo-attachment for data.	Inconclusive. This work's methods are different to those used in the Ashcroft poll from the first column; there, people were asked to rate their 'Englishness' (or Scottishness) against their 'Britishness' on a 5-point scale from 'English not British' to 'British not English'. People could not identify as *both*, which they could in the present research. This work does though echo research on Brexit as an 'English' phenomenon and relating to English identity,[963] though previous work has not considered more local identities such as 'Northerner'.[964]
Health	Poor health.[965]	Both Leavers and Remainers described themselves as having fair-good general health, in contrast to prior research.[966]	Not consistent with prior research. It could be that 'poor health' in previous research acts as a proxy for 'age', noting that the SE sample appears younger than the general population.
Political leanings	Voted for UKIP in the 2015 General Election (96%) or Conservative party (58%).[967] Conservative voters more likely to support Leave, and Labour voters Remain.[968]	Leavers significantly more likely to describe themselves as Conservative Party supporters (14.4% VPL vs 1.7% VPR). Remainers more likely to be Labour supporters (10.7% VPR vs 2.2% VPL), Scottish National Party supporters (6.4% VPR vs 0.2% VPL), and Liberal Democrat supporters (3.4% VPR, 0% VPL). 3.5% of VP Leavers identified as Brexit Party or UKIP supporters compared to 0.5% of Remainers.[969]	Consistent with prior research.

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[962] Ashcroft, 'A Reminder of How Britain Voted in the EU Referendum - and Why'. See also Henderson et al., 'England, Englishness and Brexit', 194.; those in England "who felt more British than English were actually most positive in their attitudes towards the EU", whereas those with "a strongly or exclusively English sense of their own national identity" were the most hostile.

[963] E.g. Henderson et al., 'England, Englishness and Brexit'; Virdee and McGeever, 'Racism, Crisis, Brexit'.

[964] See also Berry, 'Brexit'. on the role of the 'North', and particularly blaming of the North, in Brexit discourses.

[965] Alabrese et al., 'Who Voted for Brexit?'

[966] Participants could select 'poor' (0), 'fair' (1), 'good' (2), or 'excellent' (3) general health (see also 4.4.1 Survey-experiment). VP Leavers had a mean health of 1.5 (SD 1.0) and VP Remainers 1.4 (SD 1.0).

[967] Ashcroft, 'A Reminder of How Britain Voted in the EU Referendum - and Why'.

[968] Alabrese et al., 'Who Voted for Brexit?'. Leave/Remain voters look similar in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. People who 'look like' Leavers (older, less educated, male, less employed) but who support Labour were more in favour of Remain, while people who 'look like' Remainers but identify with the Conservative Party more likely to support Leave.

[969] This may be partially explained by a researcher oversight: 'The Brexit Party' was not included in the first round of the SE. It was included in v2, with 19/450 (4.2%) of all those that started the survey indicating they were Brexit Party supporters. 5 of those people did not complete the survey by responding to the vignette. Adding the 14 people with completed surveys would have brought identification as a Brexit Party supporter up to 5%, I.e. a little more than double that for Labour and still significantly less than that for the Tories. UKIP were included in both SE iterations. At the time of the survey, Nigel Farage was leader of the Brexit

Item	Previous research	This research	Consistency
Psychology: agreeability and sense of control	Low agreeableness.[970] Higher sense of control.[971]	Leavers and Remainers had similar senses of agency (2.5 vs 2.7 of 6) and agreeability (26.8 vs 27.7 of 40).[972]	Consistency unclear. Agreeableness: ostensibly inconsistent with prior research. However, Garretsen et al identify the level of agreeability for a particular voting district, then compare that with how the district as a whole voted in the referendum, on the premise that personality characteristics are found in 'regional clusters'. Such regional clustering would not be apparent in the present research, which considers VP Leavers/Remainers 'on average', rather than first allocating them to particular locales.[973] Sense of control: ostensibly inconsistent with prior research, perhaps because different tools were used, or because Macdougall et al's sample size was smaller (N=158), and noting that Macdougall et al located a higher sense of control only in wealthy Leavers; the present research did not collect income data.[974]

Party, and no longer that of UKIP. It is likely that his personal role as Brexit champion saw increased support for Brexit Party and reduced it for UKIP once he was no longer a member.

[970] Garretsen et al., 'Brexit and the Relevance of Regional Personality Traits'. Per Meier and Robinson, lower agreeability is associated with more anger and aggression in response to blame, (Meier and Robinson, 'Does Quick to Blame Mean Quick to Anger?'), which suggests that Leavers would be angrier in response to blame during the campaign. However, see E4: Blame and underlying characteristics.

[971] Macdougall, Feddes, and Doosje, '"They've Put Nothing in the Pot!"'

[972] See full data in 8.4 Psychometric data, health, and education level.

[973] Garretsen et al., 'Brexit and the Relevance of Regional Personality Traits', 170.

[974] Whereas Macdougall et al used an abbreviated adaptation of Lachman and Weaver's 'Mastery and Constraint' scale, (Clarke et al., 'Guide to Content of the HRS Psychosocial Leave-Behind Participant Lifestyle Questionnaires'.) the present research used an abbreviated adaption of the Sense of Agency scale ('SOAS') per 4.4.1 Survey-experiment. Questions used by Macdougall et al, using a 6-point Likert scale: *(i) I often feel helpless in dealing with the problems of life. (ii) Other people determine most of what I can and cannot do. (iii) What happens in my life is often beyond my control. (iv) I have little control over the things that happen to me. (v) There is really no way I can solve the problems I have*. Questions used in the present research, with 7-step sliding scales used between available responses: *(i) Generally, how much control do people have over their lives? Things people do are subject only to their free will (0) -> People are just instruments in the hands of somebody or something else (6) (ii) How much control do you feel you have over your life? I am full control of what I do in life (0) -> Nothing I do is actually voluntary (6)*. Sliders for responses started in the centre (i.e. at 3). It could be that these measure different things, though questions appear broadly similar. The present research's adaptation of the SOAS may have had lower validity than the measure used by Macdougall et al. Macdougall et al used a smaller sample size (N=158) than this research, from only one geographic location (Greater Manchester), which likewise may have skewed results; they divided Leavers and Remainers into 'poorer' and wealthier' groups, and it was only for wealthy Leavers that a higher sense of control was identified. Macdougall, Feddes, and Doosje, '"They've Put Nothing in the Pot!"', 988–89. The present research does not divide voters in this manner. The full list of questions can be viewed at Annex: Ethics Review Attachments. See also discussion in Methodology.

Item	Previous research	This research	Consistency
Race	White (53% voted Leave).[975]	For participants that included race as part of their identity, 90.9% of VP Leavers identified as 'white', vs 80.6% of VP Remainers.[976]	Consistent with prior research; Leavers were more likely to identify as white.
Religion	Christian (58% voted Leave).[977]	47.2% of VP Leavers giving a religious identity were Christian, vs 12.2% of Remainers. 80.2% of VPRs identified as non-religious.	Consistent with prior research; Leavers were more likely to identify as Christian.

5.4.3.a)   A comment on consistency

This research shows good consistency with prior research, such that Leavers herein 'look like' Leavers in prior research: they are more likely to identify as working class, men, white, less educated, Conservative/UKIP supporters, and Christian than are Remainers. There is less consistency for age, as the present sample skews young; for health, where both groups are equally healthy (likely related to the young cohort); agreeableness (both groups similar) or sense of control (though the latter two come with caveats as noted above). Data about geo-attachment is inconclusive due to different methods used. The overall similarities suggest that participants in the current research were broadly similar to 'real' Brexit voters, granting a level of ecological validity and enabling meaningful discussion of creation of the EU specifically as a villain as an outcome of the Brexit campaign in the following chapters.

5.4.4.   Empirically relevant new findings

This research gathered information about Leaver/Remainer Just World Beliefs ('JWBs') and in-group values ('IGVs'), which had not been done in previous research. JWB is the notion that the world is essentially fair, and thus whatever happens to somebody is in some way precipitated by them; IGVs centralise protection of the 'group' rather than any individual member thereof. Each of these is associated with conservative politics and blame behaviours that stigmatise victims and outsiders, though results in E4: Blame and

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[975] Ashcroft, 'A Reminder of How Britain Voted in the EU Referendum - and Why'. Supported by Alabrese et al., 'Who Voted for Brexit?'.

[976] 39.6% of VP Leavers included their race as part of their identity, compared to 30.9% of Remainers. 30.3% of all VP Leavers identified as 'white', with a further 1.2% identifying as white-Irish and 4.5% as Anglo-Saxon (36% total, compared to 24.9% for Remainers). Use of 'Anglo-Saxon' perhaps reflects right-wing co-option of this term. The British National Party explain the need to couch ideology "in terms of specifically British history and the specific national identity of Britain", and to present right-wing revolutions are "restoring older traditions". British National Party, 'British National Party Language and Concepts Discipline Manual'. Historian Billie Melman posits the "invention of an Anglo-Saxon tradition" as just such a strategy. Melman, 'Claiming the Nation's Past'. Excluding 'Mixed/multiple ethnic' (1.2%), 'White and Asian' (0.5%), 'White and Black African' (0.2%) and 'White and Black Caribbean' (0.2%) from analysis, given it is unclear what role 'whiteness' plays in these, just 1.2% of Leavers included a race identity that did not include being white. (Note: While convention demands capitalisation of 'Black', the researcher has chosen not to capitalise 'white' in order to not lionise it where alternate race-based identities are absent.)

[977] Ashcroft, 'A Reminder of How Britain Voted in the EU Referendum - and Why'.

underlying characteristics will prove surprising.[978] Per Figure 27 and Figure 28, Leavers were higher in IGVs and JWBs than were Remainers.

Figure 27: Normal distribution curves for in-group values per voting preference; VP Leavers indicated higher levels of in-group values. Mean (VPL) = 9.3, mean (VPR) = 6.0[979]
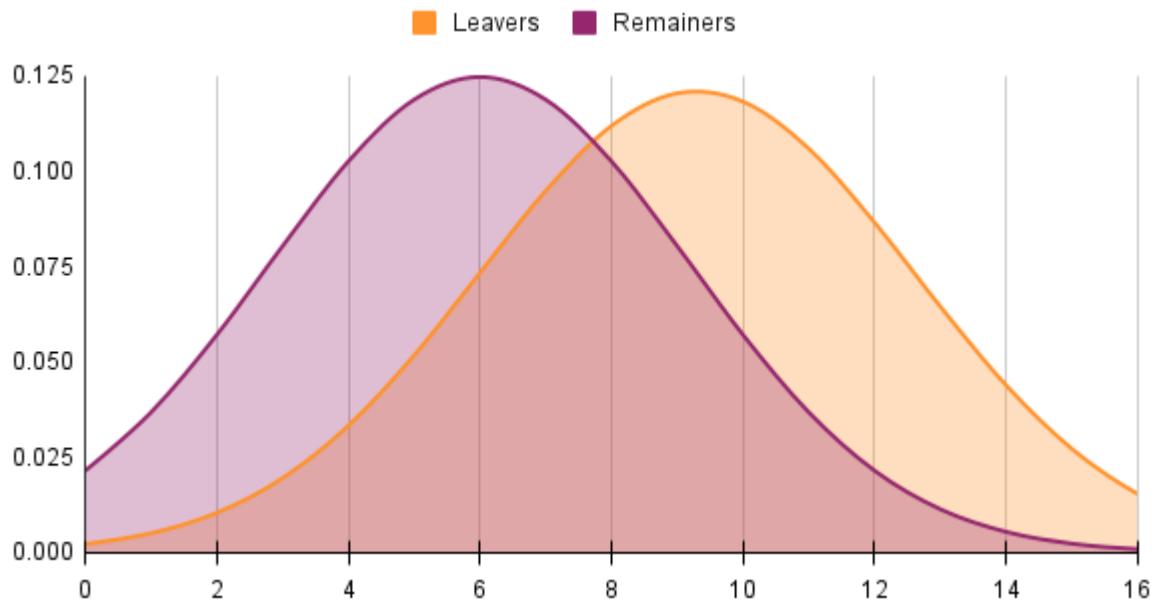
Figure 28: Normal distribution of Just World Beliefs per voting preference. Mean (VPL) = 5.2; Mean (VPR) = 3.8.[980]

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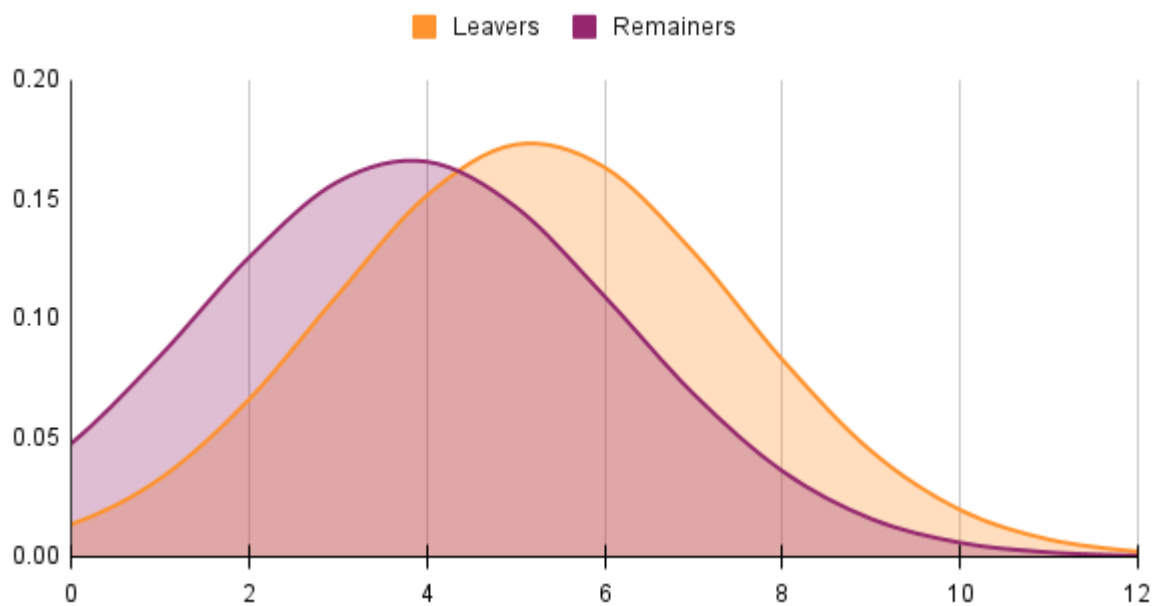
[978] E.g. Double, 'Blaming the Victim and Blaming the Culprit'; Hayes, Lorenz, and Bell, 'Victim Blaming Others'; Niemi and Young, 'When and Why We See Victims as Responsible'.

[979] Recall that just over two thirds of responses occur at mean +/- standard deviation, and ~95.5% of results are found in the range mean +/- 2SD.

[980] Recall that this research used an abbreviated version of the tool for measuring JWBs (3/7 questions). See discussion in Methodology.

5.5. Chapter conclusion

This chapter has established context surrounding the Brexit campaign, including a brief history of EU-UK relations and outlining the concurrent issues around migrant and financial crises that informed what was salient for blame, as illustrated in the next chapter. The second part showed the Brexit assemblage and key links between actors, informing data collection per Methodology and discussion of subjects and objects in E5. The third part gave insight into who voted for Brexit, as an important part of the Brexit assemblage; demonstrated that Leavers in the present research are broadly similar to those in previous research (and similarly for Remainers), rendering it possible to speak of vilification via blame specifically in the context of Brexit; prepared for the later chapter E4: Blame and underlying characteristics; and presented new information about Leavers' comparatively higher in-group values and Just World Beliefs.

With the first part of the data analysis framework, 'identify context', addressed, the next chapter will go on to consider the second requirement: 'identify performance'. It discusses what blame actually *happened* in the lead-up to the referendum, including what was blamed 'for', who was blamed for it, and who suffered as a result. It compares blame from the Brexit campaigns to what focus group and interview participants recalled of the campaign two years later, verifying that blame performed by political actors was consumed and recalled by private voters, with implications for the creation of the EU as a villain in E3: Effects.

6.E2: Blame campaign

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter addressed the first part of the data analysis framework developed in Methodology: identifying context. It gave a brief history of Brexit, outlined the 'Brexit assemblage'—the network of people and organisations involved in the campaign—then considered who voted for Brexit. It outlined concurrent issues, such as the 'economic' and 'migrant' crises. These issues, and the Brexit assemblage, appear again in this chapter, which considers the *performance* of blame both before and after the Brexit referendum. This identification of performance is the second step in the data analysis framework, and is important for several reasons. Firstly, it must be established that blame was present in pre-referendum materials to meaningfully consider its role vis-à-vis the creation of villains in the Brexit case study. Secondly, the *way* in which blame was done—who was blamed? for what? who were the victims?—must be identified in order to replicate similar conditions in the survey-experiment, enhancing realism and thereby ecological validity. Thirdly, the 'spread' of blame must be considered, such that what campaigns said was reiterated by the public. This indicates that blame in the campaign 'reached' voters, and was therefore able to affect them as discussed in E3: Effects.

This chapter begins by considering whether the campaigns *wanted* to tell a story of heroes and villains, finding that the Leave campaign did explicitly label those who fought against the EU 'heroes', with the EU described in villainous terms. This complements the existing finding of Alexander Spencer and Kai Oppermann, that the Leave campaign was characterised by 'romantic' narratives[981] such as that of heroes rescuing victims from villains.[982]

A reminder of the methods used when discussing performance of blame in this chapter are then briefly reiterated alongside a description of the 'meaning of numbers' in the context of this chapter, before 6.2 goes on to consider what blame was apparent in pre-referendum materials. These included campaign materials, content from The Metro newspaper, and commentary in MetroTalk, all produced prior to the June 2016 referendum. It shows that pro-Leave campaigns used blame more frequently than the general public as located in MetroTalk commentary, while the Britain Stronger In Europe ('BSIE') campaign refrained. To check that this is not simply because the campaigns considered different topics, the section establishes what the campaigns spoke about, and that pro-Leave actors blamed for what they talked about in a way that BSIE did not; BSIE were an anomaly.

Next, the subjects and objects of blame are considered—blamees (and what they are blamed for), victims, and beneficiaries. The EU appears as the 'most common' blamee, and

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[981] Spencer and Oppermann, 'Narrative Genres of Brexit'.
[982] I.e. A Rescue narrative, Lakoff, *The Political Mind*.

the UK as victim. The presence of multiple blamees suggests multiple villains would be a possible outcome of the campaign; however, the predominance of the EU as blamee means it is the focus of the following chapters. The blamees and victims identified therefore help inform later stages of research, and particularly the design of the survey-experiment.

The 'subjects and objects' section also notes 'non-agentic' blamees, such as 'the weather' or 'Brexit'. Unlike individual people, or organisations composed of people, these cannot have 'agency'—they cannot make a decision or act upon it. In previous research, blaming of 'situations' has been associated with emotions such as sadness;[983] whatever the outcome, it is difficult to see how a 'non-agent' could be morally bad, as they cannot have morals. Therefore, under the typology of a villain used in the present work—villains being bad/strong/active and we feel negatively towards them—they cannot be a villain.[984] For this reason, and the fact they are not as common as other blamees in the materials analysed, they are not the focus of this chapter. They are however highlighted when they appear.[985]

The final part of this chapter considers blame amongst pro-Leave focus group and interview ('FGI') participants. It shows that they could recall and repeat blame from the campaign, even nearly four years after the fact (March 2020), indicating the success of campaign discourses.[986] FGI interlocutors discussed blame intelligently, whether describing blame that had been done in the campaign or when conveying their own views about who is 'at fault' for a given problem, mitigating and even disagreeing with it. This shows that they could *consume* exogenous blame—blame from third parties, such as Leave.EU or Vote Leave—but not necessarily agree with it in full. Blame can be contested—its causal powers perhaps intensified or mitigated—with implications for varying levels of vilification.[987]

Overall, this chapter helps unearth the ways in which blame made villains in the specific context of the Brexit campaign by establishing that the EU was frequently blamed by the Leave campaign, and that this blame was similar to that reiterated by FGI participants nearly four years later. It enabled design of the FGI questions and survey-experiment alike, permits meaningful discussion of the EU specifically as vilified as an outcome of the campaign, and identifies initial sites where blame is contested.[988]

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[983] Kim and Cameron, 'Emotions Matter in Crisis'; Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff, 'Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism'. See 2.3.7 Blame is emotional.

[984] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*. This may vary with culture—for instance, if a volcano is conceived of as a deity, then it could well have evil intentions. It is presumed in the current research that the majority of the public do not imbue non-agents such as 'the weather' or 'Brexit' with personhood. (See also Annex: Who is the EU?.)

[985] See also 7.3.4 Blaming niches: do people blame the EU because the EU is responsible?, where blaming the situation is more common in response to the no-blame vignette.

[986] Whether they originated with the campaigns or with the public.

[987] See also E3: Effects, E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.

[988] See also E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.

6.1.1.   Characters in the text

Is there any evidence that the Leave campaign were attempting to use blame to make a *villain* of the EU? Explicit character labelling in the texts helps answer this question, providing insight into how the campaigns saw, or wanted to portray, various actors. In short, they were *making* it a story of heroes and villains, and this narrative was understood by the public as seen in MetroTalk comments at the time.[989]

Explicit references to 'heroes', 'victims', 'villains', and cultural representations thereof were present in pre-referendum materials, albeit infrequently; they appeared 13 times in pro-Leave materials, and not at all in the limited BSIE materials. Explicit labelling of characters is rare when compared to blame, which is why it is so important to consider the role of blame in creating villains and supporting associated, ultimately divisive narratives.[990]

6.1.1.a)   Victims are questionable

Note: This section contains references to sexual violence.

There are several explicit references to victims in the analysed texts. These include victims of sexual assault in Cologne:

> "If Tim Farron wants facts, he should go to Cologne and speak to the New Year's Day victims instead of burying his head in the sand and hoping the problem will go away." (D Turner, Suffolk)[991]

And victims are re-victimised by Europhiles to get their way:

> "The Europhiles who wanted people to vote for the opt-ins, used images of victims of child sex abuse and human trafficking all across the media to try and scare people into voting for more EU."[992]

Notably, despite being consistently depicted as a victim through having, or having had, harmful things done to it, the UK is not *labelled* a victim. Rather, it is *exceptional*. It has a 'destiny',[993] it is a "powerful, capable, and successful nation" (if only the EU weren't in its way),[994] is "formidable" and "influential",[995] and indeed, one of the 'greatest countries on earth':

> "The truth is, the doom-mongers think the UK is too small, too poor and too stupid to make its own way in the world. They completely ignore the talent of our people, our history of economic success, our world-beating inventions and our contributions in

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[989] Spencer and Opperman argue that the Leave narrative was successful in part because it conformed to a typical romantic narrative (Spencer and Oppermann, 'Narrative Genres of Brexit'.); Lakoff's 'Rescue narrative' of heroes rescuing victims from villains is such a romantic story (Lakoff, *The Political Mind*.)   Blame was used to create these characters, per E3: Effects.

[990] See also 4.3.7 Reading process and quote selection; discussion of affective polarisation in Introduction.

[991] MetroTalk, 1 April 2016

[992] Leave.EU, 'Danes Reject Surrendering More Powers to the EU'.

[993] Leave.EU, 'Northern Irish Case', 4.

[994] Leave.EU, 'A New Face, Same Old Story'.

[995] Leave.EU, 'Bush Backs Britain'., Leave.EU, 'Can We Secure a Brighter Future Outside of Political Union?'

culture, sport and science that have made us one of the greatest countries on earth."[996]

This echoes the issue described in 3.2.8 The tension in victimhood—on the one hand, victim status is desirable, as it means that one is innocent, above reproach, and deserves rescue or emancipation; on the other, it indicates a lack of agency, strength, or ability. Thus, while the UK is being victimised by the malevolent EU, it is described as anything but.[997] This also highlights that characterisation does not need to be 'true'; in principle, a victim should be 'weak', which is a difficult case to make for a rich, highly-developed, UN Security Council member.[998] 'Victim type feelings' become vital to understanding successful characterisation as a victim, per Constructing villains and emotions—just as 'villain type feelings' towards blamees are vital to identifying whether characterisation as a villain has been successful.

Migrants are explicitly discussed as victims. On the one hand, they *are* victims if they have been raped:

> "Those to be accepted in Britain are deemed to be particularly vulnerable cases - such as children and rape victims - who have fled into wartorn Syria's neighbours Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey."[999]

However, other headlines question this, with one piece linked from the quoted article entitled "Migrants flee incomprehensible violence but are they all victims?".[1000] With the portrayal of Cologne's sex attacks as committed by migrants, the status of migrants as victims becomes even murkier:

> "Nigel Farage is absolutely right when he says we could well see Cologne-type sex attacks if we have a mass influx of men who think that because a woman is not covered from head to toe she is 'asking for it'." (Lisa, Surrey)[1001]

British minorities are likewise contested victims, though this notion arises just once:

> "It is divisive and harmful to our society to portray specific British ethnic groups as victims and caricatured British white men as oppressors when actually all sections of society should be encouraged to vote in the referendum." (Paul, London)[1002]

This questions minorities as victims, and objects to characterisation of white men as villainous 'oppressors'; there is an attempt to redesignate characters played by various actors.[1003]

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[996] Leave.EU, 'It's Time for the pro-EU Campaign to Get Positive'.

[997] See also discussion in Zappettini, 'The UK as Victim and Hero in the Sun's Coverage of the Brexit "Humiliation"'.

[998] A victim is good and weak per Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*.

[999] Hall, 'Migrant Crisis Is Causing More People to Want to Leave the European Union'.

[1000] Hall.

[1001] MetroTalk, 1 April 2016.

[1002] MetroTalk, 27 May 2016.

[1003] This highlights character creation as an ongoing, constructed activity, as well as its subjective and contested nature. See also 3.2 The art of character work. It is further worth noting this mention of race dynamics, because in many ways, pro-Leave parties appear to have followed the ethnonationalist British National Party playbook. See for example rule 6, where the BNP is not 'anti-European', but "'anti-EU' or

Lastly, the EU is no *agent's* victim, but rather the "victim of peace".

> "The EU has been a victim of peace, papering over major differences in national attitudes as part of its federalising mission. During the same period the US has refused to take peace for granted, and neither has the UK, both retaining formidable military, intelligence and diplomatic resources."[1004]

Here, the word 'victim' is used to depict the EU's lack of ability. Because it was lackadaisical and unthinking, it naively stumbled over problems of national attitudes; the strong and agentic US and UK, as 'thinking' countries, are instead capable and prepared. Victim status is accorded to the EU, but in such a way as to portray it as weak—a drain, without being in need of rescue.[1005]

6.1.1.b)   Heroes and villains

In a similar vein, the EU is sarcastically described as a saviour of Britain (meaning the opposite): "It's surprising we were able to get anything done before the saviour that is the European Union took Little Britain under its wing".[1006] Indeed, only those with bad intentions would describe the EU as a saviour at all:

> "No doubt the US will be covertly funding the pro-EU side to the hilt ... along with the Tory grandees and a few ne'er-do-wells who once told us that joining the EU single currency would be our saviour."[1007]

At-the-time Greek Prime Minister Tsipras becomes a hero through his 'bravery' in standing up to the EU,[1008] while David Cameron is portrayed as wanting to become a hero in the same way when he fights for the UK against the EU (though he may not be an *effectual* hero—he is unlikely to 'make a sound'):

> "it is crunch time for Mr Cameron as he remains naively tight-fisted, clinging on to his meagre reform package. His mission today: to convince a rather inflexible bunch of EU leaders to give him something—anything—that he can portray as a victorious restoration of power from Brussels; his great European triumph, his White Paper moment. The question is, despite the vision Cameron wants conveyed—the heroic British leader throwing his weight around, bargaining hard and fighting stoically for the

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'anti-European Union' or 'anti-Brussels'. Do not criticise Europe per se—only the institution of the EU", rule 7 on not being "'anti-Polish' or 'anti-Eastern European'" or the claim that "it is the EU 'Freedom of Movement' rules ... that are ultimately responsible for recent demographic changes, and not the people themselves", rule 11 prescribing the use of British 'history', 'national identity', and 'traditional rights', or rule 12 on use of 'restorationist' terms. British National Party, 'British National Party Language and Concepts Discipline Manual'.

[1004] Leave.EU, 'Bush Backs Britain'.

[1005] See also discussion of victim uncreation in 9.4.2 Uncreating victims.

[1006] Leave.EU, 'Can We Secure a Brighter Future Outside of Political Union?'

[1007] Trade Unionists against the European Union, 'Trade Unionists against the European Union Press Release'.

[1008] Farage, 'It's Advantage EU, And Tsipras May Be Forced to Resign'.

> British people—do European leaders have more to worry about than Britain? If David Cameron bangs his fist and no one is listening, does it make a sound?"[1009]

'True' heroes fought for Britain in World War Two,[1010] or challenge the European Union. One article from Leave.EU explicitly states that "We can be heroes"—and 'we' can do so by voting to leave the EU (Figure 29).[1011] Notably though, while Leavers can be 'heroes', they are also 'vilified' by Remainers:[1012]

> "[M]any of you [have written] in to tell me about instances where you've seen or experienced those in the education sector seeking to push and promote the European Union or indeed vilify those who oppose it."[1013]

Leavers are the underdog heroes, fighting both the superior force of the EU and the 'enemy within' in the form of the Remainers who are attacking them.

Figure 29: 'We can be heroes'[1014]

Villain metaphors are reserved for the supporters of the EU: at that time newly-elected London mayor Sadiq Khan is 'inhuman' and compared to Frankenstein's monster, with questionable integrity and motives:

> "We have new political figure in our midst 'Khaneron', a Frankenstein-like amalgam of political opportunists and most certainly bereft of the more human characteristics of Mary Shelley's tragic figure. What cheek of Sadiq Khan to campaign with David Cameron on the issues of workers' rights in the EU when the Labour movement bitterly opposes the Conservatives' 'draconian' plans to limit the right to strike." (Richard McCauley, London)[1015]

German Chancellor Merkel and then-Commission President Juncker are likewise portrayed as villains preying on the UK. In his intimate physical spaces, Leave.EU's founder Arron Banks chose decor depicting EU parties as storybook monsters:

> "Several of Banks's most senior staff have been diverted to a quest that matters to him enormously. A poster on his office wall shows a vampiric Angela Merkel and Jean-

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[1009] Leave.EU, 'Twenty Seven States Arrive in Brussels for a Summit. One Arrives to Have a Conversation with Itself'.
[1010] Farage, 'Battle of Britain Bravery Came in Many Forms, and Should Be Remembered'.
[1011] Leave.EU, 'We Can Be Heroes'.
[1012] See 6.4.3 Victimisation of Leavers below.
[1013] Farage, 'Universities Are Rife With EU Propaganda'.
[1014] Leave.EU, 'We Can Be Heroes'.
[1015] MetroTalk, 1 June 2016.

> Claude Juncker, the German chancellor and European commission [sic] president respectively, 'sucking the life out of Great Britain'."[1016]

The story of Leavers as heroes emancipating the UK from such monsters becomes clear—the question becomes how the Leave campaign could convince others of the same story. Blaming of the EU and thereby making it a villain is an important part of the answer.

6.1.2.   The meaning of numbers

This chapter, like those that follow, makes use of both quantitative and qualitative forms of analysis. The next two sections—pre-referendum performance of blame, and subjects and objects appearing in that performance—make use of qualitative content analysis.[1017]   While other forms of content analysis focus on quantitative description[1018] of pre-selected items, qualitative content analysis emerges underlying themes[1019] and emphasises the context in which data is produced; for instance, the related assemblage per E1: The Brexit context. It requires familiarising oneself with the context in which texts are produced, becoming familiar with a small number of documents, generating categories (codes), testing them, and refining those codes as work continues. In short, the process described in 4.3.7 Reading process and quote selection.[1020]

This allowed for discourses to be located during analysis—for instance, regarding the economy or migration; both important at the time of the campaign per E1. This differs somewhat from the activity of identifying items such as 'blame', as contextual knowledge of how ideas fit together is required.[1021] It is on the basis of such knowledge that 'themes' may be identified—for instance, items such as 'tax' or 'trade' belonging to an overall theme of 'economy'. This highlights the role of the researcher in producing knowledge. The method for identifying blame, victims, and contestation is outlined in 4.3.1 Data analysis framework and reiterated as appropriate below.

All this 'identification' produces a set of 'coded' data, in this case within the software MaxQDA.[1022] Information such as the number of codes[1023] can be discussed—indicating, for instance, the frequency of blame—as can intersections between types of data. 'Intersection' means that data overlaps, so that for instance 'blame' could overlap with the discourse of

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[1016] Leave.EU, 'Arron Banks'.

[1017] Also known as 'ethnographic content analysis' per Altheide and Schneider, 'Ethnographic Content Analysis'. In this form of content analysis, "there is an emphasis on allowing categories to emerge out of data and on recognizing the significance for understanding meaning in the context in which an item is being analysed". Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 291.

[1018] Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research.*, 18.

[1019] Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 557.

[1020] Altheide and Schneider, 'Process of Qualitative Document Analysis'.

[1021] Per Bryman, "[c]oders must draw upon their everyday knowledge as participants in a common culture in order to be able to code the material with which they are confronted." Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 306.

[1022] See codebook at Annex: Codebook.

[1023] I.e. Quantitising, "whereby a priori and/or data-derived codes are attached to segments of text and numerical values are then assigned to those codes." Sandelowski, Voils, and Knafl, 'On Quantitizing', 210.

'economy', indicating that the economy is 'blamed for'. The frequency of intersections can likewise be discussed.

On the one hand, frequency is important: something appearing frequently may mean that it is important (or prescriptively important), or acceptable to speak about. On the other, focusing on frequency can hide what is 'not' discussed, and does not take subjective 'intensity' into account. For example, where blame is quantified in terms of 'instances of blame', all blame appears equal. However, previous research suggests blame can be more or less 'intense' when factors such as backing or intentionality are taken into account.[1024] For this reason, quantitative results throughout this research are complemented by discussion of qualitative examples.[1025]

Further, there are several ways in which to 'count' incidences of items such as blame. This is because 'blame' could be counted as the number of instances of blame attributed to a particular blamee; it could also be the number of things (e.g. policies) blamed *for*. One sentence could contain multiple blamees and/or multiple things they are blamed for, while at the same time, depending on the speaker's style, an 'instance' of blame may take place over multiple sentences. There is no perfect way to 'quantify' blame, and this should be borne in mind when considering results—though, within any section, the ways in which a given item is 'counted' is kept consistent. As above, the quantification of blame and other items in this chapter is not intended to stand as *a priori* 'evidence'; rather, it is used to investigate trends. Numerical information is always considered in context—for instance, the unusual 'lack' of blame in the Remain campaign's texts is discussed with regard to the objectives of the campaign, and identified as a source of contestation that is later discussed in E5.

A complete codebook may be found at Annex: Codebook. This is divided into 'codes' (for instance, 'the economy') and 'subcodes' (for instance, 'taxes'). In this research, subcodes are 'collapsed' into their parent codes in several places to enable more complex forms of analysis. Such analysis is useful in identifying trends, but there are limitations to what the researcher can do manually or even as assisted by software. In this case, the software used, MaxQDA, does not permit more than two levels of codes for certain types of analysis.

One example is examining which blamees are blamed for harming particular victims, as seen in 6.3.3 Who were their victims?. This requires identifying intersections between blamees and victims within the text. However, the parent code 'blame' contains multiple levels of subcodes: for instance, blame>EU>specific EU figure. The same applies to 'victim', e.g. victim>UK>geographical part of the UK. As only two levels of codes can be used for analysis, a second version of MaxQDA files were created where third-level codes were

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[1024] See 2.4 Defining blame; the 'way' in which blame is said could have an effect, e.g. Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*.; see also Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame'; Alicke, 'Blaming Badly'; Lagnado and Channon, 'Judgments of Cause and Blame'; Guglielmo and Malle, 'Enough Skill to Kill'.

[1025] Per 4.3.7 Reading process and quote selection, qualitative examples are selected with equanimity to their support for the thesis' argument, with an attempt made to find quotes that do *not* support it. See also 4.2.2 Methodological pluralism and 4.5 Reliability, replication, and validity.

collapsed into their parents. This means that all 'child' codes of 'EU', such as 'specific EU figure', were merged into 'EU'.

This had a slight effect on numerical results. In the file for text-based data—the source for much of this chapter—'economy' goes from a total of 474 instances to a 'collapsed' total of 451. This is because a statement that was coded as generally 'economy' may also have included a subcode (e.g. 'currency'), and as the same statement cannot be coded in the same way twice, in merging the codes, the second code was removed. The same applies where one statement had previously had two subcodes of 'economy'—when they both became 'economy', only one instance of the 'economy' code was retained.

For text-based data, total incidences of codes are affected as follows (Table 12):

Table 12: Original code counts vs 'collapsed' counts

Code	Original total, including subcode counts	'Collapsed' total
Economy	478	451
Migration	517	453
Quality of Life	140	124
Security	24	23
Blamee—'Part of EU/EEC'	32	32 (no change)
Blamee—'Political party'	188	181
Blamee—'EU'	492	479
Blamee—'Other' (note that 'Migrants, migrant crisis (inc. implied)', otherwise a subcode of 'Other', is retained as a separate category due to its salience per the previous chapter and **6.3 Subjects and objects of blame**, below.	76	76 (no change)
Blamee—'Non-agent/situation'	38	38 (no change)
Victim—'EU'	113	108
Victim—'Political party'	62	62 (no change)
Victim—'UK/Britain'	418	382
Beneficiaries—'EU/Europe'	27	27 (no change)
Beneficiaries—'UK/Britain'	39	38

This code collapsing is marked in tables, graphs, and analysis below with the term 'collapsed'.

6.2. Pre-referendum performance of blame

When investigating the ways in which blame makes villains in politics, it is necessary to identify what blame actually happens—if there were no blaming in the Brexit campaign, there would be no effects to consider. This section begins by identifying the incidence of blame, finding that pro-Leave parties blamed more than the general public (as captured via

MetroTalk commentary), while the Remain campaign refrained. To check that this is not simply because the campaigns were talking about different topics, section 6.2.2 What did the campaigns talk about? identifies what the campaigns 'talked about', then comparing this to the topics that drew blame to show that parties other than the Remain campaign 'blamed for' similar things to what they generally talked about: the Remain campaign was aberrant. Blame may be something 'normal' (the public do it, as in MetroTalk), but it also may be 'done' or 'not done', for the Leave and Remain campaigns respectively. Identifying such differences can provide initial insight into how blame is contested, meaning identifying performance is essential to discussion of contestation in E5. Overall, this section establishes that the Leave campaign used blame in their campaign, meaning there was scope for vilification—the effects of which are elucidated in E3.

6.2.1.   What blame was apparent prior to the referendum?

Per 4.3.2 Recognising blame, identifying blame necessitates locating, at a minimum, a 'harmful thing' and a perpetrator as blamee. Pre-referendum materials analysed for the presence of blame included Leave.EU materials (news and media, plus brochures and pamphlets), texts from Farage for Breitbart,[1026] Britain Stronger in Europe ('BSIE') content, and MetroTalk comments (public remarks).[1027]

All MetroTalk comments for a given day were gathered into one document for analysis,[1028] noting that unlike BSIE, Leave.EU, or Farage materials, they could be expected to include both Leave and Remain perspectives.

Pro-Leave ads were excluded from this initial analysis due to their repetitive nature: ads were differently targeted, and often changed just one to two words. As such, one sentence with very small changes could form the basis for tens of ads, and this would have skewed results. Articles in the Metro were likewise not included in this analysis, due to the way they were collected by the researcher: every article containing references to Brexit or the EU was photographed, and where there were multiple articles on one page or double-page spread, that entire spread was photographed and coded together (Figure 30). This means one 'document' could contain multiple 'texts', rendering measures such as the percentage of documents featuring blame less meaningful.[1029]

[1026] A right-wing news blog; see 4.4 Data sources and 5.3 The Brexit assemblage.
[1027] See 4.4 Data sources.
[1028] I.e. One document represents one day's comments.
[1029] Were the researcher to begin again, each 'text'—an article, for instance—could be photographed and analysed separately. The format of the Metro meant optical character recognition—rendering articles into text, like for MetroTalk—was not feasible. Collecting and transcribing articles separately would have added weeks to data collection, to little if any additional benefit.

Figure 30: A page from the Metro on 6 June 2016, containing 4.5 articles

The groups of documents used in analysis for this section were therefore BSIE, MetroTalk, Farage for Breitbart ('Farage'), Leave.EU News and Media ('LNAM'),[1030] Leave.EU Brochures and Pamphlets ('LBROCH'), and Leave.EU combined content ('L.EU (ALL)').

Table 13: Blame in campaign materials

	BSIE	MetroTalk	Farage	LNAM	LBROCH	L.EU (ALL)
Number of documents	25	45	43	281	6	287
% of corpus	6.3%	11.3%	10.8%	70.3%	1.5%	71.8%
# documents containing blame	2	26	31	165	3	168
Total instances of blame	2	51	92	445	84	529
% documents containing blame	8%	57.8%	72.1%	58.7%	50%	58.5%

The amount of Leave.EU content heavily outweighed materials from other sources, and as such it could be expected that all kinds of words and discursive practices would appear more commonly. Nevertheless, some interesting ratios appear when comparing the raw number of instances of blame with the number of documents in which blame appears (Table 13); blame was found in two BSIE documents and occurs a total of two times—there is a 1:1 ratio between instances of blame and documents containing blame. MetroTalk

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[1030] There wasn't always a clear divide between the 'media' and 'news' sections of Leave.EU's website, with media articles, or text from those articles, occasionally posted in the news section.

shows a ratio close to 2:1, so two instances of blame for each document (day) in which blame appeared. Farage and LNAM content are closer to 3:1, with the ratio steeper again for LBROCH materials, though this can be understood as a result of the greater length of those documents. An initial analysis therefore suggests that the pro-Leave campaigns may be using blame more frequently than the BSIE campaign or public as expressed in MetroTalk.

This is likewise apparent in the percentages of documents featuring blame. The BSIE campaign is less prone to blaming (8% of documents) than the public as expressed in MetroTalk (57.8%, noting that each 'document' for MetroTalk includes comments from different members of the public), Farage (72.1%), or the Leave.EU campaign (58.5%).

Could a different document selection have led to different results? BSIE documents focused on brochures and booklets produced for the public, images, and website content, and did not include news items as for Leave.EU or blog posts like Farage. It is at least plausible that there could have been more polemic, blame-based, content in the news items. However, two things fly in the face of this: firstly, the rough comparability between Leave.EU's brochures and pamphlets with BSIE content—50% of Leave.EU's brochures contain blame, and the documents are of similar length and for a similar intended audience[1031] to those from BSIE. Secondly, the following direct comparison between published statements from BSIE and Vote Leave as the official Remain/Leave campaigns respectively shows that the Leave side blamed in a way that the Remain campaign did not.

6.2.1.a)   Boris versus Cameron

Figure 31: The Metro front cover, 3 May 2016[1032]

On 3 May 2016, The Metro published an article where the Remain and Leave campaigns gave their "12 essential reasons why the vote should go their way" (Figure 31). It pictured David Cameron with the Remain reasons, noting that he "heads the official Conservative campaign to stay in"; Boris Johnson was displayed for 'Leave', with the comment that he "is backing the Brexit campaign". While it is implied through use of their images that Blair and

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[1031] I.e. UK referendum voters. See also 2.1.1 Aristotle, audiences, and proofs.
[1032] Britain Stronger In Europe and Vote Leave, 'In or Out? The Two Sides Give Their Reasons for Us to Remain - or Brexit'.

Johnson are the authors, the accompanying blurb suggests it is instead BSIE and Vote Leave, as official campaigns, that provided the text.

This article is exceptional in that both campaigns provided text of the same length formatted in the same way, allowing direct comparison. No similar such text appeared elsewhere in The Metro, or in any of the articles linked from Leave.EU.[1033] As such, this article is used to engage with the possibility outlined above that BSIE and Leave campaigners blamed in similar ways in similar texts, while acknowledging that this text was not authored by the campaign whose materials are a primary text source in the present research, i.e. Leave.EU.

In the Leave part of the article, blame is included in six of the twelve essential reasons to vote Leave (

[1033] As Leave.EU were not the official campaign, they were not invited to participate.

Table 14).

Table 14: Vote Leave's 'reasons to leave' that contain blame

Reason #	Text	Comment
1	"Our money, our priorities". We send £350million to the EU every week, enough to build a new fully-staffed NHS hospital. This payment is forecast to go up in the coming years and will be £400million in 2020. We can take back control of this money and spend it on our priorities.	The UK's money extracted via the EU would otherwise go to the National Health Service; it is implied[1034] that it is because of the EU—and membership thereof—that the UK does not have control and that the NHS is beleaguered. It is 'our' money being used, so 'we' as UK residents are victim. The implied blame is complemented by a threat of increasing contributions in coming years.
4	"Support business". Regulation from the EU costs our businesses £600million every week. Only six per cent of UK businesses export to the EU, yet 100 per cent have to comply with these burdensome rules.	EU regulations blamed; UK businesses suffer.
5	"Protect our NHS". Uncontrolled immigration has put huge strain on A&E waiting times and demand for GP registrations. EU law also prevents UK authorities from checking qualifications and language skills of doctors coming from the EU, putting patient safety at risk.	EU law blamed for putting patient safety at risk; it is also the source of the problematic "uncontrolled immigration" indicated by 'also' in the second sentence. Patients in Accident and Emergency departments, or waiting to register with their local General Practitioner, need to wait longer than they otherwise would—they are the victims.
8	"Safer border protection". Free movement within the EU means that the European Court has control over who can come into the UK. This means we have been unable to prevent dangerous individuals walking into our country.	The EU's free movement policy is blamed for dangerous individuals arriving in 'our' country.
9	"Control of our tax system". The EU decides the levels of VAT we pay on goods and services. This was most recently evident when the government couldn't reduce VAT on women's sanitary products.	The EU's tax system means women in the UK pay more for sanitary products (and the government is helpless to assist).

In comparison, blame appears just once in the Remain reasons to stay:

> #8 "Future generations". Entry-level jobs are already at risk due to uncertainty around leaving Europe.

Here, the blamee is Brexit itself; it is due to uncertainty about Brexit that entry-level jobs are at risk. Use of 'already' suggests entry-level jobs—and more to the point, entry-level workers—are suffering. No *agent* is blamed; Brexit is not a person or collection of persons

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[1034] Implied blame must be 'completed' by the audience using contextual information. Niemi, Roussos, and Young, 'Political Partisanship Alters the Causality Implicit in Verb Meaning'. find that support for a political party has implications for interpretation of causation. Essentially, the "causal structures of events" are reinterpreted to favour preferred candidates and vice versa. (p. 816) It is reasonable to assume that implied blame would be 'interpreted' to disadvantage the EU by those against the EU. This can "[allow] people to uphold political allegiances while evading the costs of overtly aggressive speech" (p. 816). See also 4.3.2 Recognising blame.

that could be argued to have agentic powers. It is more akin to blaming a situation than an Other—there is no Other to vilify.[1035]

The Remain side did talk about broadly similar issues to the Leave side, suggesting that "public services" including the NHS were reasons to stay; likewise for "British trade" and "jobs" (rather than "business"), "security" (for "safer border protection"), and "lower prices" (as opposed to the VAT addition to prices). However, they did so without blaming the EU, rather suggesting opportunities arising out of EU membership.[1036]

This example article bolsters the suggestion from the analysis above, that the Leave campaign used blame at a higher frequency than the Remain campaign. There is something quite intuitive about this: when arguing against being part of something, it would be expected to say that it is doing (or has done) bad things, and will probably continue to do so in future. These would not be highlighted when arguing to become (or remain) part of that same body.

There are several other possibilities—perhaps the Leave and Remain campaigns simply talked about different things, and the Remain campaign did not talk about the 'bad' things that the EU has done or does. For this reason, the following two sections establish (a) what the campaigns talked about, and (b) what the campaigns 'blamed for', showing parties tend to blame 'for' those things they talk about; BSIE is an anomaly. This is picked up again in E5, where BSIE's limitations in whom they could blame, and preference for other strategies such as giving *credit*, are discussed.

Another possibility is that the Remain campaign did not use blame *in the same way*, as in the above text where they blamed the 'non-agent' of Brexit for creating uncertainty; section 6.3 Subjects and objects of blame considers 'who or what' the campaigns blamed to engage with this notion.[1037]

6.2.2.   What did the campaigns talk about?

Per 4.3.7 Reading process and quote selection, identifying what campaigns talked about necessitated a close, multiple reading of exemplar texts, and all recurrent ideas, motifs, and practices were identified in Leave.EU news and BSIE materials as samples.[1038] Recurrent discourses including practices were located, coded, and grouped as follows:[1039]

[1035] Per 2.3.7 Blame is emotional, blaming a situation may be associated with emotions such as sadness, rather than villain-type feelings. Kim and Cameron, 'Emotions Matter in Crisis'; Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff, 'Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism'; Lerner and Tiedens, 'Portrait of the Angry Decision Maker'. See also 9.4.3 No-blame: rendering the perpetrator invisible, or calling for blame to be laid?.
[1036] See discussion of 'credit' in E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.
[1037] See also 4.3.6 Resistance and contestation and E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.
[1038] Given the extensive overlap between what was posted on the Leave.EU 'News' and 'Media' sections of its website, it was considered legitimate to select just texts from one of these locations. Leave.EU's materials were more accessible than those of Vote Leave; see 4.4 Data sources. BSIE's materials were selected to represent the pro-Remain campaign.
[1039] Topoi and metaphor could be understood as discursive practices in the same way as is blame.

1. 'Things that can be done' or affected within existing infrastructure, such as policy topics that can be legislated. This includes migration, security, the economy, and closely related topics—for example, 'racism', 'terrorism', 'border security', and the policy topic of 'migration' were heavily interlinked in the texts.

Two non-'policy' topics were included here: 'identity/traditions/values/culture' and 'status/voice/influence/global representation'. The former was discussed in the text as being affected by UK government or EU policy, though the link between specific policy and identity or values was not necessarily present. E.g.:

> "The EU advances and protects the values that Britain's young people believe in. By enshrining LGBT rights in its treaties, the EU is a force for inclusion and respect".[1040]

This category included references to British 'traditions', such as cricket, fox-hunting, and Christmas stockings.

The latter, status/voice, referred to governmental choices that could be made—namely participation in political bodies as forums for representation—and as such was likewise included. E.g.:

> "The threats we face today are global in nature – whether it is Isis, cyber-crime, a more assertive Russia or even climate change – and international collaboration is the surest route to influence and impact."[1041]

> "by being outside the EU and CFP Norway has its own seat and voice on the World Trade Organisation, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (and its fisheries committee) and Norway holds the presidency of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation"[1042]

This group was labelled "Discourses—policy concerns".

2. Meta-level discussions on the nature of politics and political values such as accountability, sovereignty, democracy, liberty, or populism.[1043] This group was labelled "Discourses—political meta", and could include blame. For example:

> "Brexit offers the opportunity to restore critical aspects of UK sovereignty, currently undermined by unelected EU institutions."[1044]

(The EU is blamed for the harmful act of undermining the UK's sovereignty.)

3. Warrants that help back up claims such as topoi of facts vs untruth, good/bad, just/unjust, or testimony of authorities. These cannot be a 'topic' of blame, a 'blameworthy thing', as they are about the nature of/justification for a thing, rather than what harmful thing is actually done or doable.

[1040] Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Young People Are Stronger in Europe'.
[1041] Britain Stronger In Europe, 'What the Experts Say on Security'.
[1042] Leave.EU, 'Northern Irish Case'.
[1043] Populism/anti-establishmentarianism is considered a 'political meta' topic as it relates to who is represented, and by whom, thus cutting to the core issue of representation within democracies.
[1044] Leave.EU, 'Northern Irish Case'.

4. 'Other' discourses and practices, including the nature of the UK (European or not, UK exceptionalism), constituted subjects (e.g. families, young),[1045] outcomes (threat, danger, unity, collaboration, promise for future), the nature of the EU (reforming, drawing closer, falling apart), and metaphors/motivators (war and violence,[1046] religion,[1047] gender,[1048] strength,[1049] patriotism[1050]).

As this research addresses what blame is done, not how it is supported, the first and second groups above were selected for analysis: they contain 'blameworthy topics'. Table 15 shows that BSIE prioritised discussion of policy to the almost total exclusion of discussion about the *nature* of politics: despite comprising just 10.1% of the documents in this analysis, BSIE contributed more than a third (34.1%) of the instances of policy discourse identified in total.[1051] Leave.EU did discuss policy, but some 32.7% of their content discussed 'political meta' issues; this is in comparison to BSIE, who focused on policy 98% of the time.

[1045] See discussion of objects in E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.

[1046] These were some of the most frequent metaphors, with politics depicted as a battleground, bolstered by references to World War 2 and even the Napoleonic Wars.

[1047] E.g. Metaphors around confessions, crusades, or Biblical plagues ("The only thing we haven't heard yet is how leaving the EU would bring a plague of locusts upon us", Farage, 'The Only Thing We Haven't Heard Yet Is How Leaving The EU Would Bring A Plague of Locusts Upon Us'.)

[1048] Note that gender was referred to in non-metaphorical ways on few occasions, namely relating to the 'tampon tax' (VAT on sanitary products—coded under 'Taxes/VAT') and in relation to sexual assaults in Germany and Sweden (coded under 'Crime'). Where there were references to "women's rights", this was coded under 'Rights and standards'. However, largely, gender was invisible in the campaign materials; Leave.EU materials were dominated by men, whether authors, quoted, or depicted. Women speakers depicted are limited to Liz Bilney; Leave.EU 'Messenger' for small business' Caroline Drewett (one occasion)—a young, attractive, smiling, blonde woman (Drewett, 'Caroline Drewett - Leave.EU Ambassador for Small Businesses'.); and Angela Merkel, who is depicted as either an impediment to negotiations or as incompetent, with people passing notes behind her (Hall, 'Huge Boost in Fight to Quit EU: Campaigners Unite to Win Crucial Referendum'; Leave.EU, 'David Cameron's "Pathway to a Deal"'; Farage, 'The Turkey-EU Migrant Deal Verges on "Insanity", A New Tide Awaits Britain'.). Women, when depicted in BSIE materials, were shown as mothers, (Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Family Leaflet'.) though they were also quoted more. Gender metaphors included referring to campaigns as having 'balls' (Farage, 'Time for Tory Eurosceptics to Put up or Shut Up, Do the "Bastards" Have the Balls?') or being impotent (Farage, 'Is Cameron REALLY Going To Get A "Victory" On The Tampon Tax? Don't Be So Sure…'), while Britain is feminised in the older linguistic convention ("Britain's relationship with the rest of Europe was her business", Leave.EU, 'Bush Backs Britain'.). Women were often treated as objects of policy ("it is better for women", Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Family Leaflet'.), or just objects ("The first thing we saw as we arrived were some very pretty girls serving champagne. So we indulged.", Farage, 'The EU Referendum Is Our Waterloo'.). In short, the campaigns as a whole appeared highly gendered, but gender was not spoken of as an issue of 'policy' so much as a metaphor or motivation. In this thesis, where an author is introduced for the first time, their full name is used to help render gender—and to a degree, origin—more transparent. The references list includes a gender breakdown for the unique first authors cited. See also Harmer, 'Brexit "Mansplained"'; Ross, 'X Marks the Spot but the Ys Have It'.

[1049] Key to BSIE's campaign, I.e. 'Stronger in'.

[1050] Patriotism appeared explicitly in few instances, and was not used in conjunction with identity- or tradition-related discourses; instead the focus was on how to be a 'true patriot' (Wintour, 'Stuart Rose to Launch EU Campaign Saying True Patriots Are Not Inward-Looking'.) and whether Leave/Remain was more patriotic (e.g. Ferrari, 'EU In And Out Campaigns Have Blazing Row On LBC'.).

[1051] Two of the BSIE documents—webpage printouts—were longer than the average news item posted on Leave.EU, but this is offset by the presence of one-line posters, so the higher frequency of policy discussion is unlikely to be due to a difference in document length.

Table 15: Policy concerns and meta-level discussions

	BSIE	Leave.EU - News
> ⊙ Discourses - policy concerns	299	577
> ⊙ Discourses - political meta	6	280
# N = Documents	25 (10.1%)	223 (89.9%)

Even excluding 'political meta', Leave.EU and BSIE appear to have addressed different policy concerns (Table 16; top three items are highlighted). While the 'economy' was the top issue for both, Leave.EU also prioritised migration.[1052] It had two just clear policy issues, as opposed to BSIE, which was more extensive.

Table 16: Relative frequency of policy concern discourses in BSIE and Leave.EU news content

Discourses – policy concerns	BSIE	Leave.EU News
Business, industry, fisheries	5.4	3.3
Climate change / environment	1.7	3.8
Crime	4.3	4.0
Economy	24.4	29.3
Education / universities / research / qualifications	4.7	0.7
Identity / traditions / values / culture	0.7	5.2
Jobs (inc. trade unions)	13.4	6.2
Migration	8.7	27.4
Public services inc. NHS	5.7	0.9
Quality of life	15.7	2.6
Rights and standards	4.7	3.8
Security	3.3	0.7
Status / voice / influence / global representation	5.4	4.7
UK pays money to the EU	2.0	7.5
Figures represent % of policy spoken about. BSIE N=25, Leave.EU News N=223. Columns total 100%.		

One limitation to this analysis is that the BSIE materials included several leaflets discussing specific topics (e.g. 'Farmers leaflet', 'Workers rights' leaflet', 'Experts on the economy'),[1053] which may not have been as wide-ranging as the opinion pieces, blog posts, and news items included under Leave.EU's 'News' tab. In principle, using materials from other parts of BSIE's website could have illustrated more convergence in messaging between BSIE and Leave.EU. A review of the final 41 text-based blog posts on the BSIE website posted prior to the referendum did not give any reason to think this was the case.[1054] Further, as will become apparent in the following section, even where BSIE spoke on a similar topic to Leave.EU—the economy—they refrained from blame. That is, while the present analysis indicates the campaigns often spoke about different things—one potential reason BSIE

[1052] The presence of the economy and migration as important concerns is not surprising, given the ongoing crises outlined in E1: The Brexit context.

[1053] Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Farmers Leaflet'; Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Workers' Rights Leaflet'; Britain Stronger In Europe, 'What the Experts Say on Economy'.

[1054] 10/35 pages of BSIE blog posts were collected and reviewed by the researcher. Due to the similarity of that content to the BSIE materials used in this analysis, these documents were not formally coded and do not appear in analysis. See discussion of skimming and scanning in 4.3.7 Reading process and quote selection.

blamed so infrequently—BSIE also did not blame in relation to the main topic they had in common with Leave.EU; it was anomalous.

Now that they had been identified, the same codes—'policy concerns' and 'political meta'— were used throughout the rest of analysis wherever blame occurred.[1055] So, for Leave.EU news and BSIE, *all* text was coded with these items; for the other pre-referendum materials, only text that also contained blame was coded with these items (see also the codebook at Annex: Codebook). It was on this basis that the following section is able to speak of what topics drew blame.

6.2.3.   What topics drew blame?

MaxQDA's "Code Relations Browser" was used to investigate where the items above, policy concerns and political meta, intersected with instances of blame. This meant it was possible to see what 'things' were blamed for—if something coded as 'blame' intersects with something coded as 'the economy', then somebody is being blamed for something to do with 'the economy'.

Table 17 shows the intersections of a given discourse with blame, in raw numerical instances and as a percentage of total instances of blame for a given source (BSIE, The Metro, MetroTalk, Farage and so on). BSIE blamed a total of twice: once in connection with business/industry/fisheries and once concerning the economy; 50% of BSIE's blame regarded the economy.[1056]

In the Metro, parties were 'blamed for' the economy (generally, and trade/foreign investment/Single Market), though this was overshadowed by blame for migration. The topic of migration appeared in MetroTalk as well, though jobs were more important, followed by crime then the economy generally. For Farage, migration was 'blamed for' far more than any other topic. Well behind were business/industry/fisheries and education/university/research/qualifications. Leave.EU news and media blamed for migration, followed by climate change (etc) then control (etc), while in their brochures and pamphlets, business/industry/fisheries preceded jobs then control (etc). Migration is consistently 'blamed for'.

[1055] See discussion of qualitative content analysis above (6.1.2 The meaning of numbers), and Altheide and Schneider, 'Ethnographic Content Analysis'; Altheide and Schneider, 'Process of Qualitative Document Analysis'. Data collection, analysis, and interpretation are circular, as is implied by the abductive research design of the current study.
[1056] See also section 6.3 Subjects and objects of blame below, where it is found that this 'blame' is non-agentic; a situation is blamed rather than an actor with 'agency'.

Table 17: Intersection of blame with 'policy' and 'political meta' discourses. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, and the highest three values in each column—excluding subtotals—are shaded.[1057]

	BSIE		The Metro		MetroTalk		Farage		LNAM		LBROCH		L.EU (All)		Ads		All pro-Leave		L.EU News	
DISCOURSES—POLICY CONCERNS																					
Business, industry, fisheries	1	50%	7	5%	5	6%	9	12%	26	5%	25	20%	51	8%	0	0%	60	8%	22	5.1%
Climate change / environment	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	4	5%	38	7%	4	3%	42	7%	1	2%	47	6%	26	6.0%
Crime	0	0%	2	1%	8	9%	3	4%	17	3%	2	2%	19	3%	1	2%	23	3%	13	3.0%
Economy	0	0%	12	9%	6	7%	1	1%	14	3%	8	7%	22	3%	3	6%	26	3%	11	2.5%
- Austerity, loans, financial crisis	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%	0	0%	25	5%	4	3%	29	5%	1	2%	30	4%	24	5.5%
- Currency (inc joining the Euro)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	3%	9	2%	0	0%	9	1%	0	0%	11	1%	9	2.1%
- London	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	6	1%	0	0%	6	1%	0	0%	6	1%	4	0.9%
- Other	0	0%	1	1%	1	1%	0	0%	1	0%	2	2%	3	0%	0	0%	3	0%	1	0.2%
- Taxes, VAT	0	0%	5	4%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	1	0%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0.0%
- Trade / (foreign) investment / Single Market	1	50%	13	9%	5	6%	2	3%	36	7%	10	8%	46	7%	3	6%	51	7%	33	7.6%
Subtotal Economy	*1*	*50%*	*31*	*22%*	*15*	*17%*	*5*	*7%*	*91*	*17%*	*25*	*20%*	*116*	*18%*	*7*	*13%*	*128*	*17%*	*82*	*18.9%*
Education / universities / research / qualifications	0	0%	3	2%	1	1%	5	7%	5	1%	0	0%	5	1%	0	0%	10	1%	4	0.9%
Identity / traditions / values / culture	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	13	2%	1	1%	14	2%	0	0%	15	2%	12	2.8%
Jobs (inc trade unions)	0	0%	8	6%	16	18%	1	1%	27	5%	17	14%	44	7%	4	8%	49	6%	25	5.8%
Migration	0	0%	31	22%	14	16%	25	34%	83	16%	9	7%	92	14%	8	15%	125	16%	54	12.4%
- Racism	0	0%	7	5%	2	2%	2	3%	4	1%	1	1%	5	1%	0	0%	7	1%	4	0.9%
- Physical safety and border (control)	0	0%	5	4%	0	0%	1	1%	21	4%	0	0%	21	3%	1	2%	23	3%	18	4.1%
- Turkey	0	0%	2	1%	1	1%	1	1%	5	1%	2	2%	7	1%	0	0%	8	1%	4	0.9%
- Terrorism	0	0%	3	2%	1	1%	3	4%	14	3%	0	0%	14	2%	0	0%	17	2%	9	2.1%
Subtotal Migration	*0*	*0%*	*48*	*34%*	*18*	*21%*	*32*	*44%*	*127*	*24%*	*12*	*10%*	*139*	*22%*	*9*	*17%*	*180*	*23%*	*89*	*20.5%*
Public services inc NHS	0	0%	5	4%	3	3%	0	0%	4	1%	1	1%	5	1%	6	11%	11	1%	4	0.9%
Quality of life	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0.0%
- Other	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	1	0%	4	8%	5	1%	0	0.0%
- Holidays	0	0%	1	1%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0.0%
- Housing	0	0%	2	1%	5	6%	0	0%	8	2%	0	0%	8	1%	0	0%	8	1%	7	1.6%
- Prices / wallet	0	0%	2	1%	0	0%	0	0%	3	1%	1	1%	4	1%	1	2%	5	1%	3	0.7%
- Salaries / wages	0	0%	1	1%	1	1%	1	1%	5	1%	1	1%	6	1%	1	2%	8	1%	4	0.9%
Subtotal Quality of Life	*0*	*0%*	*7*	*5%*	*7*	*8%*	*1*	*1%*	*16*	*3%*	*3*	*2%*	*19*	*3%*	*6*	*11%*	*26*	*3%*	*14*	*3.2%*
Rights and standards	0	0%	0	0%	5	6%	1	1%	12	2%	3	2%	15	2%	0	0%	16	2%	12	2.8%
Security	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	1	0%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0.0%
- Financial security	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%	1	0%	1	0.2%
- Social security / welfare (inc pension)	0	0%	2	1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%	1	0%	1	0.2%
Subtotal Security	*0*	*0%*	*2*	*1%*	*0*	*0%*	*0*	*0%*	*2*	*0%*	*1*	*1%*	*3*	*0%*	*0*	*0%*	*3*	*0%*	*2*	*0.5%*
Status / voice / influence / global representation	0	0%	2	1%	1	1%	1	1%	9	2%	1	1%	10	2%	0	0%	11	1%	9	2.1%
UK pays money to the EU	0	0%	4	3%	3	3%	3	4%	29	6%	2	2%	31	5%	13	25%	47	6%	24	5.5%
DISCOURSES—POLITICAL META																					
Accountability	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	10	2%	4	3%	14	2%	0	0%	15	2%	10	2.3%
Control / sovereignty / independence	0	0%	4	3%	1	1%	1	1%	38	7%	11	9%	49	8%	3	6%	53	7%	33	7.6%
Democracy / elections	0	0%	6	4%	0	0%	2	3%	26	5%	9	7%	35	5%	2	4%	39	5%	25	5.8%
Freedom / liberty	0	0%	7	5%	1	1%	0	0%	7	1%	1	1%	8	1%	1	2%	9	1%	6	1.4%
Populism (inc establishment conspiracies)	0	0%	4	3%	3	3%	3	4%	24	5%	0	0%	24	4%	0	0%	27	4%	22	5.1%
SUM	*2*		*140*		*87*		*73*		*521*		*122*		*643*		*53*		*769*		*434*	

Pro-Leave ads showed some minor differences, with 'UK pays money to EU' as the pre-eminent 'blamed for' item, followed by migration generally and public services including the NHS. This may reflect the progression of the Leave campaign—ads were from organisations including the official 'Vote Leave' campaign, which (as exemplified by the infamous side-of-the-bus slogan, shown in Figure 32) highlighted the connection between an ostensibly failing and definitely underfunded NHS with the UK's money instead being sent to Brussels.

[1057] The table's final row gives the 'sum' of discourse/blame intersections, and this sum appears higher than the total number of instances of blame given in 6.2.1 What blame was apparent prior to the referendum? Per section 6.1.2 The meaning of numbers, this is because one 'instance' of blame may contain multiple things for which a blamee is blamed.

Figure 32: The 'NHS' bus[1058]

For the remaining images and analysis in this section, subtotals for the categories of economy, migration, quality of life, and security were used to simplify comparison between parties; these subtotals are shown in Table 17 above.

Per Figure 33, there is clear alignment between what Leave.EU talked about generally, and what they blamed somebody for.[1059] The 'inner' ring of the donut chart indicates that the economy represented 19.7% of what was spoken about in the Leave.EU news sample, versus 18.9% of what was 'blamed for'; migration represented 18.4% of what was discussed and 20.5% of what was blamed for (outer ring). There were some shifts: a 4.9% drop in populism spoken about vs blamed for, a 3.4% increase in prevalence of climate change blame vs climate change discussion, and a 2.9% increase in blame for business/industry/fisheries over the prevalence of this topic overall. This suggests that migration, climate change, and business/industry/fisheries were considered particularly salient topics for blame.[1060] However for the most part, it appears that what Leave.EU talk about is what they blame about. This is unlike BSIE, who per the previous section, speak more about the economy than any other topic—but do not blame for it.

[1058] Image credit PA Drewett, 'Boris's Brexit Bus Should Have Said £350,000,000 a Year for NHS - Not a Week'.
[1059] Data for this figure is shown in Table 17 above for the blame intersections, with the prevalence of discourses available at Annex: What the campaigns talked about.
[1060] See also 5.2.4 Concurrent issues; note too that a climate change topic was selected for the vignettes used in this research.

Figure 33: Donut chart showing Leave.EU News discourse prevalence (inner ring) and intersection of that discourse with blame (outer ring)
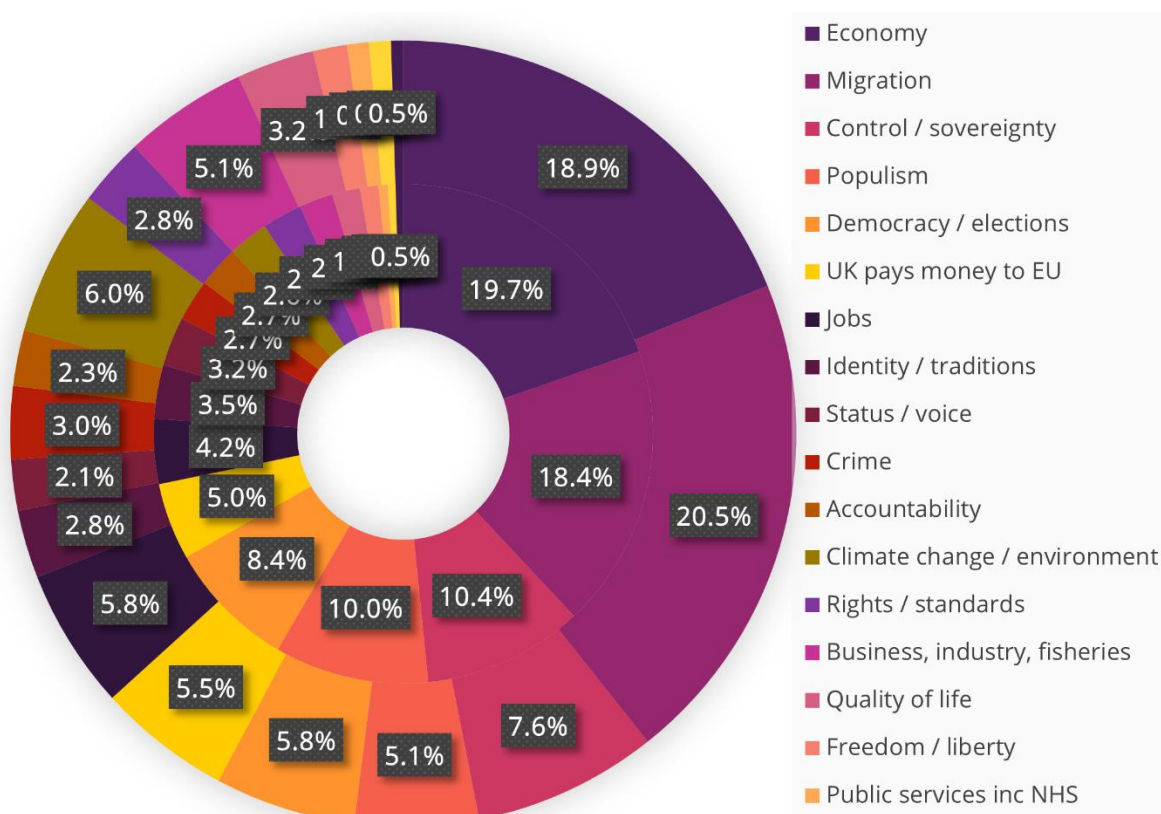
Are Leave.EU an outlier in what they find blameworthy, such that Leave.EU is as different to Farage or the public as it is to BSIE? Figure 34, showing data from Table 17, suggests not. It illustrates what is 'blamed for' for four sets of documents: Leave.EU (all content; outermost ring), MetroTalk comments, Farage for Breitbart, and The Metro articles (innermost ring).[1061]

'Migration' intersects with blame more than any other topic, for all parties. The economy, business/industry/fisheries, and jobs consistently take second to fourth place, albeit in a slightly different order.

Farage appears an outlier, as he blames about migration in nearly half of all instances (44%) in which he blames. Migration is clearly a pressing issue for him,[1062] and more so than for Leave.EU or in MetroTalk commentary. Migration is also important in The Metro articles about the EU/Brexit, with 34% of blame appearing in conjunction with 'migration'. Articles in The Metro appear similar in terms of blame to Farage's work for Breitbart. It is perhaps surprising that this would be the case, given The Metro is a mainstream commuter paper

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[1061] BSIE's documents have been excluded for the lack of blame, as have the pro-Leave ads for the reasons outlined in 6.2.1 What blame was apparent prior to the referendum?.
[1062] Farage's insistence upon migration as the issue that would win the referendum is clearly documented in Banks and Oakeshott, *The Bad Boys of Brexit*.

that professes its political neutrality,[1063] whereas Farage's pieces were written for the right-wing online Breitbart blog.[1064]

Figure 34: Donut chart showing what was 'blamed for' in Leave.EU (outermost ring), MetroTalk, Farage, and the Metro (innermost ring)
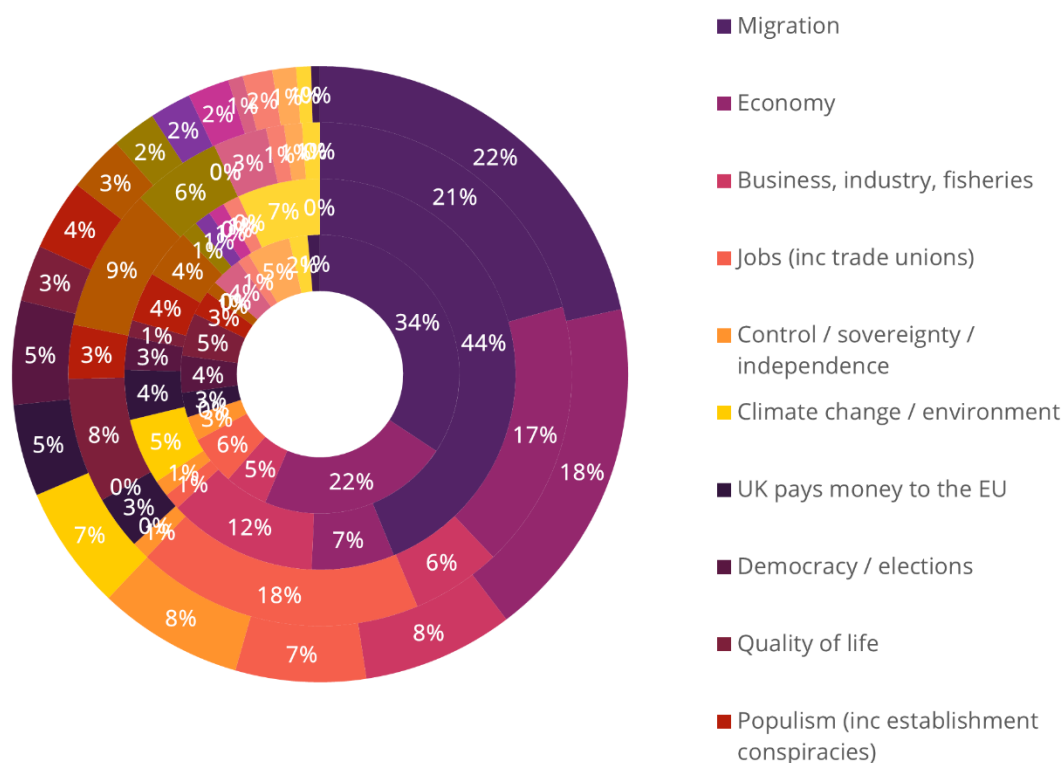
Another, even more striking similarity is that between blame in Leave.EU content and the public's comments in MetroTalk. There are several explanations for this: that Leave.EU truly was the "people's campaign", and it described the same things as blameworthy as did the public; that Leave.EU was entirely and factually accurate in terms of its blaming (not evaluated in the present research); that editors were biased towards Leave.EU claims in their selection of comments;[1065] or that the public had been informed by Leave.EU's

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[1063] "Along with the i, Metro is the only UK national newspaper to take a neutral political stance. In the run-up to the EU referendum, [editor Ted] Young says the Leave campaign wanted to take out a cover-wrap advert (worth £250,000). He says he said the only way the paper could do it was if Remain took out an advert as well. As it turned out, they did, meaning Metro made £500,000. … 'We don't want to upset our readers. The reason we are even handed is because we are a very broad church, I think we are a one-nation newspaper.'" Ponsford, 'Who Says Millennials Don't Read Newspapers?' Hameleers et al highlight that media may be biased towards populist frames as 'newsworthy', with journalists using similar frames and causal stories. June Woong Rhee similarly notes that "news texts construct a narrative representation of a situation featuring well-motivated agents, dramatic actions, background events, and possible implications". Even 'neutral' news may narrate causal stories that incorporate blame. Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, 'Selective Exposure to Populist Communication'; Rhee, 'Strategy and Issue Frames in Election Campaign Coverage', 28.

[1064] Sources for media bias: Thompson, 'Interactive Media Bias Chart'. used in conjunction with Smith, 'How Left or Right-Wing Are the UK's Newspapers?' and Fighting Fake, 'Fighting Fake'.; see also Greenberg, *Sandworm*; Marantz, *Antisocial*.

[1065] It is not clear how comments were selected to be published, and whether for instance there was editorial policy applied that ensured an approximate 50/50 split between pro-Remain and pro-Leave voices. The researcher attempted to contact the Metro editorial team via phone, email, and social media, over the

campaign (and perhaps that of UKIP beforehand), and thus had been educated about what issues were blameworthy. I.e. The public's performance of blame could be an *effect* of blame from pro-Leave campaigns, and this notion of 're-blaming' is considered in E3.[1066]

<div align="center">❖</div>

The most important outcome of this subsection is that all parties other than BSIE, including the newspaper The Metro and the public per commentary in MetroTalk, found broadly similar things blameworthy, and blamed for them. This indicates that BSIE is an outlier in their lack of blame—even though they frequently spoke about the 'economy',[1067] they only blamed in connection with it once. This, and the implications thereof, are discussed in E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation. However, while this subsection gives an overview of what blame was 'done' and what it was 'about', it does not give an indication as to who the subjects and objects of blame were. In these texts, was it just the EU that was blamed for the items above, or were others also involved? Who were the blamees, and potential villains? Who were their victims? And who were the beneficiaries of their nefarious deeds? This is the task of the following section.

6.3. Subjects and objects of blame

This section concerns itself with the subjects and objects of blame, and particularly those actors that appear 'within' blame itself. In the definition of blame, *blame is a discursive practice whereby a speaker claims that a party did, or has done, a harmful thing*, there are already two explicit roles: the speaker as blamer, and the 'party' doing the harmful thing as blamee. A 'harmful' thing is also done *to* somebody—the victim. There may be beneficiaries, who benefit from the situation.[1068]

The 'blamers' in this selection are constrained by what data sources were used, per 4.4 Data sources and 5.3 The Brexit assemblage. Other than the pro-Leave parties, 'BSIE' is included as one 'speaker' who does not tend to use blame; the notion of who speaks and who does not is discussed in E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation. Blamees and victims can however be identified in pre-referendum texts, as can—rarely—beneficiaries.[1069]

It becomes quickly apparent that the EU is the most common blamee in the analysed texts, though other blamees appear—including the UK government. These two 'groups' are shown on the Brexit assemblage diagram in E1, as are the 'speakers' doing the blame in this section. MaxQDA is used to identify where blamees and discourses per the previous section

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course of more than a year. There was no response and thus editorial policy with regard to comment selection could not be established.

[1066] As a form of endogenous blame provoked by exogenous blame—I.e. we hear blame from an external third party, then generate blame in response.

[1067] See previous section.

[1068] See also 2.4.3 Blame for 'being' vs blame for 'doing'.

[1069] See also 4.3.1 Data analysis framework.

intersect (I.e. overlap);[1070] this shows what blamees are blamed 'for', and the EU is revealed to be blamed for a wide range of issues. Thirdly, victims are identified, with the UK/Britain (as reflected in the 'public' part of the Brexit assemblage) the most common victim of harmful activities; a relationship between the EU as blamee and UK as victim arises. Lastly, an investigation of beneficiaries shows that the EU were (allegedly) in alignment with a range of elite 'others' (per the assemblage) when harming the UK.[1071]

This section performs three functions: verifying that the EU was blamed in the course of the Brexit campaign, enabling meaningful discussion of the EU being made a villain in the specific context of the Brexit campaign; refining research design through informing survey-experiment and focus group/interview design; and providing context for later discussions of contestation.[1072]

6.3.1.   Who was to blame?

Blamees identified in the analysed texts were the EU (including its component institutions, specific figures, and policies), UK-based political parties (including the Prime Minister, Leave and Remain campaigners, and public servants), parts of the EU/EEC[1073] (member states and their leaders), non-agents and situations (including Brexit fears, climate change, and other non-agents), and 'other' (academia, the 'elite', ISIS and terrorists, media, migrants/the migrant crisis, other countries including their leaders or policies, and the people of the UK). As shown in Table 18, it was not just the EU that was being blamed—even in texts from The Metro, which were specifically selected for discussing (relations with) the EU.[1074]

Table 18: Relative frequency of blamees per source. Columns add to 100%; all instances of blame are counted, rather than the number of documents containing blame, for accurate weighting.

	BSIE	The Metro	MetroTalk	Farage	LNAM	LBROCH	L(ALL)	Ads
∨ BLAME								
> Part of EU/EEC		0.8%	2.0%	8.7%	4.5%	2.4%	4.2%	
> Political party		41.0%	49.0%	33.7%	17.3%	4.8%	15.3%	1.8%
> EU		35.2%	21.6%	31.5%	66.1%	73.8%	67.3%	96.4%
> Other		7.4%	21.6%	23.9%	10.1%	16.7%	11.2%	
> Non-agent / situation	100.0%	15.6%	5.9%	2.2%	2.0%	2.4%	2.1%	1.8%
# N = Documents	25 (4.1%)	204 (33.4%)	45 (7.4%)	43 (7.0%)	281 (46.1%)	6 (1.0%)	287 (47.0%)	6 (1.0%)

Per 6.2.1 What blame was apparent prior to the referendum?, BSIE only blamed twice in all documents; Table 19 shows that this blame was of a non-agent. Indeed, the only thing BSIE blame is Brexit itself—and the fears that relate to the upcoming referendum.[1075] Texts from

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[1070] See 6.1.2 The meaning of numbers.

[1071] See also 5.3 The Brexit assemblage.

[1072] See E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation, 4.2.5 The research spiral, 4.4.1 Survey-experiment, 4.4.2 Focus groups and interviews.

[1073] 'EEC' = European Economic Community. This was a precursor to the EU, such that the EU of 2016 contained all members of the EEC as well as additional Member States. I.e. Reference to the 'EEC' in this and other labels in this chapter make no substantive difference. See Annex: Codebook.

[1074] Per 4.4 Data sources, articles collected from The Metro concerned Brexit, the EU, or Europe.

[1075] "[T]he planned June referendum on European Union membership has already created uncertainty for investors" Britain Stronger In Europe, 'What the Experts Say on Economy', 3.; "56% of small and medium-

The Metro and MetroTalk comments likewise blame non-agents,[1076] whereas this is barely apparent in materials from pro-Leave actors (Farage, Leave.EU, pro-Leave ads). Again, the 'Remain' campaign blames differently to the public and ostensibly neutral parties, and very differently to pro-Leave campaign.[1077]

Several other trends become apparent: in The Metro and MetroTalk, where somebody is blamed, that party tends to be a UK political party (e.g. the 'Government', David Cameron). Farage blames *UK* political actors first, followed by blaming the EU. Leave.EU materials and the pro-Leave ads are dominated by blame of the EU. This is presumably because they were staying 'on topic'—blaming the EU to get out of the EU. There was little motivation to blame other parties, as this would distract—and possibly detract—from their central message.

'Zooming in' (Table 19), the 'EU' in the form of its institutions, Eurocrats, 'Brussels' and so on is a favoured blamee for all pro-Leave parties, with Leave.EU brochures additionally targeting specific EU policies.[1078] The UK government is a favoured blamee for the Metro, MetroTalk, and Farage. The 'elite', with 9.5% of all blame in Leave.EU's brochures, are popular blamees, while in MetroTalk, migrants/the migrant crisis are frequently blamed.

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sized businesses say the uncertainty surrounding a possible British withdrawal from the EU is holding growth back" Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Small Businesses Are Stronger in Europe', 2.

[1076] E.g. "I'm frightened by the dangerous wave of ignorance, beligerence and bigotry that is drowning this country."—'ignorance, belligerence, and bigotry' (blamee) are to blame for 'drowning' (harmful act) 'this country' (UK as victim) (MetroTalk, June 22). "one of the reasons Welsh steel was suffering was the strength of the pound"—'the strength of the pound' (blamee) is causing the 'suffering' (harm) of 'Welsh steel' (victim). Farage, 'Why For The First Time In 29 Question Time Appearances, I Applauded Another Member Of The Panel'.

[1077] See also E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.

[1078] EU policies are understood as agentic because they are *done*, created and implemented—and by the EU. They don't 'just happen'.

Table 19: Blamees per document set, as a percentage of overall blame from that source

	BSIE	The Metro	MetroTalk	Farage	LNAM	LBROCH	L(ALL)	Ads	Total
BLAME									
Part of EU/EEC		0.8%	2.0%		2.5%	1.2%	2.3%		1.9%
Other European leaders				8.7%	2.0%	1.2%	1.9%		2.0%
Political party			3.9%		0.7%		0.6%		0.6%
Remain campaign(er)		3.3%	2.0%	1.1%	2.7%	2.4%	2.6%		2.5%
Leave campaign(er)		9.8%	2.0%	3.3%	1.3%		1.1%		2.0%
UK Government or party (inc individuals, civil service)		19.7%	37.3%	23.9%	5.2%	1.2%	4.5%	1.8%	8.3%
Cameron (inc implied)		8.2%	3.9%	5.4%	7.4%	1.2%	6.4%		6.2%
EU									
EU institution(s) Eurocrats Brussels ECJ euro		23.8%	15.7%	19.6%	35.7%	34.5%	35.5%	69.1%	34.0%
EU policies (regulations, red tape, rules)		6.6%		1.1%	13.9%	29.8%	16.4%	9.1%	13.6%
Implied EU		4.9%	5.9%	6.5%	15.1%	9.5%	14.2%	18.2%	12.7%
Specific EU figure (e.g. Juncker)				4.3%	1.3%		1.1%		1.2%
Other		0.8%		1.1%					0.1%
Academia				5.4%	0.2%		0.2%		0.5%
Elite inc rich, banks, experts, IMF, corporations		3.3%	2.0%	4.3%	2.9%	9.5%	4.0%		3.7%
ISIS, terrorists					0.2%	1.2%	0.4%		0.3%
Media		1.6%	2.0%	3.3%	1.6%		1.3%		1.4%
Migrants, migrant crisis (inc implied)		0.8%	11.8%	5.4%	2.9%		2.5%		2.8%
Other country, leader, policy		0.8%	2.0%	2.2%	2.0%	6.0%	2.6%		2.3%
People of the UK (inc we)			3.9%	2.2%	0.2%		0.2%		0.4%
Non-agent / situation									
Brexit fears, referendum	100.0%	8.2%	3.9%		0.2%		0.2%		1.2%
Climate change / weather / flooding					0.9%		0.8%	1.8%	0.7%
Other non-agent		7.4%	2.0%	2.2%	0.9%	2.4%	1.1%		1.7%
Σ SUM	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
# N = Documents	25 (4.1%)	204 (33.4%)	45 (7.4%)	43 (7.0%)	281 (46.1%)	6 (1.0%)	287 (47.0%)	6 (1.0%)	610 (100.0%)

Considering just MetroTalk comments per Table 20 below, there is some difference between people who were identifiably pro-Leave and those who were non-Leave or where it was unclear.[1079] For pro-Leave commentators, UK political actors and the EU alike were consistent blamees, while non-Leave commentators predominantly blamed UK political actors (60.8%). That is, pro-Leave commenters blamed the EU and non-Leave commenters did not; this trend is replicated in E3: Effects.

Overall, while there were multiple blamees present in the collected texts, the EU is the primary blamee for the Leave campaign, with the UK government also created as blamee and potential villain. For this reason, vignettes used in the survey-experiment in this research to evaluate the vilifying effects of blame include both blame-EU and blame-UK variants; as the EU is the most common blamee, it provides a focal point for examining effects in E3. Questioning in the FGIs likewise focused on what the *EU* had done.[1080] 'Performance' of blame in the Brexit campaign thus informed research methods in following stages.

[1079] Commentators were identified as likely pro-Leave where their comment was in support of pro-Leave actors, where they advocated for voting Leave, or where they criticised Remain supporters (but not Leavers). 81 statements were from clear Leavers, and 146 from non-Leavers/unclear. 50% of instances of blame in MetroTalk were from pro-Leave speakers, despite this group contributing only 36% of comments overall. No other difference between Leaver/Remainer blaming frequency was found in the present research; see Figure 44 on page 1.

[1080] See 4.4.2 Focus groups and interviews and Annex: FGI questions.

Table 20: MetroTalk commenters and the incidence of blame. Prepared using collapsed codes.

MetroTalk - Speaker	Blamee	Segments	Percent
Leave	Migrants, migrant crisis	5	10.9%
	Part of EU (+)	1	2.2%
	UK political party (+)	9	19.6%
	EU (+)	8	17.4%
	Subtotal	*23*	*50.0%*
Non-Leave / unclear	Political party (+)	14	30.4%
	EU (+)	2	4.3%
	Other (+)	4	8.7%
	Non-agent / situation (+)	3	6.5%
	Total	*46*	*100.0%*

6.3.2.   What were they blamed for?

The below Sankey diagram shows the relation between particular blamees and what they are blamed for, for all sources combined (Figure 35).[1081] This was established by locating the intersections between instances of 'blame' and other discourses as outlined in the previous section.[1082] It becomes quickly apparent that the EU is not *just* the most popular blamee; it is blamed in connection with a wide variety of things—particularly the economy, migration, business/industry/fisheries, and payment of money from the UK—in short, all the items that were 'blamed for' in the previous section are blamed upon the EU. UK political parties are blamed in connection with migration and the economy.[1083]

[1081] Collapsed codes were used due to software limitations (see 6.1.2 The meaning of numbers). Leave.EU blamed the EU for migration (13% instances of blame), the economy (11.8%), business/industry/fisheries (7.1%), control/sovereignty/independence (6.4%) and jobs (5.6%). Farage blamed UK political parties (13%) and the EU (11.6%) alike for migration, blaming the EU for business/industry/fisheries (7.2%) and parts of the EU/EEC for migration (7.2%). See Annex: Who is blamed for what? for full data.

[1082] See 6.2 Pre-referendum performance of blame.

[1083] E3: Effects makes it apparent that blaming is a 'normal' thing to do; spontaneous (endogenous) blaming is performed by study participants after reading a vignette containing no blame. However, who is blamed depends to a large extent on existing beliefs and allegiances. Counter-blaming as blame reallocation is discussed in E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.

Figure 35: Sankey diagram showing blamees and what they are blamed for (collapsed codes)[1084]
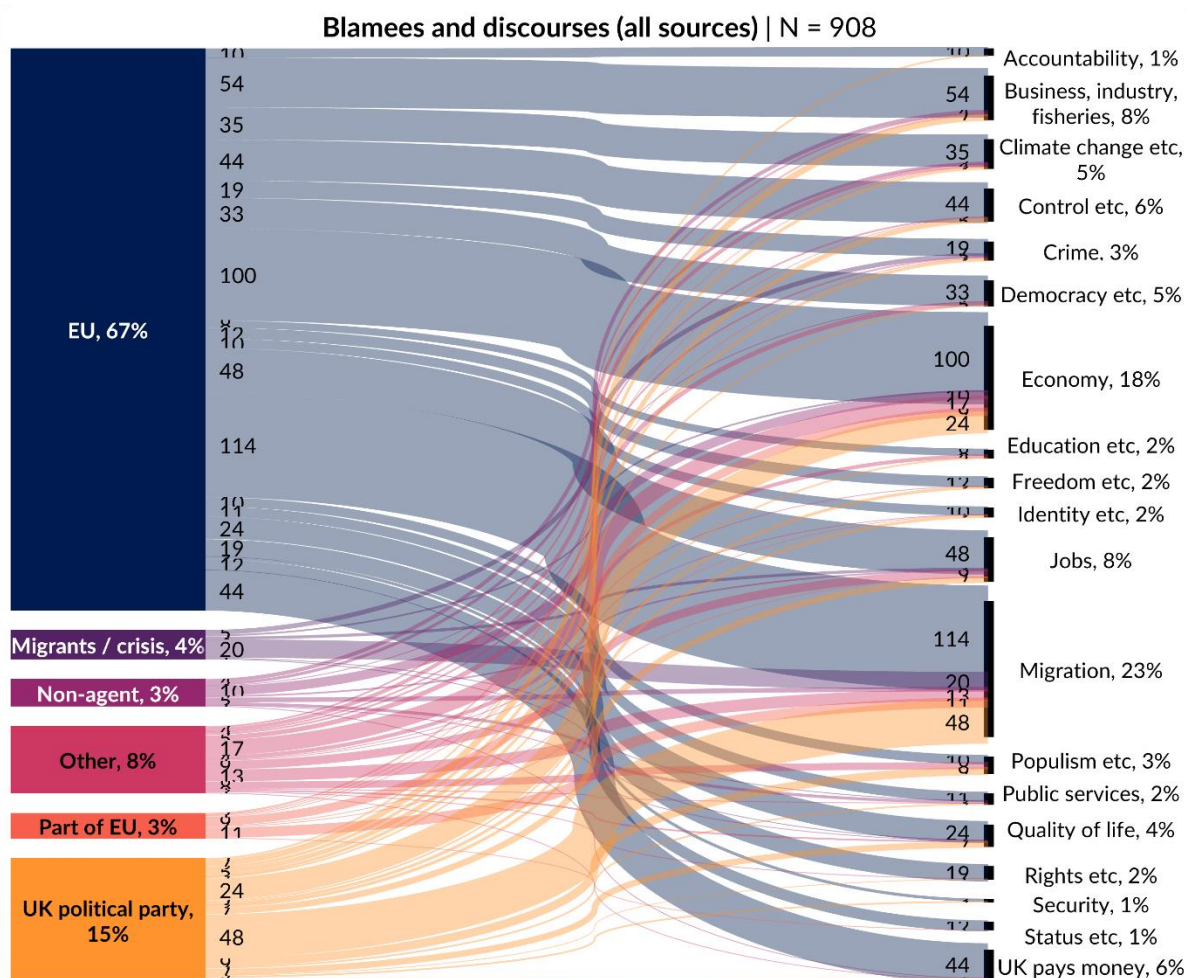
Climate change/the environment was one issue for which the EU was blamed, albeit infrequently. Blaming the EU for something in this area would therefore be ecologically valid for the present research, while research participants would be less familiar with the EU as potentially 'responsible' for something in this area than they would be for the economy, migration and so on. For this reason, due to ongoing salience, and thanks to the availability of a suitable text from Leave.EU that could be adapted, an environmental issue was selected for the survey-experiment vignette used to investigate the vilifying effects of blame in E3.

6.3.3.   Who were their victims?

Figure 36 shows the intersections between blame of a particular blamee and victims. The UK/Britain is consistently the victim (63%) in blameworthy situations, whether they are the victim of the EU, migrants, non-agents, constituent parts of the EU, UK political actors, or others. There is a clear trend between blaming the EU, and the suffering of the UK. In the figure, 'EU*' on the victim side includes the EU itself, members of the European public, parts of the EU such as member states, and EU leaders.

[1084] Several names are abbreviated so they are not cut off.

Figure 36: Sankey diagram showing intersections between blamees and particular victims (collapsed codes)
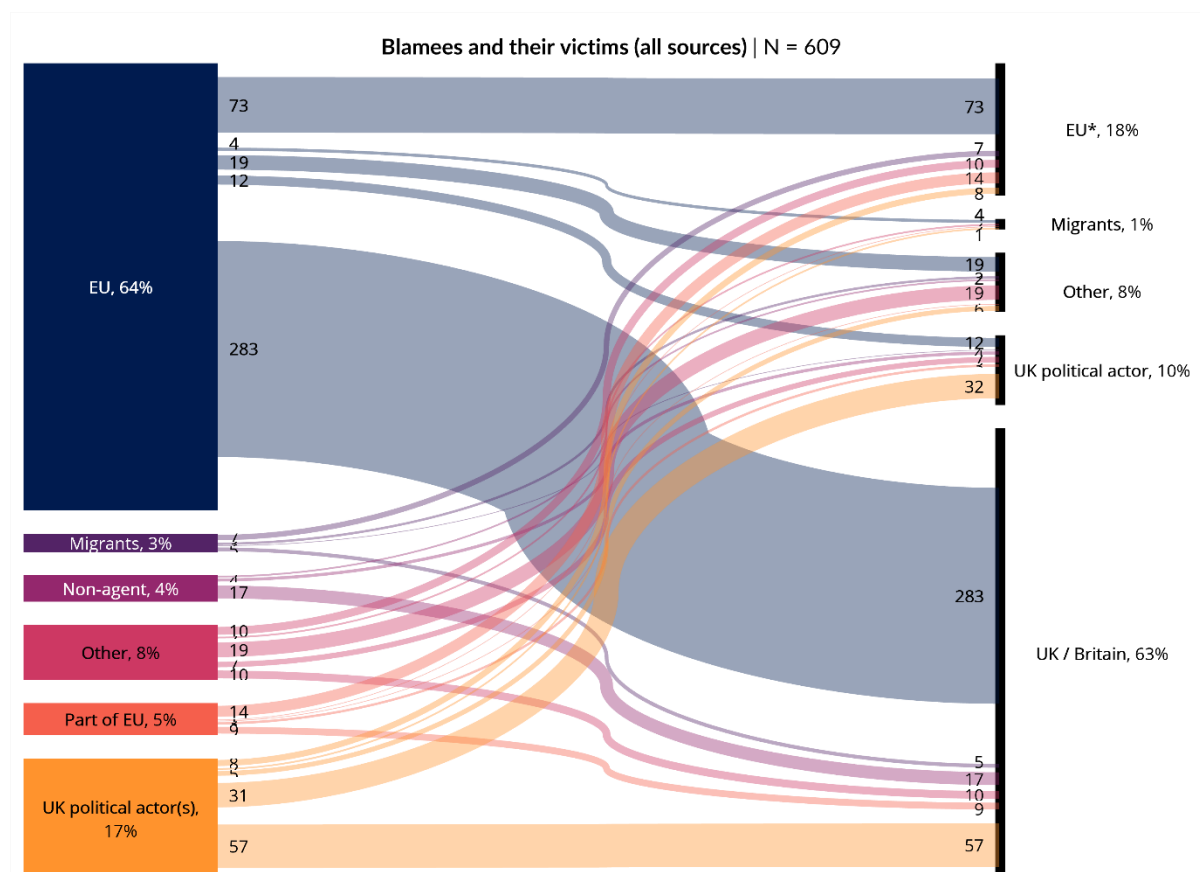
Other notable perpetrator-victim relationships are between the EU as blamee and parts of the EU itself (e.g. member states) as victims;[1085] and UK political actors harming the UK/Britain or other UK political actors, though this is less frequent than the EU blamee/UK victim relationship. The UK as frequent victim is selected as an appropriate and salient victim for use in the survey-experiment vignette, while in the FGIs, participants could supply their own victims.

6.3.4.   Who were the beneficiaries?

Relationships between blamees and beneficiaries were mapped through identifying the intersection of blame against one party (the blamee) and benefits accorded to another party (the beneficiary). The smaller number of intersections compared to the preceding sections permitted for more fine-grained analysis. In the resultant figure (Figure 37), EU blamees are coloured dark blue, parts of the EU (e.g. Germany) pink, UK political actors orange, and 'others' yellow.

[1085] See also 6.4 Post-referendum performance of blame and discussion of Greece and other Member States as victim in E3: Effects and E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.

Figure 37: Sankey diagram of intersection of blamee with beneficiaries. Does not use collapsed codes
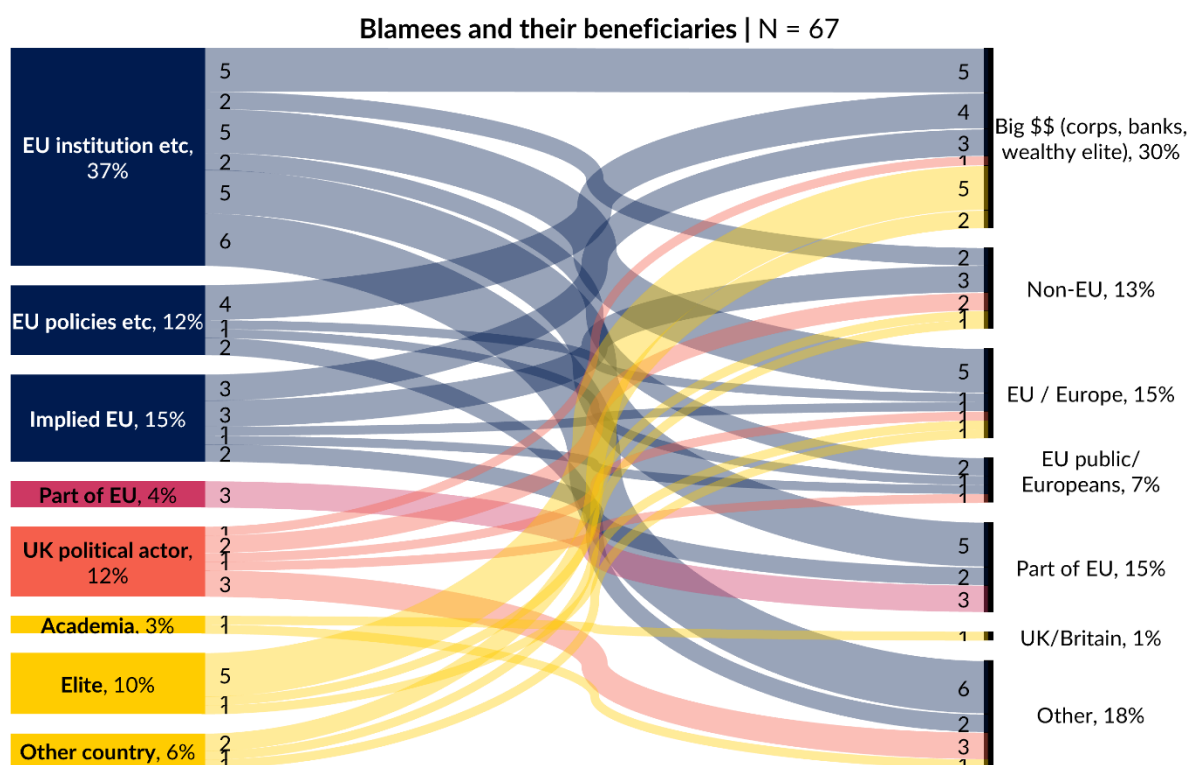
From this, it appears that parties such as the EU, foreign countries, and international 'elite' are in league, to the benefit of big money/elite. This is apparent in the text, where for example Arron Banks claims that "The failed political classes of Europe sit on the gravy train, in league with big corporate business, which flourish while small business is regulated to death".[1086] The EU is likewise working to the benefit of itself (EU/Europe), the European public, and non-UK parts of the EU,[1087] while the UK/Britain does not benefit from the EU's dastardly activities at all. That is, the EU (and others) are incurring harm, and it is never to the UK's benefit.

There were only 67 intersections of blame and explicit beneficiary, representing a maximum of 7.9% instances of blame.[1088] While it could be that the presence of beneficiaries makes blame more outrageous ('not only are they harming us, they're doing it for somebody else!'), the relative infrequency of beneficiaries in the analysed texts meant this factor was not included in later examination of effects. The survey-experiment vignette therefore does not include beneficiaries.

<div align="center">❖</div>

[1086] Banks, 'Over 60,000 Supporters Are in the Know!'

[1087] E.g. "The EU has had 7 years to solve the Eurozone crisis and has enforced austerity on some of the poorest states, such as Greece, which under its current deal will remain in debt to richer EU countries like Germany indefinitely." Leave.EU, 'Time for a School of EU Disintegration Studies'.

[1088] The figure would be lower where instances of blame intersect with multiple beneficiaries.

Overall, this section has found that the EU was the most frequent blamee in the analysed materials, with the UK its most common victim (and the most common victim overall). It verifies the EU as blamee and potential villain in the Brexit case study, and informs design of the focus groups/interviews and survey-experiment alike.

6.4. Post-referendum performance of blame

The previous sections have considered what blame was performed prior to the Brexit referendum; this section instead focuses on what blame was remembered or reiterated afterwards. Focus group and interview ('FGI') participants were asked what the EU was blamed for during the Brexit campaign and how they felt about it, enabling them to put their experiences into their own words.[1089] This was vital to revealing the causal powers of blame[1090] in following chapters. Participants were asked about the EU specifically, as the predominant blamee in pre-referendum materials.

Recall that exogenous blame is third-party blame, as when a politician blames somebody and an audience[1091] hears or reads that blame, and endogenous blame is blame arising within the audience—as when a person encounters a harmful act and blames somebody for it. That person could well encounter the harmful act because they hear about it from a third party; blame can spread from speaker to speaker. In this section, endogenous blame arising within the audience is referred to as (re)blame, as participants may 're' blame the same party as did the Leave campaign, or blame somebody else—if they blame endogenously at all.

This section has two major purposes: (1) verifying that members of the public consumed third-party blame from the Leave campaign through being able to recall it—even nearly four years afterwards[1092]—and (2) identifying differences in endogenous blame that arise as a result of that consumption. The first addresses whether blame was just 'on the page' in the sense of being something Leave campaigners did, or whether it was effective in circulating among the public.[1093] If blame was ineffective in reaching—or being reiterated by—the public, then vilification via blame would be limited to Leave campaigners and would not have taken place at a wider scale. The second helps identify points of contestation and

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[1089] See also Annex: FGI questions.

[1090] See discussion of 'causal power' in 4.2 Research design.

[1091] As a group of 'receivers'; anybody who encounters the blame, whether or not they were the recipients intended by the speaker. See also 2.1.1 Aristotle, audiences, and proofs.

[1092] At the time data was collected, Brexit had not yet 'happened'. Related issues may have remained salient, particularly in the pro-Brexit social media groups that were one of the sites of participant recruitment (4.4.2.e) Participant recruitment). The 'timing' of EU-blaming is not considered problematic, as only its effects—including endogenous (re)blaming that would lend itself to circulation—are under investigation. See also discussion in 7.2.1 Unveiling blame-villain links through the FGIs.

[1093] The Leave campaign is not understood as the 'only' source of EU blaming; they simply had a public platform and funding to reach wide audiences. It is possible that blame emerged in members of the public and was then given a wider platform by the Leave campaign.

disagreement, as well as emerging additional blameworthy items—particularly, the victimisation of Leavers.[1094]

Analysis required identifying blame—whether exogenous or endogenous—in FGI responses, then grouping it into general topics of 'what was blamed for' (e.g. the economy), as in the preceding sections. Complete FGI transcripts were next reviewed for the presence of those topics elsewhere to locate any other ways in which a given interlocutor constructed them, in case for example they elsewhere credited the EU in connection with that topic, contesting the blame. Typically though, when participants were asked to recall blame from the campaign, they would repeat it and immediately say whether they agreed or disagreed and why.[1095] Quotations are used throughout this section to illustrate blame, and have been selected such that all FGI participants are represented, that key ideas are conveyed—whether or not they support the present research—and ultimately, with a view to presenting participants' opinions as they may have wished them to be presented.[1096] Stutters and fillers have been removed, and asterisks (*) indicate speaker emphasis.

FGI participants included seven women and eleven men; five students (three undergraduate, two graduate) and at least one other person with a graduate-level education; four people who appeared to be in their 20s, four in their 30s, five in their 40s–50s, two in their 60s, and three over 70 years of age. There were two widows; three political activists (a former Labour campaigner; Brexit Party candidate; Vote Leave organiser); only one visibly non-white person; one person who identified themselves as LGBT; two people who work in IT,[1097] and one unemployed person who otherwise works in STEM. One person living in Wales and one originally from Wales were included; the only person in Northern Ireland was originally from Australia, as was one person in England; two people lived in Scotland, with two participants self-identifying as Scottish and another Scottish accent present in the sample; everybody else was English. All names have been changed.[1098]

This section illustrates that participants recalled blame from the Leave campaign; however, unlike in the campaign itself, FGI participants contested the blame, for example by pointing out mitigating circumstances.[1099] This could be expected in that the Leave campaign would have little reason to hedge their blame, as the more direct blame is, the more it would help them to achieve their goal of a Leave vote; on the other hand, it illustrates that people do not just blindly believe exogenous blame, even where they may be sympathetic to the cause of the blamer.[1100] Some participants are even described as 'low-blame'; they are able to

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[1094] See also E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.
[1095] See 4.3.2 Recognising blame, 4.3.6 Resistance and contestation.
[1096] Watts, 'User Skills for Qualitative Analysis'. See also 4.3.7 Reading process and quote selection.
[1097] This is unsurprising, given people were recruited via an online survey. See also 4.4 Data sources.
[1098] See also Confidential Annex: Focus group and interview participants and 4.4.2 Focus groups and interviews.
[1099] See also 4.3.6 Resistance and contestation.
[1100] Confirmation bias does however appear strong in circumscribing the effects of blame; see E3: Effects. Christopher Hood, in considering blame, talked about 'vindictive' and 'sympathetic' blamers, with a vindictive public understanding politicians as to blame where those politicians had direct control over the

reiterate the exogenous blame from the Leave campaign, but do not (re)blame anybody themselves.

For instance, Jamal was able to recall and repeat blame from the Leave campaign, but did not appear to endorse it. He couched it in modifying language and specified that it was not 'his' view, but 'possibly' that of others:

> "It's kind of difficult because I suppose some of the things are kind of specific to certain people. And they wouldn't necessarily be my views, but I can see why they would be affecting people, so I suppose immigration from Eastern European countries to the UK. I think a lot people maybe think that that is kind of unchecked, or people are taking their jobs, that kind of thing. I mean personally, I don't have an issue with that myself."

He said that "I don't really have anything specifically against the EU", and that his vote wasn't because the EU had done something specifically "bad", but because he "saw it as a kind of an opportunity to maybe try something different." Jamal did not appear to have the rancour against the EU that some of the other participants had. That is, a person who did not believe exogenous blame that the EU was truly at fault did not appear to feel it was a villain, supporting the present research.

Sam was able to recall blame from the campaigns, but stressed that "These aren't *my* opinions". Other than when specifically asked what the EU was blamed for, Sam focused on the European Central Bank (for linking bail-outs to austerity measures), though indicating that they had to take measures "out of necessity", hedging this with "I guess" and indicating that "you've got the complications". Like Jamal, Sam seemed indisposed to blaming others, or *believing* exogenous blame of others, and again like Jamal, did not seem to have strong emotions for or against the EU.

Such 'low-blame' participants are particularly helpful when considering vilification via blame, as with them, it is clear that they are reiterating exogenous blame but not blaming endogenously. For the other participants, it is difficult to disentangle whether they are recalling and repeating blame from the campaign, or simply believe the EU *should* be blamed for a given item and blame endogenously. For that reason, after showing that participants could reiterate campaign ideas, this section largely refers to (re)blaming, encapsulating both possibilities.

6.4.1.   Recalling what the campaigns talked about

In the focus groups and interviews, participants were asked specifically what the EU should be blamed for. The initial phrasing for this question, used at the in-person London focus group, was:

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harmful event. In this typology, Leavers would presumably be 'vindictive' against the EU, and it is not clear whether their nuanced approach to blaming of the EU is because of the EU's lack of direct control, or because Hood did not test his ideas: he instead theorised what endogenous blame the public would generate in response to a harmful act done by a politician. Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game'.

> "Think back to the EU referendum campaign. There were a number of things the EU was blamed for. Please work together to come up with a list of as many of these things as you can remember."

This proved unsuccessful in that London focus group participants went on to produce a poster of *all* the issues they could remember arising in the campaign, rather than just those things the EU was blamed for. Phrasing was later amended to "Think back to the EU referendum campaign. What were some of the problems with the EU raised in the campaign?", with the optional follow-up "What was or should the EU be blamed for?".[1101] This was more successful, presumably because it is easier to think of 'bad things the EU has done' than think explicitly in terms of blame.

Despite the miscommunication, the resultant poster (Figure 38) is interesting in that it closely reflects what the campaigns talked about, including content from the Remain side, even nearly four years after the fact. That is, campaign messaging appeared effective (or the campaigns were saying what 'the people' really thought). This is important, because it implies that blame was not just 'on the page'; it was 'heard', and potentially spread to others.[1102] Vilification via blame could then 'go viral'.

Note that despite the presence of 'Turkey', 'house prices', 'border control', and 'pressure on social services', each ostensibly linked with immigration, 'immigration' itself was not listed on the poster. There appeared to be strong reluctance in the group to name this as an issue, presumably due to the potential for being labelled 'racist' as discussed further below.[1103] However, following a comment from a participant that the poster was "quite balanced" and an extended pause, four participants began to cross-talk about security, cross-border movements, community change, and terrorism. At this point the rest of the group looked at myself as the researcher, and once it was clear I was not going to sanction or condone them for explicitly discussing immigration, there seemed to be an aura of relief: the group as a whole relaxed, and began to discuss immigration and its implications in detail. This speaks to the effectiveness of the researcher in creating an empathetic safe space for discussion in the FGI, as well as the censoring effects of a group. It is with a view to preventing such censorship that the focus groups were designed to include only people from one camp—Leave.[1104] Reluctance to discuss immigration was not apparent in the other FGIs.

[1101] See Annex: FGI questions.

[1102] See also 7.3.3 (Re)blaming in the .

[1103] See 6.4.3 Victimisation of Leavers.

[1104] See also discussion around the role of the researcher and generation of empathetic spaces in 4.4.2 Focus groups and interviews.

Figure 38: Poster of referendum issues created by London focus group. While the 'side of the bus' message that £350 million was being sent to the EU was pre-eminent, the EU's growth including Turkey's potential accession was listed as a secondary issue. Other issues included the idea of 'empire' and expansion, the concept of the EU as Armageddon, the Brussels 'gravy train', and the UK's global voice. Pro-Remain messaging also appears, including access to Erasmus and scientific funding, access to labour from the EU, and the importance of being in a trade block. Credit was given to the EU for subsidising parts of the UK.[1105]
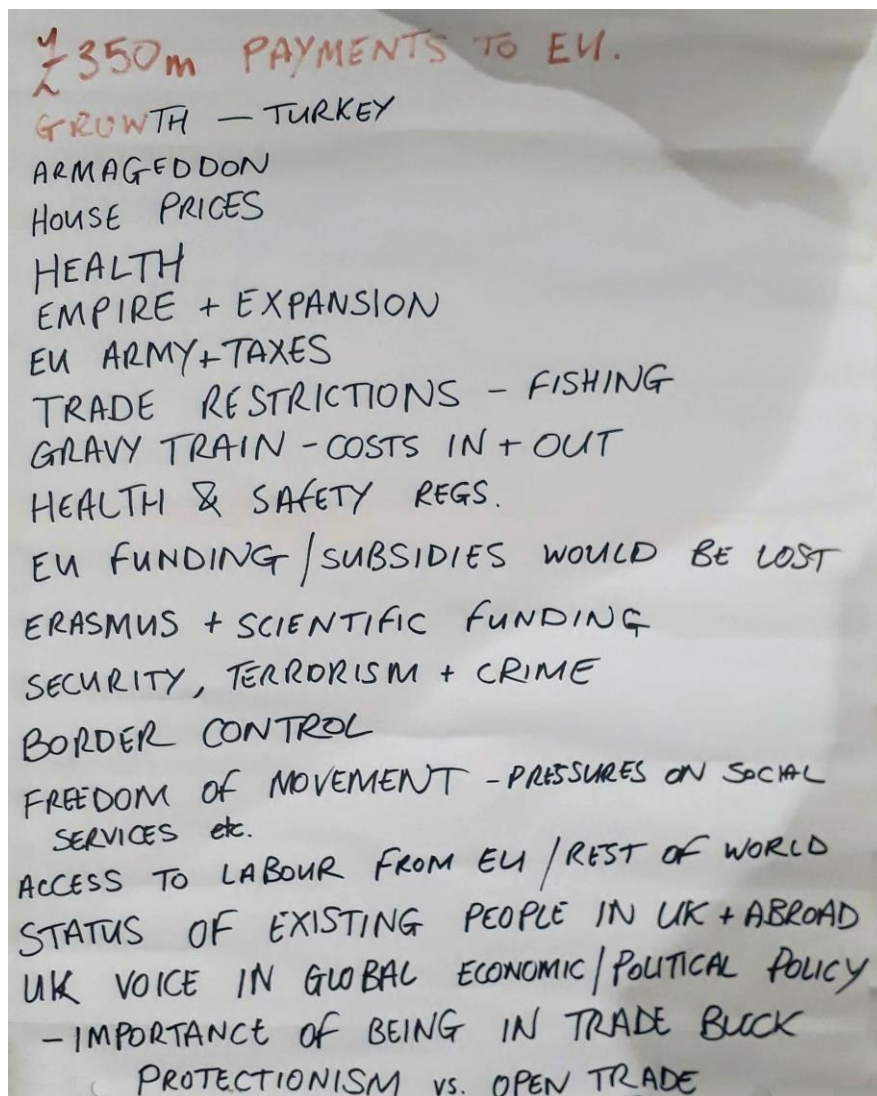
6.4.2.   What was the EU at fault for?

FGI interlocutors (re)blamed the EU for a wide range of things that closely match what was 'blamed for' in the pre-referendum materials. Particularly apparent were the economy, migration, and 'doing the wrong thing' by industries and workers. (Re)blame, whether an effect of recalling Leave campaign items or recalling earlier anti-EU discourses,[1106] also

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[1105] See discussion of credit in 9.3.1 Crediting the EU.

[1106] It is not necessarily important in this research that FGI participants could have been exposed to anti-EU blaming prior to the official Leave campaign; more important is the link between EU-blaming and vilification, noting that blame was particularly evident *during* the campaign per the previous chapter. Further, while there may have been additional items for which the EU was blamed—such as the memorable 'bendy bananas'—the items raised in the FGIs largely reflected campaign discourses. Lastly, triangulation of FGI and SE data allows verification of the blame and vilification link in the specific case study of Brexit. See also 4.5.3 Validity.

appeared in connection with the bendiness of bananas, the lack of a minimum wage in the EU, EU internet policies and regulation, the 'revival of the far-right' (as the fault of the EU), environmental destruction, nepotism, and (over)regulation of London as a financial hub.[1107] The economy, migration, and business/industry/fisheries are focused on below, as issues drawing frequent blame in pre-referendum campaign materials.

6.4.2.a)   Creating economic disasters

The EU—and other parties, including the UK government, banking industry, and 'the establishment'—was blamed in connection with the 2008–2009 financial crisis and related outcomes.[1108]

> "I think there is *still* an *incredible* sense of anger about how the financial crisis was dealt with in the UK, *and* in the EU. The fact that the banking industry was seen to get away with things scot-free, and ... I think that there was a *huge*, **huge** amount of ill-will towards *all* politicians for allowing that to happen. ... [I]t's about the outcomes of it, not necessarily the act itself of bailing them out, but also the fact that you've had suppressed interest rates, which has really affected people's savings; you've had suppressed wages, which is affecting people's standard of living." (John)[1109]

The crisis was associated not just with destruction to people's savings and suppressed wages, but also with unemployment, particularly in Greece, but also in Italy, Spain, and Ireland:

> "Now they say that Greece is a 'poor country full of very rich people'. Well yes, there are some very rich people in there. But overall, as far as the country is concerned, they were *royally screwed* by the EU. Yeah, partly their fault, but when you call an ambulance 'cause you're in trouble, you expect the people that rock up there are going to actually try to make you get better, not give you another broken leg or whatever else it might be and that's *exactly* what they did to Greece." (Todd)

> "high levels of youth unemployment in sort of Italy and Spain and the Eurozone crisis and in Greece. If you were to blame the EU for anything—I suppose those would be the issues that the EU sort of partly caused" (Luke)

> "what the European Commission has done to Ireland is criminal, that they've indebted them for life basically, that Ireland—even if they wanted to leave— couldn't afford to." (Liz)

On the one hand, austerity and the EU's controlling policies in this regard were seen as negative:

[1107] Blame of local UK parties such as Theresa May for the Grenfell Tower disaster also appeared, but as the focus here is on the EU, this item is not discussed. See also 2.3 What does blame do?.

[1108] As the focus of this section is blaming of the EU, other blamees are not discussed in-depth here. They do reflect the blamees for 'economy' in pre-referendum data above; see 6.3.1 Who was to blame? and also Annex: Codebook.

[1109] Jonathan Baron and John Hershey find that outcome bias matters for endogenous blame, with bad outcomes heuristically understood as the result of bad decisions or bad people (e.g. villains). Hershey and Baron, 'Judgment by Outcomes: When Is It Justified?'

> "And yeah I think the *imposition* of austerity politics onto Greece in particular. Yeah, that made me really, really angry." (John)

On the other, the EU were blamed for giving out money without such controls:

> "it was like giving a child your wallet and said 'Go, go out and just *spend*, go *crazy*, you don't ever have to pay it back'" (Liz, regarding Ireland)

The EU's treatment of Greece, through austerity policies and bail-outs following the financial crisis, was a recurrent theme. Several participants said that originally they had seen Greek suffering as Greece's fault, but over time they had come to see that it was really the EU that was the problem. This was either because Greece was being exploited, via the EU, to the benefit of Germany; or because the EU were giving money to people who were too irresponsible to use it (as with Ireland in Liz's quote above).

> "I became increasingly concerned about what was happening in Greece. And again, and I'm ashamed to say that part of me was thinking well, you know, 'the Greeks have brought this on themselves'. You know, they're a bunch of spendthrifts, they don't do this, they don't do that, they should never have been let in in the first place. But then I started to have a bit of a closer look into this. And I think it's probably true to say that the Greek people have been *royally screwed* by the—I mean these bailouts that we have heard so much about, were they for the benefit of the Greek people? Nooo! They went to the German banks. And, you know, the Greeks giving the Germans money is really, really bad news for them. So, having had very little sympathy for the Greeks, I started to have a lot more sympathy for them and thinking 'is this the way the European Union is supposed to run?'" (Todd)

The EU was relatedly portrayed as an extractive mechanism for both resources and 'brain power' from 'Southern' to 'Northern' European states:

> "You know, you don't like the idea of the southern European states in particular becoming client states of the rich *north*. I mean that's not what the EU should be about, but that's the way I feel it is very much about at the moment." (John)

> "Poland [indistinct] is not happy with the EU because they've been brain-drained, because it's now no place for anyone with a brain right. ... [A]ll the smart people have left—I mean, partly it's the Soviet Union, but also that the thing with the Schengen area is that if you're intelligent and you're from Greece, it makes no sense to stay [in] the country." (Alex, London FG)[1110]

Two participants contested this, with Liz suggesting that the relationship was the other way around, with 'poorer' states exploiting the rich thanks to the freedom of movement afforded by the EU:

> "And then the countries who weren't as wealthy could *really* exploit and abuse what the wealthy countries were [offering]" (Liz)

[1110] NB: The EU's fundamental freedom of movement is unrelated to the Schengen travel area.

Mac agreed there was an institutional problem causing brain-drain from poorer states to richer states, but suggested it was the result of a lack of minimum wage in the EU, rather than freedom of movement. There was perhaps too *little* EU rather than too much.

Overall, the concern with the economic issues appears to echo that in the campaign materials discussed above. Unsurprisingly though, given campaigns must stay on message to be effective, there was significantly more nuance amongst FGI participants. Even when they agreed that the EU was to blame for a given issue, the *reasons* it was at fault were contested.[1111]

6.4.2.b)   Causing (inappropriate) immigration

When it comes to the migrant crisis described in E1, Luke said "I don't know if there's anything that [the EU] could have done differently or handled differently". Whether or not the 'crisis' itself was due to the EU, the 'abandonment' of its Member States was highlighted by Steve as problematic:

> "January 2015 the refugee crisis happened, and I noticed that the top level of the EU were inviting all and sundry to come to the EU. But then I noticed that they were leaving the individual countries to deal with the repercussions of that. And there didn't seem to be much consideration or planning for either the people welcoming the refugees, or the refugees themselves." (Steve)

Here, it is not just the Member States that are suffering due to the EU, but the refugees themselves.

Other pressing topics included immigrant-related crime,[1112] lack of immigrant integration/assimilation, and the lack of jobs or opportunities associated with immigration. Lack of integration, including speaking English or participating in communities in particular ways, was raised in both the London and Scottish focus groups. Georgina, in Scotland, pointed to the feeling of "whole communities almost altering", though said that this did not affect Scotland, but rather other parts of the UK. Mother-daughter pair Margot and Megan in the London focus groups were cynical about migrant integration, with Megan saying she was upset by the lack of English spoken in her community, and how this causes isolation of the elderly:

> Megan: "... to be in your own community and not be able to speak to people or be able to get your point across or to be able to communicate is incredibly—it's quite fearful. And it's very isolating, and you can see why [there's] such a big problem with loneliness at the moment, because if you're an elderly person and you can't leave the house, every carer who might come to the house ... [doesn't] speak English as a first language, their culture is very different in the way that they do things. If you go into a shop, you're trying to get your point across and no one can understand you—"

[1111] See also E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.

[1112] Luke indicated that (ostensibly migrant-related) terrorism was particularly important to him; he was working near London Bridge during the 2017 terror attacks, and admitted "it does have a little bit of an impact on your thinking".

> Margot: "Or they don't want to understand you."

Margot's comment suggests a lack of desire to integrate via learning English, with Douglas inferring that those who did not speak English could not be understood as equals:

> "It's because it's like I want to be able to interact with the people around me, and to be able to engage with them as equals." (Douglas, London FG)

Particularly problematic were the lack of jobs, opportunities, health services, or school places ostensibly due to EU-facilitated immigration, with leaving the EU seen as the answer to these problems:

> "it was really the breakdown over the years that I've seen of not being able to get health services; ... friends of mine ... can't get their kids into the local schools because the migrant children go in there." (Liz)

> "I think people felt that—due to things like immigration—there was actually less opportunities and less *jobs* for native people. And obviously people got quite *annoyed* about things like that. And I do feel that now that we're leaving, and given that we'll be making our own decisions, there *will* be greater opportunities for people. People *can* do things that they have been *stopped* from doing previously [due] to EU rules." (Aileen, London FG)[1113]

Jacob recalled from the campaign that "social services and housing" were "under pressure because of the open borders", though clarified he "didn't necessarily agree with" that—while he could reiterate the campaign line, he did not blame the EU for the problem. Abigail was sceptical of what she saw as Remain's argument for freedom of movement, "whereby we *must* have it, we need it, we can't survive without it". Alex then suggested "Britain was framed as a Commonwealth more global power by the Leave campaign, and as an intrinsically European and integrated workforce by Remain", with the real choice being between labour from India as a Commonwealth country or Romania as an EU country.[1114]

Generally, it appears Brexiteers blamed for similar things to the Leave campaign, blaming the EU for immigration which was in turn linked to crime, lack of jobs, or lack of access to public services. Migrants themselves were also blamed, including for taking up space and failure to integrate; again, reflecting pre-referendum materials.

6.4.2.c)   Doing the wrong thing by industries and workers

As in the pro-Leave campaign materials, blaming of the EU appeared in the FGIs in connection with industry. Todd blamed the EU and its Common Fisheries Policy for a decline in the British fishing industry ("'Well fishing's not what it was in this country.' I mean yeah! And *whose fault is that*?!?"). Luke shared a personal story on the same topic, explaining that "back in the 70s, my granddad was a trawlerman ... I know he was never

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[1113] 'Annoyance' is the primary emotional effect of exogenous blame of an Other in the survey-experiment, per 7.3.2 Emotions experienced as an effect of blame.
[1114] This may imply a hierarchy between acceptable migrants.

pro-EU. Given it basically—well partly wiped out his livelihood", though added that it neither affected him nor "ninety nine point nine percent of people in 2016".

Coal and steel industries were likewise described as being damaged by the EU, due to anti-competitive practices that means people are told "they shouldn't produce coal" in the UK because they don't produce it as cheaply as elsewhere, which "puts the people in that region out of work, and … it increases the number of people who are unemployed, which makes the area less well off" (Mac).

While the EU is blamed for interfering in industries (fisheries) or preventing them from happening (coal/steel), they are also blamed for subsidising industries (farming), leading to less-than-prime, 'non-economical' solutions:

> "farmers are subsidised and things across the EU, and that kind of creates kind of an imbalance I think, where things are maybe *propped up* which aren't kind of economical" (Jamal)

John took a more libertarian perspective, linking anti-competitive subsidies with immigration and defending the rights of immigrants while doing so:

> "You know, black, white, brown, yellow, whatever, *whatever* you are, if you're going to bring something that's going to make our place even better then come. But if you're going to come, you need to be paid properly. And you can't be dependent on the state. … It's just wholly wrong—freedom of movement, where people are coming over here and getting a job in agriculture, and then being dependent upon tax credits to increase their wages—which are essentially just a subsidy to bad employers. No! It's not right. It's *just not right*. It's just not how it should be." (John)

Leave voters' take is again more complex than that in campaign materials. They point out that most of the population is not affected, express compassion for those who have lost their jobs, and defend the rights of immigrants in the face of exploitative practices that they link to the EU. Chapter E3: Effects illustrates that this compassion becomes important in the vilification of the EU.

Overall, it seems (re)blaming amongst FGI participants echoes that from the Leave campaign, albeit with more nuance, more concern for victims, and varying degrees of ambivalence over whether the blame was 'right' or not as exemplified by the low-blame participants.

6.4.3.   Victimisation of Leavers

FGI interlocutors also blamed parties for 'getting Brexit wrong', and victimisation of Leavers. To the first, the EU is blamed for treating the UK and David Cameron with 'contempt', Leave campaigners are blamed for not having a plan for Brexit, Remain campaigners are blamed for failing to campaign—or perhaps negotiating in bad faith—and politicians are blamed for Brexit not having been 'done' yet. It is understandable this did not arise to such a degree in the campaign, as Brexit could not have yet happened.

More interesting is the blame of pro-Remain parties for their abuse of Leavers in the lead-up to and after the referendum, with the 'Remainer' bloc incorporating individuals, campaigners, and transnational alliances of 'Metropolitan Elite', including as facilitated by the EU.[1115] This was raised by *all* FGI participants. Several of the participants described this abuse as entrenching them in their pro-Leave vote, as well as destroying relationships. Essentially it boiled down to "you called me names, so I'm not going to change my mind."[1116] Typically, participants described themselves as having been called stupid and racist:

> "I was quite surprised at the *absolute vitriol* by *Remain* voters. I mean it *was disgusting*. And all you heard was 'if you're voting Leave you're racist, you're stupid'. And actually, I'm *not* stupid. I've got two degrees; I've got a postgraduate qualification. I am *far* from stupid. I knew *exactly* what I was voting for. I worked on an EU project, so I had insider knowledge that most people *didn't* have. Yet I was stupid; I was racist; and that really wasn't the case. And I know a lot of people fell out with people." (Aileen)

> "I've been called *everything*, *seriously*, online—both during the campaign and after the vote, and over the last four years—I've been called *everything*. I had one friend who *totally melted down* ... she's a PhD, she's not somebody *stupid* ... and *she bombarded me*, saying that I was a racist and all this, which is totally ridiculous." (Bronwyn)

> "I think what they did, what the Remainers did leading up to the referendum, they overplayed their hand. With the Project Fear. With the labelling everybody racists and everything else. And I think there's a number of people—well, clearly a majority of people—who thought 'we're not having this'." (Todd)

> "not necessarily the campaign, but the way people argued, I think, sort of like put my back up. You know you'd have discussions in the pub was quite like a frequent thing. And then you'd say "oh you know, I think I'm going to vote Brexit". And then the response would be 'Oh, you're a fucking racist' or whatever." (Luke)

This blaming of Remainers differs from during the lead-up to the referendum; Leave campaigners would not have wanted to blame the Remainer public, as this would ensure they would never vote leave. Pro-Leave members of the public clearly think they have been *victimised* by Remainers, and this has helped to entrench them against Remainers, speaking to ongoing affective polarisation in the wake of the referendum.[1117] A new evil arose in the form of Remainers, as captured in this blame; they might be villains in their own right, rather than simply the minions of the EU or an elite.[1118] Further research could help

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[1115] Todd claimed the EU had infiltrated national infrastructures and created a supporting elite class. For instance: "And the fact that the EU have so successfully infiltrated the *establishment* in *so many* countries, basically bribed them on board, really did it for me"; "the way that they've *created* this pro-EU, anti-UK class is despicable in my view".

[1116] See Table 2, where 'name-calling' is a discursive practice related to blame. As blame is for 'doing', name-calling is for 'being'. Associated effects are out of scope for this research.

[1117] E.g. Hobolt, Leeper, and Tilley, 'Divided by the Vote: Affective Polarization in the Wake of Brexit'. See also discussion in Acronyms.

[1118] Recall that per 3.2 The art of character work, Jasper et al give 'minions' as a lesser form of villain: essentially, characters who are 'bad' and 'active' but not 'strong' like villains. Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*. These minions can be 'inept' or 'overexcitable', "immature, gullible, and childlike". Jasper,

establish whether Remainer members of the public are seen as villains in their own right or mere 'minions' of more powerful bodies. This is important, as while villains are associated with anger, hatred, or fear, minions are deserving of ridicule and contempt[1119]—they are inherently less threatening, meaning it may be more possible for Leavers and Remainers to envisage shared futures. Creating villains of Remainers via blame would be detrimental to such efforts.

<div align="center">❖</div>

This section has found that FGI participants (re)blamed for similar things to those appearing in pre-referendum materials. This indicates campaign messages reached the public—or that the public were the source of blame leveraged by the Leave campaign. A limitation is that FGI participants may have been skewed towards those people who were interested in politics or current affairs, given their participation in an online survey-experiment ostensibly about the news; further, they agreed to participate in a study discussing Brexit, so may have been more passionate about issues than the public at large. However, while several of the participants such as Todd or Liz were clearly very passionate about Leaving the EU, this degree of commitment was not apparent in all participants—such as the low-blame participants, Jamal and Sam. Luke and Mac even said they had not paid much attention to the campaigns, preferring to do their own research; and yet they were able to reiterate key campaign claims, nearly four years after the referendum took place. The notion of victimisation of Leavers at the hands of Remainers additionally appears, and is notable in that it was raised by every FGI participant. Like in the pre-referendum materials, there is not just one blamee; there are multiple potential villains.

Moreover, whether or not they identified the original source of blame as being the Leave campaign, FGI interlocutors blamed the EU for similar things to the campaigns, through with significantly more nuance. Whether through not 'necessarily agreeing with' blame per Jacob regarding the EU and the migrant crisis, or giving mitigating circumstances (justification), contestation appeared throughout the FGIs. It shows that people do not blindly believe blame—they can agree or disagree with it, and for this reason, vilification may not always appear. Such agreement or otherwise, and contestation in its various forms, become apparent in the following chapters.

Young, and Zuern, 183. While descriptions of Remainer 'emotional snowflakes' elsewhere suggests this latter typology, it is clear that the Leavers in the present research—or that in affective polarisation studies—do not view Remainers as inept or childlike so much as part of a villainous alliance.

[1119] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, Public Characters. Jasper notes that "with contempt, you are pure and blameless, while the other person is vile and despicable." Jasper, 'Not In Our Backyards: Emotion, Threat, and Blame', 128. See also discussion of disgust in E3, including footnotes 1163 (p. 222) and 1317 (p. 258). Leaver disgust seems mainly reserved for Remainers.

6.5. Chapter conclusion

This chapter set out to identify performance of blame in the Brexit case, assisting with research design and allowing for meaningful discussion of vilification via blame in the specific context of Brexit. It began by considering whether this was something the campaigns set out to do, and found that Leave campaigners leveraged character narratives of heroic campaign staff emancipating the UK as victim from a villainous EU and its supporters.

Next, pre-referendum performance of blame was investigated, showing that pro-Leave parties blamed at a comparatively higher frequency than the public, while BSIE as the Remain campaign was an outlier in its limited use of blame. There was a close match between what the Leave campaign spoke about and what they blamed for, which was not the case for the Remain side. The biggest issues were migration and the economy, as foreshadowed by discussion of associated crises in the preceding chapter.

The specific subjects and objects of blame in pre-referendum materials were next identified. This section verified the EU was blamed in the course of the Brexit campaign, permitted refinement of the research design, and provided context for later discussions of contestation via changing subjects and objects in E5. As the most common blamee—albeit not the only one—the EU was selected as focus for the remaining empirical chapters and incorporated into experiment design. In a similar vein, the UK appeared as consistent victim—and particularly, victim of the EU—meaning it was used as a realistic victim in the survey-experiment vignette.

Lastly, attention was given to post-referendum performance of blame using focus group and interview data, where it was found that FGI participants replicated blame from the referendum campaign—albeit with significantly more nuance than that found in the campaign itself. This demonstrated that blame is not even in its effects, even amongst a sympathetic audience, and supports discussion of effects and contestation in the following chapters.

Researcher interpretation could be a limitation in this chapter, for example when identifying themes in codes or selecting quotations. This was overcome insofar as possible through the consistency checking procedures outlined in 4.3.7 Reading process and quote selection and 4.5 Reliability, replication, and validity, as well as spot checks throughout analysis.

Overall, this chapter informed development of the survey-experiment and focus group/interview questions alike, while illustrating how blame was used differently by different campaigns and permitting and pre-empting discussion of contestation in E5, and establishing that the EU was blamed during the referendum campaign. What effects could this have had? The following chapter will go on to unveil the blame-vilification link, speaking to the ways in which blame created villains in the Brexit case study and helping to develop theory about the vilifying effects of exogenous blame more broadly.

7. E3: Effects

7.1. Introduction

The previous two chapters established context surrounding the Brexit referendum campaign and examined what blame was performed during and after the campaign. They showed that blame was 'done' with particular regard to ongoing crises at the time; that the Leave group did frame the campaign to leave the EU in terms of heroes, villains, and victims; that the EU was the predominant party blamed in the lead-up to the referendum and the UK was the predominant victim. This chapter considers the *effects* of such blame, and specifically how it creates *villains*—parties who are bad, strong, and active, and who we feel negatively towards.[1120] As the first three of these characteristics are already implied by blame, this chapter focuses on the fourth: what negative 'villain-type feelings' result from blame? This investigation is central to understanding the ways in which blame makes villains in politics.[1121]

'Villain type feelings' are important in a wider sense: per the Theory of Constructed Emotions, the more a particular emotion is experienced in a particular context, the more likely it is that that emotion will be predicted in similar contexts in future.[1122] This means the more people feel a blamee such as the EU is a villain, through experiencing negative emotions such as anger or annoyance against it, the more likely they are to construct it as a villain in future. The EU becomes irredeemable.

The vilifying effects discussed herein are those experienced by audiences and resulting from *exogenous*, third party blame. Such blame arises from the 'outside', and is heard, seen, read, or otherwise consumed by an audience as the person or people that encounter the blame— whether or not they were part of an intended audience.[1123] The audience may also perform blame, either after encountering a harmful and 'blameworthy' act themselves, or after encountering exogenous blame—they learn of the harm third-hand and may reiterate or reallocate the blame. These forms of social but endogenous blame are referred to throughout this chapter as (re)blaming, and are an important indicator of how blame spreads from person to person; they also provide clues as to how new blamees enter one's 'blaming niche'. By examining differences in who people (re)blame, it is possible to verify that blame is effective in generating new blamees and thus possible villains.

[1120] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*. See also 3.2 The art of character work. Note that blame could have non-vilifying effects that are not measured in the present analysis; the focus on effects, and the *emotional* effects, are an outcome of research design. See 7.3.4 Blaming niches: do people blame the EU because the EU is responsible? and 4.2.5 The research spiral.

[1121] See 3.2 The art of character work.

[1122] E.g. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

[1123] See also 2.1.1 Aristotle, audiences, and proofs.

Importantly, per Methodology and critical realist ontology, blame is not a 'cause', but rather has 'causal power'. As sunscreen may interrupt the causal power of sunlight to burn skin, things may 'get in the way' of blame's effects being realised. This is particularly the case given blame is a discursive practice that is essentially social in nature:[1124] unlike in the natural sciences, it is hard to control for items that may interfere with effects in the social world. However, it is possible to recognise that confirmation bias—the cognitive bias by which we tend to agree with things we already agree with and vice versa, even in the face of contradictory information—is likely to be such a factor.[1125] For that reason, this chapter uses 'voting preference' ('VP') at the time of the survey-experiment when discussing the effects of EU-blaming.[1126] 'VPL' means 'voting preference Leave' and likewise for 'VPR' and 'Remain'.

This chapter begins with a reminder of the methods used, a note on anger and annoyance as 'villain-type feelings', and consideration to the role of time in collecting data. It goes on to consider focus group and interview ('FGI') data, wherein interlocutors describe how blame turned them against the EU. FGI participants connect several emotions with blame, including *anger* towards the EU as the blamee, and *compassion* towards its victims. The former is already a 'villain-type emotion', meaning vilification via blame has been successful, while the latter is described as an 'indirect' pathway to villain creation, or the 'compassion backhand'. This is because people focus on victims before turning back on the EU. It reflects work from Pfattheicher et al that shows that where people feel sorry for victims but are unable to help those victims, they turn on the perpetrator to punish them.[1127]

Next, results from the survey-experiment ('SE') are analysed, showing that blame again causes villain-type feelings, with anger still apparent but annoyance predominant. An evaluation of (re)blaming in SE responses demonstrates that, in response to the blame-EU vignette, people (re)blame the EU more than for the other vignettes. This is not because of existing knowledge, but because blame itself gives them the information. Blame thus

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[1124] Social reality is stable 'enough' to be examined: "Even as discourse is shaped by the words and actions of many agents over time, at any one time it is relatively intransitive to those studying it or even being affected by it. "Banta, 'Analysing Discourse as a Causal Mechanism', 390. However, it is possible to imagine other social realities where blame does not have the same causal power. It is for that reason that the present research is understood to be generalisable to broadly similar cultural and discursive contexts in the first instance, per 4.2.6 Case study selection.

[1125] Confirmation bias is "our tendency to search for and interpret things in a way that 'confirms' our own long-held beliefs". Holm, *The 25 Cognitive Biases: Uncovering the Myth of Rational Thinking*, 30. This becomes apparent in responses to SE vignettes: people with voting preference ('VP') 'Leave' accept blame of the EU and are more committed to Brexit, while Remainers argue with the blame and locate fault in somebody else. There is certainly some confirmation bias at play. However, this bias does not explain vilification, as VP Remainers and VP Leavers alike get ~annoyed at whomever they blame. The text author did not 'exist' prior to VPRs reading the vignette, so while they may not have wanted to blame the EU, there is no reason they would have villain-type feelings towards somebody who was previously a non-entity. Confirmation bias appears to affect blame acceptance, but by itself does not explain emotional and therefore the vilifying effects of blame.

[1126] E4: Blame and underlying characteristics goes on to establish the validity of this approach. Responses were per a question on how participants would vote were the referendum to be held 'today'.

[1127] Pfattheicher, Sassenrath, and Keller, 'Compassion Magnifies Third-Party Punishment.'

creates the possibility of the villain as well as engendering villain-type emotions. At the same time, it reduces people's focus on the victims of harm, particularly where the audience disagrees with the blame. This section demonstrates what people feel as a result of blame and who they are talking about, but does not yet link these together to firmly establish that people feel negatively toward the blamee.

7.4 Why we feel that way then delves into a qualitative analysis of SE responses, to emerge why people feel what they say they feel, in their own words. It shows that blame primarily causes ~annoyance at blamees, rendering them villains. Importantly, this is mediated by voting preference, so that both VP Leavers and Remainers experience ~annoyance, but at different parties: for Leavers, the EU is reinforced as villain, while for Remainers, the text author becomes a villain. Some evidence of the 'compassion backhand' located in the FGIs is identified, though this is less conclusive; additional villain-type emotions such as disgust and disappointment towards blamees also appear.

The argument that emerges out of the empirical work in this research is depicted in Figure 39, along with the chapter in which a given component is discussed. The current chapter shows that we experience different emotions in response to blame, including several negative 'villain-type feelings' (notably annoyance) as well as compassion for victims that can ultimately turn audiences against an ostensible perpetrator.[1128] Each of these pathways to villain-type feelings can complete vilification. This is because villain-type feelings are a missing link; blame already implies that a perpetrator is 'bad', 'strong', and 'active',[1129] and it is these in conjunction with villain-type feelings that creates a villain.[1130]

Further, as this chapter will show, what we already know or believe—as captured via voting preference—mediates blame's causal powers. VP Leavers read blame of the EU and (re)blame the EU; VP Remainers read the same blame and instead blame the text author. This shows that one instance of blame can create multiple villains, depending on what somebody already knows or believes.[1131] E4 will go on to show that what we know is a better explanation for the mediation of blame than what we *are* (for instance, angry, or highly educated), while E5 shows the ways in which blame's causal powers are contested and potentially mitigated. Also shown on the diagram is where there are ambiguous responses to blame, as when people in the current chapter read the SE vignette and experience other, non-villain-type feelings emotions such as apathy, worry (but not about the blamee), or even happiness.[1132] These responses are treated as ambiguous vis-à-vis the

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[1128] Recall discussion in the discussion in 3.2 The art of character work, where a person could be 'accepted' as a 'true' victim or perhaps rejected for being 'at fault', each of which is associated with a different emotional response.

[1129] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*.

[1130] See 3.2 The art of character work.

[1131] This becomes apparent in the empirical results, such that VP Remainers who read the blame-EU vignette blame the text author rather than the EU.

[1132] See also 7.4 Why we feel that way.

causal power of blame to create villains, and further research could consider when such ambiguous responses arise, and what they indicate.

On the diagram, there is a dotted line between compassion for victims and the villain, indicating that the compassion backhand may not always appear; 'villain-type feelings' and 'villain' are tied together with three thick lines to show that experiencing villain-type feelings means vilification has already taken place. In effect, the villain now exists.[1133]

Figure 39: Indicative flowchart showing the path from exogenous blame to creation of a villain[1134]
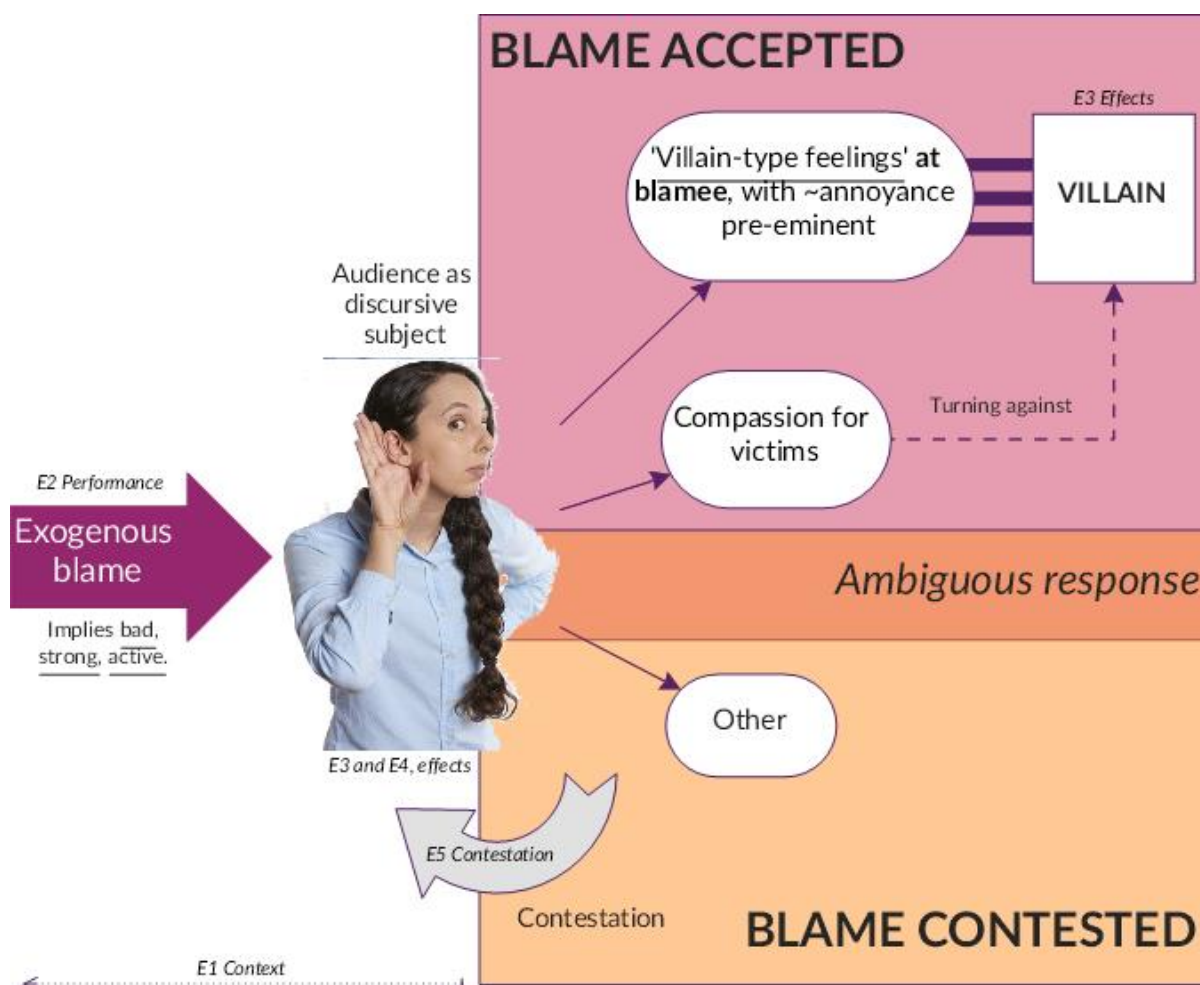
This innovative chapter demonstrates the differentiated vilification effects of third-party blame in politics for the first time, adding nuance to our understanding of effects. In the specific context of Brexit, it shows how the EU was created as a villain, helping to explain affective polarisation both against the EU and between supporters and opponents.[1135] It shows that blame may be accepted or contested; introduces the concept of a 'blaming niche' as the parties that may be acceptably blamed for a given thing; illustrates that blame

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[1133] 'Villain-type feelings' and 'villain' were drawn in separate boxes to elucidate the argument; a direct arrow from the audience member to 'villain' would have obscured the villain-type feelings, and hidden such emotions as the 'missing link' in creating a villain.

[1134] Image of woman is adapted from Higgins, 'Listen, Woman, Listening, Young'.

[1135] See Acronyms.

sometimes leads to vilification—and sometimes does not;[1136] and demonstrates that existing knowledge including preferences and biases (as captured in voter preference) is important to understanding vilification via blame. For this reason, blame is probably most effective in creating villains when people do not know much about the topic at hand, and have not already taken a side.[1137] This means blaming the EU presents an interesting opportunity, as people may not know much about it or what it does.[1138]

7.1.1.   Producing data

Like the preceding chapter, this chapter uses data from the focus groups and interviews. As described in the introduction of E2 and 4.3.7 Reading process and quote selection, quotations are selected based on their relation to the topic at hand, then arranged into themes such that all views are represented. Stutters and filler words were removed, and emphasised words indicated with asterisks (*). Concretely, this chapter briefly establishes that FGI participants did come to see the EU as a villain, establishing an 'end point' for blame,[1139] and moreover unveils the blame-vilification link through identifying where an interlocutor spoke about both blame and emotions at the same time.[1140] Blamees are created as villains where we feel negatively towards them, per 4.3.4 Recognising vilification, meaning we can spot a villain by identifying where a party is blamed *and* where audience members feel negatively towards that blamee.

This chapter also makes extensive use of survey-experiment data. The SE collected a range of information about participants, then presented one of four vignettes in which the party that is blamed varies and some questions about how participants felt as a result. The resultant data is analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Results are used to show both frequency of particular results—for instance, what emotions are experienced as an outcome of consuming blame, or what party is (re)blamed after reading a vignette—and qualitatively, such that participants give explanations for how they feel in their own words.

Blame is identified in the same way as in the preceding chapter, per 4.3.2 Recognising blame; in short, by locating a harmful thing that is or has happened and has an identified perpetrator. This was coded as an instance of blame accorded to a particular blamee—such

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[1136] I.e. When its causal powers are interrupted.

[1137] "[E]ven those with firm values are susceptible to framing on new issues that have yet to acquire a settled interpretation." Chong and Druckman, 'Framing Theory', 111–12. See also the role of intentionality, causality, severity etc in allocating 'how much blame' a blamee receives, i.e. establishing blameworthiness, per Hershey and Baron, 'Judgment by Outcomes: When Is It Justified?'; Alicke, 'Culpable Control and the Psychology of Blame.'; Lagnado and Channon, 'Judgments of Cause and Blame'; Guglielmo and Malle, 'Enough Skill to Kill'; Rogers et al., 'Causal Deviance and the Ascription of Intent and Blame'.

[1138] Consider arguments around 'clarity of responsibility' per Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?* discussed in Blame and its effects. Per 7.3.4 Blaming niches: do people blame the EU because the EU is responsible?, the EU seems to enter people's 'blaming niche' only when it is introduced by third parties. This indicates that, to avoid vilification of the EU in future, there is need for a mass communication and education campaign covering both how to communicate with the EU, how one is represented at the EU, how the EU makes decisions, and in what it does and does not have competency. See also Conclusion.

[1139] See also Annex: Suppose the EU was a person.

[1140] See also 7.2.1 Unveiling blame-villain links through the FGIs.

as the EU—in the software MaxQDA.[1141] Only explicitly-labelled emotions were coded, such that 'anger' is coded as 'anger' and so on.[1142] Emotions were occasionally grouped by the researcher per Table 8 in 4.3.5 Recognising emotions, and groupings are marked with a tilde (~). The group ~annoyed contains annoyed, angry, exasperated, frustrated, irritated, miffed, and narked. These latter two appear just once each; the researcher used her knowledge of local emotion concepts to understand that these were related to annoyance. However, other than in cases such as this, and except where noted, emotions that appear fewer than seven times are not included in analysis; a total of 344 unique emotions were located in SE responses, and the sample size for infrequent emotions is too small to provide meaningful insight. See Annex: Codebook for a list of all emotions identified.

7.1.2.   Anger and annoyance

This chapter emerges two 'villain-type feelings' in particular: anger and annoyance. FGI participants consistently described themselves as angered at blamees, and SE participants annoyed. Consistent with UK dictionary definitions, annoyance is understood as a less-angry form of anger.[1143]

The researcher grouping ~annoyed includes 'anger', on the understanding that had people had a limited number of emotions to select from, those who wrote 'annoyed' would have found 'anger' to be the closest emotion to what they were feeling.[1144] Rather than call the emotion grouping ~anger, the researcher chose to instead use ~annoyance: not simply because 'annoyance' was more frequent, but to highlight the complexity of emotions, how and when they may be expressed, and cultural rules that governs such expression.[1145]

The relation between 'anger' and 'annoyance' as captured in the ~annoyance grouping means triangulation of anger from the FGIs and ~annoyance from the SEs is not considered problematic. This is because irrespective of any relationship, it is clear that both involve feeling negatively towards a target; both are villain-type feelings.[1146] Thus while this

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[1141] See also Annex: Codebook.

[1142] See also 4.3.5 Recognising emotions, 3.3.4 Recognising emotions.

[1143] "annoyance: "the feeling of being slightly angry". 'Annoyance Noun'.

[1144] Other research has associated annoyance with irritation (Eyetsemitan, 'An Exploratory Study of the Emotion-Expressive Behaviors of "Peace," "Contentment," and "Annoyed/Irritated"'.). Irritation is likewise included in the ~annoyance grouping.

[1145] See also 3.3.2 Feeling structures.

[1146] Tom Roberts finds that annoyance involves "a negative construal of an object, event, or state of affairs as having failed to exemplify one of a suite of kinds of everyday quality or excellence." (Roberts, 'On Being Annoyed', 190.) These include "pursuit of enjoyment", "exercise of bodily or mental agency", or obstacles that prevent a person from receiving "something to which they are entitled" (p. 203). He argues that annoyance "may be continuous" with anger, but annoyance is not *just* a milder version of anger (p. 192); it can also devolve into disappointment and others. Notably, while the author was based in the UK at time of writing, the article is a philosophical piece that does not incorporate empirical data that supports the argument. Further, emotions are understood via the lens of appraisal theory, meaning annoyance is typified according to tenets such as intentionality, rather than by interrogating how people themselves describe the experience of, reasons for, and outcomes of annoyance.

research adds *nuance* to existing research on what we feel towards blamed others, which of these emotions is expressed does not affect this thesis' underlying argument.

Further research may consider whether the US-based audiences that have been the subjects of prior work do feel 'anger' in response to blame or rather 'annoyance' or some variation thereof.[1147] This is important in light of emotions as constructed, as more nuanced emotions may be associated with alternate regulation strategies—'rage' might require revenge, but 'annoyance' might result in pulling a face.[1148]

7.1.3.   Time and data

While texts from E2: Blame campaign were created prior to the Brexit referendum, data collected and analysed in this chapter was created 3–4 years after the referendum result.[1149] While Brexit remained topical, it could have been considered a 'done deal'; blaming the EU in the survey-experiment could potentially be treated with apathy as the UK was already leaving, and any bad things the EU was doing would soon be escaped. This could affect Leavers' responses in particular, as what the EU is (ostensibly) doing would meet their expectations, and they had already taken appropriate action to redress its nefarious actions by voting out. The survey-experiment thus may not provide the exact same results as it would had it been carried out during the referendum campaign; it is anticipated that results would have been more extreme at that time, with less Leaver apathy and more antipathy.

Focus groups/interviews redress this disconnect between SE results and the referendum campaign by interrogating participants' memories, asking them what the EU was blamed for and how they felt about that. This supplements the findings of vilification resulting from blame in the SE data. At the same time, it is not anticipated that people have perfect memories, and interlocutors could have sought to provide what they thought the researcher was looking for or a post hoc explanation for their vote.[1150] This latter could be a factor even where somebody who voted Leave continued to support Leave; perhaps the reason they voted Leave at the time of the referendum was not the same as the reason they would do so today (or at the time of the interview).[1151] Here, SE data helps to 'fill in the gaps', as it was completely anonymous, meaning less pressure to conform, as well as providing 'in the moment' reactions to blame. It is by triangulating SE and FGI data that the short-comings of both methods—as well as the time gap—were overcome.

Note that the only thing the present research extrapolates from FGI to SE data is that if, for FGI participants, feeling angry at a blamee or compassion for their victims leads to 'turning

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[1147] See also 2.3.7 Blame is emotional.
[1148] This relates to emotional granularity; see 3.3.4.c) Language and priming and 10.4 Theory-driven reflections on disrupting the blame|vilification link. Little research has been done on differences between anger and annoyance, though Kiviniemi, Jandorf, and Erwin, 'Disgusted, Embarrassed, Annoyed'. shows that these emotions predict different rates of colonoscopy uptake amongst 103 African American adults.
[1149] The SE took place August–December 2019, and the FGIs in March–April 2020. The referendum was held 23 June 2016. See also Annex: Brexit timeline.
[1150] Though see also footnote 1271 on page 1.
[1151] See also section on building trust and empathy in 4.4.2 Focus groups and interviews.

against' the blamee as a villain, similar emotions towards blamees/victims amongst other UK residents would likewise lead to vilification.[1152] As FGI participants, like SE participants, were UK residents, subject to similar emotion concepts and cultural narratives alike (e.g. of what a villain is), there is no reason to think this would not be the case. Further studies could more deeply investigate specific 'turning points', for instance over the course of a political campaign rather than after the fact, or by focusing on swing voters.

7.2. Making villains: the FGIs

The focus groups and interviews provided an opportunity to find whether pro-Leave voters did come to perceive the EU as a villain. By asking them "Suppose the EU was a person— what would that person be like?", explicit labels and metaphors could be emerged— recalling that *labelling* as a villain comes after *feeling* somebody is a villain, with the present research focusing on this latter component.[1153] The EU was variously characterised as (unwanted) family:[1154]

> "Someone who maybe tells you what to do in many cases; maybe sometimes being overprotective, and not letting you make your own choices sometimes. ... they obviously care for you and want to look out for you; and I suppose they've always been kind of friendly, but I suppose they're maybe disappointed that you are leaving. ... it's a bit like someone leaving home ... we do have a lot in common and we obviously wouldn't want to stop being in contact". (Jamal, described as a 'low blame' participant in E2).

> "For me, it would be the overbearing step parent." (Steve)

> "I'd almost feel like the EU was an abusive partner who you really love but you couldn't leave" (John)

Or, infrequently, as possessing the more banal villainy of a boring, disconnected bureaucrat, being 'faceless' (Jacob), 'opaque' (Mac), 'disconnected' and 'living in a bubble' (Douglas), being a 'corporate fat cat' (Sam), and akin to 'upper management' (Steve). This reflects modern conceptions of bureaucracy as inhuman or ill-intentioned, per the George Orwell novel *1984* or Christian Bale film *Equilibrium*—though it could be that the evil of bureaucracy is less extreme than that of control freaks or fascists.[1155]

By far the most common portrayal of the EU was as a know-it-all control freak:

[1152] See also 7.4.2.a) Does the 'compassion backhand' actually happen?.
[1153] See 3.2 The art of character work.
[1154] For work on metaphors including Brexit as a 'divorce', see Greavu, 'Metaphors for Brexit in the European Public Discourse'; Berberović and Mujagić, 'A Marriage of Convenience or an Amicable Divorce'; Islentyeva, 'The Europe of Scary Metaphors'. Isabel Negro Alousque highlights Brexit metaphors as both a 'journey' and 'family', with visual metaphors of the family used to argue for staying *within* the EU. Negro Alousque, 'The Metaphorical Representation of Brexit in Digital Political Cartoons'.
[1155] See also example typologies of villains and other characters in Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*; Klapp, 'Heroes, Villains and Fools, as Agents of Social Control'., and noting that villain ideal-types vary over culture and time as highlighted in 3.2.4 Characters and culture.

> "to boil it down to one phrase: a control freak. A *narcissistic* control freak." (Todd)

It was also depicted as an inexorable fascist:

> "I actually see that project as a fascist project. *You* have to do what *I* tell you. You cannot think for yourself." (Abigail)

(See Annex: Suppose the EU was a person for extended data and examples.)

For most participants, the EU is *unlikable*, and perhaps even deserving of hatred or fear. They would not want to spend time with the EU; the EU is, effectively, the 'bad guy'. There was some ambivalence demonstrated by Jamal (EU as home that's been outgrown), Mac (EU as unknown/opaque), and Sam (EU as bureaucrat/fat cat), and noting that Jamal and Sam were the two people described as 'low blame' in E2; they were able to recall exogenous blame from the Leave campaign, but disagreed with it and did not blame endogenously. This suggests that those who disagreed with blame in the Leave campaign did not vilify the EU to the same extent, helping to substantiate the argument that blame helps create villains. It also indicates that blame may be contested and its effects thereby mitigated.

However, as highlighted in 6.1.1 Characters in the text, the Leave campaign's use of villain labelling and metaphor in campaign materials is tiny when compared to the frequency of blame; it cannot be that FGI participants came to describe the EU in villainous terms because the Leave campaign explicitly labelled it as such. How then did it come to occupy the villain role? Per 3.2 The art of character work, a villain is bad/strong/active[1156] and we feel negatively towards them. The first three are already implied by blame and so may be located discursively—doing a 'harmful thing' is 'bad', the actor is strong enough to have done it, and they were 'active' in promoting their agenda by doing so, whether the harm was caused by acting or choosing not to act. For this reason, the present research focuses on emerging negative, 'villain-type feelings' amongst audiences to establish whether or not a villain is created.

Importantly, once we *feel* somebody is a villain, we know how to relate to them—they are to be resisted or defeated; we know how to relate to their supporters—they are 'wrong', perhaps 'stupid', and should suffer our scorn and betrayal; and we know that people who would emancipate us from villains are heroes. Our emotions support narratives and vice-versa, as illustrated in 3.3 Constructing emotions and 3.3.2 Feeling structures. As Lakoff points out, we learn narrative frames and come to interpret the events around us through those lenses.[1157] As with emotions that are experienced as appropriate and therefore predicted in future, our narratives predict and construct the social world around us. How then did the FGI participants come to feel the EU was a villain?

[1156] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*.
[1157] Lakoff, *The Political Mind*.

7.2.1. Unveiling blame-villain links through the FGIs

In previous research, there appeared to be some link between endogenous blame of an Other and anger (see 2.3.7 Blame is emotional). It is on this basis that the survey-experiment was designed to ask people how they felt after reading blame-containing vignettes. Per this research's abductive design,[1158] methods were designed to draw upon and supplement one another—and so the SE used vignettes inspired by the findings of E2: Blame campaign. Further, the first version of the SE was designed and conducted prior to the FGIs, and some preliminary data analysis done prior to developing FGI questions. This preliminary analysis, which entailed identifying all explicit emotions per response and then producing word clouds of those emotions to facilitate comparison, demonstrated a blame-emotion link; there were differences in how people felt after reading each vignette, and particularly between blaming-other vignettes and the no-blame vignette. However while these results showed different emotions, there was no *explanation* for those emotions. For this reason, the second version of the SE asked participants why they felt a certain way, and FGI questions were specifically designed to emerge the blame|villain link. While based on prior research,[1159] 'anger' was anticipated, it was only through FGI responses that compassion's role in creating villains became apparent.

FGI recordings were transcribed and coded per the 4.3.1 Data analysis framework. All segments coded with both explicitly-labelled emotion and blame ('intersections') were examined to gain understanding of the blame/emotions link, and recurrent themes identified: particularly anger at the blamee, compassion for victims, and indifference/apathy, as described below. Texts were scrutinised for 'turning points' in how people perceived the EU, revealing that anger at the EU, and compassion for its victims, turned people against it.

One challenge is that it was not always certain whether people were repeating exogenous blame they had heard from the campaign or whether they had seen a harmful thing and blamed endogenously as a result. This is difficult to entangle, because other than where people recall blame and say they disagree with it—as for the 'low blame' participants in the previous chapter—people do not explicitly separate their personal beliefs from what they have heard and are repeating. That said, the below issues that the EU is 'blamed for' were apparent in campaign materials in E2: Blame campaign, so it is likely that participants encountered exogenous blame. It is also not clear that the financial or migrant crises are the EU's 'fault' outside of how these issues were mobilised via blame; it is similarly unclear how people in the UK would have encountered the 'migrant crisis' except as mediated through third parties as in pro-Leave campaign materials. The risk that blame in the FGIs arises endogenously as a result of existing villain-type feelings or post hoc rationalisations is

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[1158] Depicted in 4.2.5 The research spiral.
[1159] E.g. Lerner and Tiedens, 'Portrait of the Angry Decision Maker'; Lerner, How Cognition Became H ot; Lerner, Goldberg, and Tetlock, 'Sober Second Thought'. See 2.3.7 Blame is emotional.

mitigated through later triangulating this data with that from the survey-experiment, which evaluates what people experience as an effect of blame 'in the moment'.

FGI participant John explains that the financial crisis was associated with "an *incredible* sense of anger" in the UK and EU, leading to "a *huge*, **huge** amount of ill-will". For him, the EU's 'mishandling' of the crisis turned him against the EU:

> "And that's what changed my mind from a position of being quite neutral … I certainly can't say I was ever particularly *pro* EU, but it changed my position from a position of neutrality to being very, very anti."

For John, blame of the EU makes people angry, and it's how he came to turn against it.

Jacob experiences 'frustration'[1160] towards both the UK government and the EU as the result of EU-blaming, framing his choice to vote Leave as almost vengeful in response:

> "that's what's being presented to us for years and years and years by politicians and to a certain degree the media, that things go wrong *because* of the EU and somehow we can't do anything about that, we're trapped. … So that made me frustrated, and pushed me towards almost like pulling a plug—if that's the case, then let's see what you do when we don't have [the EU to blame]. [laughs]"

Anger against the EU for things it had done—been blamed for—was consistent, as in the following examples. (The 'harmful thing' done by the EU is underlined.)

> "Their interference on the internet is something … that's made me angry. I think some of it could be really *dangerous* to *business*." (Bronwyn)[1161]

> "*Another* thing that makes me feel angry: *despite the fact* that lots of people in the EU say 'oh, well you know, we're really gonna miss you Brits, 'cos you brought a certain pragmatism to the whole thing'. I think they treated us with contempt. I think they've treated us with contempt *since before we joined*. I'm sure you're aware that Charles de Gaulle vetoed our joining. And I don't think we've *ever* managed to get over that hump. And I think they've been using us like a cash cow ever since."[1162] (Todd)

> "And yeah I think the *imposition* of austerity politics onto Greece in particular. Yeah, that made me really, really angry." (John)

> "that's what I'm probably most angry at; it's because the EU has fooled Ireland into this belief that they are better being controlled by the EU" (Liz)

Additional negative, 'villain-type' emotions were occasionally apparent—concern (as worry), disgust, and terror.   These usually did not refer to the *EU* as a potential villain, so are not considered in-depth here; there is initial indication that disgust was associated with Remainers who were attacking Leavers.[1163] *Anger*, included in the ~annoyance grouping

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[1160] NB: 'Frustration', like 'anger', is included in the ~annoyed emotion grouping used for SE data.
[1161] The 'interference' is the harmful thing, though it is also linked to future threat.
[1162] For context regarding the veto, see 5.2 A brief history of Brexit.
[1163] Steve, Aileen, Liz, and Georgina described disgust with Remainers for their treatment of Leavers: "And it's just like I can't even explain, when I was watching it, just how disgusted I was." (Steve); "I think a lot of

discussed in following sections, is the pre-eminent response to blame of the EU and turned people against it. For that reason, it is the focus of 'direct' vilification here.

This link between the EU being blamed and experiencing villain-type feelings towards it is not the only effect of blame mentioned by FGI participants. There was a consistent message of compassion for victims driving people to vote Leave, where compassion is feeling 'for' others—indicated by 'sympathy', 'feeling sorry for', and so on. Aileen focuses on the EU's ostensible victims in the UK:

> "I found it quite *sad*, because I think Georgina's right. There *are* communities that have been *absolutely decimated*. They've *completely* lost their identity; and unfortunately, not for the better." (Aileen)

Liz "felt sorry for the Greeks" as a result of what the EU had done to them, as did Todd:

> "So, having had very little sympathy for the Greeks, I started to have a lot more sympathy for them and thinking 'is this the way the European Union is supposed to run?'"

That is, the more Todd was exposed to blaming of the EU, the more sympathy he had for its perceived victims.

This message of compassion for victims was particularly apparent in the interview with Mac. He explained his vote against the EU as swayed through sympathy for fellow citizens, while expressing consistent compassion for those affected by what he saw as the EU's migration policy:

> "[I felt] *sad* for basically *everyone* in that situation. The people trying to get in, because how bad's it got to be on that side of the wall to try and climb these three bloody massive fences ... I mean I was sad for the *border guards* as well, because I mean it's your job to enforce that border and make sure people don't cross over. And maybe you *understand* why. ... But you've also got to feel like a piece of shit for having to push these people back over the fences, you know? Just like 'no, you can't come in, I don't care how much you're suffering; I'm paid to keep you back in there'. So obviously it's got to tug at them quite hard. So I feel sorry for the border patrol people as well as the people trying to get over the border."

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people who maybe voted to remain in the referendum ... the way they spoke towards us, it was just disgusting." (Liz); "I think it was *disgusting* actually, the way [Leavers] were portrayed as Little Englanders and narrow-minded, racist, probably homophobic" (Georgina); "Remain voters just absolutely ran Leave voters into the ground. ... I used to sit there saying *nothing*, and *absolutely horrified* by what was coming out of their mouths. If *anyone* was disgusting and stupid, it was *them*. ... I used to think 'just *listen* to yourselves'. You are *horrible* human beings." (Aileen).   Pascale Sophie Russell and Roger Giner-Sorolla suggest that disgust predominantly arises when there is a breach of 'bodily' norms. Russell and Giner-Sorolla, 'Moral Anger, but Not Moral Disgust, Responds to Intentionality.'; Salerno and Peter-Hagene, 'The Interactive Effect of Anger and Disgust on Moral Outrage and Judgments'. Liz was also disgusted by the EU based on what it had 'done'; Steve was disgusted by the EU's treatment of David Cameron, because "you just insulted our leader, whether you like him or not, or we like him or not". See also 7.4.8 Additional villain-type feelings.

He understood that the EU prevents the UK from assisting companies, and this made him feel sad for the workers in the UK:

> "Honestly I think it made me feel a bit sad about it, because the people in the UK *matter* to me, and saying that they ... shouldn't produce coal because they don't produce it cheaper as [others], that doesn't make a huge amount of sense to me. I mean it just puts the people in that region out of work"

He said that this sadness 'swayed his opinion' against the EU:

> "It made me see them less as kind of a force for bringing us all together, and helping us all be more productive, and more of a kind of—although they are unifying us, they seem to make things slightly worse. ... I mean maybe on the grander scale of things, the entirety of the EU, ... the suffering went down on a *large* scale .... If you look to the locality of Britain, it'd gone up slightly, but on overall had gone down. I can understand that point of view from the EU, but since the—I guess the suffering is local to me—it doesn't seem *fair* in a way."

For Mac, it was not so much *anger* at the EU as blamee that caused him to see it as bad, but rather sympathy for the *victims* of the things the EU had done. This echoes Pfattheicher et al's research, whereby compassion for victims but being unable to help those victims magnifies third-party punishment, and suggests a second way in which blame can make villains of the blamee.[1164] Namely, where exogenous blame is performed, and people feel compassion for the victims who are harmed by the blamee, they may turn against the blamee as villain. Compassion as well as anger (as a villain-type feeling) becomes important to understanding what villains are made. This is here labelled 'indirect' vilification, as the blamee is vilified only as an outcome of how people feel about victims—people 'feel about' the victims before returning to the blamee as indirect object.

Notably, the two 'low-blame' participants from 6.4 Post-referendum performance of blame did not identify strong emotions in connection with exogenous blame; Sam said that "It's hard to feel strong about these things right" and because the situation he described didn't affect him, he was "at *best* a little bit disinterested".[1165] This was not because he was generally emotionally indifferent; he later gave an in-depth description of Cambridge Analytica and micro-targeting, describing it as "incredibly scary", "hugely scary", "scary, dystopian".[1166] Jamal likewise did not connect his own emotions to exogenous blame. He indicated cognitive empathy[1167] with other people, suggesting that those affected might feel "uneasy" or "threatened" by migration, or "encouraged" by campaigns against it. He, like Sam, was not emotionally reticent elsewhere. This demonstrates that not everybody who encounters exogenous blame will experience 'villain-type feelings' as a result; perhaps

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[1164] Pfattheicher, Sassenrath, and Keller, 'Compassion Magnifies Third-Party Punishment.'
[1165] See discussion of victim unmaking in E5.
[1166] See also 5.3 The Brexit assemblage.
[1167] See Zaki, *The War for Kindness*. Annex A for a helpful discussion of empathy; it encompasses 'cognitive empathy' (I know what they feel), 'emotional empathy' (I feel what they feel), 'emotional concern' (aka 'compassion', 'sympathy'; I feel *for* them).

because they do not believe the blame, or disagree with it. Non-vilifying reactions are likewise emerged in the following discussions of survey-experiment results.[1168]

Blame then creates villains when audiences experience villain-type feelings such as *anger* at the blamee, or when they experience compassion for the blamee's victims and turn against the blamee as a result. However, not all exogenous blame leads to the creation of villains, as with the 'low blame' interlocutors; its effects are uneven, as could be expected where causal powers are mediated or mitigated by other factors.

7.3. Villains at large: the survey-experiment

The survey-experiment ('SE') presented an opportunity to identify a relationship between exogenous blame and vilification at a wider scale than in the FGIs, and to verify that similar effects were seen 'in the moment' to those seen years after the exogenous blame may have been encountered. For the SE, participants provided some basic information about themselves as described in 4.4.1 Survey-experiment,[1169] read one of four vignettes while holding their breath, then answered up to five open-ended questions as shown in Table 21.[1170]

Table 21: Post-vignette questions

A	How do you feel after reading the above text?	
B	Why do you feel that way?	v2 only
C	What should be done about the situation?	
D	What could you personally do to ensure these actions are taken?	
E	How will you feel after these actions are taken?	

Responses to these questions were coded with blamees, victims, and explicit emotions[1171] as above.[1172]

[1168] See also E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.

[1169] See also full questions at Annex: Ethics Review Forms.

[1170] Breath-holding was designed as a natural timer so that people would read the vignette quickly and thereby be more likely to engage heuristic, rather than systematic processing. This was presumed to be a more realistic way for people to engage with news content in an era of click-bait headlines and attention overload. (See e.g. Williams, *Stand out of Our Light*.). Heuristic processing is associated with more emotion and bias, and less information-seeking or interrogation of facts. As vilification is associated with emotions, it was important that people gave an emotional response over a considered one. See also Methodology. With specific regard to blame, "people initially process information in a heuristic manner, then make rational adjustments if they have adequate time and mental resources." Goldinger et al., '"Blaming the Victim" under Memory Load'. See Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*; Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*. for two explanations of dual processing models. It is not necessarily that effects would have differed significantly had people had more time to read, but this would be less realistic; it is possible that the FGIs themselves emerged what would happen when people 'systematically' engaged with blame, as demonstrated by the nuance shown in 6.4 Post-referendum performance of blame.

[1171] Including expressions of affect such as 'breath' (, breathlessness, dizziness, light-headedness).

[1172] See 7.1.1 Producing data, 4.3.1 Data analysis framework.

To investigate the relationship between blame and vilification in the SE, it is important to understand what blame participants were reacting to. For this reason, this section first analyses the vignette itself. Next, 7.3.2 Emotions experienced as an effect of blame establishes that blame provokes emotions. However, it could be that these emotions are general and not 'at' anybody, in which case no villain would be created. For that reason, the remainder of this section establishes the objects created by blame, through interrogating spontaneous endogenous (re)blaming and victim identification by participants. It shows that blame makes people 'annoyed' as well as 'angry', and that people reading the blame-EU vignette as the focus of analysis seem to have been speaking about the EU and the text author. 7.4 Why we feel that way then emerges people's own explanations of what they felt and towards whom, allowing for meaningful triangulation with FGI results and verification of vilification.

7.3.1.   Analysing the vignette

Per 4.4.1 Survey-experiment and based on the findings of E2, the vignette used in the survey-experiment was based on Leave.EU content and incorporated victimisation of the UK.[1173] It concerns flooding in the UK and was adapted to include flooding from 2019 when the SE was run rather than 2015–2016 as in the original article to ensure relevance. Flooding is an environmental issue, and such issues were blamed on the EU in pre-referendum materials per 6.3.2 What were they blamed for?.[1174] The vignette is analysed here to highlight what blaming and victimisation were performed, to allow for meaningful discussion of results in the remainder of this section. The parts of the vignette that were switched out are labelled using the format [blamee], with paragraphs numbered with 'P', sentences with 'S', and instances of blame with 'B'. Blamees included the EU, the UK, 'us'/ourselves, and a fourth vignette contained no blame. Full vignettes are at Annex: Vignettes.

Title

Thanks to [blamee], the UK's big flooding problem is only going to get worse.

The title attributes blame for flooding to [blamee]; the flooding is a negative event ('get worse'); and the UK—whose problem it is—is the victim. In the 'no blame' condition, the title was "The UK's big flooding problem".

The original title on the Leave.EU piece was "Arron Banks: This unnatural disaster was made in Brussels thanks to EU flooding policies"; it too led with blame. It was modified to take into account multiple floods in 2019 (rather than one disaster) and to permit use of the title in a

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[1173] The article used was included in texts analysed in E2: Blame campaign.
[1174] Neil Malhotra and Alexander Kuo note that most studies on blame attribution relate to economic performance, and that non-economic domains "such as disaster management" may be particularly interesting for analysis. They imply that it is better to analyse blame around an event that is not very well-known—as for the vignettes in the current study, about which participants expressed shock and surprise—to enhance generalisability. Malhotra and Kuo, 'Attributing Blame', 121–22.

consistent way between vignettes. No author was included in the modified title so that any existing perceptions of the speaker could not influence results.[1175] The modified title is arguably less strong in terms of blame than the original title, which used the word 'unnatural' to illustrate how aberrant the situation was, and evidence for the claim in the headline ('thanks to EU flooding policies'). It also mentioned the blamee twice.

Opening paragraph

> The UK's summer has gotten off to an exceedingly soggy start.
>
> In Lincolnshire, the residents of more than 580 homes were evacuated in mid-June after the town of Wainfleet endured the equivalent of <u>two months' rain</u> [B1] in just two days.
>
> In Edinburgh and Stirling, people had to be rescued by boat on June 24 after <u>flash floods</u> [B2] left people stranded on top of cars and inside their homes.

In the opening paragraph (P1), there are clear victims: in the second sentence (S2), the residents of homes in Wainfleet, and/or the town of Wainfleet, have had to 'endure'. In S3, 'people' have been 'stranded' and have to be 'rescued'—the use of the word 'rescue' helps reinforce the notion of 'victim'.[1176]

In S2, the 'cause' is 'two months' rain'; the situation is the rain's fault (B1). Likewise, in S3, the non-agentic 'flash floods' are to blame (B2). The situation itself is at fault, and as a 'non-agent', cannot have morals, therefore cannot be 'bad' or a 'villain'. This could change were rain to be personified or anthropomorphised, which is not the case here.[1177]

In S2 and S3, the victim precedes the blamee, and in S3, the blamee is 'sandwiched' between mentions of the victims. The language is passive; residents 'were evacuated', the town 'endured'; people 'had to be rescued' (and the 'boat' as ostensible rescuer is non-agentic; the people carrying out the rescue in the boat are not as important as the victims) and have been 'stranded'. Nobody is intentionally or actively carrying out any action.[1178] The focus is on establishing the victims, and their condition could be expected to generate sympathy.

In the original version of the article, victims were likewise established in the opening paragraph:

> "LAST winter, it was Somerset. Now Yorkshire, Cumbria, Lancashire and large parts of Scotland have been devastated by floods. So why are towns and villages which have stood for hundreds of years suddenly under threat, in rainy islands where bad weather is nothing new?"[1179]

[1175] See 'ethos' in 2.1.1 Aristotle, audiences, and proofs and notions of how speakers can present themselves as heroes in 3.2.5 The circumstances of characterisation.

[1176] Cf. 'Rescue' narrative in Lakoff, *The Political Mind*.

[1177] See discussion of agentic/non-agentic blamees in the introduction of E2.

[1178] See also discussion in 9.4 Changing subjects and objects.

[1179] Banks, 'This Unnatural Disaster Was Made in Brussels Thanks to EU Flooding Policies'.

Stronger language is used ('devastated by floods'), though the passive voice remains. There is reference to the UK's history and the normalcy of the situation, meaning something must have been *done*, and suddenly, to have caused the flooding. Lastly, reference is made to a 'threat'. This last was removed in the vignette to avoid conflating 'blame' behaviour, sited in the past, with 'threat', sited in the future.[1180] It also would have been dubious to suggest that, in the 'blame selves' condition, people's behaviour had 'suddenly' caused flooding, and given the need to keep vignettes consistent, the opening paragraph had to be written in such a way that victimisation was retained but that the more inflammatory language and lead-in to blame were removed.

In the 'no blame' condition, participants encountered only the title, the opening paragraph, and P4, discussed below.

Second paragraph

> The politicians swanking around the disaster zones in hard hats and hi-viz jackets are pointing the finger at <u>climate change</u> [B3] – a convenient bogeyman in this situation, but in truth this is an unnatural disaster which was made to order in <u>[blamee]</u> [B4].

P2 is more active. Politicians are 'swanking around' and 'pointing the finger'—blaming—climate change. This blame (B3) is countered, with the author describing it as merely a 'convenient bogeyman', before going on to explain that the situation was in fact intentionally created ('made to order') in [blamee] (B4). In the different vignettes, the blamee was 'Brussels', 'Westminster', or 'our own backyards'.

The politicians 'swanking around' are bumbling at best, or corrupt at worst, as they are blaming the wrong party. They may be trying to 'scare' people through use of a 'bogeyman'. 'Climate change' is perhaps not serious; it is compared to a mythological creature that lives under the bed, which all reasonable adults should understand does not exist. The paragraph makes explicit reference to 'truth' as opposed to falsehoods propounded by the politicians, suggesting that B4 gives the 'true' cause.

Here, 'politicians' acts as an empty signifier;[1181] it is not clear what or whom it means, and the reader themselves can fill in the details based on their existing knowledge and allegiances, helping to entrench existing views.[1182] The image accompanying the original article did not show any politicians, in 'hi viz' or otherwise (Figure 40).

[1180] See also 2.4 Defining blame.

[1181] A "signifier that absorbs rather than emits meaning" 'Floating Signifier'. See discussion of empty signifiers in Laclau, Gasché, 'How Empty Can Empty Be?'.

[1182] See also 9.4.3 No-blame: rendering the perpetrator invisible, or calling for blame to be laid?.

Figure 40: This unnatural disaster[1183]

After establishing that the 'blame' claimed by the 'politicians' is erroneous and that climate change is not credible, the author uses 'made to order' to emphasise that not only is the [blamee] to blame, but they do so 'on purpose'. Per existing research,[1184] where a harmful act is done intentionally, people see the perpetrator as having more causal responsibility and the actions are more blameworthy. This fourth appearance of blame becomes the strongest blame in the piece.

Third paragraph

> There are a number of different factors to consider, of course, but none have had a bigger impact than [actions or initiatives of the blamee], [outcome for river and flooding].

P3 helps bolster B4 with evidence. There is an implied warrant that the actions undertaken by the [blamee] are within the blamee's responsibility and area of competence. In the 'EU' version of the vignette, leveraging original text, further backing is given through pointing at

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[1183] This image from the article is no longer available online, but was downloaded as part of a PDF of the full article by the researcher in 2015. Banks, 'This Unnatural Disaster Was Made in Brussels Thanks to EU Flooding Policies'. The statue of a soldier and his dog overlooking a flooded English town and prominent 'Yorkshire' sign could have engaged underlying patriotism discourses, emphasising the betrayal of the politicians and inappropriateness of their actions. This in turn could be expected to enhance emotional reactions towards the unnamed politicians, and further diminish the alternative blame in B3.
[1184] E.g. Malle and Knobe, 'The Folk Concept of Intentionality'; Lagnado and Channon, 'Judgments of Cause and Blame'; Guglielmo and Malle, 'Enough Skill to Kill'.

specific EU regulations that have ostensibly led to the flooding. In the UK version, UK legislation was instead used as the backing. For the 'blame ourselves' condition, actions such as 'irresponsible water use' placed responsibility with citizens. Because river dredging is outside the remit of individual citizens, rather than having the outcome of 'hugely increased the difficulty and expense of dredging our rivers', the outcome was instead 'hugely increased the likelihood of flooding'. The 'blame ourselves' condition therefore loses one instance of portrayal as 'us' as victims ('our rivers') which is present in the blame EU and blame UK conditions.

The qualifier that "there are a number of different factors to consider" helps re-open the door to other possibilities and contributors to the flooding, meaning the overall claim of B4 cannot be dismissed out of hand.[1185]

Fourth paragraph

Managing floods costs the UK around £2.2 billion each year.

This final paragraph (P4) was included in all vignettes and was aimed at ensuring that the entire UK was the 'victim', rather than just those directly affected by the floods.

The original article, after P3 above, continued with another 11 paragraphs of blame (12 instances of EU blaming total), backing, and victim identification. This was not considered necessary for the purposes of the survey-experiment, and the length may have created a barrier to people completing the task.

<div align="center">❖</div>

The vignette then takes the overall structure of

1. Title establishing victim and blamee (for all bar the 'no blame' condition)
2. Victims established; non-agentic blame (B1 and B2)
3. Alternative version of events (B3) rebutted, and 'true' blame laid (B4)
4. Evidence for B4, with an implied warrant of responsibility and backing in the form of associated regulations (etc)
5. Entire UK portrayed as victim

7.3.2. Emotions experienced as an effect of blame

What emotions did people experience as an effect of exogenous blame in the vignettes? Table 22 shows the top twenty emotional and affective responses[1186] to each vignette, excluding positive emotions and expressions of apathy. Positive emotions were removed because they typically related to the final question, "How will you feel after these actions are

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[1185] It is possible that this invitation encouraged SE participants to seek alternate blamees where they did not agree with the vignette; further research could establish whether this does take place.
[1186] Recall that 'affect' consists of bodily information. In this case, 'breath' (, breathlessness, light-headedness, dizzy) is included as an outcome of research design.

taken?", which concerns what people would like to feel in future, not what they feel now. Expressions of apathy or indifference ('same', 'apathetic', 'nothing', 'unknown')[1187] were removed to simplify reading, and because it is *antipathy*, not apathy, that indicates vilification.

Annoyance and anger appear in the top twenty emotional responses to the blame-containing vignettes, and not for the no-blame vignette. This indicates that blame itself engenders these emotions. The no-blame vignette is associated with more 'sadness' and 'concern', likely because only *victims* and no *blame* are included.[1188]

Table 22: Top twenty emotions/feelings in responses to vignettes, with positive emotions and expressions of apathy removed

	None		EU		UK		Ourselves	
1	sad	14.3%	annoyed	12.7%	breath	11.3%	breath	12.6%
2	breath	8.8%	breath	7.6%	annoyed	8.5%	annoyed	8.7%
3	concerned	6.6%	angry	6.3%	sad	5.5%	angry	6.1%
4	have-tried	6.3%	have-tried	6.0%	have-tried	5.5%	sad	5.8%
5	worried	5.8%	unknown	5.7%	angry	4.7%	unknown	4.8%
6	unknown	3.6%	sad	5.1%	unknown	4.7%	concerned	4.5%
7	sorry	2.7%	confused	4.8%	confused	3.6%	worried	4.2%
8	anxious	2.5%	concerned	3.6%	concerned	3.3%	frustrated	4.2%
9	sympathetic	2.5%	frustrated	3.3%	worried	3.0%	have-tried	3.9%
10			worried	3.3%	frustrated	2.5%		
11					stressed	2.5%		

If the increased anger and annoyance were because of *possibly* more inflammatory text in the blame-containing vignettes,[1189] then there would not be between-vignette differences—people would be equally annoyed, equally angry, etc whether in response to the blame-EU, blame-selves, or blame-UK vignette. Between-vignette differences are however apparent, indicating it is the blame and not the nature of the text that provokes these emotions.

These differences appear even within groups of the same voting preference ('VP') at the time of the survey-experiment, as shown in Figure 41 and Figure 42. These figures use researcher emotion groupings (~) per 4.3.5 Recognising emotions—see reproduced Table 23.

[1187] This last included where, for example, people said they 'don't know' how they feel. It is possible that this represents low emotional intelligence or granularity; it is also possible that people do not *want* to write what they feel; or people do not care enough to write what they feel. 'Unknown' was located in 3.6%–5.7% of responses to the vignettes.
[1188] See also 7.4.7 Are Remainers just emotional snowflakes?.
[1189] See 7.3.1 Analysing the vignette.

While the largest differences are between blame-containing vignettes and the no-blame vignette, there are between-group differences such that voting preference Remainers are less ~annoyed by blame of the UK than they are by blame of the EU or ourselves; VP Leavers are likewise most ~annoyed by the EU-blame vignette, and least by the blame-selves condition. It is clear that something about the blame being done is affecting people's emotions—and it is affecting them differently. (Full data may be viewed at Annex: SE emotions by vignette and voting preference.)[1190]

Figure 41: VP Remainers—percentage of SE responses containing grouped emotions
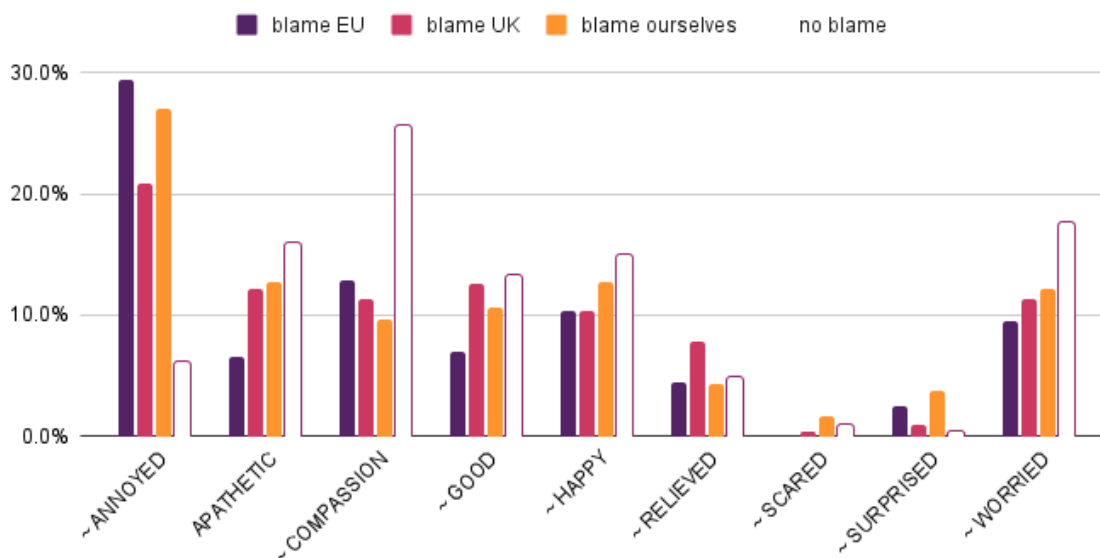
Figure 42: VP Leavers—percentage of SE responses containing grouped emotions

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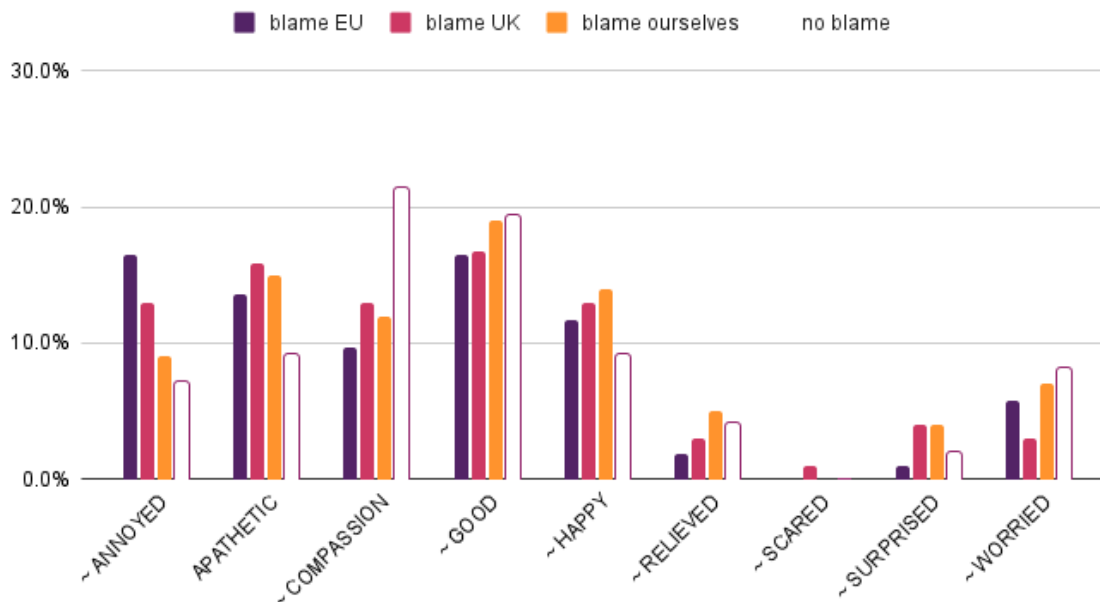
[1190] See also discussion of VPL versus VPR 'emotionality' in 7.4.7 Are Remainers just emotional snowflakes?.

Table 23: Researcher emotion groupings for survey-experiment responses, with the number of instances indicated

Group name	Inclusions	Group instances
~Annoyed	Annoyed (110), angry (63), exasperated (4), frustrated (42), irritated (20), miffed (1), narked (1)	241
Apathetic[1191]	apathetic (13), ambivalent (18), don't care (6), disinterested (5), don't/won't/wouldn't feel anything (7), neutral (44) , indifferent (86), meh (13), nothing in particular (2), not bothered (7), not interested/uninterested (6), unconcerned (4), undecided+ambivalent (1), unmoved (2)	214
~Compassion	Empathetic (11), have-tried (80), sad (111), sorry (17), sympathetic (12)[1192]	231
~Good, great	Fine (80), good/great (73), nice (4), okay (43), positive (13)	213
~Happy	Happy happier happiest (96), content (44), glad (13), pleased (16)	169
~Relieved	Relieved (60), reassured (6)	66
~Scared	Scared (6), afraid (1)	7
~Surprised	Surprised (20), shocked (9)	29
~Worried	Worried (61), anxious (25), cautious (1), concerned (65), nervous (1), panicked (1), uneasy (1)	156

7.3.3.   (Re)blaming in the SE

Establishing that exogenous blaming of the EU causes anger and annoyance is not the same as establishing that villains have been created—perhaps the anger is general, and not targeted 'at' someone as a potential villain. Identifying who is *vilified* in survey-experiment responses also necessitates identifying which actors are spoken about (this subsection), and how people feel about those actors specifically as a result of blame (next section). The former may be done by establishing who participants spontaneously (re)blame after reading the vignette.[1193] '(Re)blame' is used to denote endogenous blame and encompasses both participants re-blaming the same party as in the vignette, and where they counter-blame by blaming an alternate party.[1194]

The no-blame vignette helps establish a blame baseline—though no blame was included in the vignette, (re)blame appears in responses (Figure 43). This highlights that blame is a

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[1191] This is not indicated with a tilde (~) as grouping was conducted from the outset when performing initial coding per Annex: Codebook, rather than after coding had been completed. I.e. 'Apathy' is never broken down into component subcodes; given vilification is associated with antipathy rather than apathy, this is not considered problematic. See also Annex: Codebook.

[1192] 'Have-tried' and 'sad' may or may not relate just to victims; one can feel like they 'have tried' if they stop people throwing rubbish into canals in the blame-selves condition, for example. Likewise, people can feel generally sad—for instance about 'climate change'—rather than sad for victims specifically. 'Concerned' is included in the ~worried group, as 'concern' did not appear to predominantly relate to victims—people were 'concerned by' or 'concerned with', not 'concerned for'.

[1193] Such endogenous blame was identified in the same way as throughout this thesis—by identifying the harmful act, who did it, and any apparent victims of the harm. See 4.3.2 Recognising blame. Technically, such blame would be *exogenous* for the researcher.

[1194] See also E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.

normal behaviour, at least for politically/personally salient events such as flooding and/or climate change. The blame-EU vignette resulted in the most spontaneous (re)blame.[1195]

Figure 43: Percentage of SE responses containing (re)blame, by vignette
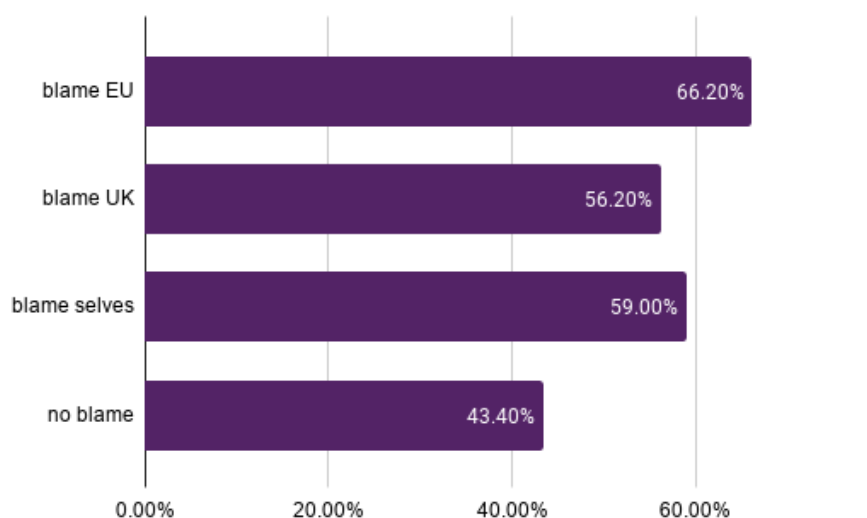
While they differed somewhat in their emotional experiences above (Figure 41, Figure 42), VP Leavers and Remainers (re)blamed at approximately the same rates (Figure 44), and more than apathetic or unsure voters ('VP Others').[1196] It is not possible to know whether VP Leave/Remain are blaming 'too much' or that VP Other are blaming 'too little', but exploring the difference could provide interesting for further research, given the emotional and polarising effects of blame.[1197]

[1195] This appears to be due to VP Remainers, who contested the vignette by blaming the text author. See also E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation, 7.4.1 Annoyance.

[1196] Unsure, would not vote, would prefer not to say.

[1197] See also E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.

Figure 44: Percentage of SE responses containing (re)blame, by VP and vignette
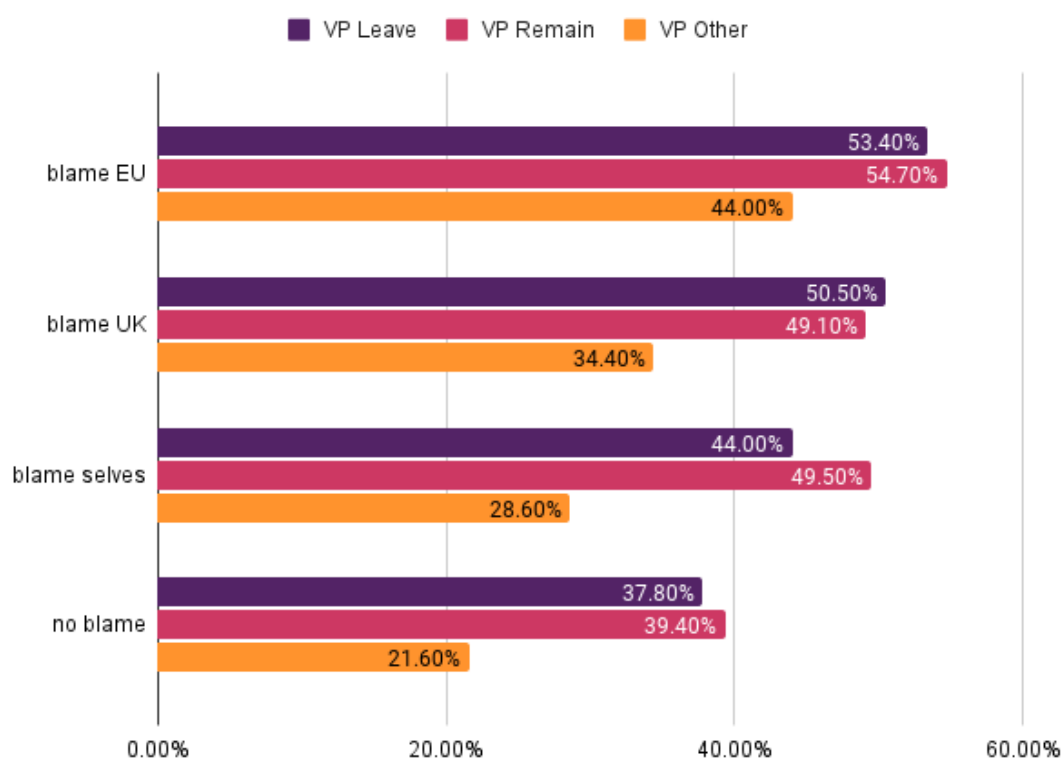
7.3.4.   Blaming niches: do people blame the EU because the EU is responsible?

The case study for the present research is Brexit, and per E2, the EU was the primary blamee during the campaign. Was this why the blame-EU vignette provoked the most (re)blaming—people were used to it being blamed—or is there some other reason?

Figure 45 shows blame makes an informational contribution: participants did not (re)blame the EU other than in response to the EU-blaming vignette. The party that is exogenously blamed enters what could be called a person's 'blaming niche'—the group of parties that can be blamed in association with a particular thing.[1198] In the present research, the EU entered SE participants' blaming niche in relation to flooding in the UK because they were told it was at fault, not because of any existing knowledge. Blame helps create viable blamees as well as provoking the emotions experienced against them. The present research then complements existing work on blame attribution (see 2.3.6). For instance, Hameleers et al find the EU is seen as more to blame when it is blamed, as opposed to when there is no blame or the (Dutch) government is blamed. [1199]

[1198] This relates to "available beliefs" in framing theory. "[P]eople draw their opinions from the set of available beliefs stored in memory. Only some beliefs become accessible at a given moment. Out of the set of accessible beliefs, only some are strong enough to be judged relevant or applicable to the subject at hand." Framing—including via causal stories—can affect all three items. Chong and Druckman, 'Framing Theory', 111.

[1199] Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, "'They Did It'", 882.

Figure 45: Number of responses in which blamees are (re)blamed by SE participants[1200]
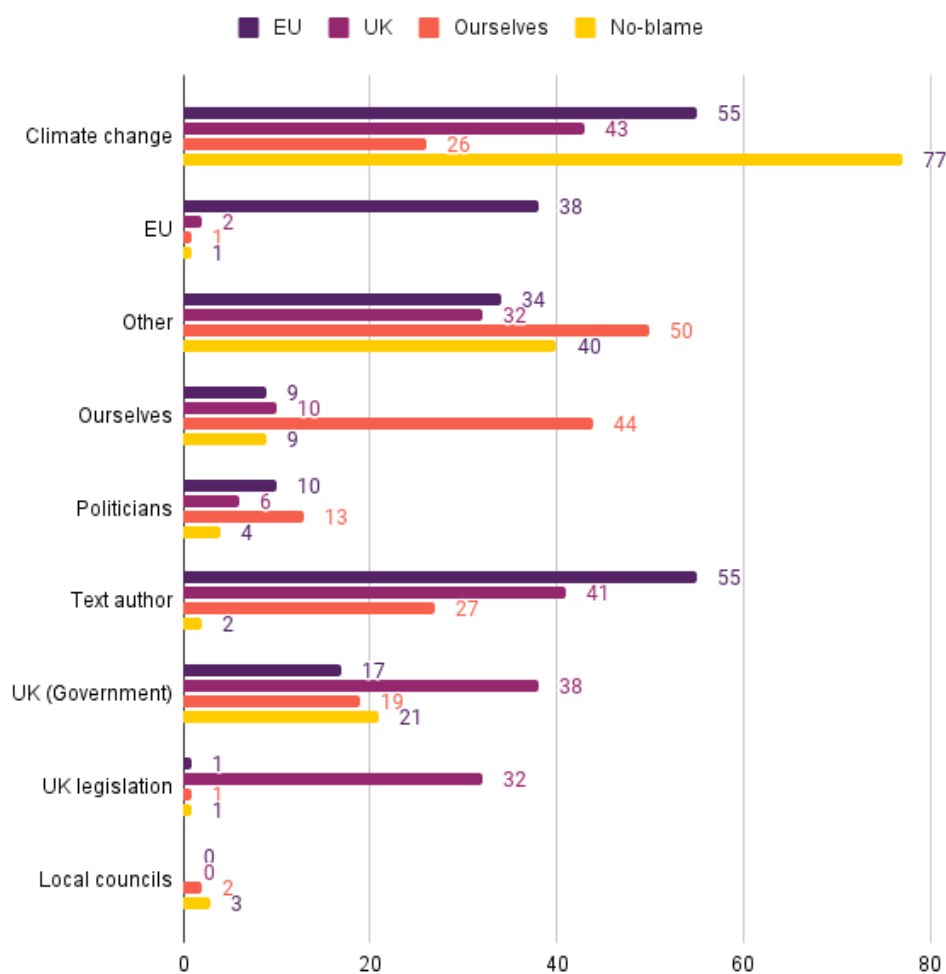
Further, there were some differences between VP Leavers' and Remainers' blaming niche; VPRs blamed climate change and the text author more across the vignettes,[1201] while VPLs were more prone to blaming the EU and 'Others'[1202] (Figure 46).

[1200] Best viewed in colour; data bars are presented in the same order as the key. See also Annex: Codebook.
[1201] See though Figure 52 on page 1. VPRs' blaming the text author appears skewed by responses to the blame-EU vignette.
[1202] 'Other' blamees are one of the most common blamees in the SE responses, perhaps recommending further division. However, there is little consistency within this group. It includes situational blamees (infrequent, e.g. "lack of empathy"), and more commonly, agentic blamees such as architects, builders, developers, other countries, everybody else (I.e. not me, but other people are the problem), the international community, money, capitalism, big corporations, insurance, water boards, (lack of radicalised) unions, and many more. It seems there are almost as many possible blamees as there were survey-experiment participants who were blaming, indicating that people do 'arrive' with existing knowledge prior to reading the vignette—their 'blaming niches' are not empty. Rather than divide this category, it is retained as a group to indicate that there is a substantial amount of blame that is accorded to parties outside of those mentioned in the vignettes. See also Martin Sievert et al, who note the role of social conformity in circumscribing people's blaming niche. Sievert et al., 'The Power of Conformity in Citizens' Blame'.

Figure 46: Who did VP Leavers and Remainers blame? (All vignettes; percentage of responses containing that blamee.)
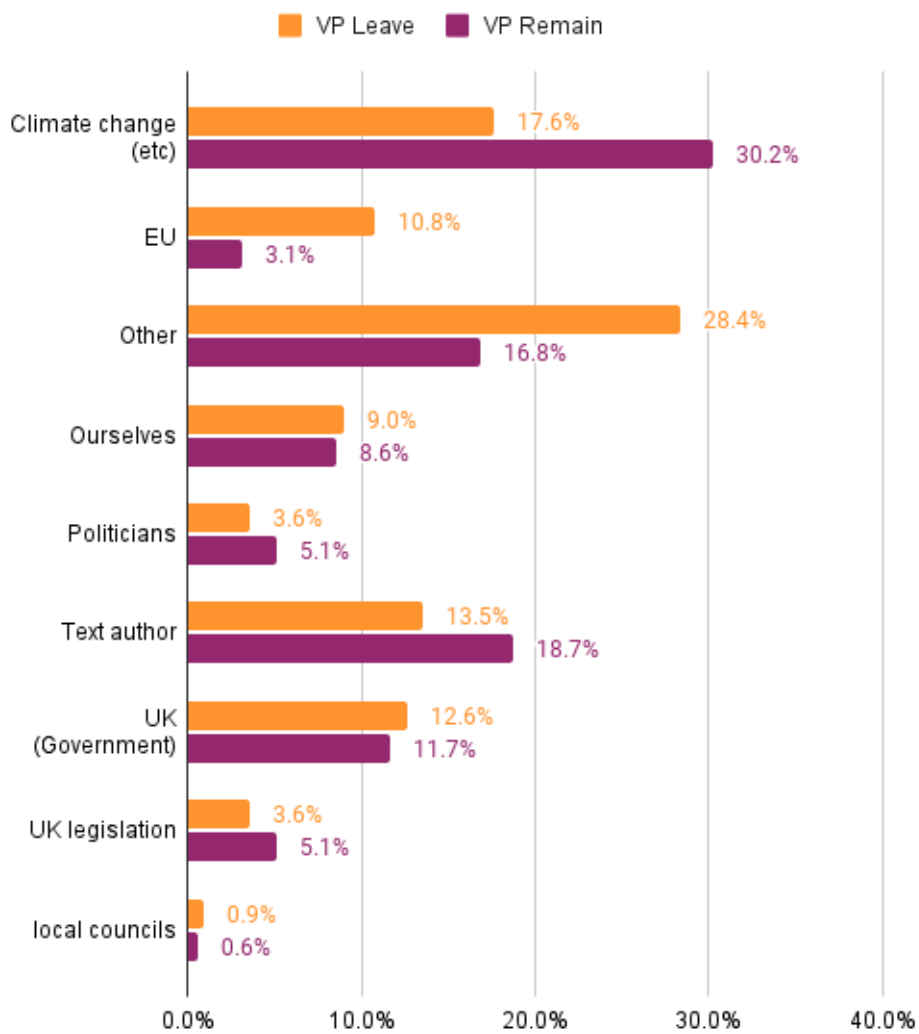
Figure 47 shows how VP Leaver/Remainer (re)blaming changed, compared to all vignettes, after reading the blame-EU vignette.

Figure 47: VP Leavers and Remainers (re)blamed differently after the EU-blame vignette[1203]
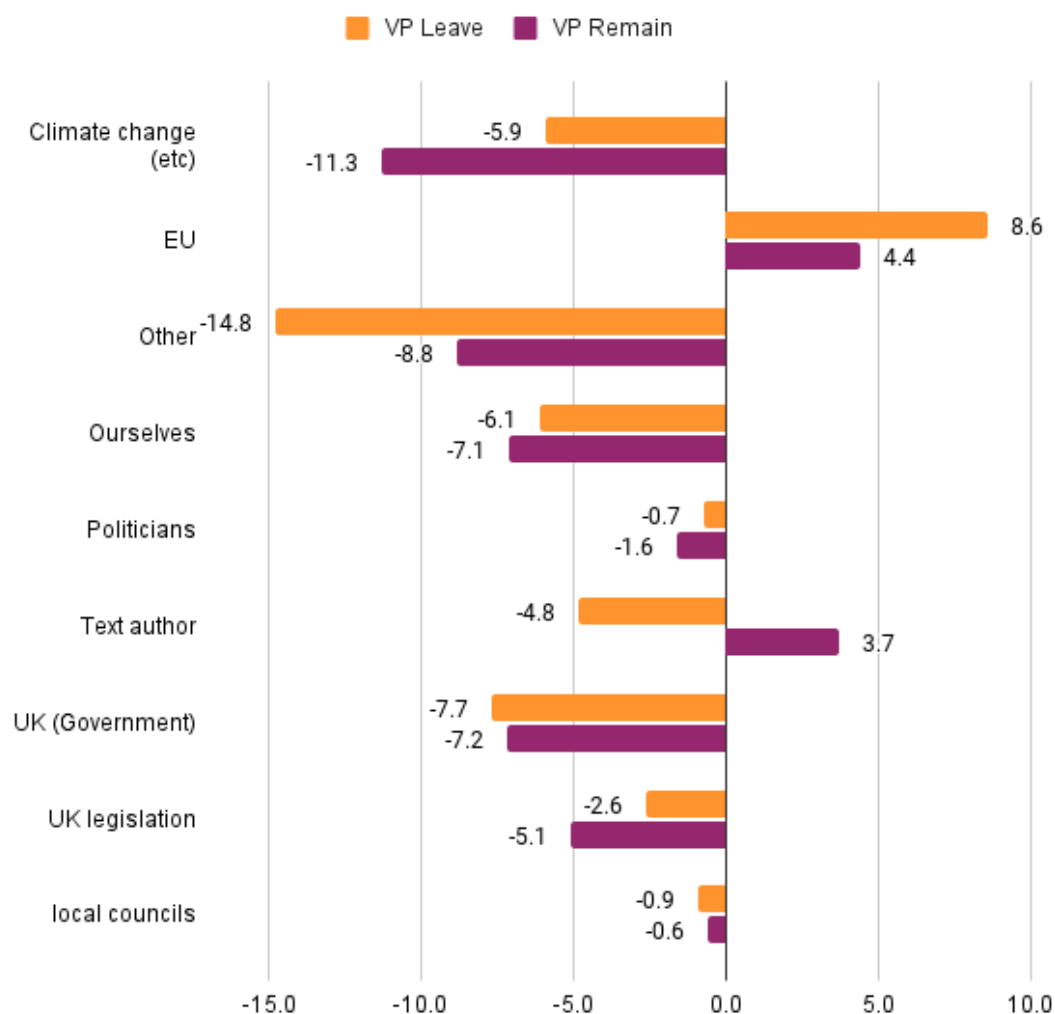
In response to the blame-EU vignette then, VP Leavers and Remainers spoke more about the EU than usual, and VPRs also blamed the text author. As people reading this vignette felt ~annoyed (Table 22), it is possible that these two actors are the objects of such annoyance, indicating two possible villains. That this is the case is elaborated in 7.4 Why we feel that way.

It is worth noting that the EU is salient and known to a much wider audience than any individual journalist. A specific author may not arise much in any given person's daily life, meaning vilification of them may be irrelevant.[1204] The EU is a bigger target, with relevance for more people and more facets of life. Unlike an individual author whose name one may

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[1203] The numbers in the figure are calculated by deducting the overall percentage occurrence of the blamee from the percentage occurrence of the blamee in blame-EU responses. A percentage sign is not used in case this were mistakenly interpreted as representing percentage change.

[1204] Exceptions might relate to famous authors—several FGI participants expressed a dislike for Nigel Farage, though of course he is not simply 'an author' given his UKIP/MEP role, while still endorsing the Leave movement as a whole; those who decry JK Rowling's trans-exclusion might choose to boycott her; The Sun became villain as a result of their coverage of the Hillsborough disaster and is boycotted as such in Liverpool.

not recall, the EU is easy to remember and (re)blame, meaning blaming and concordant vilification of the EU has more potential for impact than blaming of any one author.

7.3.5.   Victims in the survey-experiment

The FGIs indicated victims may be important to vilification, as it is when people feel compassion for victims that they turn against the perpetrator. As such it is important to identify whether victims were spontaneously identified by SE participants in their responses; these are potential objects for compassion, rendering the compassion backhand possible. Victims are those who were identified by participants as having been harmed.[1205]

As shown in Figure 48, victims were identified approximately twice as often in responses to the no-blame vignette. This could be because, consistent with prior research,[1206] blame distracted people from victims. It is also possible that people were asked to react to the vignette to complete the survey, and all they saw to talk about was the victims—so that is what they wrote about.

Figure 48: Percentage of responses containing a victim, by vignette
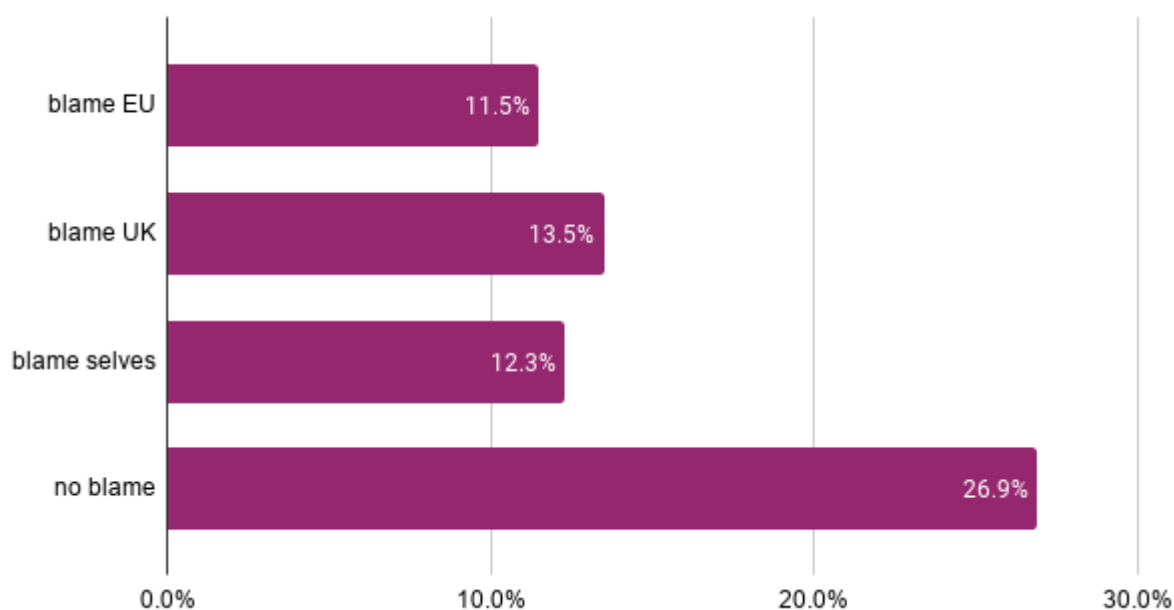
Generally, VP Remainers identified victims more than did VP Leavers, though people with 'other' voting preferences[1207] identified victims most of all (Figure 49). It is unclear why.

[1205] E.g. "people affected by the floods" 1529. Labour supporter, white, man, working class. "concerned for the people affected" 668. Remainer, progressive, man, Scottish, working class. See 4.3.3 Recognising (un)victims.

[1206] Ryan, *Blaming the Victim*; Resodihardjo, *Crises, Inquiries and the Politics of Blame*.

[1207] Unsure, would not vote, would rather not say.

Figure 49: Percentage of responses containing a victim, by voting preference
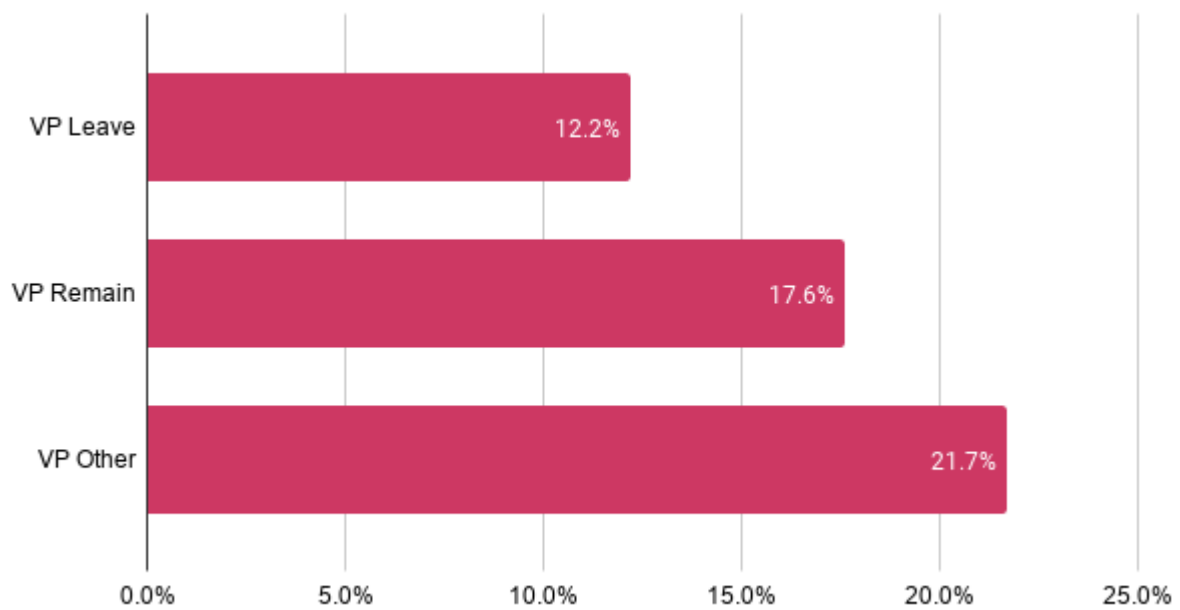
Further, while VPLs identified victims fairly consistently across vignettes, VPRs identified victims much more in the no-blame condition, and *less* in the EU-blame condition (Figure 50). This suggests blame may be particularly effective in distracting attention from victims amongst people who disagree with it, likely leading to inferior solutions for victims.[1208]

Figure 50: Percentage of responses containing a victim, by vignette and VP[1209]

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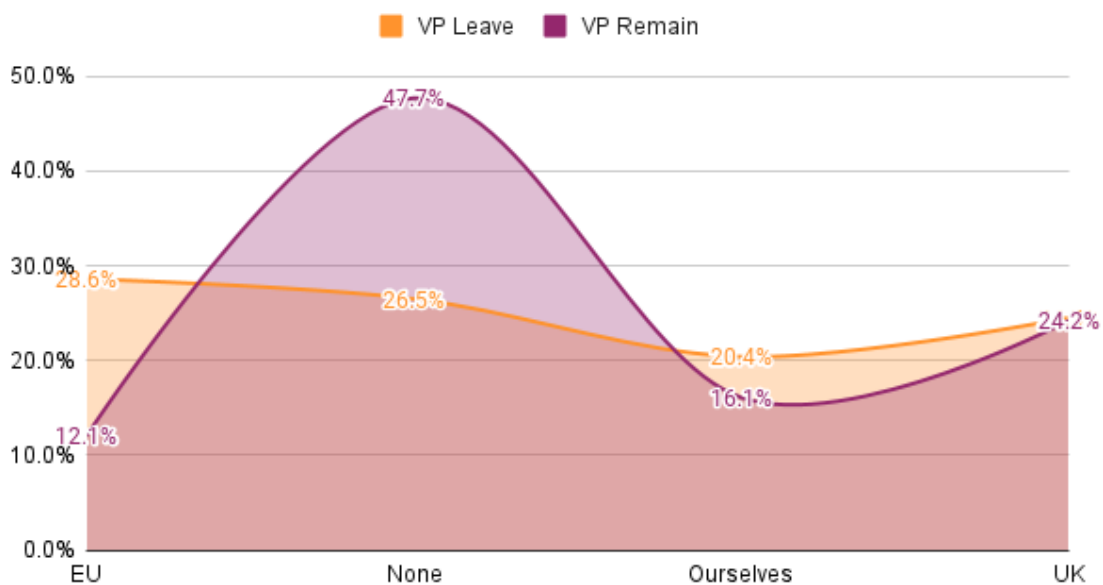
[1208] A similar effect seems apparent in the blame-selves condition. See also E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation, 7.4 Why we feel that way
[1209] The values for blame-UK are 24.2% for VPR and 24.5% VPL.

This section has analysed the vignette used in the survey-experiment and demonstrated that blame causes emotions, including negative 'villain-type' emotions such as anger and annoyance. It located blamees and victims identified by SE respondents, as potential objects of the emotions engendered by blame. It introduced the concept of a 'blaming niche', and illustrated that VP Leavers and Remainers (re)blame different people generally as well as experiencing—presumably relatedly—some variation in what they 'feel' as an effect of blame of specific blamees. However, the emotions and people spoken about have not yet been tied together such that vilification of specific parties can be meaningfully discussed. This is the task of the following section.

7.4. Why we feel that way

Qualitative analysis of SE responses permits investigation of people's own explanations for the way they felt, shedding light into how villains are made. This section focuses on the EU-blaming vignette, given the EU was the primary blamee appearing in E2: Blame campaign and to facilitate triangulation with FGI data. It verifies that projected villains from the blame-EU condition—the EU and the text author—are in fact vilified, with existing knowledge and allegiances mediating the effects of blame such that Leavers vilify the EU and Remainers instead vilify the text author. This section also notes several instances of victim (un)making as a form of blame contestation, which is discussed further in the following chapters.

In 7.3.2 Emotions experienced as an effect of blame, the largest divergence between emotions experienced after the blame-containing vignettes and the no-blame vignette were in ~annoyance, ~compassion, and ~worry.[1210] ~Annoyance appeared in responses to blame-containing vignettes, and the latter two for the no-blame vignette. This means it is possible to understand these emotions as provoked (or prevented) by blame. These three emotions groups are the primary focus of this section.

Further, VP Leavers and Remainers appear to have slightly different responses to the EU-blaming vignette (Figure 51). The emotions and affect showing greatest divergence are included in discussion, as these indicate possible sites for mediation or contestation of blame. Apathy,[1211] feeling ~good, and breath are therefore included.

[1210] See also Annex: SE emotions by vignette, 7.4.7 Are Remainers just emotional snowflakes?.
[1211] Note that 'apathetic' is a researcher emotion grouping per Annex: Codebook.

Figure 51: Percentage of EU-blame responses containing a given emotion or grouping[1212]
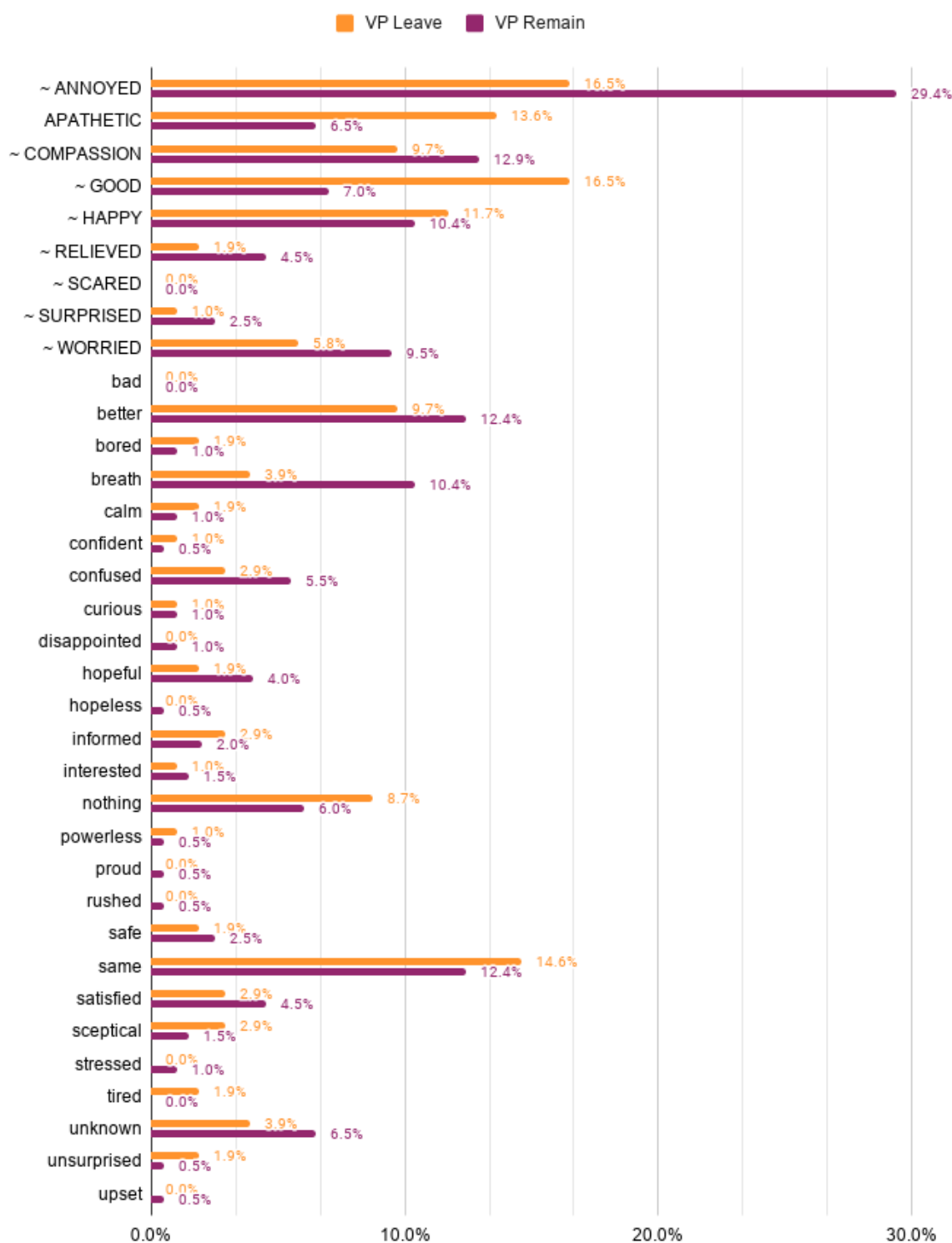
[1212] See full data at Annex: SE emotions by vignette and voting preference. People with 'other' voting preferences were infrequent and are not included here due to the small sample size. For the blame-EU vignette, there were 201 VP Remainer responses, 103 VP Leavers, and 25 VP 'Other'. 'Other' includes 'unsure', 'would not vote', 'would rather not say'. It is possible that VP Other could include swing voters, in which case their responses would be of interest; however, even the most common emotion grouping (~annoyance) had just five VP Other respondents, meaning discussion would be premature. VPL/VPR responses are sufficient to establish vilification.

7.4.8 Additional villain-type feelings takes a more wide-ranging approach, such that every intersection of a negative, villain-type feeling with a blamee is investigated in order to identify any further ways in which blame makes villains. For instance, one VP Remainer 'disliked' the text author as a result of blame—they felt negatively towards the blamee, meaning the text author was created as a villain:

> "Dislike the author for being dismissive of climate change & coming up with a bunch of badly-thought-out excuses" [1213]

As a result, additional 'villain-type feelings' beyond simply ~annoyance and compassion are identified, though these are far less frequent, and it is less sure that they relate to *exogenous* rather than *endogenous* blame.

Note that this section draws on SE participants' intact and uncorrected typed responses. Slashes (/) indicate the quotation includes data from multiple question responses from the same participant.[1214] Themes in responses—the reason people felt a particular emotion, or whom they feel it at—are identified where applicable, with all ideas represented per 4.3.7 Reading process and quote selection, and differences between those of alternative voting preferences and implications for vilification considered. Numbers following quotes (or included in footnotes) indicate the response number; additional information about the respondent may also be included, for instance, their voting preference or how they self-identified. The order in which this information is presented is not significant.[1215]

All discussion in this section refers to emotion groupings; tildes (~) are elided to enhance readability.

7.4.1.   Annoyance

As annoyance was the pre-eminent group of emotions provoked by the blame-EU vignette, it is considered at some length here.

VP Leavers linked their annoyance to the need to leave the EU (see quotes following). This held even when then said they felt 'indifferent' to the flooding,[1216] and where there were doubts as to the factual accuracy of the piece (suggesting contesting blame by refuting may not always be effective).[1217] One respondent was annoyed "that there's probably some truth in it", then went on to argue for leaving the EU, repeating Leave-campaign motifs around 'unelected bureaucrats' in doing so.[1218]

[1213] 640. VP Remain, blame-selves vignette. White, English, Northerner, non-religious, upper middle class. See also E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.

[1214] See Table 21 for questions.

[1215] See also 4.4.1 Survey-experiment.

[1216] 324. VP Leave, Leaver, Conservative supporter, man, heterosexual, British.

[1217] See 9.2.2 Rebuttal.

[1218] 128. VP Leave, Leaver, white, British, English, rural person.

> Annoyed / Because Brussels doesn't know what people need / Leave the EU / Vote for brexit[1219]

> Leave the European Union, manage issues like this at a more local level. Stop sending millions to Brussels and get half of that back invested where they deem fit[1220]

> Ignore EU directives and do what is best for us.[1221]

> If true, then continue supporting brexit[1222]

> the usual: pissed at the EU / leave the EU to be able to pass legislation that suits the UK. People's lives should take precedence over protecting water birds for example / vote Leave[1223]

Each of the people quoted above included being a 'Leaver' as part of their identity in response to the question ("I am (a/n)...").[1224] Another VP Leaver who did not *identify* as a 'Leaver' was annoyed but argued that the issue should be handled by local MPs:

> Informed and annoyed. / Money should be made available to prevent problems like those experienced in Lincolnshire through cuts in other areas. / Write to my MP.[1225]

Yet others were annoyed, but did not link the issue specifically to the EU, or were not able to produce suggestions as to what should be done:

> Annoyed / Better flood management at local level replacing lost upland woods.[1226]

> Fed up. / No Idea / Nothing / Don't know[1227]

The 'government', or politicians generally, also seemed to be responsible, with one angry person arguing that climate change has been 'blown out of proportion", that "the Elite" are choosing how people live their lives, that other nations are doing worse, and then returning to the topic of the EU to point out that his politicians "can't even honour my vote to leave".[1228]

Two VP Leavers who expressed a connection to environment causes, with their top general election voting issue as the environment/climate change or identifying as a Greens supporter, contested the blame. They countered it ("it is to do with climate change")[1229] and shamed the act of blame itself ("It's a bigger problem then just 'EU bad'").[1230] While both still

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[1219] 1016. Leaver, white, man, Scottish, working class. Most important GE issue the UK's relationship with the EU.
[1220] 128. Leaver, white, British, English, rural person.
[1221] 494. Leaver, Conservative, English, upper-middle class.
[1222] 1477. Leaver, Conservative, mixed/multiple ethnic, man, Jewish.
[1223] 397. Leaver.
[1224] See 4.4.1 Survey-experiment.
[1225] 1352. Progressive, man, heterosexual, English, skilled working class.
[1226] 60. Leaver, man, middle class.
[1227] 55. Leaver, UKIP supporter, white, English, southerner.
[1228] 52. Leaver, Conservative, man, British, working class.
[1229] 1130. Man, British, northerner, rural person. Top GE issue environment/climate change.
[1230] 775. Leaver, Greens supporter, progressive, English, southerner. Most important GE issue relationship with the EU. See also E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.

felt annoyed, their commitment to environmental causes appears to have caused them to interact differently with blame than for other VP Leavers, pointing to the role of underlying knowledge and allegiances in mediating the vilifying effects of blame.[1231]

VP Remainers were annoyed at different parties to VP Leavers: namely, and primarily, the text author. They believed the text to be lies and propaganda, and were rather upset about it:

> whoever wrote that bullshit should be dragged out from whatever rock they live under and exposed to sunlight.[1232]

> Annoyed at the person writing the text / It's written in an emotive way that does not appear to look at evidence[1233]

> It was annoyingly biased[1234]

> I don't believe it to be true[1235]

> Annoyed at the transparent and myopic bias of the article[1236]

> Angry / The inflammatory article is stirring up hatred / The broadcaster should be held to account[1237]

Like VP Leavers, annoyed VPRs also occasionally blamed the UK government or climate change in response to the blame-EU vignette,[1238] or they contested the blame by refuting it, e.g. "annoyed by the blame on the EU <u>which I disagree with</u>".[1239] Only one annoyed VP Remainer (re)blamed the EU in response to the vignette,[1240] with participants otherwise urging caution and thoughtful engagement with the text:

> Irritated / Without reading the details of the EU directives that are being blamed, it's impossible to make any sensible of informed recommendations.[1241]

> Irritated / The article is clearly intended to manipulate / I'd need to look into the facts on the flood directive, water framework directive etc. Usually when a regulation is

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[1231] A similar effect was seen in a 'VP Other' who had a Masters of Science in Environmental Dynamics and Climate Change. They were frustrated at the lack of flood mitigation, poor laws, and buck-passing, saying that "Climate change can't just be used as a blame—we need to do something to mitigate the effects." 1435. Conservative supporter, white, Southerner, rural person, non-religious.

[1232] 557. Progressive, Gen X, Scottish, non-religious, skilled working class

[1233] 1067. Remainer, Labour supporter, white, man.

[1234] 110. White millennial British non-religious middle class.

[1235] 1148. White, Gen Z, European, Scottish, English, major GE issue Brexit.

[1236] 203. White, British, northerner, city person, Westerner.

[1237] 825. Greens supporter, progressive, European, Scottish, working class, major GE issue Scottish independence.

[1238] E.g. "Write to my MP" as the solution. 154. Remainer, Lib Dem supporter, man, European, multi-cultural. "climate change is the culprit here not EU". 1090. Labour supporter, bisexual, millennial, Buddhist, skilled working class, major GE issue housing.

[1239] 398. Remainer, European, middle class. Emphasis added to indicate the refutation.

[1240] "regualtions should be looked at for a change". 1533. Woman, heterosexual, Scottish, non-religious, working class.

[1241] 456

mentioned by name in an anti-EU article it tends to be willfully misinterpretted or the benefits ignored in favor of focusing on the negatives.[1242]

Or even seeing the EU as the *answer* to the situation, by providing expertise or creating a forum where the UK can enact local change:

> Slightly annoyed / It seems like more could be done about the situation but the EU is preventing it / Politicians should work within the EU to change things / Vote for said politicians.[1243]

> Pissed off / A combination of eu and local expertise should find the best solution[1244]

> Infuriated by the populist rhetoric / The effect of EU regulations such as the Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive and Floods Directive and other regulations should be analysed and changes to them should be worked on with the EU if they are found to have adversely contributed to the situation.[1245]

Overall, while the EU-blaming vignette engendered annoyance in both VP Leavers and Remainers, their annoyance was about different things. VPLs were primarily annoyed at the EU; VPRs were overwhelmingly annoyed at the author of the text/the text itself. While the sample of VP Leavers is smaller, it is notable that the VPRs consistently described the text as propaganda, and this did not appear at all in the VPL responses. This is in comparison to the other vignettes, where per Figure 52, VP Remainers and VP Leavers blamed the text author at almost identical frequencies. This means it is not simply a case of VPRs being more 'critical readers'. Rather, it indicates underlying knowledge or allegiances mediate the effects of blame, with VPLs gladly re-blaming the EU in accordance with their biases and VP Remainers contesting this by blaming—and feeling annoyed at—somebody else.[1246] The 'text author' then becomes a new 'villain' for VP Remainers.[1247] Meanwhile, people with an interest in environmental issues interacted differently with the blame, as exemplified by VPLs with green interests *not* (re)blaming the EU.

[1242] 780. Alliance supporter, progressive, millennial, non-religious, middle class, major GE issue Brexit.

[1243] 918. Sinn Fein supporter, Millennial, European, Irish, lower middle class, major GE issue Brexit. The EU is arguably blamed for 'preventing' remedial actions here, but the way to fix that is by staying within the EU—for 918, the EU is the answer to the problem.

[1244] 135. Remainer, Labour supporter, woman, European, British.

[1245] 502, Remainer, SNP supporter, European, city person, immigrant.

[1246] Per Tilley and Hobolt, voters "seek to reconcile the facts with their political predispositions", and in the process could change how they view policy performance (selective evaluation), or "change who they hold responsible" (selective attribution). VPRs blaming the text author appears to be an instance of selective attribution. Tilley and Hobolt, 'Is the Government to Blame?', 318.

[1247] See also 7.3.3 and 7.3.4.

Figure 52: Blaming of the text author as a percentage of all blamees per vignette and VP
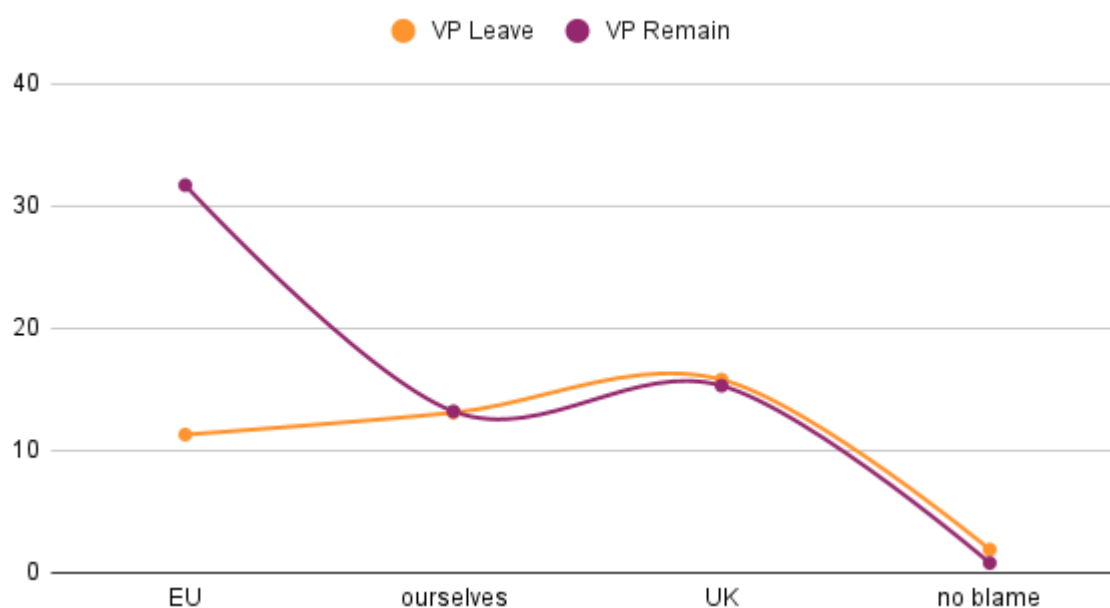
7.4.2. Compassion

Across all vignettes, where identification of a victim intersected with an emotion,[1248] two themes appeared: compassion for victims; and people saying they would be happy and feel that they had contributed once the victims had been rescued or assisted.

> I felt sympathy towards the victims.[1249]

> sorry for the people who had to go through this and surprised there's flooding in england (to this extent)[1250]

'Happiness' appeared in responses to the question on how people would feel once actions had been taken in regard to the situation:

> Happier as I know people wont be at risk as much as they could have been[1251]

> A little happier that fellow British people are not in danger of having their homes flooded[1252]

> I'd be happy that flooding issues would be less likely to have as severe of an effect on the residents.[1253]

Both these emotional themes are pro-social, indicating concern for the victims. It is also apparent that there is some emotional benefit to the audience where victims are helped—they will feel happier. According to Pfattheicher et al,[1254] where there is *not* the possibility to

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[1248] I.e. Codes of 'victim' and an emotion intersected in one segment.

[1249] 1188. VP Remain, white, man, heterosexual, British, Christian.

[1250] 1111. VP Unsure, Caribbean, man, heterosexual, Gen Z, British, unsure about most important GE issue.

[1251] 1505. VP Remain, man, heterosexual, Millennial, English, middle class.

[1252] 900. VP Remain, DUP supporter, Alliance supporter, man, British, lower middle class, most important GE issue Brexit.

[1253] 949. VP Remain, Remainer, SDLP supporter, man, Irish, middle class, most important GE issue Brexit.

[1254] Pfattheicher, Sassenrath, and Keller, 'Compassion Magnifies Third-Party Punishment.'

help victims, people are likely to turn on the blamee—they will come to feel they are the villain. This finding of compassion complements the FGI findings above.[1255]

In responses to the blame-EU vignette, three VP Leavers indicated compassion for victims, and none related this to a need to leave the EU. One said "it sad to hear the affects this has on people / because this destroys peoples lifes",[1256] with the UK government as the answer; another was "Sympathetic / As much assistance as possible should be given to the victims before any other concern", saying they would volunteer and feel 'helpful' after doing so;[1257] the third said they "sympathise with the victims of the floods", with 'better flood defences' the answer, though they personally could not do anything to help.[1258]

Of VP Remainers feeling compassionate towards victims, several refuted the EU-blame by suggesting it was actually because of climate change or the responsibility of the UK government, and two, as for annoyance, indicated the EU was the *solution* to the problem:

> I feel sorry for the people affected and the impact on their lives. / The UK MEPs
> should lobby the EU for laws that suit the geography of the UK.[1259]

One sad person carefully avoided blaming at all, through use of the passive voice (discussed in E5):

> people have been evacuated from their houses / monetary compensation to those
> affected / sign a petition[1260]

If nobody in the sample who feels compassion for victims talks about how they feel about the EU, it makes it difficult to establish vilification of the EU. A clue can be gleaned via responses of compassionate people where the victims are not explicitly identified. For instance, one person does not mention the victims but advocates for punishment of politicians ("I think that most of the people who were in charge should not only be moved away from their seats but also should be punished for allowing this situation to happen"). They will then feel "better about the situation".[1261] This does link experiences of compassion with punishment per Pfattheicher et al;[1262] however, the SE data is *inconclusive* with regard to the compassion backhand, possibly as an outcome of the small sample size, or because it is obscured by initial reactions of annoyance.

To that, it is notable that both VP Leavers and Remainers express *less* compassion when reading blame-containing vignettes than they do for the no-blame vignette (Figure 53).

[1255] See 7.2 Making villains: the FGIs.
[1256] 1033. Leaver, Conservative supporter, Brexit party supporter, Caribbean, Londoner, most important GE issue family life / childcare.
[1257] 1157. White, man, European, English, international.
[1258] 1178. White, British, rural person.
[1259] 432. Remainer, Sinn Fein supporter, millennial, Irish, city person.
[1260] 1086. City person, multi-cultural, non-religious, skilled working class, most important GE issue Brexit.
[1261] 1264. White, man, English, middle class. Other compassionate people agree with this, suggesting people should be voted out, with "Different people in positions of power and government support" as the solution. 716. Remainer, white Irish, bisexual, non-religious, working class, major GE issue health.
[1262] Pfattheicher, Sassenrath, and Keller, 'Compassion Magnifies Third-Party Punishment.'

Blame—at least 'in the moment'—appears to reduce the amount of compassion experienced by individuals. This echoes prior research, where blame diverts attention from solutions and the suffering of victims.[1263]

Figure 53: Percentage of SE responses containing compassion, by VP and vignette
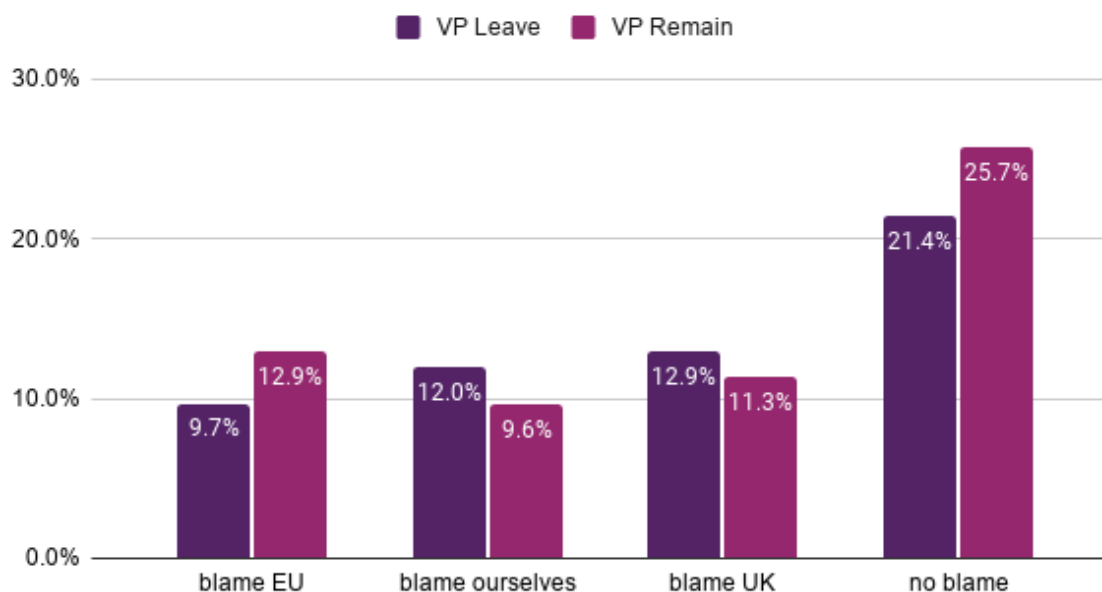
7.4.2.a)   Does the 'compassion backhand' actually happen?

While the role of annoyance in vilification is clear and direct—feeling annoyed at somebody is already feeling negatively towards them, I.e. feeling they are a villain—the path for the 'compassion backhand' is murkier. This is because compassion may or may not *always* lead to vilification.[1264] Does simply spotting compassion for victims in SE responses imply vilification?

Per Pfattheicher et al, compassion leads to third-party punishment where people feel they cannot assist victims.[1265] There are three elements: victims, compassion for those victims, and an inability to help them. However, the latter was not specified in the FGIs—Mac felt sorry for refugees and that turned him against the EU, but he did not make reference to his capability to help the victims or otherwise.[1266]

References to victims in the survey-experiment are mixed. Some compassionate respondents appeared to see voting as a way to help victims:

> Sad and sympathetic / It must be horrible for the people effected by these
> happenings. / ... Utilise my ability to vote to vote for the candidate or party that will

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[1263] See 2.3 What does blame do?. E.g. Ryan, *Blaming the Victim*.

[1264] And indeed it might be problematic to make that claim, as it implies that feelings towards victims are inevitably always about the perpetrator.

[1265] Pfattheicher, Sassenrath, and Keller, 'Compassion Magnifies Third-Party Punishment.'

[1266] It is not clear that turning against the EU as villain would in any way assist refugees, though it could 'feel' like doing something for the refugees without having to commit to specific actions.

> best address these issues ... but also take action on an individual level ... / [I will feel] Better about myself".[1267]

Others perceived themselves as unable to help:

> I personally couldnt do anything. Apart from exercise caution when looking for house to not buy...[1268]

> Maybe better flood defenses. / I don't feel that I could make any positive impact myself[1269]

People do seem to *want* to feel they have helped, however. This emotion, coded as 'have-tried' in SE responses, appeared in 3.9%–6.3% of responses.[1270] Where these people found themselves unable to perform activities that lead to them *actually* helping, the compassion backhand may be likely to appear. The survey-experiment was not designed to capture later inability to help victims, though follow-ups would be of assistance. As such, the FGIs are the best source of information for the compassion backhand,[1271] and it is noted that compassion and victims alike did appear frequently in SE responses as they did in FGI transcripts.[1272]

7.4.3.   Worry

Generally, participant worry appears focused on the *future* rather than vengeance against any potential blamee for the *present*; it is not experienced 'at' the blamee and thus does not link blame with vilification.

Worried VP Leavers thought taking remedial action (I.e. in future) would divert attention from "something more important",[1273] or worried that needed funds were being sent

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[1267] 851. VP Leave. Blame-selves. Progressive, white, woman, English, middle-class, biggest GE issue education.

[1268] 334. Voted Leave, VP Remain. No-blame.

[1269] 1178. Leave, VP Leave. White, British, rural person.

[1270] Coded as 'have-tried', this appeared in 6% of blame-EU responses, 6.3% no-blame, 3.9% blame-selves, and 5.5% blame-UK. It included contributed/contributing, have helped, taken action, done something, achievement, accomplishment, helpful, made a difference, did my part/bit, doing my best, useful, and have tried/am trying. Note that as for all emotions, 'appropriate' behaviours are learned—people can perform similar activities and some will feel they 'have tried', and others will not. Some participants but not others indicated that 'voting' would give them the feeling of having tried. Exploring this notion of what it means to 'help' could be a useful extension to Pfattheicher et al's research. Pfattheicher, Sassenrath, and Keller, 'Compassion Magnifies Third-Party Punishment.'

[1271] It is difficult to justify this as post hoc rationalisation, given victims and compassion for them arose across various focus groups and interviews, and were spoken of in similar ways. Further, there was little reason for participants to give misleading responses, given they were on the 'winning side' and had thus been proven in their beliefs. Certainly, those such as John or Todd who were more focused on anger than compassion were not reticent about the fact; and as highlighted in 6.4 Post-referendum performance of blame, interlocutors spoke of blame with intelligence and nuance, including when it came to hot-button issues such as immigration. It is difficult to believe that every participant was dishonest because their 'actual' reason was socially unacceptable—such as racism—and even if this had been the case for a number of participants, anger and compassion arise amongst almost all (barring the low-blame participants, Sam and Jamal). See also discussion of empathetic space generation in 4.4.2 Focus groups and interviews.

[1272] See also 6.3.3 Who were their victims?.

[1273] 1428. Conservative supporter, Gen X, British, non-religious, skilled working class

"abroad".[1274] They were reassured that their worries would be *relieved* once they left the EU[1275]—a positive emotion was connected with a future outside of the EU.

VP Remainers were worried about the victims ("I feel worried for the people affected by the flood")[1276] or about the state of affairs, whether that be climate change, journalism,[1277] or in three cases, the actions of the EU. One VPR said they were both slightly worried and surprised, and that "Some kind of investigation into the intentional things that have been done" should be undertaken.[1278] Another expressed doubt in that they were not sure what the regulations purportedly causing flooding meant, "but it seems to be a threat to the UK", with this 'threat' (not blame) making them concerned.[1279] A third, who was both concerned and angry, said that "Experts/scientists in the UK who are familiar with these problems should report directly to the EU parliament with their concerns"[1280]—the EU regulations may have been at fault, but the EU was the solution. These three examples of worry relating to the EU all hint at information-seeking: asking for an investigation, expressing unsurety as to the nature of the regulations, or turning to experts who know more about the situation to fix things *in future*. The worry is not 'at' the blamee, meaning it does not make them a villain; it appears associated with solution-seeking to avoid the situation happening in future, or information-seeking so the person knows whether or not they should believe the blame in future.

Worry could then be a helpful response to blame, though the appearance of victims ("I feel worried for...") could potentially enact the compassion backhand. Additionally, the fact there is *less* worry expressed in response to the blame-containing vignettes when compared to the no-blame vignette suggests people's attention may be diverted from solution-seeking when blame is involved—again consistent with previous research.[1281]

7.4.4.   Apathy

Overall, apathy seems to have been associated with incomplete responses, with VP Leaver apathy associated with indifference towards victims specifically. Curiously, VPLs are more

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[1274] 370. Leaver, British, English, city person, Christian.

[1275] "Leave the EU, so we don't have to worry about their regulations." 276. Leaver, Conservative and UKIP supporter, traditional values, Christian.

[1276] 1125. Remainer, African, man, Muslim, working class

[1277] "Worried about journalism. Headline does not match spurious body text. No evidence is given linking EU with flooding. Attacks on politicians are given without critical analysis." 395. SNP supporter, Scottish, non-religious, Jewish, skilled working class

[1278] 1258. Remainer, millennial, European, non-religious, working class. It is not clear whether worry leads to vilification, though this could be explored on the basis 'worry' is to 'fear' as 'annoyance' is to 'anger'. Villains may be feared, per Jasper et al. (Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*.) However, see Figure 14 in 4.3.5 Recognising emotions—worry might equally be related to 'anxiety'. Note reference to 'intentionality'; per Malle et al, higher 'intentionality' means people accord more blame. E.g. Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame'.

[1279] 1084. Remainer, African, Gen Z, British, non-religious. See also 2.4 Defining blame.

[1280] 694. Woman, European, Southerner, expat.

[1281] E.g. Ryan, *Blaming the Victim*.; see discussion of the 'bad be gone' fallacy in 2.4.5 Blame and fallacies: Scapegoating and 'bad-be-gone.

apathetic when reading blame then after reading the no-blame vignette; VP Remainers are *most* apathetic after the no-blame vignette and least apathetic after the blame-EU vignette (Figure 54).

Figure 54: Percentage of SE responses containing apathy
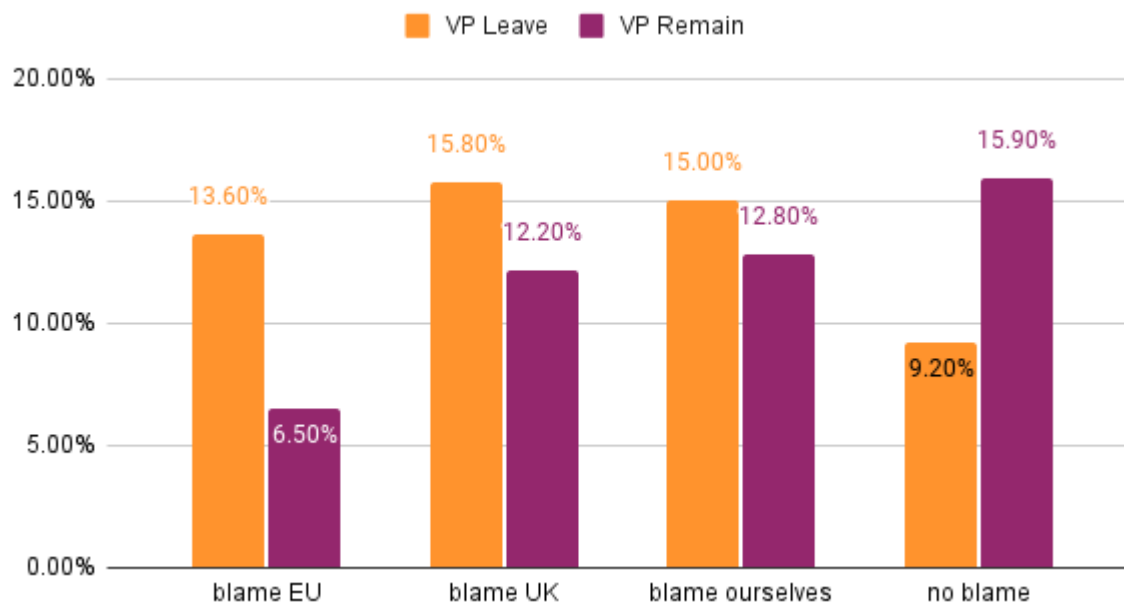
One 'exasperated' VP Leaver envisaged being indifferent in future because the floods did not affect them, though indicated Brexit was the solution; another combined indifference (the flood did not affect them) with victim-blaming ("people choosing to buy homes near flood plains are deciding upon that risk for themselves").[1282] In a similar vein, one felt neutral 'now', because "I don't personally live or know anybody affected in the flooded areas."[1283] These all suggest victim 'unmaking'—by erasing the harm or the victim, participants are in a sense undoing the blame. This effect, as a form of contestation, is discussed further in E4 and E5.[1284]

Beyond apathy being associated with incomplete responses, or with a pro-active statement to the effect the participant did not care because the situation outlaid in the vignette did not affect them, there were no discernible trends in apathetic VP Leaver responses. It could be that VPLs are apathetic because their desired action—leaving the EU—was already underway; this does not explain overall higher apathy in response to blame. Apathetic VP Remainers likewise left incomplete responses,[1285] though one person pointed to the possibly

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[1282] 305. Man, British, English, Southerner, middle class.

[1283] 749. White, man, British, Northerner, skilled working class. This person suggested re-evaluating the EU regulations after leaving the EU, and generally, voting Conservative.

[1284] See 4.3.3 Recognising (un)victims and particularly 9.4.2 Uncreating victims, It is considered an 'effect' in that it happens after exogenous blame is encountered. (While 'rebuttal' could be considered an effect in the same way, there is no reason to believe it should be correlated with any of the underlying characteristics examined in the following chapter, hence non-inclusion.)

[1285] One of the responses included the suggestion "guillotine politicians until the ones left take action", and "collect the heads afterwards and put them on spikes"; *however* that person said they envisaged feeling 'hard' afterwards. This suggests a joke response, and it is not clear how to interpret it, other than the

helpful role of the EU regulations ("if anything the Floods Directive should have lead to procedures that have already mitigated the impacts of these events")[1286] The victim unmaking—and victim-blaming—present amongst VP Leavers did not recur.[1287]

In principle, this may have made the blame less effective amongst VPLs, as if there is no victim, then there can be no harm and hence no blame; the 'compassion backhand' vilification effect would be absent. However, due to the frequency of incomplete responses, results are inconclusive; apathy would be a worthy topic of study for further research.

7.4.5.   Good

VP Leavers felt good because they saw no reason not to ("Why shouldn't I feel fine");[1288] because they felt action was already underway ("I'm sure the laws that this is being blamed on are being reviewed";[1289] "Did not read it because I have voted already and still waiting to come out of eu"[1290]); because the flooding was a natural event, hence nothing to get worked up over; or simply said they would feel good after actions were taken. As for apathy, several responses were incomplete.

VP Remainers who felt good left predominantly incomplete responses. One person said the solution was to "Cancel Brexit", though did not say why;[1291] somebody else suggested that more socialist ideology would be helpful. Another explained that "Uncredited text without sources doesn't impact my feelings".[1292] While less prevalent, the idea of feeling good after actions had been taken did appear.

Feeling good is positive, meaning it cannot make or indicate villains. However, Leavers notably felt good because action was already being taken against the villainous EU in the form of Brexit. This may help explain why Leavers were less annoyed than VPRs after reading the blame-EU vignette: the villain had already been conquered.

7.4.6.   Breath

VP Remainers mentioned their breath[1293] more than VPLs for all vignettes, per Figure 55. This is curious, because in principle all participants should be at the same level of 'breathlessness'.[1294]

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person has read the vignette and does not feel particularly positive towards politicians (!). 573. Gay or lesbian, bisexual, Gen X, Celtic.

[1286] 499; SNP supporter, progressive, Scottish, rural person, lower middle class.

[1287] See also 8.4.2 and 8.5.1 on underlying differences and victim (un)creation.

[1288] 1056. Conservative supporter, man, English, Christian, middle class.

[1289] 1546. White, woman, heterosexual, British, English.

[1290] 379. Leaver, white, man, British, lower middle class.

[1291] 270. Man, English, city person, non-religious, skilled working class. The EU did not otherwise appear in responses of good-feeling VPRs.

[1292] 837. Remainer, White Irish, woman, Irish, Christian, top GE voting issue environment/climate change.

[1293] Includes breathlessness, dizziness, light-headedness. See code book at Annex: Codebook.

[1294] Quotes are not included in this section because there were no themes; people simply said they felt 'breathless' etc with no further explanation.

Perhaps people prefer to write about physical feelings rather than uncomfortable emotions, which could go some way to explaining why VPRs focused more on 'breath' in the blame-selves vignette: it was more comfortable for people to focus on this basic bodily function than on any feelings of guilt or shame.[1295] Elsewhere, VPR breathlessness was consistent, suggesting VPRs did not talk more about their breath to cope with the cognitive dissonance of the *EU* being blamed.

VP Leavers talked about their breath more for the blame-selves vignette and most of all in response to the blame-UK vignette. This may suggest underlying patriotism discourses that affected VPLs, though this was not measured in the current research.

It is unclear why there is an overall difference in mentions of 'breath' between VPRs and VPLs, though between-vignette comparison suggests differences do not relate to vilification of an Other; VPRs were equally breathless after reading the blame-EU and no-blame vignettes, as were VPLs.[1296]

Figure 55: Percentage of SE responses containing 'breath' (breathless, lightheaded, dizzy)
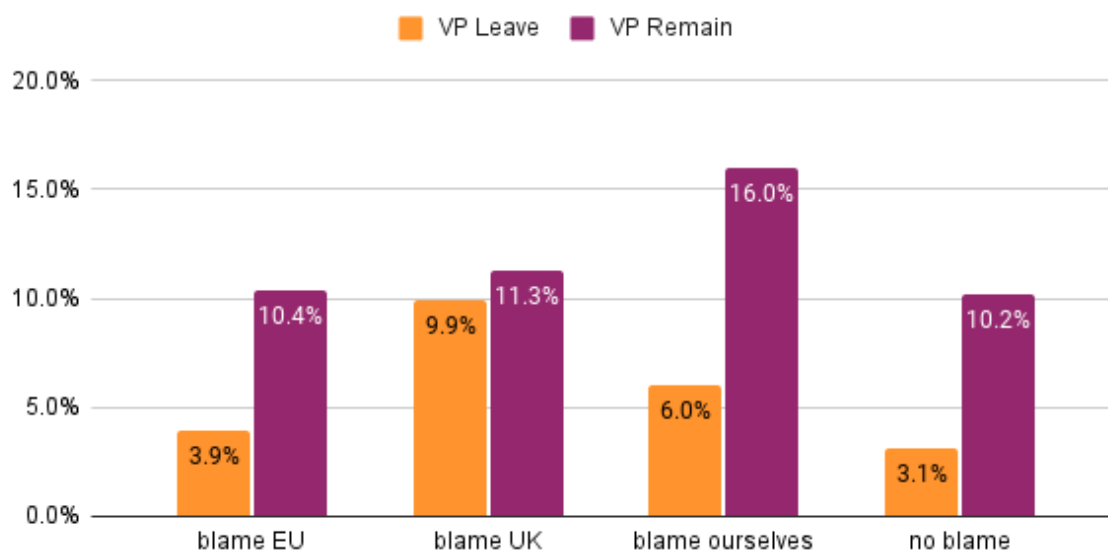
7.4.7.   Are Remainers just emotional snowflakes?

Overall, VP Remainers and VP Leavers appear to react somewhat differently to blame. Figure 56 compares the emotions expressed by VPLs and VPRs after reading a blame-containing vignette as opposed to the no-blame vignette. Both groups become more annoyed, less worried and less compassionate; however, Leavers become more apathetic and more happy in response to blame, which is not the case for Remainers.[1297]

[1295] See also 8.4.1 Post-vignette emotions, where it appears that exogenous blame of one's group may produce different results than the 'shame' or 'guilt' expected when the individual self is blamed per 2.3.7 Blame is emotional.

[1296] Note that VP Leavers were less emotionally expressive; see 7.4.7 Are Remainers just emotional snowflakes? See also Table 30 (p. 1).

[1297] This should be interrogated further using blame that does not relate to conservative political positions, given climate change-related issues are politicised and Leavers tend to be more conservative (E1).

Figure 56: Emotion change when blame is present. Percentages reflect the number of responses in which the emotion group is present.
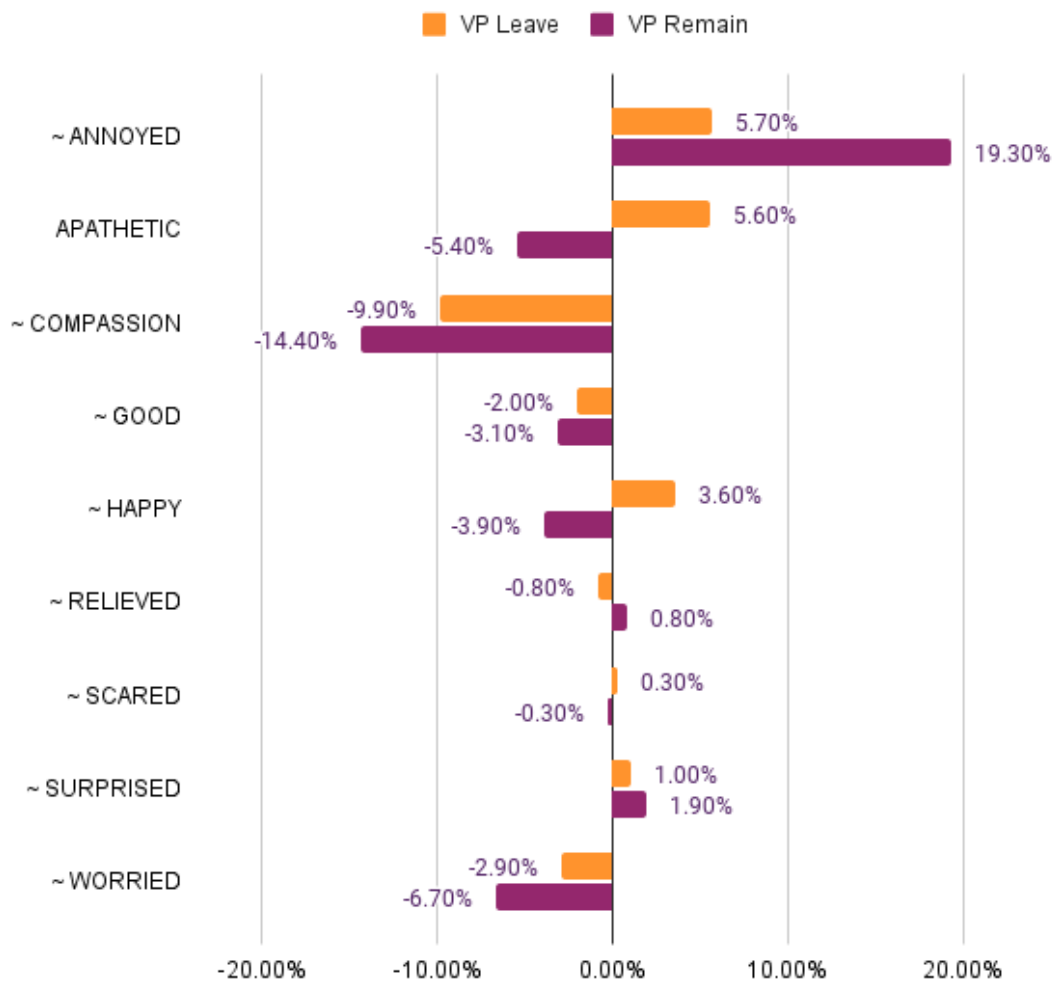
Further, per Figure 57, VP Remainers are more emotionally expressive than VP Leavers across the board:[1298]

[1298] See full data at Annex: Emotional expressivity. VPRs express approximately the same amount of 'feel good' emotions as do VPLs, but significantly more 'feel bad' emotions as an outcome of blame.

Figure 57: Emotional expressivity, by percentage of responses containing that item
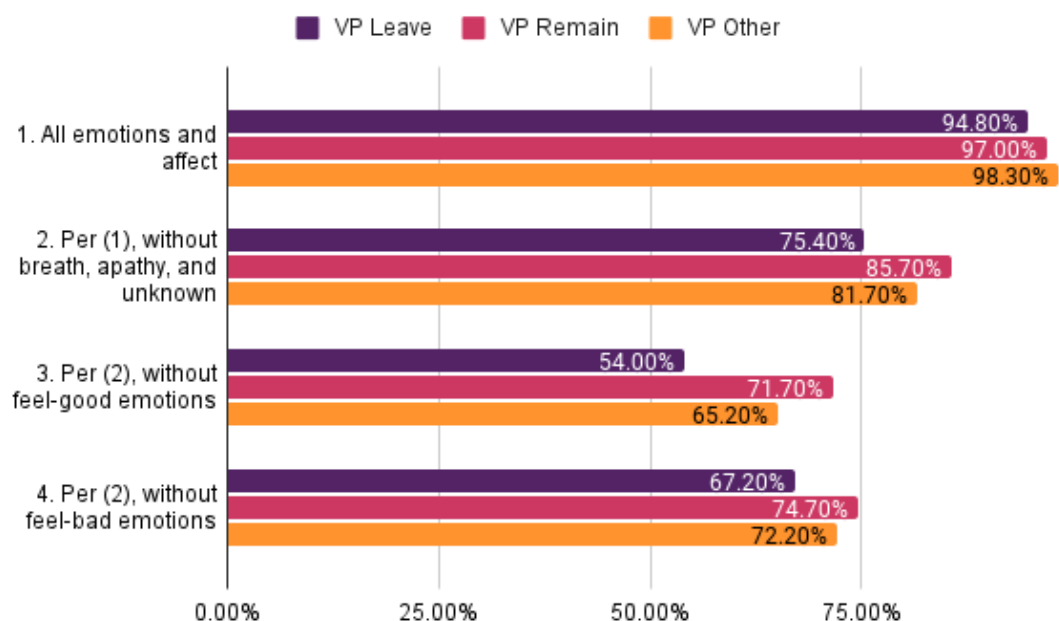
This does not mean VP Remainers are more emotional; simply that they are more emotionally *expressive*. Given the ability to put emotions into words is associated with improved emotional—and therefore behavioural—regulation,[1299] this may imply a lower ability for VPLs to regulate their emotional reactions to blame.[1300] This would mean that vilification could be more successful amongst VPLs. It is also possible that Remainers are more neurotic and thus more prone to expressing negative emotions;[1301] however, E4 will show that there is no link between poor mental health and negative emotions expressed as the result of blame. The gap in emotional expressivity would be a fascinating topic for future research, particularly if it does pertain to affective polarisation as suggested here.[1302]

7.4.8.   Additional villain-type feelings

The role of compassion in creating villains that was apparent in the FGIs was a non-intuitive finding in that, per Figure 53, blame leads to fewer expressions of compassion.[1303] For that reason, it is worth considering other non-intuitive findings; specifically by seeking other 'villain-type feelings' provoked by blame, including low frequency emotions that occurred fewer than seven times overall. This was possible to do by locating instances where participants documented their emotions while (re)blaming, while noting it is difficult to

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[1299] E.g. Kircanski, Lieberman, and Craske, 'Feelings into Words'; Lieberman et al., 'Putting Feelings into Words'; Barrett et al., 'Knowing What You're Feeling and Knowing What to Do about It'.
[1300] See also 3.3 Constructing emotions and 10.4 Theory-driven reflections on disrupting the blame|vilification link.
[1301] This is borne out by data in E4: Blame and underlying characteristics, which shows Remainers recorded more days of poor mental health in the preceding 30 than did Leavers.
[1302] Brett Q Ford and Maya Tamir find that people who feel angry when confronting others (like VP Leavers) are higher in emotional intelligence, and those that "prefer to feel happiness in such contexts" (like VP Leavers) " tend to be lower in emotional intelligence". Ford and Tamir, 'When Getting Angry Is Smart'.
[1303] This research does not attempt to establish precisely whom the compassion is for, though it is presumably for victims.

entangle whether the emotions are the result of exogenous or endogenous blame in such circumstances.

In response to the EU-blaming vignette, the text or text author were the recipient of negative, villain-type emotions including affrontedness, conflictedness, crossness, disappointment, feeling sceptical or stupid:

> Affronted / Intentionally inflammatory language[1304]

> Conflicted / The text seems quite biased[1305]

> Cross / The article is very biased[1306]

> Disappointed that they seem to be blaming the Directives for the flooding.[1307]

> Skeptical. / Article is borderline conspiracy nut core.[1308]

> It made me feel more stupid for reading it. / Because it is false. / Tabloids should be accountable when they make shit up. / Never buy newspapers or visit websites like The S*N[1309]

Politicians and/or the government also received feelings of conflict, 'non-plussed', dismay, and disgust:

> Conflicted / Money should be spent on improving the situation rather than turning up after for a photo opportunity[1310]

> Non-plussed / The government should react to individual flooding scenarios as the situation demands.[1311]

> I feel disgusted by the amount of people who have to experience this almost every other day, the government could be doing a lot more to be preventing the floods.[1312]

> Dismayed / Politics does not care about climate change / The conservative government should be ousted.[1313]

One person was 'resigned' that this is how the EU would act, reaffirming them in their desire to leave:

> Resigned / Leave the eu / Continue campaigning to leave the EU[1314]

[1304] 738. Progressive, European, rural person, non-religious, lower middle class, most important GE issue education.

[1305] 1075. Remainer, Labour supporter, Greens supporter, African, skilled working class, most important GE issue housing.

[1306] 1063. Remainer, woman, gay or lesbian, northerner, non-religious, health.

[1307] 218. White, man, British, northerner, non-religious.

[1308] 829. Sinn Fein supporter, white - Irish, Gen Z, Irish, skilled working class, most important GE issue "issues relating to the emancipation of the working class"

[1309] 789. Remainer, Labour supporter, SDLP supporter, Irish, skilled working class, GE issue: health.

[1310] 436. Man, European, Irish, non-religious, skilled working class.

[1311] 289. Leaver, British, English, Rural person, Westerner.

[1312] 1453. Mixed/multiple ethnic, man, English, Christian, skilled working class.

[1313] 1117. Man, English, non-religious, upper middle class, middle class.

[1314] 81. Leaver, Conservative supporter, British, northerner, working class.

While others were (again) 'disappointed' in the public, or 'disgusted' by particular members thereof:

> Disappointed due to other voters[1315]

> disgusted at how long it's taken. Most people want to save the world, but it's the greedy that are destroying it.[1316]

Feelings of 'grossness', likely related to disgust, also appeared:

> Gross / It sounds like a satirical piece, written by a remainer. Although, I hope I am just being cynical.[1317]

For the blame-UK and blame-selves vignettes, participants felt 'brain drained' by the content; defeated or guilty when they blamed themselves (they themselves were the villain); misled or non-plussed by the text, or resigned "that this is the way British Politics is".[1318] Those reading the no-blame vignette demonstrated clear villain-type feelings just twice: when feeling distressed at a "brutal right wing government led by disaster capitalists",[1319] or when disgusted that 'we' are not doing enough about flooding.

These last cases show that even the no-blame vignette results in spontaneous villain creation or reiteration; however, it is less frequent than that in the EU-blaming vignette. This indicates that consuming exogenous blame results in more (re)blaming than would otherwise be 'natural'; resulting in more numerous blamees as potential villains.

While the emotions listed here are less frequent than the annoyance that results from blame, they do highlight that there are additional ways in which blame may create villains in politics. Disgust and disappointment have not appeared as the outcome of blame in previous research, whether exogenous or otherwise—and disgust also appeared in the FGIs per 7.2.1 Unveiling blame-villain links through the FGIs. This SE finding therefore complements the FGI data and suggests that disgust, as a negative villain-type feeling, joins annoyance and compassion in making villains. However, the low frequency of this emotion, appearing just three times of nearly three thousand instances of emotion identified, means it may be an uncommon mode of vilification; it is also uncertain whether it results from exogenous or endogenous blame, so is not discussed further here.[1320]

[1315] 519. European, British, Scottish, English, Welsh.

[1316] 1146. Westerner, Christian, middle class, lower middle class, GE issue environment/climate change.

[1317] 725. VP Leave. Leaver, woman, English, non-religious, working class. Note that in an echo of experiences of disgust expressed in the FGIs, this emotion was mainly reserved for Remainers. This is interesting in light of overall narratives of minions supporting villains; minions are bad and active, but not strong like villains. Perhaps this weakness lends itself to disgust rather than just anger and the like.

[1318] 1358. Remainer, Labour supporter, Welsh, Buddhist, working class

[1319] 958. Progressive, woman, Scottish, Celtic, multi-cultural, GE issue: Scottish independence

[1320] Anger, here included in ~annoyance as the most common effect of blame, appears to differ from but perhaps interface with disgust. E.g. Russell and Giner-Sorolla, 'Moral Anger, but Not Moral Disgust, Responds to Intentionality.'; Salerno and Peter-Hagene, 'The Interactive Effect of Anger and Disgust on Moral Outrage and Judgments'.. Russell and Giner-Sorolla suggest that disgust predominantly arises when there is a breach of 'bodily' norms, while anger relates to intentionality—which, as highlighted by Malle et al, is itself intertwined with blame. Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame'; Malle and Knobe,

7.4.9.   Implications

7.2 Making villains: the FGIs established that feeling angry at the EU or compassionate towards its victims as a result of blame turned participants against the EU. 7.3 Villains at large: the survey-experiment showed that blame causes people to feel more annoyance, and less worry and compassion; and that the EU was created as a potential villain through having fingers pointed at it.

This section has brought these ideas together by interrogating survey-experiment participants' own explanations for *why* they experienced villain-type emotions, investigating why VP Leavers and Remainers felt differently, and identifying any additional villain-type emotions in responses. As in the FGIs, annoyance is clearly apparent—people feel annoyed *because of* blame, and *at* whomever they find to be at fault, indicating vilification. Data on the 'compassion back-hand' is less conclusive, due to the low sample size—though it is notable that blame appears to divert attention from victims per previous research.[1321] Other villain-type emotions, such as disgust and disappointment, appeared, though it is unclear whether disgust is necessarily the result of *exogenous* blame.

Even where VP Leavers and Remainers experienced similar emotions, they did so for different reasons. VPRs were consistently more annoyed than VPLs, and at a different target—the text author—rendering a different villain to the EU. VPLs became even more set in their desire to leave the EU.[1322] Still other differences were seen amongst people who were aligned with environmental causes, pointing to the relevance of existing knowledge and allegiances in mediating the vilifying effects of blame; while partisanship appears to be a strong perceptual shield,[1323] other forms of knowledge are likewise interesting.

Vitally, blame engenders 'villain-type' feelings in its audience, whether the EU becomes the villain ("pissed at the EU / leave the EU")[1324] or an alternate blamee becomes the villain for annoyed people ("bloody half arsed politicians want reeducation",[1325] "whoever wrote that bullshit should be dragged out from whatever rock they live under"[1326]). This illustrates the strength of the current research; without the use of mixed methods and permitting open responses, it would only have been possible to identify vilifying effects at the level of the population—as when people become angrier—and not to note that people were annoyed

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'The Folk Concept of Intentionality'; Lagnado and Channon, 'Judgments of Cause and Blame'; Guglielmo and Malle, 'Enough Skill to Kill'.

[1321] As tales of compassion were frequent amongst FGI participants, it is possible there is some time factor at play—perhaps people become annoyed at the blamee first, and only later come to feel sorry for the victims.

[1322] Per the Theory of Constructed Emotions, the more one experiences an emotion in a situation, the more likely one is to predict (and therefore) experience that emotion in similar situations in future; the renewed desire to leave the EU may indicate entrenchment against it.

[1323] Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*

[1324] 397. Leaver.

[1325] 157.

[1326] 557. Progressive, Gen X, Scottish, non-religious, skilled working class.

at, and creating villains of, different parties. Exogenous blame may therefore serve to radicalise a population, in addition to rendering invisible victims per 7.3.5.

7.5. Chapter conclusion

A villain is bad, strong, active, and we feel negatively towards them.[1327] The first three markers of villainy are already met through a blamee having (allegedly) done something harmful, being active in doing so, and being strong enough to be capable—meaning it is emotions that make the difference between a 'blamee' and a 'villain'. This chapter used focus group/interview and survey-experiment data to emerge that blame makes villains by engendering negative emotions including annoyance and anger *against* a blamee,[1328] and compassion for the blamee's victims. In the case of ~annoyance vilification is direct, as feeling annoyed 'at' a blamee already meets the threshold of feeling negatively towards them; in the case of ~compassion for victims, there may be more variety, as audiences may only, or predominantly, turn against perpetrators when they are unable to assist victims.[1329] Further, per 7.3.4 Blaming niches: do people blame the EU because the EU is responsible?, the EU did not seem to exist as potentially responsible until it was blamed. That is, blame *matters*, it affects our knowledge and our emotions, and helps make villains in politics.

SE data demonstrated that the emotional effects of blame were consistent amongst UK audiences, while highlighting that existing knowledge and allegiances mediate the effects of blame. Accordingly, VP Leavers feel ~annoyed at the EU in response to the blame-EU vignette, while VP Remainers instead feel ~annoyed at their alternate blamee in the form of the text author. People with some kind of existing allegiance to environmental causes again reacted differently. This complements Hobolt and Tilley's findings that "citizens rely on their in-group biases when making judgements about who is to blame",[1330] though extends this idea from merely 'knowing' who is to blame through to the emotional and vilifying effects. Moreover, the present research suggests that citizens' knowing how to 'correctly' apportion blame may not be as important as how they already think (and feel) about who is blamed,[1331] as captured in this research by voting preference. As this chapter shows that blame may not *always* make villains in politics—as when people instead begin to 'unmake' victims in response to blame and experience apathy rather than villain-type feelings— mediation and potential mitigation of blame's causal powers are further investigated in E4 and E5.

[1327] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*.

[1328] 'A' blamee is referred to, not 'the' blamee, because people may provide an *alternative* blamee as seen when VP Remainers blamed the text author rather than the EU. See discussion of contestation in E5.

[1329] Pfattheicher, Sassenrath, and Keller, 'Compassion Magnifies Third-Party Punishment.'. If people feeling ~compassionate towards the EU's victims were able to help them directly, they may not have turned against the EU as villain; however, this still constitutes a path to vilification, as highlighted in FGI responses.

[1330] P. 2 of Conclusion in Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*

[1331] Recalling that per TCE, emotions are premised on knowledge and context, e.g. existing knowledge about the EU and associated emotional predictions. See discussion in 3.3 Constructing emotions.

Notably, under the Theory of Constructed Emotions, when somebody feels a certain way about a certain thing, they are more likely to feel that way about that thing in future.[1332] There are clear vilification effects in the SE after reading just one blame vignette, and should somebody be consistently exposed to similar blame over time, the more entrenched their feelings towards the blamee would become. Indeed, this is understood by the researcher as to have already taken place in the case of the blame-EU vignette—per E2, UK voters were clearly exposed to a great deal of EU-blaming in the lead-up to the campaign. This helps explain the entrenchment of VP Leavers against the EU (and deep vilification of the EU amongst higher-blame FGI participants),[1333] as people presumably more open to consumption of pro-Leave discourses; VP Remainers meanwhile take great pains to avoid blaming the EU, instead turning on the text author. Future research into the blame|vilification link should be conducted over the course of a campaign featuring blame, to identify turning points and the entrenchment of villains as an outcome of blame.[1334]

This chapter has identified some additional interesting trends, including that VP Leavers and VP Remainers both (re)blame at approximately the same rate, and more frequently than do more apathetic voters. VP Leavers are also less emotionally expressive than those of other voting preferences, with implications for emotional regulation as discussed in 7.4.7 Are Remainers just emotional snowflakes?. Reasons for this gap would prove an interesting avenue for future research, given the relevance of emotions for entrenchment and polarisation as discussed here.

Overall, the present chapter contributes to literature on exogenous blame by examining its vilifying effects, adding nuance to prior research on the emotions of blame through permitting qualitative responses—it is not all about 'anger', but also the more banal 'annoyance'[1335]—using realistic materials rather than fictional situations, drawing from a more representative population than just university students, considering exogenous blame from third parties rather than only endogenous blame, and demonstrating that emotions are essential to understanding blame in politics. As emotions are embedded in cultural knowledge,[1336] it bolsters work from authors such as Lakoff on the role of metaphor like 'Rescue narratives', wherein heroes save victims from villains.[1337] Such stories are learned cultural products, as are the emotions that go with them.[1338]

[1332] See also 3.3.3.e) The predictive brain.

[1333] See full data in Annex: Suppose the EU was a person, and particularly conceptions of the EU as an inexorable fascist.

[1334] It would be particularly interesting to see whether VP Remainers (as an example) could have been swayed from their course, given enough blame—'confusion' results and compassion for victims suggest this may be possible; likewise, a larger sample of swing voters may have helped illustrate vilification effects.

[1335] E.g. Sheikh and McNamara, 'Insights from Self-Blame and Victim Blaming', 241. suggests blame 'is' anger. See also 2.3.7 Blame is emotional.

[1336] See discussion in 3.3.4.a) Culture and acculturation and 3.3.2 Feeling structures.

[1337] Lakoff, *The Political Mind*.

[1338] See also introduction of Koschut, *The Power of Emotions in World Politics*., and discussion in 3.3.1 Emotions in political science.

This work likewise highlights a shortcoming of certain work on so-called 'moral emotions':[1339] use of quantitative text analysis and 'emotion dictionaries' lose the additional semantic meaning gained through analysis of multi-word discursive practices such as blame. The word 'hurt' by itself may have emotional impact, but without knowing *who* has (or is) hurt, such work cannot explain affective polarisation against a villain.[1340]

Lastly, the present research highlights areas of contestation, as when people argue against the blame or provide an alternate blamee, again giving a more nuanced view of blame in politics: blame does not affect everybody equally. Its causal powers may be interrupted. This is explored further in E5.

While this chapter has focused on existing knowledge and partisanship as mediating the effects of blame, 5.4 Who voted for Brexit? showed that 'Leavers' and 'Remainers' differed in several underlying characteristics. Are differentiated effects the result of voter preference, or those underlying characteristics? This is investigated in the following chapter.

[1339] See also critical work moral foundations theory, e.g. Suhler and Churchland, 'Can Innate, Modular "Foundations" Explain Morality?'.

[1340] See e.g. Brady et al., 'An Ideological Asymmetry in the Diffusion of Moralized Content on Social Media among Political Leaders.'. Such quantitative analysis is of course more scalable; the present research shows that this should at a minimum be complemented by qualitative research to draw in people's own understandings of meaning. This is particularly important given similar emotions can produce different prescriptions and results, per 7.4 Why we feel that way.

8. E4: Blame and underlying characteristics

8.1. Introduction

The previous chapter found that exogenous blame causes vilification, primarily through engendering ~annoyance at a blamee. ~Compassion for victims likewise appeared, in some cases leading to a 'compassion backhand' that turned people against the villainous perpetrator. Voting preference appeared to mediate vilifying effects, for the EU-blaming vignette and otherwise. Remainers were both more ~annoyed as a result of blame, suggesting they could be more prone to constructing villains as a result of blame, and more emotionally expressive than Leavers, indicating Leavers may be less able to identify and therefore regulate their emotions.[1341]

However, is this truly due to voting preference? And, if so, why would patterns hold even where the EU—subject of people's voting preferences—is not the party being blamed? Per 5.4 Who voted for Brexit?, both this and previous research have found that Leavers and Remainers have some underlying differences. For instance, Remainers are more educated, while Leavers are more likely to describe themselves as Conservative Party supporters and to identify as Christian. Perhaps blame's causal power was mediated by these underlying characteristics, and not by vote preference per se—as pre-empted by the discussion of existing work on (endogenous) blame and underlying characteristics in 2.3.8. This speaks to the ways in which exogenous blame does (and does not) make villains, while also engaging with concerns about campaign micro-targeting used by organisations such as Cambridge Analytica.[1342]

E3: Effects showed that exogenous blaming of an Other leads to villain-type feelings, as well as other relevant effects: victim identification, victim (un)making, and (re)blaming. Victims' existence is a necessary condition to experiencing compassion for them—important for the compassion backhand—and identification of victims is affected by blame, with victims seemingly erased when a person disagrees with blame.[1343] Victim unmaking—proactively identifying a victim, but suggesting they are not worthy of being cared about or that they are responsible for the situation—in a sense undoes blame through rendering invisible the person who is harmed, meaning the ostensible perpetrator can no longer be a villain

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[1341] See 7.4.7 Are Remainers just emotional snowflakes?, 7.3.2 Emotions experienced as an effect of blame, and 10.3.5 Emotions and political science. Explaining differences in emotional expressivity is out-of-scope here, but worthy of further research.

[1342] See 5.3 The Brexit assemblage.

[1343] Particularly, VP Remainers' identification of victims was dramatically reduced when they consumed the blame-EU vignette. See 7.3.5 Victims in the survey-experiment.

(developed further in E5).[1344] (Re)blaming—as endogenous blame emerging within survey-experiment participants themselves—is important as it indicates that blame may spread from person to person, along with concordant vilification. As each of these items influences vilification via blame, they as well as emotions are considered vis-à-vis underlying characteristics in this chapter.

The chapter begins with a reminder of methods, then goes on to consider emotions before and after reading the vignette, showing that pre-existing emotions do not have a consistent effect on villain-type feelings experienced after exposure to exogenous blame. Next, correlations between voting preference as an essentialised characteristic and the villain-related effects of blame are considered, ultimately showing that Leavers and Remainers react to blame in similar ways; it is not a case of there being two types of people. The following section correlates underlying psychometric, education, and health data with the effects of blame, showing that with the exception of Just World Beliefs, there is little relationship; vilification via blame cannot be understood as a function of these characteristics. It suggests that what somebody *is* is not as important as what they *know*—it is the discourses to which we are subject, and not personalities, that mediate the causal powers of blame. The final section of the chapter returns to this theme, showing that it is the stories we tell about ourselves and the world around us, as expressed in our identity and preferences, that affects how we interact with blame. This was visible in the previous chapter, where VP Leavers (re)blamed the EU after the blame-EU vignette, while VP Remainers instead blamed the text author.

Ultimately, this chapter shows that the *content* of blame matters, and not just the form. While blame may make villains in politics, a person's underlying characteristics do little to affect the process—despite prior research suggesting otherwise.[1345] It validates the approach taken in E3: Effects, as well as the use of a data analysis framework that requires firstly establishing context—as without context, exogenous blame cannot be interpreted or reproduced, or its vilifying effects meaningfully analysed.[1346]

Note that unless otherwise noted, in this chapter 'Remainer' means 'VP Remainer', and likewise for 'Leaver' and voting preference Leave.[1347]

8.1.1.   Methods and tools

This chapter uses survey-experiment ('SE') data, as unlike for the focus groups and interviews ('FGIs'), participants provided a wealth of information about themselves prior to the experiment. As established in 4.4.1.b) , this included education level and area of greatest interest, health and mental health, agreeableness and sense of control, Just World

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[1344] See 9.4 Changing subjects and objects.
[1345] See 4.4.1.b) and 2.3.8.
[1346] See also 4.3.1 Data analysis framework.
[1347] People with other voting preferences are occasionally listed in this chapter, but are not discussed at length; at the time of the SE, 91% of participants indicated that they would vote Leave or Remain were the referendum to be held again 'today'. They are the focus of this chapter, as they were in E3: Effects.

Beliefs ('JWBs') and in-group values ('IGVs'). These latter two are the notion that the world is an essentially fair place, and a value system that puts coherence of the group above protection of any given individual, respectively. Participants also gave information about how they self-identified, by finishing the sentence "I am (a/n)…" with up to five options from a list of 78. Options related to gender, sexuality, race, geo-attachment, religion, generation, political affiliation, and class.[1348]

The experiment component involved presenting participants with one of four vignettes, each containing blame of a different party (or no blame), as discussed in the previous chapter.[1349] They would then write responses to 4–5 questions, as shown in Table 24.[1350]

Table 24: Post-vignette questions

A	How do you feel after reading the above text?	
B	Why do you feel that way?	v2 only
C	What should be done about the situation?	
D	What could you personally do to ensure these actions are taken?	
E	How will you feel after these actions are taken?	

Per E3: Effects and Methodology, these responses were analysed for the presence of emotions, victims, and (re)blame as performed by the participants themselves (I.e. endogenous blame). This chapter uses that data again alongside two forms of quantitative analysis to identify possible relationships between these post-vignette effects and pre-vignette emotions, voting preference, underlying characteristics such as psychometric, health, education data, and the stories we tell about who we are and what we like. A between-groups design is used, so that for instance, 'more agreeable' people are compared to 'less agreeable' people.[1351] Note that 'victims' and '(re)blame' were converted to Boolean variables[1352] for this chapter, meaning responses were marked with the presence or absence of victims or (re)blame—no attempt is made to link (re)blame of a *particular* blamee with an underlying characteristic.[1353] Emotions, as in the last chapter, includes all those feelings that appeared at least seven times in survey-experiment responses—including

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[1348] See also 5.4 Who voted for Brexit?, 4.4.1 Survey-experiment.

[1349] See 7.3.1 Analysing the vignette, Annex: Vignettes.

[1350] See also 4.4.1 Survey-experiment.

[1351] Such designs are suitable for communication experiments such as the present one. Oeldorf-Hirsch, 'Between-Subjects Design'.

[1352] Boolean variables have two options: true/false, yes/no, 1/0. Note that "[p]resence is… a function of what a researcher is prepared and inclined to see, whereas absence is better conceived as a function of what a researcher is prepared and inclined to see but does not." Sandelowski, Voils, and Knafl, 'On Quantitizing', 217. Effects sought in the present research were guided by the abductive and critical approach outlined in 4.2 Research design.

[1353] This is partly due to the small sample sizes that would be involved, and partly because it is nonsensical.

some that might be pure affect such as 'tired' and 'breath'-related feelings.[1354] Using more infrequent emotions would have rendered sample sizes too small for use.

Two software packages were used: MaxQDA, where all data had previously been coded per the preceding chapters, and SPSS. Both crosstab analysis[1355] and correlation analysis are used, reflecting the nature of the data in each respective section.

Throughout this chapter, p<0.01 is referred to as 'highly significant' and marked with **, while p<0.05 is understood as 'significant' and marked with *.[1356] Small effect sizes are noted throughout, as this suggests very weak associations; moreover, 'significant' does not necessarily mean 'important', and for this reason results are discussed in context.[1357] For the crosstab analyses, adjusted standardised residuals are used to indicate significance, with ±1.96 being significant at p<0.05.[1358]

Lastly, results throughout this chapter tend to be separated by vignette, or 'blame condition'. This is because the vignettes differed: the blame-EU and blame-UK vignettes blamed a distinct 'Other'; the blame-selves vignette blamed 'us'; and the no-blame vignette contained no agentic blame. Gathering these vignettes together could have obscured potential correlations or relationships, and so they were separated in analysis—the vignette was controlled for.

Note that, per 4.2.3 and 4.4.1, the current work is designed to be theory generating rather than theory testing, and as such, does not posit hypotheses to be tested; rather, it aims to

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[1354] The 'affective' feelings are included because, while for the researcher 'tired' might not be an emotion, that is not necessarily the case for the people who wrote that they felt tired. And indeed, one person said they felt 'horny'—the jury's out on whether this is physical or emotional. See also 'concordance' in Nagoski, *Come as You Are*.

[1355] Also known as 'contingency analysis'.

[1356] Following the recommendations of Bertie Vidgen and Taha Yasseri and others, (Vidgen and Yasseri, 'P-Values'.) low p values are preferred as indicating more confidence (1/100 chance of a false positive, rather than 1/20 for p=0.05, or 1/10 for p=0.1). This was not feasible for the crosstab analysis used in section 8.5 The stories we tell; further, low sample sizes for several of the analyses would have rendered some correlations invisible. This highlights the need to interpret data in context, for instance by considering correlation coefficients across scenarios such as the 'blame EU' and 'blame UK' conditions where results simply approach, rather than have attained, high levels of significance. Actual p values are given, other than for the crosstab analysis where adjusted standardised residuals are used, to facilitate meaningful discussion of results, particularly in cases of small sample sizes. Di Leo and Sardanelli, 'Statistical Significance'. See also Greenland et al., 'Statistical Tests, P Values, Confidence Intervals, and Power'; Dahiru, 'P-Value, A True Test of Statistical Significance?'; Wasserstein and Lazar, 'The ASA Statement on P-Values'.

[1357] As Hilda Bastian puts it, "You can have a statistically significant p-value of an utterly trivial difference—say, getting better from a week-long cold 10 minutes faster. You could call that 'a statistically significant difference', but it's no reason to be impressed." Bastian, '5 Tips For Avoiding P-Value Potholes'.

[1358] This research uses the adjusted standardised residual, which is the "residual for a cell (observed minus expected value) divided by an estimate of its standard error". IBM, 'SPSS Statistics 24.0.0 Crosstabs Cell Display'. It is expressed in standard deviation units away from the mean, noting that ±1.96 on a normal distribution curve is the cut-off for a 2.5% tail (ttnphns, 'Correlation among Categories between Categorical Nominal Variables'.). This chapter uses two-tailed significance—correlations may occur in either direction—so this means ±1.96 represents a 95% confidence interval (2.5% by two tails)—p<0.05. See also UCLA: Statistical Consulting Group, 'FAQ: What Are the Differences between One-Tailed and Two-Tailed Tests?'; IBM, 'Interpreting Adjusted Residuals in Crosstabs Cell Statistics'; Glen, 'Standardized Residuals in Statistics'.

explore possibilities in the process of theory creation (incidentally permitting theory testing via further research in the future). It thus takes the general approach of "does any of this underlying stuff matter for vilification via exogenous blame?" rather than setting theory-testing hypotheses in the form, "People who are already angry are more likely to express anger after exposure to exogenous blame" per prior research on endogenous blame.[1359]

8.2. Emotions, before and after

In the previous chapter, the primary effect of exogenous blame was making people more ~annoyed—particularly in response to the EU-blaming vignette. Is there any possibility that people were already grumpy before pre-vignette, and simply reiterated that grumpiness? This is important to consider in view of both the generally accepted notion of 'priming' in psychology, whereby what one is already feeling can affect how one will feel shortly thereafter,[1360] and given anger has previously been associated with blame, with angry people performing more endogenous blame.[1361] For these reasons, this section evaluates correlations between pre-vignette emotions and the effects of blame noted in E3—post-vignette emotions, victim identification, victim uncreation, and (re)blame.

This was possible to do by examining responses to the survey-experiment question,[1362] "Compared to how you usually feel, how do you feel today?", which gave the emotions of 'happy', 'sad', 'angry',[1363] 'anxious', 'content', and 'scared' with a Likert scale from 'Much less' (1) to 'Much more than usual' (5). Table 25 shows that Remainers were slightly less angry than were Leavers pre-vignette. Typically, participants felt 'about the same as usual', as indicated by mean proximity to the central value of 3.

Table 25: "Compared to how you usually feel, how do you feel today?"[1364]

	VP Leave	**VP Remain**
Happy	3.0 (0.8)	3.0 (0.8)
Sad	2.7 (1.0)	2.8 (0.9)
Angry	2.9 (1.1)	2.7 (0.9)
Anxious	2.9 (1.0)	3.1 (1.0)
Content	3.0 (0.8)	3.0 (0.8)
Scared	2.7 (0.9)	2.9 (0.9)
Data refer to 5-point Likert scale. Mean value is followed by (standard deviation).		

[1359] E.g. Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff, 'Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism'.

[1360] Under the Theory of Constructed Emotions, our bodily state—our ongoing affect—is known as 'mood', and circumscribes what emotions may be predicted as a result. (*Cultivating Wisdom*.)

[1361] E.g. Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff, 'Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism'..

[1362] This question was found in v1 of the SE only, which was more extensive and also received the greatest number of responses. See 4.4.1 Survey-experiment.

[1363] Included in the researcher's emotion grouping of ~annoyance.

[1364] Happy N = 317 (VPL), 617 (VPR); sad N = 317 (VPL), 614 (VPR); angry N = 318 (VPL), 615 (VPR); anxious N = 317 (VPL), 616 (VPR); content N = 319 (VPL), 314 (VPR); scared N = 313 (VPL), 614 (VPR).

Spearman's rho was used for correlations throughout this section in anticipation of non-linear relations.[1365]

8.2.1. Priming effects?

Was there any evidence of priming effects? Table 26 shows significant correlations ($p<0.05$) between pre- and post-vignette emotions. This data may be considered indicative only, given the methods of collection differed—from using a Likert scale pre-vignette, to participants explicitly writing what they felt post-vignette. Nevertheless, there is a positive correlation between pre-vignette anger and post-vignette ~annoyance (which includes 'anger'),[1366] as there is for post- and pre-vignette happiness.[1367]

Table 26: Significant correlations between pre- and post-vignette emotions. Post-vignette emotions are shown in the left-hand column.

		Happy	Sad	Angry	Anxious	Content	Scared
~ ANNOYED	CC	-0.02	-0.002	.099**	0.052	0.014	0.051
	Sig.	0.519	0.95	0.002	0.095	0.665	0.102
APATHETIC	CC	-0.053	.090**	0.034	0.011	-0.021	0.018
	Sig.	0.092	0.004	0.278	0.729	0.501	0.563
~ COMPASSION	CC	.067*	-.085**	-.085**	-.085**	0.033	-.101**
	Sig.	0.033	0.006	0.007	0.006	0.298	0.001
~ GOOD	CC	0.039	-.064*	-0.006	-.079*	0.014	-0.033
	Sig.	0.213	0.041	0.843	0.012	0.658	0.291
~ HAPPY	CC	.081**	-0.03	-0.061	-0.05	0.043	-.065*
	Sig.	0.009	0.34	0.053	0.107	0.174	0.039
~ RELIEVED	CC	-0.019	-0.002	-0.05	0.002	-.081**	-0.001
	Sig.	0.554	0.946	0.113	0.943	0.01	0.962
~ SCARED	CC	-0.004	0.024	0.03	0.009	0.02	-0.005
	Sig.	0.904	0.444	0.343	0.782	0.53	0.886
~ SURPRISED	CC	0.01	-0.034	-.072*	0.026	0.044	-0.033
	Sig.	0.75	0.281	0.022	0.405	0.157	0.288
~ WORRIED	CC	0.003	-0.014	-.084**	.062*	-0.019	-0.017
	Sig.	0.919	0.645	0.007	0.047	0.55	0.591
annoyed\angry	CC	-0.022	-0.005	.077*	0.043	-0.012	0.049
	Sig.	0.48	0.861	0.014	0.165	0.697	0.118
annoyed\irritated	CC	0.038	-.064*	-0.052	-0.033	0.021	-0.039
	Sig.	0.225	0.04	0.096	0.299	0.508	0.219
bad	CC	.105**	-0.06	-.087**	-0.056	.063*	-.066*
	Sig.	0.001	0.056	0.005	0.076	0.044	0.035
better	CC	-0.057	0.024	0.007	0.019	-.061*	0.003
	Sig.	0.067	0.437	0.817	0.554	0.049	0.931
(compassion)\sad	CC	0.049	-.111**	-.086**	-.083**	0.022	-.126**

[1365] E.g. Perhaps people who feel 'about as scared as usual' interact with blame differently to people who feel much less/more scared than usual. Spearman's rho cannot be applied to parabolic correlations—for instance, so that the 'least' and 'most' scared people were maximally angry post-vignette, and people who were 'as scared as usual' felt no post-vignette anger at all. Relations must be 'monotonic' in that as the value of one variable (pre-vignette scaredness) increases/decreases, so does the value of the other variable (post-vignette anger)—and this was expected to be the case. Spearman's rho is less restrictive than Pearson's r, used elsewhere in this chapter where there is anticipation of linear relationships. Ramzai, 'Clearly Explained'; Laerd Statistics, 'Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation'.

[1366] See discussion of emotion groupings in 4.3.5 Recognising emotions, and in 7.3.2 Emotions experienced as an effect of blame.

[1367] The full data table is included at Annex: Correlations between pre- and post-vignette emotions. See also Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff, 'Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism'., who suggest anger provokes more (re)blaming than other emotions. See 2.3.7 Blame is emotional and 0 Pre-existing emotions and other effects below.

		Happy	Sad	Angry	Anxious	Content	Scared
	Sig.	0.12	0	0.006	0.008	0.481	0
confident	CC	0.014	-0.002	-0.023	.069*	0.038	-0.009
	Sig.	0.664	0.952	0.471	0.028	0.219	0.783
confused	CC	0.03	0.006	-0.025	0.024	0.036	.078*
	Sig.	0.334	0.846	0.433	0.449	0.256	0.013
curious	CC	-0.023	-0.005	0.01	.062*	-0.037	0.018
	Sig.	0.454	0.883	0.755	0.046	0.235	0.577
good	CC	.099**	-.120**	-.079*	-.074*	.085**	-.079*
	Sig.	0.002	0	0.012	0.018	0.006	0.012
good\nice	CC	.081**	0.016	-0.013	0.014	0	.063*
	Sig.	0.01	0.608	0.677	0.652	1	0.045
happy\content	CC	0.034	-0.011	-.082**	-0.005	0.052	-.073*
	Sig.	0.278	0.722	0.009	0.884	0.094	0.02
hopeful	CC	-0.021	0.061	0.057	.108**	-0.027	.064*
	Sig.	0.494	0.052	0.069	0.001	0.393	0.042
nothing	CC	-0.041	.079*	0.02	-0.002	-0.024	0.032
	Sig.	0.194	0.012	0.522	0.942	0.446	0.309
relieved	CC	-0.007	-0.02	-.062*	-0.014	-.063*	-0.03
	Sig.	0.813	0.517	0.048	0.655	0.043	0.347
relieved\reassured	CC	-0.034	0.051	0.026	0.046	-.062*	.079*
	Sig.	0.273	0.105	0.399	0.142	0.048	0.012
safe	CC	-0.007	0.011	-0.001	0.012	.079*	-0.044
	Sig.	0.813	0.714	0.964	0.694	0.012	0.162
stressed	CC	0	.095**	0.004	0.058	-.068*	0.003
	Sig.	0.995	0.002	0.887	0.063	0.03	0.914
upset	CC	.071*	-0.025	-0.051	-0.034	0.031	-0.014
	Sig.	0.024	0.418	0.105	0.273	0.315	0.654
worried\anxious	CC	-0.029	-0.01	-0.021	.064*	-0.045	0.021
	Sig.	0.354	0.751	0.51	0.042	0.147	0.51
worried\concerned	CC	0.008	-0.024	-.078*	0.014	0.023	-0.06
	Sig.	0.791	0.445	0.013	0.662	0.458	0.056

Note: 'CC' stands for 'correlation coefficient', and 'Sig.' for 2-tailed significance. Uses Spearman's rho. Researcher emotion groupings are shown first, in capital letters. Happy N=1022 Sad N=1020 Angry N=1021 Anxious N=1021 Content N=1021 Scared N=1015. * = p<0.05, ** = p<0.01.

Focusing on ~annoyance as the primary 'villain-type feeling' in the preceding chapter, Table 26 suggests that pre-vignette anger carries over to post-vignette ~annoyance (.099, p=0.0002). This seems to support priming effects, though effect size is small.

However, per Table 27, this holds for the blame UK and blame-selves vignettes only (though approaches significance for the no-blame condition). There is no correlation in the blame-EU condition, despite the ~annoyance SE participants expressed after reading the blame-EU vignette in the previous chapter. This indicates that the annoyance is not because of pre-existing anger, but because of something else; the vignettes themselves are affecting people's emotions.

Table 27: Correlations between pre-vignette emotions and post-vignette ~annoyance, by vignette Uses Spearman's rho.

	Blame EU			blame UK			blame selves			no blame		
	CC	Sig.	N	CC	Sig.	N	CC	Sig.	N	CC	Sig.	N
Happy	0.025	0.686	257	-0.067	0.274	271	-0.026	0.703	224	-0.031	0.607	270
Sad	-0.028	0.656	256	0.061	0.317	269	-0.065	0.328	226	0.047	0.447	269
Angry	0.047	0.449	258	.158**	0.009	269	.133*	0.046	225	0.109	0.074	269
Anxious	0.073	0.244	257	0.038	0.533	269	0.055	0.409	226	0.013	0.837	269
Content	0.054	0.393	256	-0.102	0.095	270	0.026	0.702	226	0.105	0.084	269
Scared	0.040	0.520	256	0.009	0.885	267	0.130	0.051	225	-0.008	0.900	267
*Uses Spearman's rho. CC = correlation coefficient; sig. = two-tailed significance. * = p<0.05, ** = p<0.01.*												

8.2.2.   Pre-existing emotions and other effects

Table 28 shows correlations between pre-vignette emotions and post-vignette victim identification, victim uncreation, and (re)blame, by vignette. The EU and UK may be considered 'others' who are blamed—as opposed to when 'us' and 'ourselves' are blamed, or there is no blame at all. In principle, if any pre-vignette emotion is correlated with a post-vignette effect, then it should operate in similar ways for at least these two conditions. However, pre-vignette happiness was correlated with identifying victims when reading the blame-UK vignette, and a lowered likelihood of the same when reading the blame-EU vignette. There appears to be a similar effect for pre-vignette anger and victim identification. This indicates again that pre-vignette emotions do not reliably interact with blame. The *content* of blame—who is blamed—is more important than pre-existing emotions.

<div align="center">❖</div>

This section has indicated that some pre-vignette emotions may correlate with post-vignette results—notably, anger correlates with the 'villain-type' feeling of ~annoyance. However, effect sizes are small—and moreover, they seem to hold for certain situations only. Once the vignette is controlled for, effects disappear; the content of blame seems more important than pre-existing emotions. There was no support for the idea that angry people are more predisposed to endogenous blame, as captured in (re)blame here. This contradicts previous research, for example that of Deborah Small, Jennifer Lerner, and Baruch Fischhoff, who suggested that "anger arises from and gives rise to appraisals of justice and blame."[1368] Their study was conducted in November 2001, shortly after the 9/11 attacks, and involved presenting participants with a vignette that primed them for either anger or sadness about 9/11 and asked them to write about it:

[1368] Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff, 291.

> "The terrorist attacks evoked a lot of emotion in Americans. We are particularly interested in what makes you most *angry* about the attacks. Please describe in detail the one thing that makes you most *angry* about the attacks. Write as detailed a description of that thing as possible. If you can, write your description so that someone reading it might even get *angry* from learning about the situation.
>
> What aspect of the terrorist attacks makes you the most *angry*?
> Why does it make you so *angry*?"[1369]

Responses were then coded for attributions to agents such as bin Laden or non-agentic situational causes such as fanaticism or religion.

While the differing results in the present study could be due to the different audiences involved—Small et al included 973 US citizens, as opposed to the UK participants for the present research—it is more likely that variance is due to differing experimental design. Small et al's design encouraged depth of description—people may have written more, increasing the likelihood of recording attributions; at the time, news was dominated by a search for perpetrators, meaning it would be natural for people to write about perpetrators; moreover, participants were specifically asked to write in such a way that they would make other people angry. This means there was a potential for conflating participants' own anger causing them to endogenously blame, and their writing blame to make *other* people angry. They were blaming 'for' an audience; in a sense, intentionally producing exogenous blame just like the Leave campaign per E2: Blame campaign.

The present research focuses on the first of these only—what endogenous blame participants perform—and does not ask them to create propaganda to enrage others. This could explain the difference in results, and points to the need to consider who blame is done *for* in future studies, with particular reference to social context.

[1369] Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff, 292. 'Angry' was replaced with 'sad' in the 'sadness' condition.

Table 28: Pre-existing emotions vs victim (un)creation and (re)blaming.

		Victim				Victim uncreation				(Re)blame present			
		EU	UK	Selves	None	EU	UK	Selves	None	EU	UK	Selves	None
Happy	CC	-.125*	.183**	0.039	0.066	-0.096	0.058	0.03	-0.015	0.074	-0.048	0.019	-0.056
	Sig.	0.046	0.002	0.557	0.28	0.125	0.341	0.657	0.8	0.235	0.429	0.777	0.358
	N	257	271	224	270	257	271	224	270	257	271	224	270
Sad	CC	0.117	-0.037	-0.017	0.007	.152*	-0.016	0.039	0.039	-0.084	0.058	-0.019	0.034
	Sig.	0.062	0.549	0.804	0.904	0.015	0.795	0.564	0.528	0.182	0.341	0.775	0.583
	N	256	269	226	269	256	269	226	269	256	269	226	269
Angry	CC	0.106	-.159**	-0.088	-0.048	.149*	-0.008	0.042	0.022	-0.006	-0.036	0.113	0.041
	Sig.	0.089	0.009	0.188	0.435	0.017	0.901	0.528	0.719	0.918	0.557	0.091	0.504
	N	258	269	225	269	258	269	225	269	258	269	225	269
Anxious	CC	.152*	-0.086	-0.122	-0.065	0.107	-0.043	0.047	0.036	-0.062	0.102	0.09	.152*
	Sig.	0.015	0.16	0.068	0.285	0.086	0.487	0.479	0.557	0.32	0.095	0.176	0.012
	N	257	269	226	269	257	269	226	269	257	269	226	269
Content	CC	-0.027	0.094	0.078	0.046	-0.04	0.116	-0.031	-0.079	0.083	-0.056	0.048	-0.038
	Sig.	0.666	0.125	0.242	0.448	0.52	0.057	0.641	0.199	0.183	0.357	0.473	0.531
	N	256	270	226	269	256	270	226	269	256	270	226	269
Scared	CC	0.088	-.144*	-0.012	-0.063	.145*	0.003	-0.004	0.063	-0.037	-0.012	0.023	0.036
	Sig.	0.158	0.018	0.86	0.307	0.02	0.955	0.954	0.304	0.554	0.841	0.734	0.56
	N	256	267	225	267	256	267	225	267	256	267	225	267

*Spearman's rho used in anticipation of non-linear correlations. CC = Correlation coefficient; Sig. = two-tailed significance. * = p<0.05, ** = p<0.01.*

8.3. Does voting preference matter?

E3: Effects used participants' Brexit voting preference to divide and explain results. Does voting preference ('VP') correlate reliably with any of the effects of exogenous blame? If so, then voting preference would effectively divide the UK population into two groups: those who experience particular effects after being exposed to exogenous blame, and those who do not. This problematically implies that either Leavers or Remainers are more manipulable, with the others more reasonable. It is nonsensical for two further reasons: the survey-experiment exposed people to one instance of exogenous blame only, and dividing people into two distinct populations based on that fact would be fallacious and internally invalid at best. Secondly, it essentialises the groups of 'Leaver' and 'Remainer', which themselves only came into being in connection with the Brexit referendum. Voting preference was used in explanations in the previous chapter simply because the matter at hand related to those preferences—namely blame of the EU.

This section shows that 'voting preference' as an essentialised category does not have much correlation with the effects of exogenous blame generally, *despite* how useful it is as an explanatory device in E3: Effects. This is why mixed methods is so necessary for a study such as the present one—through quantitative analysis in E3 it was possible to identify trends in the effects of blame, but it was only through qualitative content analysis and use of people's own explanations that differences could be emerged and identified. It shows that 'Leavers' and 'Remainers' are not fundamentally different types of people. This is important to note in light of how focus group and interview participants described themselves as having been repeatedly called 'stupid' by their counterparts; or indeed, how liberal counterparts may be referred to as 'snowflakes' or 'sheeple', suggesting they are easily manipulated.[1370] Post-vignette emotions are again considered first, followed by the other effects of exogenous blame noted in E3.

8.3.1. Voting preference and post-vignette emotions

Table 29 shows several highly significant correlations ($p<0.01$) between having vote preference 'Leave', 'Remain', or something else as 'Other', and post-vignette emotions/affect.[1371] It suggests Remainers are more ~annoyed and ~worried, and Leavers

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[1370] See 6.4.3 Victimisation of Leavers. See also Ruggeri et al., 'The General Fault in Our Fault Lines'., who find that, across 26 countries, 'meta-perceptions' about one's own group based in negative stereotypes that have been incorrectly applied result in perception of greater distance between the beliefs and attitudes of one's own group and those of the other. Highlighting points of commonality and convergence can help redress this—namely, in the present research, showing that Leavers and Remainers are not 'natural' enemies just because of which hero or villain they support.

[1371] Emotions that are highly significant for VP 'Other' are not included except incidentally, as this contains people who would not vote, would prefer not to say, are unsure, and people who did not answer the question—they may or may not be similar people, and are also not the focus of this chapter. Full data is available at Annex: Correlations between vote preference and pre/post-vignette emotions.

less; the inverse applies for feeling ~good and so on. This reflects what was shown in E3,[1372] recalling that the two groups had broadly similar emotions pre-vignette.

Table 29: Highly significant correlations between VP and post-vignette emotions (and breath)

		VP Leave	VP Remain	VP Other
~ ANNOYED	CC	-.095**	.116**	-.060*
	Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.025
~ GOOD	CC	.081**	-.077**	0.007
	Sig.	0.003	0.005	0.802
~ WORRIED	CC	-.096**	.102**	-0.024
	Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.384
annoyed	CC	-.089**	.103**	-0.040
	Sig.	0.001	0.000	0.136
better	CC	-.068*	.073**	-0.018
	Sig.	0.011	0.007	0.510
bored	CC	.071**	-0.047	-0.032
	Sig.	0.009	0.081	0.238
breath	CC	-.061*	0.050	0.017
	Sig.	0.023	0.063	0.532
good\fine	CC	.086**	-.075**	-0.007
	Sig.	0.001	0.006	0.793
good\okay	CC	.073**	-0.046	-0.038
	Sig.	0.007	0.090	0.163
same	CC	.094**	-.089**	-0.019
	Sig.	0.000	0.001	0.489
worried	CC	-.071**	.063*	0.010
	Sig.	0.008	0.020	0.704
worried\anxious	CC	-.076**	.074**	-0.002
	Sig.	0.005	0.006	0.941
*Uses Pearson's r. CC = correlation coefficient, Sig = 2-tailed significance. N=1368 (402 VPL, 845 VPR, 115 VPO). * = p<0.05, ** = p<0.01.*				

However, once the results above are grouped by vignette, most differences disappear (Table 30). Considering for example the 'no blame' condition, Leavers continue to be less ~worried than are Remainers, and are more likely to feel the 'same'. As this vignette contains victims only and no agentic blame, this could suggest that Remainers are more prone to worry in general, though establishing this is outside the scope of the present research.

It is clear that changing the vignette changes the resulting emotions. However, the data does *not* show that people of a particular voting preference are destined to interact with blame in a particular way; there is no consistency in what any particular group feels, even across the two vignettes containing blame of an Other (blame-EU and blame-UK). That said, ~annoyance results may be approaching significance in the blame-UK condition. At best, this suggests Remainers as a group may be marginally more prone to ~annoyance as a result of exogenous blame of an Other, and Leavers less. The effect size is negligible.

[1372] See 7.4 Why we feel that way.

Table 30: Highly significant correlations between VP and post-vignette emotions (and breath), by vignette.[1373]

		EU		UK		Selves		None	
		VP Leave	VP Remain	VP Leave	VP Remain	VP Leave	VP Remain	VP Leave	VP Remain
~ ANNOYED	CC	-.126*	.109*	-0.085	0.092	-.189**	.235**	0.027	0.030
	Sig.	0.022	0.048	0.104	0.081	0.001	0.000	0.611	0.563
~ GOOD	CC	.109*	-0.085	0.074	-0.071	0.095	-0.096	0.061	-0.063
	Sig.	0.049	0.125	0.157	0.174	0.095	0.093	0.242	0.234
~ WORRIED	CC	-0.047	0.072	-.125*	.135**	-0.079	0.062	-.117*	.127*
	Sig.	0.397	0.193	0.017	0.010	0.166	0.277	0.025	0.016
annoyed	CC	-.159**	.144**	-0.058	0.089	-.115*	.132*	-0.006	0.040
	Sig.	0.004	0.009	0.272	0.090	0.043	0.020	0.902	0.448
better	CC	-0.031	0.050	-0.027	-0.008	-.182**	.176**	-0.040	0.087
	Sig.	0.570	0.367	0.609	0.885	0.001	0.002	0.449	0.097
bored	CC	0.045	-0.024	-0.021	0.041	.204**	-.174**		
	Sig.	0.413	0.660	0.695	0.438	0.000	0.002		
breath	CC	-0.086	.124*	0.008	-0.035	-.119*	0.109	-0.081	0.053
	Sig.	0.119	0.024	0.879	0.512	0.036	0.056	0.124	0.309
good\fine	CC	0.075	-0.067	.145**	-0.096	.121*	-.124*	0.021	-0.022
	Sig.	0.172	0.221	0.006	0.067	0.033	0.030	0.692	0.679
good\okay	CC	.110*	-0.075	0.034	-0.032	0.003	0.015	.133*	-0.076
	Sig.	0.045	0.174	0.522	0.539	0.961	0.793	0.011	0.147
same	CC	0.029	-0.027	0.102	-0.072	0.064	-0.069	.178**	-.177**
	Sig.	0.600	0.619	0.053	0.173	0.264	0.226	0.001	0.001
worried	CC	-0.056	0.083	-0.074	0.071	-0.047	0.015	-0.098	0.080
	Sig.	0.330	0.132	0.158	0.178	0.410	0.791	0.062	0.130
worried\anxious	CC	-0.074	0.089	-0.051	0.036	-0.079	0.092	-0.097	0.088
	Sig.	0.177	0.106	0.329	0.491	0.166	0.106	0.065	0.094

Uses Pearson's r. EU N=331; UK N=363; Selves N=310; None N=364. * = p<0.05, ** = p<0.01.

8.3.2.   Voting preference and other effects

Voting preference likewise does not correlate with victim identification or uncreation, or (re)blame, once results are grouped by vignette (Table 31). Interestingly, Leavers are less likely to identify victims in the 'no blame' condition, with the reverse the case for Remainers—but establishing why Remainers talk more about victims is outside the scope of research. It complements the finding from 7.3.5 Victims in the survey-experiment that blame distracts at least some people—in this case Remainers—from talking about victims.

❖

Overall, voting preference by itself does not appear to correlate with any of the effects of blame identified in E3; voting preference is not destiny. Could it be that any differences identified in the previous chapter are in fact the effect of something else? Per 5.4 Who voted for Brexit?, Leavers and Remainers differ in some underlying characteristics.

[1373] VP 'Other' were included when conducting analysis but are not shown. VP Leavers and Remainers together constituted >91% of all survey-experiment responses. See full data at Annex: Correlations between vote preference and pre/post-vignette emotions. If mentioning one's 'breath' does indicate an unwillingness to describe uncomfortable emotions per 7.4.6 Breath, then VP Remainers seem least comfortable with the blame-EU vignette and VP Leavers most comfortable for the blame-selves vignette.

Investigating correlations between such underlying characteristics and the effects of blame is the task of the following section.

Table 31: Correlations between VP and victim (un)creation and (re)blame, by vignette

		Victim ID			
		EU	**UK**	**Selves**	**None**
VP Leave	CC	**0.045**	**-0.029**	**-0.048**	**-.187****
	Sig.	0.419	0.577	0.404	0
VP Remain	CC	**-0.098**	**0.083**	**0.019**	**.130***
	Sig.	0.074	0.115	0.736	0.013
VP Other	CC	**.112***	**-0.094**	**0.056**	**0.083**
	Sig.	0.041	0.072	0.327	0.115
		Victim uncreation			
		EU	**UK**	**Selves**	**None**
VP Leave	CC	**0.094**	**0.047**	**0.026**	**0.028**
	Sig.	0.088	0.372	0.646	0.595
VP Remain	CC	**-0.058**	**-0.06**	**-0.081**	**-0.063**
	Sig.	0.293	0.257	0.156	0.229
VP Other	CC	**-0.053**	**0.027**	**0.053**	**0.029**
	Sig.	0.336	0.607	0.351	0.58
		(Re)blame			
		EU	**UK**	**Selves**	**None**
VP Leave	CC	**-0.001**	**0.028**	**-0.029**	**0.012**
	Sig.	0.985	0.59	0.605	0.822
VP Remain	CC	**0.031**	**0.024**	**0.083**	**0.068**
	Sig.	0.571	0.645	0.144	0.195
VP Other	CC	**-0.054**	**-0.086**	**-0.095**	**-.106***
	Sig.	0.325	0.102	0.095	0.043

*Uses Pearson's r; CC = correlation, sig. = two-tailed significance. * = p<0.05, ** = p<0.01. Blame-EU N = 331; blame-UK N = 363; blame-selves N = 310; no-blame N = 364. VP Other includes 'would not vote', 'would rather not say', 'unsure'. 37 VP 'Others' responded to the no-blame vignette. See also* Figure 44.

8.4. Psychometric data, health, and education level

Per 2.3.7 Blame is emotional, prior research points to some people being 'more affected' by blame—for instance, less agreeable people experiencing heightened anger in response to blame.[1374] Cambridge Analytica infamously used information about people's 'psychometric' profiles—their underlying personalities—in attempts to manipulate them.[1375] This section tests assumptions that underlying characteristics circumscribe the effects of blame by considering the ordinal data collected about survey-experiment participants—all that data that may be quantified and ordered to indicate 'higher' and 'lower'. This includes sense of agency ('SOA'), agreeability, in-group values ('IGVs') and Just World Beliefs ('JWBs'), health (including mental health) and education level.[1376] VP Leaver and Remainer differences in these characteristics are shown in Table 32.

[1374] Meier and Robinson, 'Does Quick to Blame Mean Quick to Anger?'
[1375] Wylie, *Mindf*ck*. See also 5.3 The Brexit assemblage.
[1376] It does not include dark triad characteristics such as narcissism, nor conscientiousness as one of the 'Big Five' that were used by Cambridge Analytica. See also 4.4.1 Survey-experiment.

Table 32: Voting preference and psychometric, health, and education data

	VP Leave	VP Remain
Sense of Agency (0–6)	2.5 (1.5)	2.7 (1.3)
Agreeability (0–40)	26.8 (5.9)	27.7 (5.7)
In-group values (0–16)	9.3 (3.3)	6.0 (3.2)
Just World Beliefs (0–12)	5.2 (2.3)	3.8 (2.4)
Health (0–3)	1.5 (1.0)	1.4 (1.0)
Days of poor mental health in the last 30	7.1 (8.4)	9.1 (8.7)
Educational attainment[1377]	2.9 (1.9)	5.2 (1.7)
VPL N=402; VPR N=845. Mean values are followed by (standard deviations).		

For responses to each vignette, correlation analyses were conducted to identify possible relationships between these underlying characteristics and the effects of blame associated with vilification, using Pearson's r in anticipation of linear relationships.[1378] Significant results (p<0.05) were then reviewed, with cases where there were similar results for both 'blame other' conditions—blaming the EU and blaming the UK—of particular interest. Such cases suggest that the characteristic under investigation does in some way interact with the causal powers of blame.

Tables below show only highly significant data (p<0.01**), and rows where there are at least two columns with significant (p<0.05*) correlations. Full data is available at Annex: Correlations between underlying characteristics and post-vignette effects.

8.4.1.   Post-vignette emotions

As shown in Table 33, people higher in **agreeability** are less likely to feel 'nothing' when an Other is blamed (and possibly also when the self is blamed).[1379] While Brian Meier and Michael Robinson claimed people lower in agreeability are more likely to be angrier in response to blame, this is not apparent here.[1380] This likely relates to study design: while in this research, people read exogenous blame and were then asked how they felt, Meier and Robinson asked participants to "quickly and accurately classify words as blameworthy or not", checking for interactions with anger.[1381] Words included, for example, oilspill, hangover, and sin.[1382] The present work is considered more ecologically valid, as it actually uses examples of blame.

People higher in **in group values** are less apathetic when ourselves are blamed or there is no blame; they appear more sad when an Other is blamed, and more 'happy' when the vignette contained *any* blame. **Healthy** people felt less bored when the UK or self was

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[1377] See full data at Annex: SE education levels.

[1378] As in the rest of this chapter, significance was two-tailed, with significance at p<0.05 indicated by *, and high significance at p<0.01 with **.

[1379] They are also more ~worried in all situations other than when the EU is blamed. It is unclear why this would be the case, and is out of scope for the present research

[1380] Meier and Robinson, 'Does Quick to Blame Mean Quick to Anger?'

[1381] "We expected speed on the task to interact with agreeableness in predicting (a) anger and arguments during the course of daily life … (b) hostile feelings during the course of a semester … and (c) anger in response to a short video involving a blameworthy action". Meier and Robinson, 858.

[1382] Meier and Robinson, 859.

blamed, less annoyed when the UK was blamed, and more when the self was blamed. Those with poor **mental health** felt more hopeful when others were blamed. Highly **educated** people were less likely to say they 'did not know' what they felt following the UK-blaming vignette.

These various emotions do not appear to relate to *vilification* via blame—they do not include 'villain-type' emotions, i.e. feeling negative as towards a blamee.[1383] The additional sadness experienced by those higher in IGVs may relate to victims, in which case the compassion backhand could be enacted; healthy people may create fewer villains in specific circumstances (as when the UK was blamed here), but there is no clear relationship between good health and emotions resulting from blame generally.

However, people higher in **Just World Beliefs**[1384] feel less ~annoyed for all conditions containing blame.[1385] They also feel more sad and more good when an Other is blamed.

While most of the characteristics noted above do not appear to relate to vilification via blame, the Just World Belief finding is an innovative one. Those who do *not* see the world as an essentially 'just and fair' place feel more ~annoyed as a result of blame. This may be because if the world is not fair, and we do not ultimately get what we deserve, then it is more reasonable to feel ~annoyed at deviations from what we would like the world to be. It appears that having higher Just World Beliefs may *reduce* blame's ability to make villains via engendering annoyance: high JWBs mitigate blame's causal power.[1386]

Note that there are further interesting results for when the self is blamed. Those higher in sense of agency are less annoyed and less pleased; agreeable people are more concerned, less informed, more positive, less fine, and more ~worried; those higher in in-group values are less apathetic, less better, more nice, and more interested; those higher in JWBs feel more nice, less better, and less ~annoyed.[1387] Healthy people feel more annoyed, better, same, and less bored; those with poor mental health feel less happy and more nice, and more educated people less scared.[1388]

Such emotions do not relate to vilification of an *Other*; exogenous blaming of the self appears to have distinct effects to blaming of an Other amongst at least some groups—and

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[1383] See 4.3.4 Recognising vilification.
[1384] The notion that the world is essentially fair; ergo, what happens to you is what you deserve.
[1385] Note that the researcher grouping ~annoyed included both 'angry' and 'annoyed'. People high in JWBs felt more angry when the EU was blamed, and more annoyed when the UK was blamed. If annoyance is a 'less intense' form of anger, people high in JWBs experience less overall anger when somebody is blamed. See also 7.1.2 Anger and annoyance.
[1386] JWBs appear to be a moderator variable—they change the strength (or direction) of the relationship between blame and ~annoyance.
[1387] This potentially results from the researcher grouping, given there was no correlation between JWBs and any individual emotion from the ~annoyance group; for high JWBs, there was more 'anger' for the blame-EU vignette vs 'annoyance' for blame-UK. Work on annoyance vs anger may prove illuminating.
[1388] Sense of agency refers to the perception that people have control over their lives. See also 4.4.1 Survey-experiment.

none of the significant results reflect findings from previous research, wherein blame of the self is associated with shame or guilt.[1389] This may be partly because it is not an individual person being blamed, but rather the self *amongst others*.[1390] Nevertheless, it appears that exogenous blame of one's own group may produce yet different results to those when an Other or the individual self is blamed. This is interesting in light of FGI participants blaming Remainers for abusing them for their support for Leave, per E3—what would this mean for an individual Remainer who was member of that group, or entrenchment as a member? Further research could prove enlightening, specifically insofar as identifying the ways in which we unmake our *selves* as villains in politics.

[1389] E.g. Neumann, 'The Causal Influences of Attributions on Emotions'; Sheikh and McNamara, 'Insights from Self-Blame and Victim Blaming'; Smith et al., 'In Search of the" Hot" Cognitions'.; though see also Stuewig et al., 'Shaming, Blaming, and Maiming: Functional Links among the Moral Emotions, Externalization of Blame, and Aggression'., who find shame correlates with externalisation of blame (as well as empathetic concern—compassion—and perspective-taking). See also 2.3.7 Blame is emotional.

[1390] 'We' did this. See also full vignettes at Annex: Vignettes, and analysis of the vignette in 7.3.1 Analysing the vignette.

Table 33: Correlation between underlying characteristics and post-vignette emotions (abridged)

		SENSE OF AGENCY			
		EU	UK	Selves	None
N		254	270	225	275
annoyed	CC	-0.043	0.110	-.152*	.156**
	Sig.	0.492	0.072	0.023	0.010
good\fine	CC	-.181**	0.105	0.014	-0.006
	Sig.	0.004	0.086	0.833	0.915
	N	254	270	225	275

		AGREEABILITY			
		EU	UK	Selves	None
N		254	271	216	270
APATHETIC		-0.024	-.205**	-0.042	-.124*
		0.705	0.001	0.536	0.042
~ WORRIED		0.030	.174**	.219**	0.109
		0.635	0.004	0.001	0.075
better		.165**	0.047	0.106	-0.014
		0.009	0.439	0.122	0.822
bored		-0.016	-.245**	0.050	.c
		0.798	0.000	0.461	
good\fine		.134*	0.089	-.182**	0.059
		0.032	0.142	0.007	0.338
good\positive		0.044	-.190**	.145*	0.023
		0.489	0.002	0.033	0.706
nothing		-.198**	-.160**	-0.124	-0.036
		0.002	0.008	0.069	0.551
same		-0.044	-.157**	0.003	-.169**
		0.481	0.010	0.964	0.006
worried\concerned		0.045	0.072	.222**	0.070
		0.478	0.237	0.001	0.251
		254	271	216	270

*Tables use Pearson's r. CC = correlation coefficient; Sig. = two-tailed significance. * = p<0.05, ** = p<0.01.*

		IN-GROUP VALUES			
		EU	UK	Selves	None
N		258	273	225	277
~ ANNOYED	CC	-0.118	-.187**	-0.129	-0.002
	Sig.	0.058	0.002	0.054	0.969
APATHETIC	CC	0.001	-0.019	-.143*	-.162**
	Sig.	0.989	0.758	0.032	0.007
better	CC	0.011	-0.036	-.196**	-0.093
	Sig.	0.859	0.553	0.003	0.121
(compassion)\sad	CC	0.114	.163**	0.012	0.053
	Sig.	0.067	0.007	0.859	0.381
happy	CC	.200**	0.103	0.114	0.035
	Sig.	0.001	0.088	0.087	0.565
	N	258	273	225	277

		JUST WORLD BELIEFS			
		EU	UK	Selves	None
N		259	275	227	276
~ ANNOYED	CC	-.138*	-.156**	-.155*	0.022
	Sig.	0.026	0.009	0.019	0.721
APATHETIC	CC	.185**	-0.032	0.008	-.126*
	Sig.	0.003	0.601	0.903	0.036
~ GOOD	CC	.177**	0.065	0.070	0.050
	Sig.	0.004	0.285	0.294	0.403
annoyed	CC	-0.036	-.173**	-0.095	0.035
	Sig.	0.563	0.004	0.153	0.566
annoyed\angry	CC	-.175**	0.035	-0.068	0.021
	Sig.	0.005	0.559	0.305	0.733
bad	CC	.c	.166**	-0.090	0.024
	Sig.		0.006	0.175	0.686
(compassion)\sad	CC	.152*	.160**	0.016	0.041
	Sig.	0.014	0.008	0.813	0.502
good	CC	.149*	.135*	0.039	0.087
	Sig.	0.016	0.025	0.558	0.151
good\nice	CC	.c	0.064	.197**	0.039
	Sig.		0.288	0.003	0.523
happy	CC	.213**	0.048	0.121	0.006
	Sig.	0.001	0.430	0.069	0.925
	N	259	275	227	276

		HEALTH			
		EU	UK	Selves	None
	N	260	275	227	276
annoyed	CC	0.003	-.145*	.142*	-0.033
	Sig.	0.961	0.016	0.032	0.581
bored	CC	0.030	-.160**	-.135*	.c
	Sig.	0.627	0.008	0.042	
nothing	CC	.168**	0.063	0.000	-.129*
	Sig.	0.007	0.299	0.996	0.032
	N	260	275	227	276

		POOR MENTAL HEALTH			
		EU	UK	Selves	None
	N	258	273	225	275
~ COMPASSION	CC	-0.093	0.077	-0.023	-.219**
	Sig.	0.135	0.206	0.728	0.000
(compassion)\sad	CC	0.009	-0.024	0.002	-.162**
	Sig.	0.887	0.691	0.980	0.007
confident	CC	.166**	0.007	-0.058	-0.032
	Sig.	0.007	0.904	0.388	0.596
hopeful	CC	.123*	.147*	0.108	-0.018
	Sig.	0.048	0.015	0.107	0.765
stressed	CC	-0.040	-0.025	0.069	.183**
	Sig.	0.525	0.684	0.305	0.002
worried	CC	0.088	.200**	0.066	0.000
	Sig.	0.158	0.001	0.321	0.996
	N	258	273	225	275

		EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT			
		EU	UK	Selves	None
	N	259	274	225	274
unknown	CC	-0.038	-.187**	0.026	0.037
	Sig.	0.541	0.002	0.701	0.542
	N	259	274	225	274

8.4.2. Victim (un)creation and (re)blaming

For the other effects of blame noted in E3, it appears that people lower in **agreeability** are more likely to 'uncreate' victims, though results were only highly significant for the blame-UK vignette (Table 34). This is perhaps to be expected—disagreeable people are acting disagreeably as far as victims are concerned. Their 'undoing' the blame suggests, counterintuitively, that people lower in agreeability may be less likely to feel the blamee is a villain—as if there is no harm done, then why experience negative, villain-type feelings? Changing subjects and objects of blame in this way is discussed as a form of contestation in 9.4 Changing subjects and objects, and further research would be helpful in bolstering this finding.

For the no-blame condition, people lower in **in-group values** identify more victims and accord more blame. This may be because people high in IGVs emphasise survival of the group, while those lower in IGVs focus on individuals;[1391] people who care about individuals identify individuals—such as victims—and look for an individual to hold responsible, hence (re)blaming.[1392] This could be tested in further research. More highly **educated** people likewise endogenously blame more in the no-blame condition. As each of these results relates to the distinct *lack* of exogenous blame, they are not considered further here.

Just World Beliefs are again interesting: people higher in JWBs are less likely to (re)blame in the no blame and blame-selves conditions than are people lower in JWBs. This contradicts previous research that suggests higher Just World Beliefs predict higher level of endogenous blame. Per Alan Lambert and Katherine Raichle, "Most introductory textbooks in social psychology hold a common assumption that just world beliefs play a major role in the process by which people blame the victim."[1393] Perhaps people higher in Just World Beliefs

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[1391] See discussion of the 'in-group/loyalty' moral foundation in Haidt, and criticisms in e.g. Suhler and Churchland. Haidt, The Righteous Mind; Suhler and Churchland, 'Can Innate, Modular "Foundations" Explain Morality?' Group-based measures were included given blame's role in constituting groups.

[1392] This latter may complement the findings of Laura Niemi and Liane Young, who claim that individualising values are associated with "increased perceptions of force and more information-seeking about perpetrators rather than victims" (Niemi and Young, 'When and Why We See Victims as Responsible', 1235.); higher binding values were associated with notions that the perpetrator made less of a difference to the outcome and the victim made more, and that victims were both more responsible and contaminated. However, they tested this by providing vignettes where there both perpetrators and victims, which does not apply in the 'no blame' condition for the present research. Further, the authors refer to 'individualising' (caring and fairness) and 'binding' values rather than 'in-group' values; binding values are "associated with prohibiting behaviour that destabilises groups and relationships", including in-group loyalty, obedience to authority, and purity. Their measurement does go beyond simply valuing the group itself. The present work uses only the in-group loyalty measures of the same Moral Foundations Questionnaire. Moral Foundations, 'Questionnaires'.

[1393] Lambert and Raichle, 'The Role of Political Ideology in Mediating Judgments of Blame in Rape Victims and Their Assailants', 861. This tends to be premised on Melvin Lerner's work on innocent victims and JWBs, e.g. Lerner and Simmons, 'Observer's Reaction to the" Innocent Victim"'.; "rejection and devaluation of a suffering victim are primarily based on the observer's need to believe in a just world". Lambert and Raichle have found that JWBs are not as strong or reliable as other types of constructs in predicting endogenous victim-blaming. Lambert and Raichle, 'The Role of Political Ideology in Mediating Judgments of Blame in Rape Victims and Their Assailants'.

do not (re)blame because it is not the victim that is at fault (the UK that is experiencing flooding and associated expenditure in this case); perhaps they believe, for example, it is 'part of God's plan'. This would be one iteration of JWBs. The present research's contradiction of 'common knowledge' as it relates to JWBs and endogenous blaming is nevertheless an innovative finding and raises questions for future research.[1394]

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Overall, this section suggests that some underlying characteristics do interfere with the causal power of blame to make villains. People higher in Just World Beliefs feel less ~annoyed as a result of exogenous blame, and (re)blame less in at least some conditions—contradicting prior research. Higher JWBs may then *reduce* blame's likelihood of creating villains. This is additionally interesting in that JWBs are associated with conservative political beliefs—as seen in the present study, where Leavers as more likely to be Conservative supporters had higher JWBs.[1395] Perhaps it is people with lower JWBs, associated with liberal political beliefs, that are more likely to experience villain-type feelings as a result of blame.

This is borne out by Remainers' higher experience of ~annoyance as a result of blame in the preceding chapter. There is a clear call for further research into how JWBs interact with blame.

[1394] Lambert and Raichle found that JWBs were not as strong or reliable as other types of constructs in predicting endogenous victim-blaming—though there remains the question of why people *lower* in JWBs would (re)blame more in conditions of no blame (Lambert and Raichle, 'The Role of Political Ideology in Mediating Judgments of Blame in Rape Victims and Their Assailants'.). Recall that the present study uses a shortened version of the JWBs tool (3/7 questions); see discussion in Methodology.

[1395] See also for example Hayes, Lorenz, and Bell, 'Victim Blaming Others', 204.

Table 34: Correlation between underlying characteristics and victim (un)making and (re)blame

		Victim identified				Victim uncreation				(Re)blame present			
		EU	UK	Selves	None	EU	UK	Selves	None	EU	UK	Selves	None
Sense of Agency	CC	.124*	0.005	-0.023	0.022	0.036	-0.069	-0.127	-0.047	0.062	0.094	0.050	0.076
	Sig.	0.048	0.931	0.732	0.718	0.573	0.258	0.058	0.441	0.327	0.125	0.456	0.211
	N	254	270	225	275	254	270	225	275	254	270	225	275
Agreeability	CC	0.047	.140*	0.034	.125*	-0.109	-.170**	-0.097	-0.109	-0.094	0.034	0.094	0.112
	Sig.	0.456	0.021	0.618	0.040	0.084	0.005	0.154	0.075	0.136	0.575	0.167	0.065
	N	254	271	216	270	254	271	216	270	254	271	216	270
In-group values	CC	0.095	0.101	0.007	-.132*	-0.044	0.047	-0.034	0.050	-0.012	-0.042	-0.112	-.165**
	Sig.	0.129	0.097	0.919	0.028	0.479	0.442	0.608	0.408	0.845	0.490	0.094	0.006
	N	258	273	225	277	258	273	225	277	258	273	225	277
JWB	CC	0.085	-0.030	-0.083	-0.085	0.013	0.040	0.058	0.086	-0.068	-0.024	-.160*	-.221**
	Sig.	0.171	0.624	0.211	0.160	0.841	0.510	0.388	0.155	0.279	0.688	0.016	0.000
	N	259	275	227	276	259	275	227	276	259	275	227	276
Health	CC	-0.021	.143*	0.080	-0.093	-0.014	0.066	-0.003	-0.002	-0.098	-0.049	-0.041	-0.026
	Sig.	0.738	0.018	0.229	0.125	0.821	0.276	0.969	0.974	0.114	0.420	0.536	0.662
	N	260	275	227	276	260	275	227	276	260	275	227	276
Poor mental health	CC	-0.024	0.038	-0.042	0.002	0.004	0.060	-0.033	0.016	0.022	-0.017	0.020	0.014
	Sig.	0.700	0.535	0.528	0.980	0.954	0.326	0.628	0.795	0.724	0.781	0.766	0.819
	N	258	273	225	275	258	273	225	275	258	273	225	275
Educational attainment	CC	-0.034	0.021	-0.040	0.111	0.050	0.006	-0.100	-0.008	0.007	0.036	0.066	.129*
	Sig.	0.586	0.730	0.555	0.068	0.427	0.923	0.134	0.894	0.908	0.553	0.323	0.032
	N	259	274	225	274	259	274	225	274	259	274	225	274

*Uses Pearson's r. CC = correlation coefficient; Sig. = two-tailed significance. * = p<0.05, ** = p<0.01.*

8.5. The stories we tell

This section focuses on *nominal*, rather than *ordinal*, characteristics. Whereas items in the previous section could be measured and ranked, for instance from low to high agreeability, nominal characteristics cannot be meaningfully ordered: despite the patriarchy, there is no way to rank and therefore enumerate 'woman', 'nonbinary', and 'man'. This means correlation analyses cannot be used. Instead, crosstab analysis is conducted using SPSS.[1396]

Data for this section is primarily from responses to the survey-experiment question asking participants to complete the sentence "I am (a/n)..." with up to five items, thus giving a 'self-identity'. There were 78 items to choose from, in the general categories of political party, Brexit-specific identity, political values, race, religion, gender, sexuality, generation, geo-attachment, cultural attachment, and class. As participants did not have to give an answer for *each* of these categories, and because each category might contain a large number of items (for instance, 'geoattachment' had fourteen options, and people could choose an assortment of those or none), sample sizes are smaller than in the preceding section.[1397] Particularly, they were too small to establish significant relationships with post-vignette emotions. For that reason, this section considers victim (un)creation and (re)blaming only, recalling that the first may indicate the relevance of any compassion backhand, and the latter indicates scope for spreading blame and therefore vilification. 'Most important General Election voting issue' and 'area of greatest interest' are likewise included in this section.

The tables below show the characteristic in question, how many times it appeared, how many times it could be *expected* to occur all else being equal, and an adjusted residual. Adjusted residuals indicate whether or not a result is meaningful, with adjusted residuals of ±1.96 indicating significance at p<0.05. Only significant results are shown, with full data available at Annex: Crosstabs and post-vignette effects.

Note that while in correlation analyses, low sample sizes reduce significance (larger p values), in crosstab analyses they can give false positives. For this reason, groups with small sample sizes were disregarded in analysis. Any item that appeared fewer than three times—for instance, Londoner/rural person, which appeared once—was captured as 'Infrequent'. Where items appeared related but were still infrequent—for instance, Welsh/Celtic, and Welsh/Celtic/Rural person—they were grouped by the first item listed then 'other', e.g. Welsh/Other. If a response was ambiguous—for instance, if somebody identified

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[1396] Data from the MaxQDA file where survey-experiment responses were coded was exported to MaxQDA Stats, thence to SPSS for analysis.

[1397] I.e. Participants did not have to give their Brexit identity, and their political party, and their race, and their religion and so on; instead, they could just choose the most important things for them. See also 4.4.1 Survey-experiment.

as both a 'Leaver' and a 'Remainer', or as a 'man' and a 'woman' but not non-binary—it was grouped under 'ambiguous'.[1398]

Finally, it is worth noting that as in the last section, results here were grouped by blame condition—which vignette survey-experiment participants were exposed to. Again, this is because it can be expected that collecting results from the blame-UK, blame-EU, blame-selves, and 'no-blame' conditions together would skew results. For example, when results were processed together, it seemed as though people whose area of greatest interest was 'health' (re)blamed significantly less than expected. When results were separated by vignette, it turned out that people interested in 'health' only (re)blamed less for the blame UK condition; it was otherwise irrelevant.

8.5.1.   Victim (un)creation and (re)blaming

People's **gender**, **race**, **sexuality**, and **cultural attachment** (e.g. 'multicultural', 'expat') did not relate in any significant way to post-blame behaviour such as victim (un)creation or (re)blaming. **Socioeconomic class** only mattered in the 'blame selves' condition, where people who identified as middle class identified more victims, and working class people uncreated more victims (Table 35). **Political values** (traditional/progressive) were significant only in the blame EU and no blame conditions; in the former, progressives uncreated victims less than expected, and traditionals more; in the latter, progressives identified more victims and traditionals fewer.

Area of greatest interest was likewise irrelevant; in the blame EU condition, people interested in education identified more victims; in the blame UK condition, people interested in health were outliers in that they blamed significantly less than expected, while people interested in society and culture (re)blamed more. People interested in IT identified more victims in the 'blame selves' condition, while for the no blame vignette, people interested in creative arts identified more victims and people into management and commerce (re)blamed less than expected.

People whose major **General Election voting issue** was Brexit uncreated more victims in the blame-EU condition and identified fewer victims in the blame selves condition. For **generation**, more victims were identified only by Gen Zs and only in the blame UK condition. **Brexit-specific identity**, *identifying* as a 'Leaver' or 'Remainer', only mattered where there was no blame; Leavers identified victims less than expected, and Remainers more.[1399] When it came to **political party support**, Labour supporters identified more victims than expected in the blame-UK condition. Conservatives (re)blamed less in both the blame-selves and no-blame condition (but not the all-important 'Other' blame-containing

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[1398] See also 5.4 Who voted for Brexit? for data on how VP Leavers and Remainers differed.
[1399] In 7.3.5 Victims in the survey-experiment, VP Leavers and Remainers varied in when they identified victims, with VP Remainers identifying fewest victims in the blame-EU vignette and VP Leavers identifying victims consistently, they identified victims at the same rate on average across all vignettes.

vignettes). Scottish National Party supporters (re)blamed more than expected, but only for the no-blame vignette.

For **geo-attachment**, unsurprisingly, people who identified as 'European' (re)blamed less than expected for the blame-EU vignette (while Scots and Northerners blamed more). 'City people' identified more victims than expected for the blame-EU, blame-UK, and no-blame vignettes, perhaps reflecting discourses around a 'Metropolitan Elite' that act in some way differently than the rest of the country; however, the sample size was small, and so results are inconclusive.[1400] Those who identified as 'British/English' (more typically VP Leavers) are also interesting: in the no-blame condition, they identified fewer victims, uncreated more victims, and (re)blamed more than expected, though it is not clear why this would be the case. They also uncreated more victims in the blame-EU condition.

Religion likewise did not seem to matter consistently; Christians identified more victims than expected in the blame EU condition only, while non-religious people identified fewer victims than expected in that same condition, *un*created fewer victims than expected in the 'blame EU' condition, and (re)blamed more than expected in the no blame condition.

<div align="center">❖</div>

Overall, this section suggests that underlying interests and identity only matter to blame if those interests or identity are being spoken about—as when people who identified as European did not want to (re)blame the EU.[1401] Such stories do not matter *generally* for the effects of blame, and thus do not reliably relate to vilification. This does however illustrate that when speaking about blaming of the EU, as in the previous chapter, it is necessary to divide audiences by salient stories to gain a full understanding of people's explanations. Had VP Leavers and Remainers been combined in the previous chapter, it would have been impossible to understand how vilification worked—people would have appeared more ~annoyed in general after reading the blame-EU vignette, but it would not have been clear that, for example, VP Remainers were ~annoyed at the text author as a new villain, and not the EU. In a similar vein, it was noted in E3: Effects that holding 'green' ideas—studying environmental affairs, or having climate change as one's main General Election voting priority—appeared to affect how those people created villains after being exposed to exogenous blame about an environment-related issue. This further highlights the necessity of mixed methods in a research study such as the present one: quantifying the effects of blame permitted the researcher to show that ~annoyance is a reliable outcome of other-blaming, while it is only through qualitative content analysis and an understanding of context that it is possible to understand *why* villains are created, and of *whom*.

[1400] This applies to those who 'identify' as city people, which may differ from people who actually live in cities and thus ostensibly form a 'Metropolitan Elite'.
[1401] This complements findings that uptake of particular stories—such as rape myth acceptance—changes how people blame victims in cases of interpersonal assault. Niemi and Young, 'Blaming the Victim in the Case of Rape'; Krahe, 'Victim and Observer Characteristics as Determinants of Responsibility Attributions to Victims of Rape'.

Table 35: Crosstab of stories and interests vs victim (un)creation and (re)blaming

Area of Greatest Interest		Victim False	Victim True	Victim uncreation False	Victim uncreation True	(Re)blame present False	(Re)blame present True	Total
BLAME EU Education	Count	6	3	8	1	4	5	9
	Expected	8.0	1.0	8.7	0.3	4.4	4.6	9.0
	%WC	66.7%	33.3%	88.9%	11.1%	44.4%	55.6%	100.0%
	AR	-2.1	2.1	-1.4	1.4	-0.3	0.3	
BLAME UK Health	Count	21	5	26	0	21	5	26
	Expected	22.6	3.4	25.4	0.6	13.9	12.1	26.0
	%WC	80.8%	19.2%	100.0%	0.0%	80.8%	19.2%	100.0%
	AR	-1.0	1.0	0.8	-0.8	3.0	-3.0	
BLAME UK Society and culture (including politics)	Count	41	7	47	1	18	30	48
	Expected	41.7	6.3	46.9	1.1	25.6	22.4	48.0
	%WC	85.4%	14.6%	97.9%	2.1%	37.5%	62.5%	100.0%
	AR	-0.3	0.3	0.1	-0.1	-2.4	2.4	
BLAME SELVES Information technology	Count	35	11	44	2	26	20	46
	Expected	41.1	4.9	44.6	1.4	26.7	19.3	46.0
	%WC	76.1%	23.9%	95.7%	4.3%	56.5%	43.5%	100.0%
	AR	-3.3	3.3	-0.5	0.5	-0.2	0.2	
NO BLAME Creative arts	Count	18	13	30	1	20	11	31
	Expected	23.5	7.5	29.7	1.3	19.5	11.5	31.0
	%WC	58.1%	41.9%	96.8%	3.2%	64.5%	35.5%	100.0%
	AR	-2.4	2.4	0.3	-0.3	0.2	-0.2	
NO BLAME Management and commerce	Count	12	5	16	1	15	2	17
	Expected	12.9	4.1	16.3	0.7	10.7	6.3	17.0
	%WC	70.6%	29.4%	94.1%	5.9%	88.2%	11.8%	100.0%
	AR	-0.5	0.5	-0.3	0.3	2.2	-2.2	

Brexit-specific identity		Victim False	Victim True	Victim uncreation False	Victim uncreation True	(Re)blame present False	(Re)blame present True	Total
NO BLAME Leaver	Count	46	6	47	5	34	18	52
	Expected	39.1	12.9	48.9	3.1	29.3	22.7	52.0
	%WC	88.5%	11.5%	90.4%	9.6%	65.4%	34.6%	100.0%
	AR	2.8	-2.8	-1.3	1.3	1.6	-1.6	
NO BLAME Remainer	Count	65	31	92	4	50	46	96
	Expected	72.2	23.8	90.2	5.8	54.1	41.9	96.0
	%WC	67.7%	32.3%	95.8%	4.2%	52.1%	47.9%	100.0%
	AR	-2.8	2.8	1.3	-1.3	-1.4	1.4	

%WC means 'percentage within category', e.g. religion. Adjusted residuals of ±1.96 are significant at p<0.05.

Class		Victim False	Victim True	Victim uncreation False	Victim uncreation True	(Re)blame present False	(Re)blame present True	Total
BLAME SELVES Middle class	Count	28	11	39	0	17	22	39
	Expected	32.6	6.4	36.7	2.3	20.6	18.4	39.0
	%WC	71.8%	28.2%	100.0%	0.0%	43.6%	56.4%	100.0%
	AR	-2.3	2.3	1.8	-1.8	-1.4	1.4	
BLAME SELVES Working class	Count	41	6	41	6	24	23	47
	Expected	39.3	7.7	44.2	2.8	24.9	22.1	47.0
	%WC	87.2%	12.8%	87.2%	12.8%	51.1%	48.9%	100.0%
	AR	0.8	-0.8	-2.4	2.4	-0.3	0.3	

General Election voting issue		Victim False	Victim True	Victim uncreation False	Victim uncreation True	(Re)blame present False	(Re)blame present True	Total
BLAME EU Relationship with the EU (Brexit)	Count	19	3	19	3	8	14	22
	Expected	19.4	2.6	21.0	1.0	8.3	13.7	22.0
	%WC	86.4%	13.6%	86.4%	13.6%	36.4%	63.6%	100.0%
	AR	-0.4	0.4	-2.6	2.6	-0.2	0.2	
BLAME SELVES Relationship with the EU (Brexit)	Count	33	2	30	5	15	20	35
	Expected	29.4	5.6	31.1	3.9	14.7	20.3	35.0
	%WC	94.3%	5.7%	85.7%	14.3%	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
	AR	2.2	-2.2	-0.8	0.8	0.1	-0.1	

Generation		Victim False	Victim True	Victim uncreation False	Victim uncreation True	(Re)blame present False	(Re)blame present True	Total
BLAME UK Gen Z	Count	10	4	14	0	5	9	14
	Expected	12.3	1.8	13.8	0.2	5.7	8.3	14.0
	%WC	71.4%	28.6%	100.0%	0.0%	35.7%	64.3%	100.0%
	AR	-2.1	2.1	0.5	-0.5	-0.4	0.4	

Geoattachment		Victim False	Victim True	Victim uncreation False	Victim uncreation True	(Re)blame present False	(Re)blame present True	Total
BLAME EU British / English	Count	10	1	9	2	5	6	11
	Expected	9.8	1.3	10.6	0.4	5.0	6.0	11.0
	%WC	90.9%	9.1%	81.8%	18.2%	45.5%	54.5%	100.0%
	AR	0.2	-0.2	-2.6	2.6	0.0	0.0	
BLAME EU City person	Count	3	3	6	0	2	4	6
	Expected	5.3	0.7	5.8	0.2	2.7	3.3	6.0
	%WC	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
	AR	-3.0	3.0	0.5	-0.5	-0.6	0.6	
BLAME EU English	Count	30	8	38	0	17	21	38
	Expected	33.7	4.3	36.6	1.4	17.1	20.9	38.0

		Victim False	Victim True	Victim uncreation False	Victim uncreation True	(Re)blame present False	(Re)blame present True	Total
	%WC	78.9%	21.1%	100.0%	0.0%	44.7%	55.3%	100.0%
	AR	-2.0	2.0	1.3	-1.3	0.0	0.0	
BLAME EU European	Count	11	0	11	0	9	2	11
	Expected	9.8	1.3	10.6	0.4	5.0	6.0	11.0
	%WC	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	81.8%	18.2%	100.0%
	AR	1.2	-1.2	0.7	-0.7	2.5	-2.5	
BLAME EU Scottish	Count	18	1	19	0	4	15	19
	Expected	16.8	2.2	18.3	0.7	8.6	10.4	19.0
	%WC	94.7%	5.3%	100.0%	0.0%	21.1%	78.9%	100.0%
	AR	0.9	-0.9	0.9	-0.9	-2.2	2.2	
BLAME UK City person	Count	4	3	7	0	4	3	7
	Expected	6.0	1.0	6.9	0.1	3.4	3.6	7.0
	%WC	57.1%	42.9%	100.0%	0.0%	57.1%	42.9%	100.0%
	AR	-2.1	2.1	0.4	-0.4	0.4	-0.4	
BLAME UK English / Rural person	Count	4	1	5	0	0	5	5
	Expected	4.3	0.7	4.9	0.1	2.4	2.6	5.0
	%WC	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	AR	-0.3	0.3	0.3	-0.3	-2.2	2.2	
BLAME SELVES British	Count	28	6	29	5	21	13	34
	Expected	29.7	4.3	31.9	2.1	18.6	15.4	34.0
	%WC	82.4%	17.6%	85.3%	14.7%	61.8%	38.2%	100.0%
	AR	-0.9	0.9	-2.2	2.2	0.9	-0.9	
NO BLAME British / English	Count	12	0	9	3	11	1	12
	Expected	8.9	3.1	11.2	0.8	7.0	5.0	12.0
	%WC	100.0%	0.0%	75.0%	25.0%	91.7%	8.3%	100.0%
	AR	2.1	-2.1	-2.7	2.7	2.4	-2.4	
NO BLAME City person	Count	2	4	6	0	2	4	6
	Expected	4.4	1.6	5.6	0.4	3.5	2.5	6.0
	%WC	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
	AR	-2.3	2.3	0.7	-0.7	-1.2	1.2	
NO BLAME Irish	Count	6	2	8	0	1	7	8
	Expected	5.9	2.1	7.5	0.5	4.7	3.3	8.0
	%WC	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%	0.0%	12.5%	87.5%	100.0%
	AR	0.1	-0.1	0.8	-0.8	-2.7	2.7	

Political party support		Victim False	Victim True	Victim uncreation False	Victim uncreation True	(Re)blame present False	(Re)blame present True	Total
BLAME UK Labour supporter	Count	20	8	28	0	12	16	28
	Expected	23.9	4.1	27.8	0.2	13.2	14.8	28.0
	%WC	71.4%	28.6%	100.0%	0.0%	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
	AR	-2.4	2.4	0.5	-0.5	-0.5	0.5	
BLAME SELVES Conservative supporter	Count	17	1	16	2	14	4	18
	Expected	15.2	2.8	16.6	1.4	9.6	8.4	18.0
	%WC	94.4%	5.6%	88.9%	11.1%	77.8%	22.2%	100.0%

		Victim False	Victim True	Victim uncreation False	Victim uncreation True	(Re)blame present False	(Re)blame present True	Total
	AR	1.3	-1.3	-0.6	0.6	2.3	-2.3	
NO BLAME Conservative supporter	Count	15	6	18	3	17	4	21
	Expected	15.2	5.8	19.8	1.2	12.6	8.4	21.0
	%WC	71.4%	28.6%	85.7%	14.3%	81.0%	19.0%	100.0%
	AR	-0.1	0.1	-1.9	1.9	2.2	-2.2	
NO BLAME SNP supporter	Count	14	2	15	1	4	12	16
	Expected	11.6	4.4	15.1	0.9	9.6	6.4	16.0
	%WC	87.5%	12.5%	93.8%	6.3%	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
	AR	1.5	-1.5	-0.1	0.1	-3.1	3.1	

Political values		Victim False	Victim True	Victim uncreation False	Victim uncreation True	(Re)blame present False	(Re)blame present True	Total
BLAME EU Progressive	Count	41	1	41	1	20	22	42
	Expected	40.4	1.6	39.5	2.5	19.8	22.2	42.0
	%WC	97.6%	2.4%	97.6%	2.4%	47.6%	52.4%	100.0%
	AR	1.2	-1.2	2.3	-2.3	0.2	-0.2	
BLAME EU Traditional	Count	8	1	7	2	4	5	9
	Expected	8.6	0.4	8.5	0.5	4.2	4.8	9.0
	%WC	88.9%	11.1%	77.8%	22.2%	44.4%	55.6%	100.0%
	AR	-1.2	1.2	-2.3	2.3	-0.2	0.2	
NO BLAME Progressive	Count	24	17	38	3	21	20	41
	Expected	28.5	12.5	37.5	3.5	22.2	18.8	41.0
	%WC	58.5%	41.5%	92.7%	7.3%	51.2%	48.8%	100.0%
	AR	-2.8	2.8	0.5	-0.5	-0.7	0.7	
NO BLAME Traditional	Count	16	1	15	2	10	7	17
	Expected	11.8	5.2	15.6	1.4	9.2	7.8	17.0
	%WC	94.1%	5.9%	88.2%	11.8%	58.8%	41.2%	100.0%
	AR	2.6	-2.6	-0.6	0.6	0.4	-0.4	

Religion		Victim False	Victim True	Victim uncreation False	Victim uncreation True	(Re)blame present False	(Re)blame present True	Total
BLAME EU Christian	Count	22	7	26	3	14	15	29
	Expected	25.4	3.6	27.7	1.3	12.2	16.8	29.0
	%WC	75.9%	24.1%	89.7%	10.3%	48.3%	51.7%	100.0%
	AR	-2.2	2.2	-1.8	1.8	0.8	-0.8	
BLAME EU Non-religious	Count	89	8	95	2	40	57	97
	Expected	85.1	11.9	92.8	4.2	40.8	56.2	97.0
	%WC	91.8%	8.2%	97.9%	2.1%	41.2%	58.8%	100.0%
	AR	2.2	-2.2	2.0	-2.0	-0.3	0.3	
NO BLAME Non-religious	Count	69	27	92	4	53	43	96
	Expected	68.2	27.8	90.7	5.3	60.2	35.8	96.0
	%WC	71.9%	28.1%	95.8%	4.2%	55.2%	44.8%	100.0%
	AR	0.3	-0.3	1.0	-1.0	-2.6	2.6	

8.6. Chapter conclusion

This chapter set out to interrogate whether the division of UK voters according to voting preference in E3 was legitimate for the subject at hand—perhaps any differences in the villain-making effects of exogenous blame resulted from underlying characteristics or pre-existing mood, rather than the blame itself. To that end, the chapter first considered pre-existing and post-vignette emotions, showing that anger correlates with the 'villain-type' feeling of ~annoyance—but with a small effect size, and in certain situations only. The content of the blame itself—who is blamed—was ultimately more important than existing mood. Next, voting preference was considered vis-à-vis post-blame emotions, victim (un)creation and (re)blame, and there were no consistent correlations. 'Leavers' and 'Remainers' are not more manipulable via exogenous blame—they experience similar effects, though as highlighted in E3: Effects, they may target different blamees as villains in accordance with existing knowledge and allegiances.[1402] Again, content matters.

The fourth section investigated whether there was any correlation between underlying characteristics such as psychometric profile, education, or health, and the vilifying effects of blame. This was important in light of scandals over 'micro-targeting', most infamously in the case of Cambridge Analytica. Again, for the most part, there was little relation between characteristics such as sense of agency, in-group values, level of education or others and vilification via blame. At least for blame, and at least for the underlying characteristics measured, it seems that micro-targeting based on underlying characteristics would be ineffective.[1403] This chapter thus forms a novel contribution to literature on psychometric targeting and the effects of discourse.

Notably, one exception is level of Just World Beliefs. In contradiction to previous research, higher JWBs were associated with *lessened* (re)blaming post-vignette, for at least the no-blame and blame-selves conditions. There was no relation between JWBs and the vilifying effects of blames in the blame-other conditions, where the UK or EU were blamed. Despite prior research indicating higher JWBs predict higher level of endogenous blame, there was no evidence supporting this. People lower in JWBs also seemed to feel more ~annoyed as a result of blame, suggesting that high JWBs may actually *mitigate* blame's causal power to

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[1402] See also 7.3.4 Blaming niches: do people blame the EU because the EU is responsible? for an illustration of who VP Leavers and Remainers blame 'by default' across vignettes. While VP Leavers tend to blame the EU and a variety of 'Others' more and VP Remainers blame the climate/environment more across vignettes, this demonstrates only that VP Leavers have consumed broadly similar political stories in relation to environmental issues. This could be captured in a broadly conservative political agenda.
[1403] A limit of the current research was the scope—predominantly those items previously associated with blaming behaviour were incorporated into the survey-experiment, and logistically, a survey covering these other aspects would have been beyond the financial means of the researcher. Ideally, conscientiousness would be included in future research, as specifically targeted by Cambridge Analytica. Wylie, *Mindf*ck*. See also 4.4.1 Survey-experiment.

make villains. An outcome of the current research is then a call for further research into the interaction of JWBs and exogenous blame.

That section also noted that exogenous blame of the 'self' appears to have distinct effects to blaming of an Other amongst at least some groups, and none of the emotions anticipated by prior research—guilt or shame[1404]—were apparent. This finding was emerged as a result of the abductive approach used, and is a novel finding for blame research—the concept of 'us amongst others' has been notably absent from work on blame and emotions, perhaps as an outcome of the focus on endogenous blame. It should be researched further, particularly as it relates to the ways in which we 'unmake' our selves as villains in politics— being grouped in this way perhaps forms a shield against the uncomfortable emotions of shame and guilt associated with blame of the self as an individual, with implications for political (in)action.

The final section of the chapter turned to the stories we tell about ourselves, whether as captured in how we identify ourselves, or in top General Election voting issues or area of greatest interest. Again, the key finding was that these only matter for blame if they are actually being discussed—as when people who identify as 'European' (re)blame the EU less than they would otherwise be expected to. 'What' we are is less important than the stories we tell.[1405] The discourses to which we are subject are of primary importance; and the metaphorical tale of leaving a villainous EU who victimises the people of the UK is a potent one.[1406]

With this in mind, this chapter highlighted that dividing audiences by voting preference in E3 was not only valid, but essential to understanding how vilification operated in the specific context of the Brexit case study. Blame's content and context are vitally important not just when interpreting and reproducing exogenous blame, but when analysing the effects it has on audiences. This demands a mixed methods approach as in the present research, which considers not just the overall effects of blame at population level, but emerges people's own explanations for what they feel and why. It validates the data analysis framework outlaid in Methodology, which calls for establishing context as a necessary first step when analysing the effects of a discursive practice such as blame. It furthermore forms a contribution to work on underlying characteristics and the effects of discourse.

Now that underlying characteristics have been considered for how they affect—or do not affect—the causal powers of blame in creating villains, the final empirical chapter will go on to consider how blame itself is contested and potentially mitigated—whether by engaging

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[1404] See also 2.3.7 Blame is emotional.

[1405] This is supported by, for example, Irina Anderson and Antonia Lyons, who found that stories about gender roles are important to who is blamed in cases of interpersonal assault, and not gender per se. Anderson and Lyons, 'The Effect of Victims' Social Support on Attributions of Blame in Female and Male Rape'.

[1406] A 'Rescue narrative'. Lakoff, *The Political Mind*; Spencer and Oppermann, 'Narrative Genres of Brexit'.

with it directly, using opposing practices such as crediting the EU, or by changing the subjects and objects of blame.

9. E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation

9.1. Introduction

Each of the preceding empirical chapters has addressed different parts of the data analysis framework outlaid in 4.3.1 Data analysis framework. E1: The Brexit context gave context to the Brexit case study, including identifying who 'spoke' and who voted for Brexit. E2: Blame campaign identified what blame was performed in the lead-up to the referendum, showing that the Leave campaign used blame while the Remain campaign, Britain Stronger In Europe ('BSIE'), refrained. E3: Effects demonstrated that such blame has effects, both inserting actors such as the EU into a person's blaming niche, and producing specific vilifying effects. In particular, blaming the EU generated ~annoyance amongst those who consumed the blame (the 'audience'), though whom this annoyance was *at* was mediated by people's existing beliefs and desires as captured in voting preference ('VP'). E4: Blame and underlying characteristics reinforced this finding, showing that it is not people's underlying characteristics but rather what they already believe—the discourses to which they are subject—that best explains who is vilified as a result of blame.

Taken together, those chapters help explain the ways in which blame makes villains in politics: chiefly, by generating annoyance and other 'villain-type feelings' at blamees, though also through the 'compassion backhand' as when people feel sorry for a blamee's victims and turn back on the perpetrator. What those chapters do not speak to is when blame *fails* to make villains in politics. While it may be possible to contest the blame|vilification link through addressing underlying feeling structures—considered further in 10.4 Theory-driven reflections on disrupting the blame|vilification link—it is also possible to contest the blame itself, and thus potentially mitigate its outcomes. Such contestation could be disputing the blame, arguing against it, changing its content, or even not 'doing' blame. In these ways, blame is in a sense 'undone', so that vilification cannot take place.

This requires *retroductive* reasoning, which essentially goes against the grain of the ever-expanding abductive inference applied elsewhere in this research to ask 'what makes this possible?'.[1407] Reverting to the example used elsewhere, abductive reasoning might begin by observing sunburn (as an effect), then cycling between theory and data to establish that the sun has causal power to create sunburn. Retroductive reasoning would question why something happened in *this* way, and not another way; what made the sunburn possible?

[1407] "Retroduction is about advancing from one thing (empirical observation of events) and arriving at something different (a conceptualization of transfactual conditions). The core of retroduction is transcendental argumentation, as it is called in philosophy. By this argumentation one seeks to clarify the basic prerequisites or conditions for social relationships, people's actions, reasoning and knowledge." Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*, 107.

By applying counterfactual thinking to identify other ways of being—such as wearing sunscreen, or staying inside—it is possible to locate ways in which the sun's causal powers may be mitigated.[1408] In the present research, counterfactual thinking requires seeking sites where blame does and does not happen, how blame is spoken of, and by whom, as below.

This chapter then addresses the final component of the data analysis framework, moving beyond 'how do people blame' to 'how do people *not* blame', illustrating limits to blame and points of resistance. This is important because it identifies some of the ways in which blame may *not* make villains in politics; strategies used to contest blame could disrupt resulting vilification.[1409] As such, this chapter's focus is not emotions or the effects of blame, but rather the blame itself and how it is contested.

Where existing literature has considered contestation of blame, it has focused on blame avoidance strategies for politicians who themselves are blamed. Particularly, Hood outlines three types of strategy for politicians to manage blame: presentational strategies (excuses and justifications), policy strategies (avoiding blame in the first place), and agency strategies (selecting institutional arrangements that permit the minimisation or avoidance of blame).[1410] These may prove helpful for individual politicians seeking to avoid blame, but do not speak to situations where the blamee is voiceless—as when the EU is absent in the present research—or when they are being defended by third-party allies, such as the Remain campaign. As such, Hood's framework was not practical for the present research.

Instead, sites of contestation were drawn from empirical data and theory in the present research, and placed into three groups. One form of contestation could be considered *direct*, where the blame itself is spoken about and/or engaged with—counter-blaming, rebuttal, and naming and shaming blame. Such forms of contestation were visible in campaign materials, focus group/interview ('FGI'), and survey-experiment ('SE') data alike. In accordance with 4.3.6 Resistance and contestation, they were located by finding places where 'blame' was talked about and *how* it was talked about; where people expressed disagreement with blame; and where people consumed blame and then shifted that blame to an alternate blamee. This was captured by coding meta-discussion of blame within MaxQDA, before the three different sub-strategies were identified. Direct contestation strategies are the topic of the first part of this chapter, where it will be demonstrated that BSIE were limited in how they could contest blame, while Leave.EU in particular had extended capacity to blame the EU without consequences to themselves.

[1408] Counterfactual thinking is essential to retroductive reasoning, "In counterfactual thinking we use our stored experience and knowledge of social reality, as well as our ability to abstract and to think about what is not, but what might be." Danermark et al., 112.

[1409] Language is hedged with use of 'may' and 'could', because while it is apparent from previous chapters and particularly E3: Effects that not every instance of blame results in a villain—or at least, not the expected one—the present chapter abstracts reasons why this could be, and does not seek to check the effectiveness of these strategies. For instance, it locates 'rebuttal' as when somebody says blame is 'untrue' as a way of contesting blame, suggesting this might mitigate blame's causal powers for that person in that time—but it does not take these contestation strategies and test them for effectiveness in any quantified manner.

[1410] Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game'.

The second form of contestation focuses on blame's complementary and opposing practices, as established in 2.4 Defining blame.[1411] While 'blame' is harmful and takes place in the present/past, 'threat' is harmful but takes place in the future; credit is *helpful* in the present/past and promises are helpful in the future. Each of these practices is a way of speaking about actions, their desirability or otherwise, and when they are done. As such they can occupy similar discursive spaces to blame; and, as the second part of this chapter will show, credit and threat as *indirect* forms of contestation were both used by BSIE in attempts to redress blame from the Leave campaign.

The third form of contestation identified was inspired by Steven Lukes' 'three faces of power', and specifically his second face of power, agenda-setting.[1412] Agenda-setting circumscribes what is legitimately sayable, and by whom. What would happen to blame if different people spoke or were spoken about?[1413] The third section of this chapter then considers contestation by *changing subjects and objects*, including limiting speakers, uncreating victims, and 'no-blaming'. It shows that the EU's absence from the Brexit campaign meant blame went unchallenged; that erasing victims—'victim unmaking' from previous chapters—may help reduce vilification through reducing opportunity for the compassion backhand, but presumably would not lead to improved outcomes for victims; and that removing perpetrators from blame through use of the passive voice may help reduce vilification—though with caveats.

In illustrating each of these forms of contestation, this chapter draws from all data sources used in the present research. It does not seek to demonstrate the *effectiveness* of contestation in any quantifiable manner, but rather pose ways in which, based on the present research, blame's causal powers may be mitigated so that villains are not made.

Ultimately, this chapter introduces strategies for engaging with exogenous blame in future and thereby mitigating concordant vilification, while concluding the Brexit case study by

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[1411] See also footnote 348 in that section (p. 1), which highlights that the definition of blame itself implies multiple sites of contestation, including (a) subjects and objects, (b) the nature of the discursive practice, (c) justification, (d) warrant, (e) the meta level of whether blame is done or not done, and (f) calls to action. (a) is discussed in the third part of this chapter; (b) in the second part; (c) is rarely apparent as the EU that could justify itself did not take part in the debate—and as shown in this chapter, the Remain campaign did little to assist; (d) is discussed in the context of 'rebuttal' in 9.2 Direct contestation—talking about the blame only insofar as it relates to the truth/falsity of blame, (e) appears in 9.4.3 No-blame: rendering the perpetrator invisible, or calling for blame to be laid?, and (f) is not discussed given that calls to action in all the data considered largely related to whether to vote leave/remain and not alternatives such as reform.

[1412] Lukes' 'first' face of power, decision-making, is already apparent in the first and second forms of contestation identified here. His 'third face' is not considered, given the methodological challenges of explaining non-events; however, the conclusion to this thesis does include theory-driven reflections on engaging with the vilification mechanism embedded within cultural feeling structures themselves, allowing for new 'non-events' to take place. Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*. There is a link between the second face of power and Hood's concept of 'agency strategies' that involve selecting particular "institutional arrangements to minimise or avoid blame". Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game', 17.

[1413] This section focuses on 'people' and not on the specific 'content' of blame insofar as what is blamed for, given this research focuses on character creation specifically.

illustrating the ways in which BSIE as the Remain campaign failed to mitigate blame's causal power through use of appropriate contestation strategies.

Note that throughout this chapter, quotations from survey-experiment participants are retained as typed by them, with only minor misspellings and obvious typographical errors corrected.

9.2. Direct contestation—talking about the blame

This section draws extensively from BSIE examples, complemented by SE and FGI data. It shows that blame is contested directly in the materials through rebuttal ('the blame is untrue'), counter-blaming (blame somebody else), and 'naming and shaming' blame.[1414]

9.2.1.   Counter-blaming

> "Don't blame the migrant worker for being exploited, blame the company that's exploiting them." (Sadiq Khan, London mayor)[1415]

Counter-blaming may be understood as contesting blame by reallocating it.[1416] An example can be seen in Figure 58, where then-Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn links blaming the EU for immigration with anger, then redirects that blame and concordant anger at Tory Government policies.

Figure 58: Corbyn advocates blaming the Tories rather than migrants[1417]

Corbyn: Blame the Tories, not migrants

JEREMY CORBYN has defended EU immigration, urging voters to direct their anger towards Tory austerity measures instead.

The Labour leader said pressure on infrastructure would not vanish in the wake of a Brexit as David Cameron had failed to properly fund housing and schools.

[1414] See also 4.3.6 Resistance and contestation.

[1415] Yeatman, 'It's Right Down to the Wire'.

[1416] It may be considered 'endogenous' in that it arises in response to 'exogenous' blame. The line is however blurry; in this section, counter-blaming is 'exogenous' when located in campaign materials, and potentially 'endogenous' for SE and FGI participants. To avoid confusion, counter-blaming is considered here without reference as to its origin—endogenous or exogenous. The focus is on its presence as a means of contestation, not who it is 'for' or performed 'to'.

[1417] 'Corbyn: Blame the Tories, Not Migrants'.

When an individual is blamed, they may be motivated to shift or counter that blame, because feeling guilt/shame is uncomfortable;[1418] in the public sphere, a politician's accepting blame may affect perceptions and lead to lessened support (e.g. via vilification).[1419] However, per E2, BSIE did not blame, including counter-blaming—they did not defend the EU through redirecting blame from the EU to other parties. This prompts the question—why *would* BSIE counter-blame on behalf of the EU?

BSIE was competing with Leave campaigners, and was associated with David Cameron's Government. *If* they identified harmful—blameworthy—happenings, then their desirable blamees would be limited to either the Leave campaign itself, or potentially third parties outside of Europe. This is because targeting *supporters* of Leave would be attacking parts of their own population, and thus potential voters; targeting the EU would be counter to their argument; targeting the UK government would be targeting themselves and/or allies for remaining in the EU; targeting 'the elite' as did Leave.EU would have been attacking BSIE's own message of expertise; targeting other countries in Europe may have led to diplomatic problems; and targeting other actors outside of Europe may have seemed irrelevant.[1420] This meant that BSIE were extraordinarily limited in their options for blamees, rendering blame—and counter-blame—unavailable to them.

While Vote Leave had ties to Government, Leave.EU had more scope to blame as outside the 'Westminster bubble'.[1421] This meant that they could blame the EU, constituent parties, the Government itself, and adjacent parties such as an 'elite'. That is, exogovernmental bodies have more scope for blaming than do those who are part of government.[1422]

Audiences consuming blame were likewise not under the same constraints as BSIE, and this meant they could—and did—provide alternate blamees. This is exemplified by responses to the EU-blaming vignette in the survey-experiment, where VP Leavers (re)blame the EU more than in response to the other vignettes, while VP Remainers instead blame the text author and climate change—blaming each at higher rates than for any other of the blame-containing vignettes (Figure 59).


[1418] Neumann, 'The Causal Influences of Attributions on Emotions'; Sheikh and McNamara, 'Insights from Self-Blame and Victim Blaming'; Smith et al., 'In Search of the" Hot" Cognitions'; Lerner and Tiedens, 'Portrait of the Angry Decision Maker'. Though see also 8.4 Psychometric data, health, and education level, where the SE 'blame-selves' vignette does seem to produce different results to the 'no-blame' and 'other-blame' vignettes, but is not greatly associated with shame and guilt.
[1419] Further research is needed as to whether audiences are convinced by politicians' blame avoidance.
[1420] Post-referendum, other blamees have become acceptable (e.g. Brexit itself, Russia for alleged referendum interference, Cambridge Analytica, and principles such as 'disinformation'), but these were not necessarily available at the time.
[1421] A consistent theme in Banks' retelling of the campaign in Banks and Oakeshott, *The Bad Boys of Brexit*.
[1422] Per Weaver, "politicians are most likely to generate negative messages against targets when they do not have a continuing resource dependence on the target or need to have their cooperation in order to achieve their own goals, or when the target controlling the resources is unlikely to be able to succeed in gaining retribution." (Weaver, 'The Nays Have It', 270–71.) See discussion of challenger parties in Hobolt and Tilley, 'Fleeing the Centre: The Rise of Challenger Parties in the Aftermath of the Euro Crisis'; Vries and Hobolt, *Political Entrepreneurs*.

Figure 59: Who did VP Remainers (re)blame?[1423]
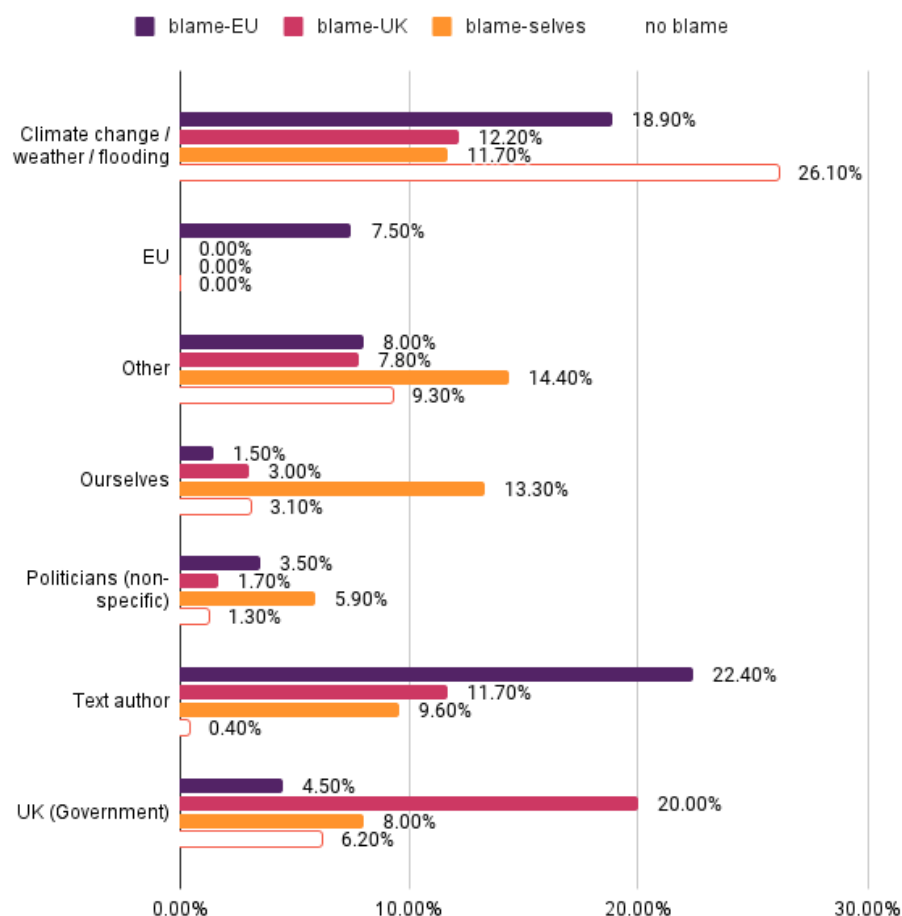
VP Remainers read the blame and *disagreed* with it, so provided alternate blamees as a form of contestation, rendering them potential villains. They indicated that they "wouldn't trust" the text "without further information",[1424] and the author was treated with aspersion ("irritated (with the 'journalist' responsible)"[1425]; "it was written by an idiot"[1426]; "Seemed like a load of shite being spouted, … sets off alarms that the person writing that is nothing less than a moron"[1427]).

FGI participants, as against the EU, pointed to additional blamees including a 'Metropolitan Elite'—but these were typically related back to the EU, or an alliance with the EU.[1428]

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Overall, BSIE were limited in what they could do to contest blame via counter-blaming, as would be any party supporting the EU, particularly those affiliated with the UK government. Blaming the EU from the Leave side, lacking a counter, would therefore be more effective—

[1423] Percentages of VP Remainer responses to the given vignette containing that blamee.
[1424] 111. Man, British, English, southerner, rural person.
[1425] 328. Remainer, Labour supporter, Anglo-Saxon, man, heterosexual
[1426] 657. Remainer, European, international, non-religious, working class
[1427] 603. Man, millennial, Scottish, city person, non-religious
[1428] Counter-blaming was less relevant to FGIs, as participants were asked what the EU was blamed for, rather than given a blameworthy situation and told who was at fault. See also 6.4.3 Victimisation of Leavers.

as would concordant vilification. People are more likely to contest blame where they don't already agree with it, meaning that ensuring people have complete and accurate information prior to campaigns premised upon blaming is essential.[1429]

9.2.2. Rebuttal

BSIE made several attempts to rebut overall claims from the Leave campaign by saying they were untrue, producing a double-sided one page 'Leave Myths Busted' leaflet and 'Top 10 rebuttals' booklet. In the former they specifically point to the factual inaccuracies of Leave campaign talking points, per Figure 60. They claim the Leave campaign are lying, and call to "Vote Remain on June 23rd".

Figure 60: "Leave Myths Busted", from BSIE[1430]

Rebuttal of Leave claims as 'untrue' appears in five of the 16 BSIE leaflets and reports analysed (~1/3). However, they do not make much attempt to rebut *blame* from the Leave campaign. In "Top 10 rebuttals to Vote Leave claims", two of the reiterated Vote Leave claims involve blame:

> 1: "Being in the EU makes it easier for terrorists to come to Britain"

> 2: "EU regulation costs UK businesses over £600 million every week"[1431]

[1429] Demonstrated in E3, where VP Remainers contested blame of the EU. See also 8.5 The stories we tell.
[1430] Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Leave Myths Busted'.
[1431] Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Top 10 Rebuttals'.

To the first, BSIE highlight *threat* twice, indicating this is one of BSIE's blaming contesting strategies (see also the following section):

> "Those who want to pull us out of Europe and end free movement should be **careful what they wish for**."

> "The **real threat** is if we leave. ... The French President himself has said there would be 'consequences'"

They then credit the EU with keeping the UK safe ("We are safer in Europe..."), but refer to truthfulness when speaking of refugees/European passports rather than to the topic of terrorism:

> "It is untrue that refugees will be granted European passports and be allowed to come to the UK. Qualification for German citizenship, for example, takes eight years."

By not engaging with and refuting the truth of the issue at hand (terrorists coming to Britain), BSIE reinforce and reiterate Leave arguments without clearly establishing that the blame is objectively untrue.

A similar theme appears in the 'rebuttal' to the second example of blame, with BSIE appearing to agree with the blame:

> "the benefits of these regulations ... [is] considerably greater than the ... cost"

They shift responsibility to the UK ("The two most expensive regulations were pushed for by the UK"), though it is ambiguous whether this is blame or credit—the regulations are described as "expensive", but justified as being for 'good' reasons including tackling climate change and ensuring "banks have sufficient capital" to be *safe*—a helpful outcome.[1432] They argue that the UK doesn't pay very much, after all ("the actual regulatory burden ... is remarkably low"); and that the UK is both competitive and under-regulated. That is, even where BSIE explicitly attempted to rebut Vote Leave arguments, they reiterated them, agreed with them, and at worst claimed the UK was responsible—and there, harm was converted to helpfulness. Refutation of blame is likewise not apparent in Metro articles featuring pro-Remain politicians.

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Rebuttal of blame is apparent in survey-experiment responses, and particularly in response to the blame-EU vignette.[1433] This is because people disagreed with the blame, or did not see the EU as a proper and salient blamee:[1434]

[1432] This may be rare evidence of 'justification' as one of the ways in which blame may be contested per footnotes 348 on page 1 and 1411 on page 1. Justification did not appear elsewhere in BSIE content, and here it justifies the UK's choices rather than those of the EU. The justification appears to convert blame to credit, though the situation is ambiguous.

[1433] 12.7% of blame-EU responses contained rebuttal, including identifying blame itself as a problem per the following section, as opposed to 2.3% of responses to the other vignettes.

[1434] See also 7.3.4 Blaming niches: do people blame the EU because the EU is responsible?.

> "aghast given that the link between the supposed events and the EU would be non-existent .... [I]f i did encounter someone who believed it I would try to disabuse them of that"[1435]

> "Blaming EU directives is beyond ridiculous"[1436]

> "annoyed by the blame on the EU which I disagree with"[1437]

> "climate change is the culprit here not EU"[1438]

Such rebuttal was not exclusive to VP Remainers, with several VP Leavers also rebutting the blame:

> "I feel like the above text had a strong anti-EU bias at the expense of accuracy, which makes it difficult to take the topic seriously"[1439]

Interestingly, one VP Leaver rebutted the blame then went on to re-blame the EU for another issue:

> "Improve investment and infrastructure. That is our government's job, we cannot blame the EU for all our own failings. But perhaps if we didn't hand over as much money to the EU and concentrated on our own issues, we may be better placed to deal with these and other issues."[1440]

In contrast, several VP Remainers rebutted the blame by *crediting* the EU for the regulations described as problematic in the vignette, or by describing the EU as the answer:

> "Implement more extensive flood prevention and mitigation procedures – if anything the Floods Directive should have lead to procedures that have already mitigated the impacts of these events"[1441]

> "Make sure you follow the directives set out by the EU, which do allow for dredging with consideration for the environment."[1442].

Several FGI participants explained that they were reiterating the blame they had heard, while specifying that they did "not necessarily agree with it", rebutting it—and occasionally, justifying what had been done.[1443]

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[1435] 603. Man, millennial, Scottish, city person, non-religious.

[1436] 164. Gen X, British, northerner, skilled working class/working class.

[1437] 398. Remainer, European, middle class.

[1438] 1090. Labour, bisexual, millennial, Buddhist, skilled working class

[1439] 117. VP Leave, Conservative supporter, white, gay/lesbian, Gen Z, northerner.

[1440] 101. VP Leave.

[1441] 499. SNP supporter, progressive, Scottish, rural person, lower middle class.

[1442] 442. Sinn Fein supporter, white Irish, Irish, working class.

[1443] See 6.4 Post-referendum performance of blame. 'Justification', as a presentational strategy for blame avoidance (Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game'.), was rare across all materials. Its virtual absence is likely related to the lack of EU voice, per 9.4 Changing subjects and objects. It relates to 'rebuttal' that say the 'blame' is untrue; 'justification' says the 'harm' is untrue by de-moralising it as a necessary activity. See also Malle et al on blame as 'moral' judgment (Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame'; Guglielmo and Malle, 'Asymmetric Morality'.).

Generally, people contested blame via rebuttal where they disagreed with it, illustrating the key role of existing knowledge where blame is concerned.[1444] It is not clear why the public as exemplified in SE responses rebutted blame more frequently and coherently than did BSIE. It could be because BSIE saw Leave's claims as having basis in fact; alternately, it could have been considered undesirable to repeat fraudulent claims, even in rebutting them, in case those claims thereby reached a larger audience. If this is the case, then it is not clear that BSIE could have successfully contested blame—and concordant vilification—through direct rebuttal.

9.2.3.   Naming and shaming blame

Blaming itself appears to be frowned-up, with actors either claiming they are not performing the unacceptable behaviour of blaming, or audience members (including opposition parties) calling them out for blaming:[1445]

> "And for those who think we're blaming the pitch, we're not." (Farage)[1446]

> "Loose talk of a Brexit of Mass Destruction is a painfully transparent exercise is buck-passing" (Banks)[1447]

One MetroTalk commenter identifies the cynical use of blame, suggesting that once the UK leaves the EU "We'll just continue to have the same problems but no longer be able to blame anyone but ourselves" (Dan Smith, Berkshire).[1448] This likewise appears in SE responses from VP Leavers and VP Remainers, with blaming seen as an unhelpful activity, and perhaps one that hides the true problems at hand:

> "there is alot of factors blaming the EU or the Gov will not get you anywhere / ... leaving the EU may help with our hands not being tied behind our backs not only that if there was less finger pointing maybe people can come together to help people that are at risk"[1449]

> "Positive action should be taken by all parties involved to reach a compromise that serves the best interest of the public. Conflict here serves only political machinations, not public needs."[1450]

[1444] Only 66 of 1368 SE responses contained rebuttal—the vast majority of respondents reacted without explicitly interrogating the nature of the blame itself. This probably relates to survey design—people were not asked to consider the truth of, or their agreement with, the vignettes. Rebuttal that does appear is spontaneous. Participants may also have wanted to provide minimal responses, rather than spending a great deal of time on the survey.

[1445] Explicit references to 'blame', I.e. using the word 'blame' and its synonyms, were coded. See 4.3.6 Resistance and contestation.

[1446] Farage, 'After Oldham, I'm Adding Voting Reform To My Bucket List'.

[1447] Leave.EU, 'Mystic Gideon's Brexit Predictions Have All the Credibility of a Magic 8-Ball'.

[1448] MetroTalk, 6 June 2016. This is reminiscent of what Jacob said in the FGIs; that "let's see what you do when we don't have [the EU to blame]". See 7.2.1 Unveiling blame-villain links through the FGIs.

[1449] 347. VP Leaver. White, man, British, Irish, English.

[1450] 697. VP Leaver. Conservative supporter, white, British, non-religious, middle class.

> "Stop burning fossil fuels, and stop blaming the people who are trying to combat the climate emergency."[1451]

Two SE participants even identified the fallacy of 'scapegoating',[1452] where a disliked person is allocated blame for something simply because they are disliked:

> "The EU came across as a scapegoat here, in much the same way that "Brexit uncertainty" is used to justify poor financial performance of big companies like John Lewis."[1453]

> "Tackling root causes. Not looking for simple quick fixes and blaming scapegoats"[1454]

Per section 2.4.5 Blame and fallacies: Scapegoating and 'bad-be-gone, it could be that adding the fallacy of 'bad-be-gone' to people's reasoning toolbox, alongside scapegoating, could help to inoculate audiences against the effects of blame. Particularly, reminding audiences that punishing or ostracising an alleged perpetrator may not resolve the structural problems that led to the harmful situation could help them refocus on finding solutions to those problems. This would prove a promising avenue for future research, both for the sake of reducing vilification and in helping victims. To this end, one VP Remainer highlights the need to end the 'blame game' and instead focus on the situation:

> "It's about blame. / The article blames domestic policy for flooding and accuses politicians of arguing that it is due to climate change. Not much can be done when politics is about blame. / **End divisive/blame game and start a conversation about the situation**." (emphasis added)[1455]

On the other hand, sometimes blaming is sanctioned, particularly where victims are involved. Victims are *allowed* to blame. Blame is portrayed as a social good—even though, per 7.3.5 Victims in the survey-experiment, it actually distracts people from victims.

> "The blame lies at the EU's door because the UK authorities have no right to put in place a system that discriminates against EU drivers from outside the UK."[1456]

> "Indeed given Greece's current financial plight, who can blame them for wanting to see these people leave their already impoverished country?"[1457]

> "Turkey are holding out for full EU membership in exchange for their help in halting the refugee influx, and who can blame them?"[1458]

> "[The public] want our so-called renegotiation to focus on the free movement of people and given the situation in Calais, who can blame them?"[1459]

[1451] 657. VP Remainer. Remainer, European, international, non-religious, working class.
[1452] See discussion 2.4.5 Blame and fallacies: Scapegoating and 'bad-be-gone.
[1453] 381. VP Leave. Leaver, English, Westerner, non-religious, working class.
[1454] 536. VP Remainer. Welsh, working class. Note application of the 'bad-be-gone' fallacy.
[1455] 221. Remain, VP Remain, blame-UK. Remainer, White Irish, woman, non-religious, working class.
[1456] Leave.EU 'Messenger' Scott Kimber. Kimber, 'Scott Kimber'.
[1457] Nigel Farage. Farage, 'I Hope Corbyn Wins, He's Good for the Referendum and Will Kill The Green Party'.
[1458] Leave.EU, 'Fractured EU Reaches a Crossroads'.
[1459] Nigel Farage. Farage, 'It's Time to Start the EU Referendum Fight'.

> "only about half of Labour voters realise their party is in favour of staying in the
> European Union – and disgruntled MPs know where to point the finger of blame."[1460]

Other than these exceptions where victims are involved, blame is shown as *undesirable*, and hiding true problems.[1461] Blame should then perhaps be treated with suspicion and evaluated for the presence of the fallacies of scapegoating and bad-be-gone, before an intentional refocusing on resolving the underlying problem and meeting victim needs. This would necessarily reduce vilification, as the blamee as potential villain is no longer the locus of all harm. Again though, BSIE did not employ this strategy of naming and shaming blame.

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Three forms of direct contestation were identified in the materials analysed: counter-blaming, rebuttal, and naming and shaming blame. The first of these two appear to have been largely unavailable to the Remain campaign, as they had nobody better than the EU to blame, and may not have wanted to repeat Leave's claims in the process of rebuttal. Blame itself is named and shamed—albeit not by Remain campaigners—suggesting it is not always an acceptable activity; and it could be that victims are the only ones socially permitted to blame. This highlights potential applications of both the scapegoating and bad-be-gone fallacies: it is possible that acknowledging that harmful things had happened—but that taking away the EU would not also take away the 'bad'—would have proven a way for BSIE to defuse blame and associated vilification, by reframing to focus on amending the situation rather than seeking punishment. The shaming of blame may then have played in BSIE's favour.[1462]

9.3. Indirect contestation—using opposing practices

In 2.4.3 Blame for 'being' vs blame for 'doing', Table 3 showed blame's relation to several other discursive practices. Credit is blame's positive counterpart: a discursive practice in which a speaker claims a party did, or has done, a **helpful** thing. Like blame it refers to things that happen now and in the past, as opposed to threats and promises, which refer to possibilities in future.[1463] This section focuses on use of *credit* by BSIE as opposed to blame on the harmful/helpful dimension, with some mention of threat as harm taking place at a different point in time. It shows use of alternate practices that may occupy similar spaces to blame, but with different outcome and temporal focuses. It highlights that poor application of these alternate practices may not help displace blame and concordant vilification.

[1460] 'Labour In under a Misunderstanding'.

[1461] See also Sievert et al, who note that "If others think that blame is appropriate, they are more likely to engage in blaming, and are less likely to engage in blaming if others think it is inappropriate". Sievert et al., 'The Power of Conformity in Citizens' Blame', 69.

[1462] This is essentially using reframing to take the mediation step of moving from 'positions' (what one says they want—leaving the EU) to 'interests' (what they actually want—improved outcomes in areas x, y, z), which creates a platform for collaboration and developing improved solutions. See e.g. Fisher and Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating an Agreement without Giving In*.

[1463] See Table 3: Doing good and bad to others, past and future.

9.3.1.　　Crediting the EU

Credit was absent in SE responses,[1464] and appeared in just four FGI responses. Jamal[1465] credited the EU for allowing the UK to conduct Brexit discussions on its own terms; Mac suggested that overall, the EU had brought people together and helped them to be more productive ("say we had a scale of suffering—the suffering went down on the … *large* scale, in the *entirety of Europe*").[1466] Liz credited the EU with making her Irish family members wealthy—but linked this to being 'trapped' by the EU, meaning this ostensibly helpful thing was rendered harmful and made her "angry". John and Liz also credited the UK—and this time, Liz did not convert credit to blame:

> "I have a great love for this country, and I have a great knowledge of … what it has
> *done* around the world, what it's given the world".

Liz experienced love in conjunction with credit of the UK, versus anger where EU credit was converted to blame. Like with blame, existing allegiances appear to mediate the effects of credit.

The BSIE campaign credited the EU rather than blaming it. Per Table 36, they credited at a significantly higher rate than the Leave campaigns or public (per MetroTalk commentary); per Table 37, the most frequent 'creditee' (as party being credited) was the EU.

Table 36: Credit in pre-referendum texts, by % of documents containing credit

	BSIE	The Metro	MetroTalk	Farage	LNAM	LBROCH	L(ALL)
CREDIT (giving, claiming)	68.0%	14.2%	11.1%	11.6%	2.1%		2.1%
# N = Documents	25 (4.1%)	204 (33.8%)	45 (7.5%)	43 (7.1%)	281 (46.5%)	6 (1.0%)	287 (47.5%)

Table 37: Comparative frequency of 'creditee' based on number of instances on which that creditee appeared. Columns total 100%[1467]

	BSIE	The Metro	MetroTalk	Farage	LNAM	LBROCH	L(ALL)
CREDIT (giving, claiming)		1.6%					
EU	88.3%	80.6%	71.4%	40.0%	87.5%		87.5%
Implied EU	3.2%	1.6%					
Other		6.5%	14.3%	40.0%	12.5%		12.5%
UK	8.5%	9.7%	14.3%	20.0%			
# N = Documents	25 (4.1%)	204 (33.8%)	45 (7.5%)	43 (7.1%)	281 (46.5%)	6 (1.0%)	287 (47.5%)

[1464] This is perhaps not surprising, given nothing positive was portrayed in the vignette.

[1465] One of the 'low blame' participants per E2: Blame campaign, who appeared reluctant to blame the EU endogenously.

[1466] Note that Mac credits the EU for improvements across Europe, but at the same time, blames it for increased suffering within the UK. This renders the credit/blame more ambiguous. See 7.2.1 Unveiling blame-villain links through the FGIs.

[1467] The value in the top row of 'The Metro' column is because there was unattributed credit in that something helpful was done, with the creditee left unnamed, in conjunction with a *promise* that the Commission will abolish roaming charges in future. The researcher wished to capture this ambiguous case. "since the end of April, roaming charges across Europe have been cut dramatically. And come June 15 next year, the European Commission will abolish roaming charges…" This also affects Table 36.

It is understandable that BSIE would credit the EU, as they were arguing to remain and thus would point out positive, rather than negative, things. For example:

> "Being in the EU creates economic growth and more jobs for you and your family – trade with the EU accounts for 44% of UK exports." (EU credited for economic growth and jobs; beneficiaries as 'your family' and 'UK')[1468]

Despite this positivity, there was occasionally some ambivalence—despite doing good things, the EU was not perfect.

> "Europe is far from perfect. But it has given us the most progressive employment legislation in the country bar none."[1469]

Credit was also claimed *from* the EU, with BSIE painting the UK as ultimately responsible for several EU initiatives:

> "Thanks partly to pressure from the UK, the EU is extending the Single Market to new fields, such as digital, and pursuing major new trade deals with further countries around the world, including the US."[1470]

> "We have successfully used this strong position to drive the EU's ambitious approach to climate change, delivering not only the Emissions Trading Scheme, a pioneering cutting-edge policy framework to incentivise low emissions, but locking the EU into a firm commitment to reduce greenhouse emissions by 20% by 2020."[1471]

By attempting to show the UK as powerful enough to influence the EU, BSIE not only takes credit from the EU and its consensus-based approach, but perhaps even feeds into Leave discourses of British exceptionalism that would permit the UK to easily survive leaving the EU.[1472]

BSIE could have perhaps made more effective use of credit.[1473] Pro-Leave campaigns made frequent references to the past, whether World War 2 (see Figure 61) or a perceived 'glory age' of the British Empire and Commonwealth, and were therefore able to speak of the UK as *worse off* over time thanks to the EU. See for example Figure 62, Figure 62, and the following quotes embedded in historicism (emphases added).[1474]

[1468] Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Get the Facts'.

[1469] Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Workers' Rights Leaflet'.

[1470] Britain Stronger In Europe, 'How the EU Benefits Business'.

[1471] Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Experts on Influence'.

[1472] Carina Chocano notes the appeal of such an exceptionalist story in perhaps engendering a sense of reassurance: "This is the story we're told again and again: no matter how bad things get ecologically, financially, corporately, health care–wise, or inequality-wise, our exceptionalism, embodied by a 'regular guy' pumped up and morally enraged to mythic proportions, will save us." Chocano, *You Play The Girl*, 125. See also Goes, 'The Leave Campaign Was Toxic'.

[1473] See also Goodwin et al, who used a two-wave survey experiment to demonstrate that "communicating the claimed benefits and advantages of EU membership to an electorate that had long been noted for its instinctive Euroscepticism might have had a significant impact on the overall vote". Goodwin, Hix, and Pickup, 'For and Against Brexit', 493.

[1474] Bromley-Davenport et al point out that the Leave campaign's appeals to nostalgia fail to recognise racial and gendered hierarchies that characterised Britain's industrial past. Bromley-Davenport, MacLeavy, and

"This subversion of democracy and the real threat it represents to our country is an issue that transcends and blurs traditional left/right divides. That is why this referendum must see all come together to fight for our country and our democracy. After all, that is what so many in **two World Wars** sacrificed their lives to protect."[1475]

"I understand there are more than 200 Monnet Professors in British universities where academics are paid for by the European Union to promote history and economics from a pro-EU perspective. Yes, they are even rewriting our history books. The **World Wars**, of which I'm a keen student, is now referred to as the European Civil War."[1476]

"That it was the Conservatives who took Britain into a six-nation EEC in 1973 is dismissed. This was a betrayal of the **Commonwealth**, which a mere 28 years earlier had fought with us against two of these countries, the **then fascist Germany and Italy**. **Commonwealth** economies suffered as a result."[1477]

"The EU Referendum is **Our Waterloo**"[1478]

"Remember, remember the **5th of November**, gunpowder, treason and plot. As Brussels is burning, the tide is now turning, the EU continues to rot! … I wonder what plot **Guy Fawkes** would have planned for the EU?"[1479]

"In his latest bid to persuade Britons to vote to leave, Mr Johnson argued that the past 2,000 years of European history have been characterised by attempts to unify Europe to recover the continent's lost **'golden age' under the Romans** … 'The EU is an attempt to do this by different methods."[1480]

Manley, 'Brexit in Sunderland', 804. See also Ross and Bhatia, '"Ruled Britannia"'. for a discussion of historicity in UKIP campaign posters.
[1475] Farage, 'FARAGE – Let's Get Real'.
[1476] Farage, 'Universities Are Rife With EU Propaganda'.
[1477] King, 'The Left Wing Case for Leaving the EU'.
[1478] Farage, 'FARAGE – Let's Get Real'.
[1479] Banks, '250,000 Supporters and Counting'.
[1480] Le Marie, 'Boris under Attack after He Likens EU Aims to Hitler'.

Figure 61: Leaving the EU is portrayed as a war, using nostalgic wartime imagery

Figure 62: Pages from a 2014 Business For Britain brochure. Images relate membership of the EU to a decline over time, whether because as part of the failing EU the UK itself fails, or because payment increases outstrip economic growth. Images presented without critique.[1481]
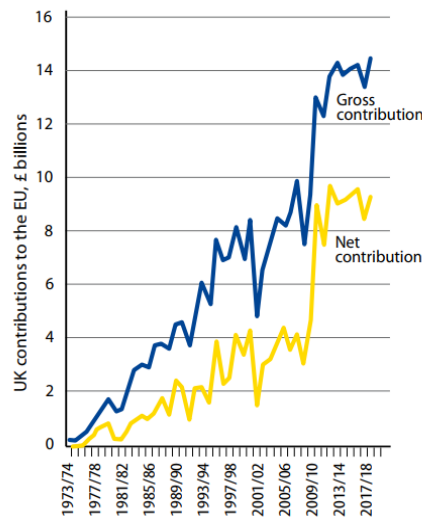
[1481] B4B was founded by Matthew Elliott, supported Vote Leave, and Matthew Elliot became chair of Vote Leave in 2014. See also 5.3 The Brexit assemblage. Business for Britain, 'Change, or Go', 4, 12.

This historicism was not typically apparent in the BSIE campaign. They spoke of current regulations doing particular things (e.g. regulations associated with worker rights) or membership giving current opportunities (e.g. trade with Europe), and of projections of what may happen in future, whether good or bad, but did not credit historical long-term improvements to membership of the EU. One moment of historicised credit relates only to the past decade, and the EU as 'creditee' is absent from the paragraph ("Over the past decade we have benefitted from investment of £24bn a year on average, which is over £66m per day").[1482] BSIE uses one image to claim that the EU was designed to prevent another war, though the message focuses on the *threat* of war should the UK leave, rather than crediting the EU for peace (Figure 63).

Figure 63: BSIE explains the EU as an anti-war project, focusing on the threat of what would happen should the UK leave[1483]

It could be that the Remain campaign did not perceive accrued benefits over time as a possible argument for remaining in the EU, though that would raise the question why there was a Remain campaign at all. It is also possible that this was simply not included in the public campaign materials analysed, but again, it is not clear why this would be the case.

Thus while BSIE does credit the EU for current initiatives, this is undermined through couching it in ambivalent statements and claiming credit from the EU. It is also not clear that credit can be as effective as blame, given human negativity bias means negative information is prioritised over positive.[1484] It is still quite remarkable that a campaign advocating *for* something so infrequently credited it with *accomplishing* anything over past decades.

[1482] Britain Stronger In Europe, 'How the EU Benefits Business'.
[1483] Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Why We Need to Remain in the EU'.
[1484] E.g. Harris, *The Happiness Trap*. In short, negative information is more important to our survival—threats and dangers are more pressing than possible gains.

9.3.2. Threats

Threats were not formally coded in campaign material, given the present research's focus on blame for the past/present.[1485] However, it is mentioned briefly here to show that BSIE did not run an entirely positive campaign, as might be suggested by its use of credit. They used threat as a negative tool, with a large part of the campaign's message boiling down to fear or uncertainty associated with the 'leap into the unknown' of leaving (Figure 64).

Figure 64: A BSIE campaign poster. The 'leap in the dark' engenders uncertainty, and 'risk' threat; the image of a woman diving off from an unknown height into darkness is scary. She is dressed in white, associated with innocence (and perhaps helplessness) and incorrupt cleanliness.

For this reason, they were known as 'Project Fear'.[1486] Per 9.2.2 Rebuttal, they also appear to have used threat as a form of direct contestation of blame.

This is the diametric opposite of the Leave campaign. Whereas Leavers claimed that things were bad now (blame) and would be good once the UK had left (promise), the Remain campaign argued that things were good*ish* now (credit) and could be bad if the UK left (threat).

There is a clear asymmetry in that Leave's blame 'now' is certain, with Remain's credit hedged; the future for Leave will certainly be bright outside of the EU as demonstrated by

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[1485] Threats were hand-coded by the researcher, and a lexical search for 'threat' and 'danger' automatically added the 'threat' code to associated fragments. However, items coded as 'threat' were not re-checked to ensure internal consistency as were all items coded with 'blame', emotions, and those other items essential to the present research. For this reason, while 'threat' appears as one of the codes for campaign data in Annex: Codebook, associated data is not as rigorously checked; the coding is labelled 'informal' and considered indicative only.

[1486] FGI participant Todd brought up this label without the researcher's prompt, indicating that this nomenclature did reach UK voters. It was on the basis of this that the 'Project Fear' labelling was used in follow-up questions in later FGIs ("The Remain campaign were occasionally known as 'Project Fear'. What would be an appropriate name for the Leave campaign?"). See also Annex: FGI questions.

an exceptional/illustrious past, whereas for Remain, things *might* be bad if they left. This asymmetry is shown in Table 38.

Table 38: Now and the future, for the Leave and Remain campaigns

	Now, within the EU	**Future outside the EU**
Leave campaign	Blame; certainty of bad things done now and for many years.	Promise; possibility of good things to come. Substantiated through references to illustrious past.
Remain campaign	Some uncertain credit.	Threat; possibility of bad things to come.

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In a head-to-head battle of BSIE's credit and threat versus the Leave campaign's blame and promises of greatness, BSIE seem certain to lose; not simply because of human negativity bias, but because they were ambiguous about the credit they gave. The Leave campaign's villain defeats BSIE's reluctant or absent hero; vilification via blame becomes inevitably more successful than any lionisation via credit.[1487] Nevertheless, it is possible to envisage a situation in which realistic threats lead to vilification, where people feel ~fear (as a villain-type feeling) towards the threatening party. It is though unclear whether the concept of Brexit itself—a non-agentic, faceless phenomenon—could ever have been a more substantial villain for BSIE's purposes than the EU was for the Leave campaign.[1488] Intensified credit-giving, perhaps embedded in a sense of historicism to avoid detracting from the present UK Government, may have been a more promising plane upon which BSIE could have indirectly contested blame and concordant vilification.

9.4. Changing subjects and objects

9.2.1 Counter-blaming above indicates that options for blamees are limited depending on the blamer/speaker's position, as well as underlying knowledge. This implies that limiting who speaks is a way to limit blame itself. Further, who is spoken to and of can circumscribe blame: by speaking *of* victims but not permitting them to speak, they are rendered objects of blame rather than subjects. They become less visible, possibly reducing opportunities for the 'compassion backhand', and obscuring underlying issues as highlighted by SE participants in Naming and shaming blame. Lastly, not naming a perpetrator (blamee) becomes a way to focus on a harmful situation rather than who created it, potentially side-

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[1487] See also work by Reem Alkhammash on British media representations of Brexit, which similarly highlights this ambiguity from the Remain side. Alkhammash, 'Discursive Representation of the EU in Brexit-Related British Media'.

[1488] Though the EU is 'faceless', it is not treated as such. It is also 'agentic' in that 'the EU', whatever that means as far as personnel or institutions, does consist of people who take actions. See also Annex: Who is the EU?.

stepping instances of the 'bad-be-gone' fallacy and overall reducing the amount of vilification that takes place.[1489]

9.4.1.   Limiting who speaks

Partly as a consequence of the data collected in the first stage of research, there is a skew to who speaks, and therefore blames, in the present research. Content is dominated by pro-Leave voices, particularly those of Farage (given his Breitbart blog posts), and Leave.EU's Arron Banks, Liz Bilney, Jack Montgomery, Brian Monteith, Andy Wigmore, Jim Mellon, and Richard Tice. Particular authors also appear, with Caroline Wheeler[1490] (3 articles) and Greg Heffer[1491] (10) from the Express writing several pieces featured on Leave.EU; Christopher Hope[1492] (2) from the Telegraph; Macer Hall[1493] for both the Express and Breitbart (12); Raheem Kassam[1494] (5) for Breitbart; and Simon Kent[1495] (2) for Breitbart. Pro-Leave campaign materials were therefore dominated by campaign members and right-wing journalists and opinionists, as shown in the 'Brexit Assemblage' in 5.3.

The Leave campaign consistently presented itself as the 'grassroots', or 'people's' campaign.[1496] This appeared in nearly a quarter of Leave.EU news and media alone, including calling it the people's campaign, showing images of UK workers, and having a brief 'messenger' series where 'regular people' could have their views on the EU published.[1497]

[1489] Beneficiaries as potential objects of blame are not included due to sheer infrequency (6.3.4 Who were the beneficiaries?). It is possible to imagine a world in which BSIE had acknowledged blame but said it was all to the *good* of the UK, as a form of justification of the harmful activity 'blamed for'; this would however have required acknowledging that the EU was 'harming' the UK. See also footnote 1432 on page 1.

[1490] Former Sunday Express political editor, present Deputy Political Editor of the Sunday Times. Fawkes, 'Caroline Wheeler Archives'.

[1491] Former Political Reporter at Daily Express Online ResponseSource, 'Greg Heffer Joins Sky News Politics Team'.

[1492] Chief Political Correspondent at the Telegraph, The Telegraph, 'Christopher Hope'.

[1493] Political Editor of the Daily Express; Express.co.uk, 'Macer Hall'.

[1494] Former editor-in-chief of Breitbart News London and chief advisor to Farage at UKIP, Gray, 'Breitbart's Raheem Kassam Is Out'; 'Raheem Kassam'.

[1495] Present Managing Editor for Breitbart London, Muck Rack, 'Simon Kent | Breitbart Journalist'.

[1496] A similar finding has been made by Tamsin Parnell in her investigation of five pro-Brexit newspapers; she notes that divides were constructed between "incompetent and arrogant" politicians and an "innocent, suffering"—i.e. victim—populace, as well as between 'elite' Remainers and 'ordinary' Leave voters (Parnell, 'Humiliating and Dividing the Nation in the British Pro-Brexit Press'.). This reflects a central concern of populism and populist communication—the divide between an ostensible albeit constructed elite and the rest of the population. A particular connection between the 'elite' and 'experts' was evident in the Brexit campaign, with universities and academics portrayed as part of the Remainer elite in pro-Leave materials (e.g. Farage, 'Universities Are Rife With EU Propaganda'; Farage, 'UK Universities Hotbeds Of EU Propaganda'.). BSIE materials seem to reinforce this message, per the following paragraphs. Irrespective of representation of academia as part of the elite, Monika Brusenbauch Meislová points out that academic issues—for instance, mobility of staff and students—were "largely absent from the debate". (Brusenbauch Meislová, 'Lost in the Noise?', 37.) See also Bonikowski et al., 'Populism and Nationalism in a Comparative Perspective'; Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*; Rigney, 'Three Kinds of Anti-Intellectualism'; Merkley, 'Anti-Intellectualism, Populism, and Motivated Resistance to Expert Consensus'; Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist'; Ross and Bhatia, '"Ruled Britannia"'.

[1497] Bilney, 'Our CEO, Liz Bilney Kicks Off Our New "Messengers" Series'; Kimber, 'Scott Kimber'; Haynes, 'Leave.EU Messenger Reece Haynes On A Future Outside The EU'.

> "'We aim to be funded by the '**public**', not the **taxpayer** or **rich individuals**. / We want this to be the People's campaign against the Political elite." (Multi-millionaire and Leave.EU founder Arron Banks; emphasis in original.)[1498]

> "At least in UKIP we are 100 per cent united. We are the vital grassroots component of this No campaign." (Nigel Farage)[1499]

This was not apparent in the BSIE materials analysed, with limited images of UK workers, and no references to representation of the 'grassroots' or 'public'.[1500] The BSIE campaign instead referred consistently and explicitly to expertise, with 'experts' drawn from a range of areas, including Nobel Prize winners, business people such as the 'Seven Dragons' (Figure 65), academics, institute directors, scientists including Stephen Hawking, historians, and security and counter-terrorism experts. They did not speak 'on behalf of' the grassroots or people as did Leave.EU; rather, the 'people' were spoken of as objects, so that BSIE was 'telling' the people rather than describing themselves as acting on their behalf. For example, "UK families are better off …. Being in Europe makes your family stronger."[1501]—it is not about 'we', 'us', and 'our', but rather 'your' family. There is a separation between the experts providing advice, and the people they are speaking to.

This means that if the people of the UK had indeed been victimised by the things the EU had done to them, the Remain campaigners were not 'part' of those victims.[1502] Considering the contested nature of victimhood, wherein being a victim is desirable (people will help me) and undesirable (I have no agency),[1503] and that people feel compassion for victims, this may have created an emotional distance between people who saw the UK and its people as in some way victimised, and the BSIE campaign that spoke as though they were different to the grassroots; there was a lack of victim solidarity. Conversely, pro-Leave campaigns such as those of Leave.EU or UKIP under Farage could posit themselves as victims' champions— heroes—as they were suffering alongside the people of the UK but had the strength to overcome the villain on behalf of all. Where blame—and concordant victimisation of the UK—was believed, the EU as villain and the Leave campaign as heroes become inevitable.

[1498] Banks, 'Big Politics, Big Banks and Big Business'.

[1499] Farage, 'Time for Tory Eurosceptics to Put up or Shut Up, Do the "Bastards" Have the Balls?'

[1500] Four male manual workers in Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Workers' Rights Leaflet'.. Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Get the Facts'. There was also one image of Cameron visiting a plant wearing a hardhat in the materials analysed. BSIE included no text references to grassroots (etc), with all references to the 'public' showing the public as victims rather than part of the Remain campaign; this compares to 14% of Farage's documents containing representation of the public/grassroots, and 24% for Leave.EU.

[1501] Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Why Families Are Stronger In'.

[1502] Though it could be that BSIE did not consider the UK a victim. BSIE identified the UK as victim in 3 of the 25 documents analysed; in one instance, working people were portrayed as in 'increasing need' of rights, suggesting possible harm done to them; in another, the UK was allegedly a victim because they did not have enough of a say in EU Council votes, but this was rebutted; in the third, UK small and medium-sized businesses were victims of uncertainty surrounding Brexit. In comparison, the UK as victim appeared at a higher rate in MetroTalk (31.1% of documents), Farage's pieces (41.9%) and Leave.EU materials (34.1%).

[1503] See discussion of victimhood in 3.2.8 The tension in victimhood.

Figure 65: The 'Seven Dragons' included on the page 'What the Experts Say' from BSIE[1504]

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While Leave.EU and BSIE spoke in very different ways regarding experts and in considering whether the 'people' were 'us' or 'you', they were united in one important way: they did not give the perspective of the EU. Despite crediting the EU, and moreover blaming the EU, the EU's voice is conspicuously absent from campaign materials and the Metro alike. This may be partly because the EU is not a single person with a single voice,[1505] and moreover, it may be appropriate for what is ostensibly a domestic decision. However, the EU's absence had several implications for its being blamed, and concordantly vilified, during the Brexit campaign:

1. The EU could not take credit on its own behalf. For example, there was a double-page spread in the Metro on 2 June 2016 talking about the removal of mobile roaming charges when in the EU. This is an EU initiative, but the EU was not credited—instead, the focus was on local mobile carriers. BSIE do occasionally mention the removal of roaming charges a reason to stay in the EU.[1506] This was the only EU initiative included as a positive in the content analysed, and outside of BSIE materials, it was not credited to the EU. Further, while the EU uses signs to indicate funding for regional projects, London FGI participants volunteered that they were not aware of anything positive that the EU had done. This means that credit of the EU, by the EU, was unavailable as a strategy by which to contest blame in the Leave campaign.[1507]

[1504] Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Why We Need to Remain in the EU'.
[1505] See Annex: Who is the EU?.
[1506] Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Get the Facts'; Britain Stronger In Europe, 'Why Families Are Stronger In'., The Metro 3 May 2016.
[1507] See discussion of credit, above.

2.   The EU could not defend itself from blame. While per 2.3 What does blame do?, parties in government may have something to lose by blaming the EU (and for the same reasons may not leap to its defence), there is no such provision in place for external campaigns such as that of Leave.EU (or even UKIP). Per E2: Blame campaign, the EU is blamed consistently by pro-Leave parties, and has no recourse for this. As such, it could be expected that blame would be 'stickier'; unlike domestic politicians or other actors, there's no 'arguing back', through counter-blaming, framing or other strategies as outlined by Hansson, Weaver, and others.[1508] This may make the EU an ideal blamee and scapegoat, particularly in the context of the Brexit referendum campaign, where David Cameron requested that at-the-time Commission President Juncker stay out of the campaign—something Juncker regrets.[1509] Where Juncker is mentioned as representative of the EU, it is via reported speech only.

3.   The EU and its Member States would be affected by the departure of the UK, meaning this was not a purely domestic decision, and the EU institutions would have formed one avenue for those perspectives to be heard. Countries such as Ireland, where there are ongoing questions about a land border and breach of the Good Friday Agreement; plus geographically and economically close countries such as France, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands would be economically affected by the rupture.[1510] The absence of the EU, as a forum for its Member States, meant that these countries could not *credit* the EU as the reason for cooperation between those countries and the UK, or contest the blame that affects and would affect them should the UK leave the EU.

Overall, the EU may be a desirable blamee in that it cannot counter-blame on a domestic level (for instance, countering blame by blaming specific national politicians or initiatives would be impolitic); this points to a deep need for proactive communications from the EU claiming credit for the activities it undertakes, in addition to how the EU works and may be 'held accountable' so that there are options beyond simply leave/remain.[1511] It means a significantly more proactive, even interventionist communications approach is required to counter and defray EU-blaming in future. Through silencing the EU, an avenue for contestation of blame was removed.

Other objects of blame that did not 'speak' included migrants (variously vilified and victimised), and the Greek people that were so commonly rendered victims of the EU.[1512] Such people became useful *objects* for blame, rather than subjects, perhaps suggesting that

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[1508] Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance'; Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game'; Hansson, 'Defensive Semiotic Strategies in Government'; Hansson, 'Brexit and Blame Avoidance'; Hansson, 'Discursive Strategies of Blame Avoidance in Government'.

[1509] Gotev, 'Juncker Regrets Not Intervening in Brexit Referendum Campaign'.

[1510] E.g. Rios, 'Brexit Will Be Painful for the EU27 Too. This Is Where It Will Hit Hardest'.

[1511] I.e. Create multifarious calls to action, beyond leave/remain. This would enable people to do something with their negative feelings engendered via blame, other than simply polarising against the blamee.

[1512] See 6.4 Post-referendum performance of blame, 7.2 Making villains: the FGIs.

their victimisation does not matter other than as a politically expedient tool. This again points to blame's role in obscuring the needs of victims and structural deficiencies alike, in the name of pursuing a villainous blamee.[1513]

9.4.2. Uncreating victims

While victims are spontaneously identified in the survey-experiment and FGIs alike, they are also pro-actively *un*identified. The possibility of people being victims is erased, for example through participants saying that the situation does not affect them and so they do not care, or victim-blaming, or suggesting that others have it worse.[1514] This victim 'uncreation' is infrequent, appearing just 54 times in the 1362 SE responses analysed. While caution is required given the small sample size, it appears that VP Leavers may uncreate victims slightly more in the EU vignette, and VP Remainers slightly more in the 'no blame' vignette (Figure 66). It is not clear why this would be the case.

Figure 66: Victim uncreation as percentage of responses featuring uncreation, by voting preference and vignette
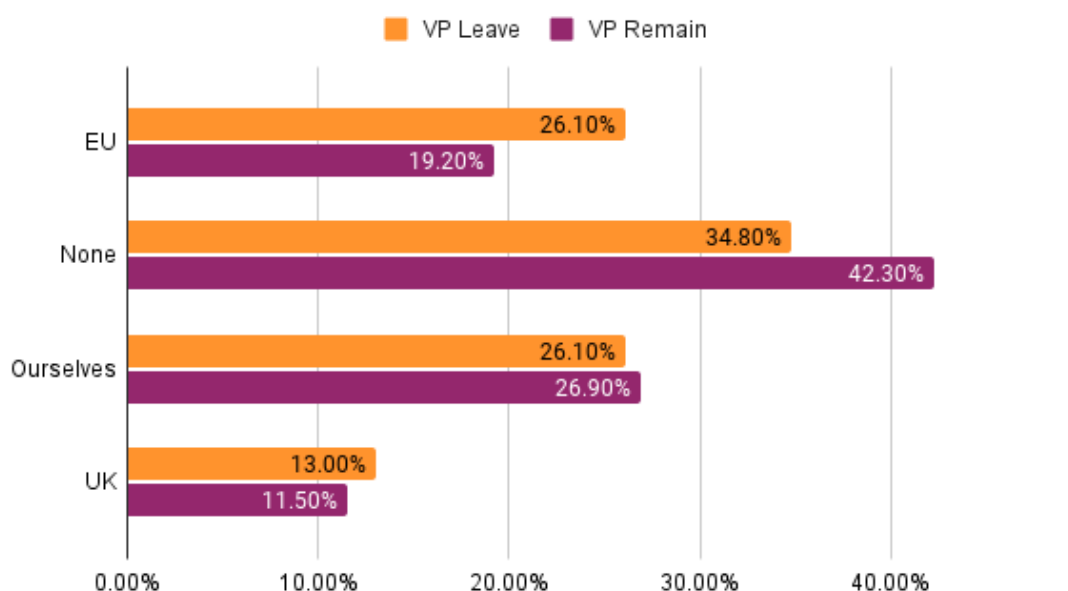
Such victim uncreation could reflect dismissal of the situation as a whole, and therefore the blame; it could equally indicate apathy or unwillingness to be involved. Victim uncreation becomes an excuse to not care about a situation, in doing so erasing the victims and the harm done to them. This would reduce the possibility of the compassion backhand mechanism of vilification, particularly where victims themselves do not speak. Victim unmaking then may lead to lower vilification, but at the same time, would not help to redress the underlying problem, the harmful thing outlaid in blame. As such it is not clear

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[1513] See also 2.4.5 Blame and fallacies: Scapegoating and 'bad-be-gone, 7.3.5 Victims in the survey-experiment.
[1514] Example responses (spelling corrected): "My area does not suffer from flooding, so indifferent"; "Nothing, it does not affect me"; "Neutral. It doesn't make a significant difference to me and people choosing to buy homes near flood plains are deciding upon that risk for themselves"; "Doesn't feel too close to home and it's worse in other countries". See 4.3.3 Recognising (un)victims for how unmaking was identified.

that unmaking victims would have been a productive strategy for BSIE, or consistent with any form of politics where compassion for victims is required.[1515]

9.4.3. No-blame: rendering the perpetrator invisible, or calling for blame to be laid?

Acknowledging a harmful act without attributing it to a specific party appears across pre-referendum materials, including Farage's posts for Breitbart, Leave.EU, MetroTalk, and Metro articles. This strategy relies on the passive voice and focuses on the harmful thing (and possibly victims) rather than any perpetrator. This may avoid vilification through not identifying a specific blamee; it may also lead to audiences allocating their own preferred blamee in line with existing understandings and beliefs—particularly where the author calls directly for the apportionment of blame:[1516]

> "<u>Too many fish being caught</u> is clearly bad news for the biomass and it would be a mistake not to acknowledge that we have a problem with the overall number of bass in our seas. / But can this really be the fault of part-time, life long anglers like myself?"[1517]

In Metro articles, use of the passive in such a way followed a headline that provided the blamee:

> "Many parents are set to be disappointed today when their <u>children are rejected</u> for their school of choice, a minister warns."
> **Headline**: "Children miss out on school places 'because of Europe'"[1518]

> "Nearly a third of <u>houses have had their asking prices slashed</u> as sellers face an uncertain market."
> **Headline**: "Home prices cut by GBP25k in Brexit flux"[1519]

The passive often appears either where the speaker is searching for a blamee as above, or where the perpetrator is less important than the victim (or perhaps, the perpetrator should not be named). This is apparent in MetroTalk comments about the assassination of Jo Cox, a pro-Europe British MP:[1520]

> "It's extremely sad that a life like hers is cruelly cut short in such a way." (Ossie, Essex)

[1515] Note: This may be limited to 'certain' victims; for instance, racist politicians could express compassion for certain victims being harmed, and not others.

[1516] Such 'blank filling' is noted in previous chapters, and raises the role of the 'stories we tell' per E4: Blame and underlying characteristics. It is for this reason that context surrounding blame forms an essential part of analysis, and why associated assemblages must be mapped per 5.3 The Brexit assemblage. Note discussion of 'empty signifiers' in 7.3.1 Analysing the vignette.

[1517] Nigel Farage; emphasis added. Farage, 'Brussels Is Targeting UK Fishermen Like Me, And The UK Papers Ignore It'.

[1518] Tahir, 'Children Miss out on School Places "Because of Europe"'. Emphasis added.

[1519] Le Marie, 'Home Prices Cut by £25k in Brexit Flux'. Emphasis added.

[1520] See also 5.2 A brief history of Brexit.

> "That poor woman going about her work and cut down in the prime of life, leaving two young children" (Susan Bellamy, via Facebook)[1521]

A clue as to the effects of this 'non-blaming' can be gleaned from the 'no-blame' SE vignette results, where a harmful thing and victims are described, but no perpetrator. Per Figure 67, people spontaneously produced (endogenous) blame after reading this vignette, albeit at a lower rate than for blame-containing vignettes. This suggests that where there is no blame, people spontaneously blame or search for a perpetrator anyway. As shown, there were some differences in whom VP Leavers and Remainers endogenously blamed after reading the no-blame vignette; these are understood to relate to the parties already in one's blaming niche as a result of the discourses to which Leavers and Remainers have been subject, per E4: Blame and underlying characteristics.[1522] That is, they filled in the absence by providing their own blamee in accordance with existing beliefs. VP Remainers were more likely to blame the non-agent of 'climate change', which did not receive 'annoyance' as did villains in E3.[1523] Additionally, VP Remainers identified victims significantly more after reading the no-blame vignette than the others, though there appears to have been little difference for VP Leavers.[1524]

There are two potential implications for vilification when it comes to 'no-blaming':

(1) Per 3.3 Constructing emotions, our brains are predictive, meaning we are more likely to see what we expect to see, and our predictions are informed by context (so that, for example, one might expect Farage to blame the EU). This means that not explicitly stating the blamee could mean people are manipulated into entrenching vilification through 'filling in the blank' with their own expected, or an implied, blamee, while the speaker can avoid criticism for lying or charges of slander. Differences between VP Leavers and Remainers above suggest this does take place, with people spontaneously producing blame in accordance with their existing beliefs. 'No blaming' may thereby help entrench existing ideas of and feelings towards perpetrators—despite those perpetrators being unnamed.[1525]

[1521] Both from MetroTalk, 20 June 2016.

[1522] A recent paper on political differences over COVID-19 in the US suggested that conservatives—here understood to be associated with Leavers, given their more conservative political leanings per 5.4 Who voted for Brexit?—"tend to attribute outcomes to purposeful actions", meaning they are "more likely to blame any negative outcomes in their lives on … more agentic policymakers or fellow Americans rather than the virus itself". Lehigh University, 'Here's Why Conservatives and Liberals Differ on COVID-19'. Through this lens, it is understandable that VP Remainers blamed the less agentic cause of 'climate change' after reading the no-blame vignette, while VP Leavers blamed agentic 'others' and the UK government.

[1523] While this indicates that blaming situations may result in fewer villains, it is not clear how realistic it is that people would consistently blame situations rather than agents (see preceding footnote). As previous research indicates blaming situations results in comparatively inactive emotions such as 'sadness', it is also not clear that this would help situations be addressed and resolved (Kim and Cameron, 'Emotions Matter in Crisis'; Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff, 'Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism'.). Christiana Figueres points to sadness and depression about climate change specifically as being unhelpful in addressing it. Figueres and Rivett-Carnac, *The Future We Choose*.

[1524] See 7.3.5 Victims in the survey-experiment.

[1525] See 3.3.3.e) The predictive brain.

(2) Both VPLs and VPRs express more ~compassion, and particularly sadness, in response to the no-blame vignette than to the other vignettes (Figure 68). This may suggest a focus on victims when the perpetrator is invisible—and ideally, improved outcomes for victims. Further, as there is no perpetrator named, there is nobody to vilify through the compassion mechanism, perhaps meaning there is no way to divert this sadness and ideally leading to better outcomes for victims. This would prove an interesting avenue for future research—particularly if it does lead to lessened vilification.

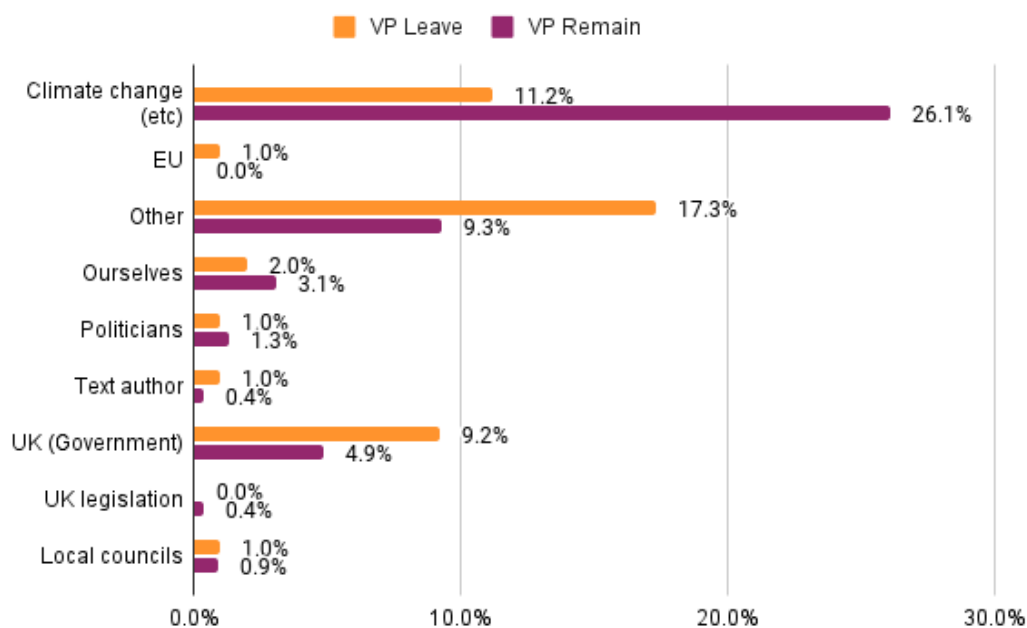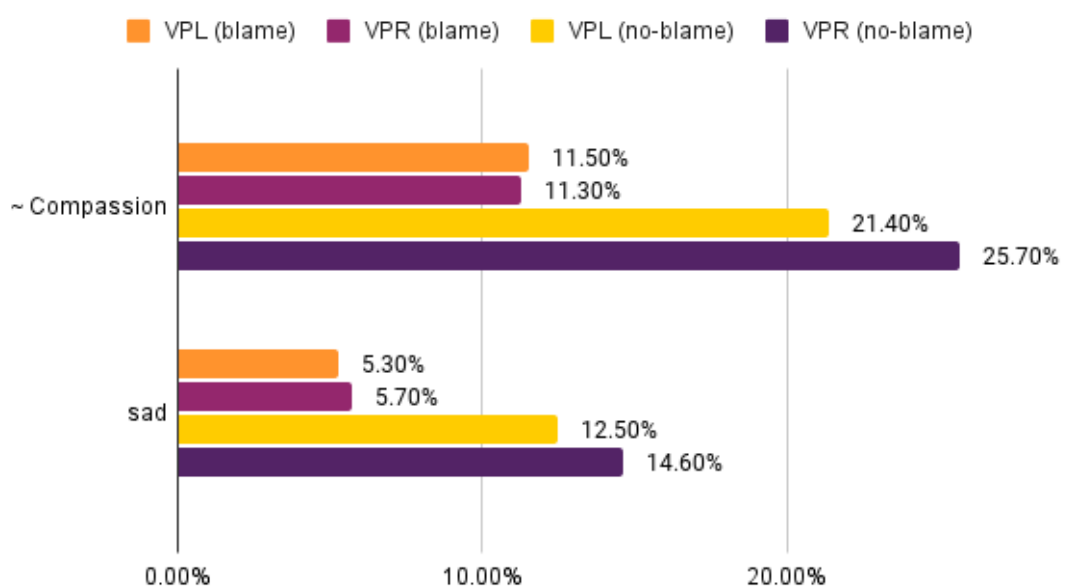**Figure 67: Blamees in SE responses after reading the no-blame vignette, by VP[1526]**

Figure 68: ~Compassion and 'sad' in blame-containing vs the no-blame vignettes, by VP[1527]

[1526] Percentages of responses in which blamee appeared.
[1527] Note: 'Sad' is included in the ~compassion researcher grouping. Data bars are presented in the same order as the key; VPL (blame), VPR (blame), VPL (no-blame), and VPR (no-blame).

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Three methods of contesting blame through changing subjects and objects have been identified here, as ways by which blame and concordant vilification can be mitigated. With specific regard to the Brexit campaign, vilification is likely to have been increased through not allowing the EU to speak—and per 9.2 Direct contestation—talking about the blame, there was nobody to rebut or counter-blame on the EU's behalf. When victims are objects of blame rather than subjects, their needs are obscured; meanwhile, proactively unmaking victims may reduce the likelihood of the compassion pathway to vilification. Lastly, 'no blaming', wherein the perpetrator is obscured, could potentially lead to vilification via leading people to 'fill in the blanks' with their preferred blamee; on the other hand, in the present research it was associated with increased sadness, suggesting a focus on victims. This, in conjunction with a lack of explicit perpetrator to vilify, is worthy of future research.

9.5. Chapter conclusion

Based on data used in the present research, this chapter has identified and discussed several methods for contesting blame and concordant vilification. Direct contestation methods include counter-blaming (blaming somebody else), rebuttal, naming and shaming blame; indirect methods include practices of crediting and threats; and blaming itself may be limited by changing subjects and objects, as exemplified by limiting speakers, victim uncreation, and no-blaming. BSIE's campaign short-comings vis-à-vis blame were identified; particularly, they were limited in who they could (counter-)blame to defray blaming of the EU, did not rebut blame, made only ambiguous and ahistoric claims of credit, and positioned certain blame now against an uncertain threatening future. The EU was absent as a subject of blame, meaning it could not take credit nor defend itself from blame; Member State perspectives were likewise absent.

Overall, the Leave campaign had an excellent blamee in the form of the EU, whereas the Remain campaign struggled to contest this through creation of an alternate villain or, indeed, a hero. Given the Leave campaign consistently blamed the EU per E2: Blame campaign, and that blame is effective in creating villains per E3: Effects, it is therefore not surprising that the referendum vote was won by 'Leave', nor that affective polarisation continues to be an issue in the UK. BSIE failed to mitigate the causal power of blame to create villains; the EU failed to defend itself. The data paints a picture of compelling, pro-Leave narratives crashing through lacklustre and foggy protests on behalf of Remain.

These findings add to existing literature by stressing the different limitations around performing blame that are experienced by third parties, such as exogovernmental 'challenger parties'.[1528] In the case of the Leave.EU campaign, their location outside government meant greatly improved scope for blaming of the EU and government alike,

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[1528] Vries and Hobolt, *Political Entrepreneurs*.

without personal consequences.[1529] Moreover, existing work focuses on blame avoidance by individuals, when they are the ones being blamed;[1530] the EU was voiceless in the Brexit referendum, and could not participate in such avoidance structures. This chapter therefore adds to blame contestation literature by focusing on what campaigns and individuals alike can and actually do to contest—and potentially mitigate the effects of—blame, beyond an individual's simply moving the blame elsewhere or avoiding situations in which they could be blamed.[1531] It understands audiences and blamers alike as active participants in practicing blame and contestation thereof, and illustrates the particular issue of having blamees and victims as objects rather than subjects of blame. This latter is likely to continue to be problematic for the EU,[1532] which does not tend to participate in 'domestic' affairs.

This has several implications: firstly, in case of future 'Exit' campaigns, there is the question of how to address suffering. If harmful things, blameworthy things, have indeed happened, then how should things be changed—and is there truly a role for a villain in resolving the situation? Perhaps a communication strategy that addresses the 'political meta', as apparent in Leave.EU texts, could help provide a platform to engage with oppositional campaigns and highlight opportunities for change other than by voting out.[1533] Focusing on shared underlying interests, rather than opposing positions, could also help.[1534]

Secondly, for the EU, there is a clear need for a more activist communication strategy, particularly one that claims credit, constituting itself as a heroic entity rather than simply waiting to be cast as a villain.

Thirdly, and vitally, this chapter again highlights that existing knowledge and biases are vital in interacting with blame, as when members of the public per MetroTalk, the survey-experiment and focus groups/interviews counter-blamed or rebutted blame they disagreed

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[1529] Per Weaver, "politicians are most likely to generate negative messages against targets when they do not have a continuing resource dependence on the target or need to have their cooperation in order to achieve their own goals, or when the target controlling the resources is unlikely to be able to succeed in gaining retribution."—conditions that seem to apply to the Leave campaign. Weaver, 'The Nays Have It', 271.

[1530] E.g. Flom and Post, 'Blame Avoidance and Policy Stability in Developing Democracies'; Hansson, 'The Discursive Micro-Politics of Blame Avoidance'; Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance'.

[1531] E.g. Policy and agency strategies per Hood; agency strategies are selecting arrangements that minimise/avoid blame, presentational strategies include excuses and justification, and policy strategies are avoiding doing things that could draw blame in the first place. Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game'.

[1532] It could even get worse, given 'lukewarm' responses to Juncker's 'political Commission'. Dawson, 'Evaluating Juncker's Political Commission'. See also Annex: Who is the EU?, where FGI participants centralised the Commission as an overly-powerful, 'heart of darkness'.

[1533] In the case of Brexit, this may not have been helped by what were portrayed as David Cameron's 'failed' renegotiations.

[1534] Such mediative approaches are applied in other forms of political conflicts, including intercultural and religious warfare. Esteemed mediators such as Ken Cloke advocate for such an integrative, interest-based approach, as do organisations such as the United States Institute for Peace. E.g. Cloke, *Conflict Revolution*.; personal correspondence with USIP mediation team. For an introduction to interest-based negotiation, see Fisher and Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating an Agreement without Giving In*.. See also Samantha Hardy on use of 'conflict stories'—i.e. conceptual metaphors such as that of a Rescue narrative in the current work: Hardy, *Conflict Coaching Fundamentals*..

with, or converted credit to blame where they did not like the 'creditee'.[1535]   There is therefore a call for timely and accurate information to reach the public—for instance, through media or education.[1536] However, there is also a role for advancements in reasoning, as highlighted in the discussion of naming and shaming blame: addition of the 'bad-be-gone' fallacy (get rid of the bad people and our problems will go away) to the existing fallacy of scapegoating (blame people we don't like) may help ensure future blaming is focused on victim and situational needs, rather than perpetrator-focused revanchism.

Further research could focus on the effects of 'no blaming' harmful situations, and whether absenting the blamee can lead to better outcomes for victims—and, of course, lessened vilification. Moreover, the concept of the bad-be-gone fallacy should be applied and investigated, for example using focus groups, to verify whether recognising the fallacy changes the solutions groups generate: perhaps addressing underlying and structural conditions rather than simply punishing a blamee. Future research may also identify additional ways to contest blame, given the present research focused on just those strategies present[1537] in texts relating to one campaign and one country. To this end, blame contestation as a potential source of effect mitigation should be investigated in other cultures, countries, and languages, with languages where the passive voice is used to explain harmful events being of particular interest.[1538] The specific effects of contestation vis-à-vis vilification might also be tested, to find out to what *extent* contestation strategies mitigate blame's causal power to make villains.

With the empirical chapters complete, the conclusion will present theory-driven reflections on contesting vilification itself, and move from the Brexit case study to the wider implications and contributions of this research.

[1535] This invokes Hood's notion of sympathetic vs vindictive voters. Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game'.

[1536] This may be challenging in an atmosphere of dis- and mis-information, where 'disinformation' is incorrect, 'malinformation' is intentionally harmful information, and 'misinformation' is both incorrect and harmful (Ireton, Posetti, and UNESCO, *Journalism, 'Fake News' et Disinformation*, 44–45.). Literature on the role of disinformation in politics has been burgeoning since the Brexit referendum and 2016 US Presidential election, e.g. Baptista and Gradim, 'Online Disinformation on Facebook'; Baumann, '"Propaganda Fights" and "Disinformation Campaigns"'; Butcher and Neidhardt, 'Fear and Lying in the EU'; Linvill and Warren, 'Troll Factories'; Lukito, 'Coordinating a Multi-Platform Disinformation Campaign'; McKay and Tenove, 'Disinformation as a Threat to Deliberative Democracy'; Pennycook et al., 'Shifting Attention to Accuracy Can Reduce Misinformation Online'; Roozenbeek, Basol, and van der Linden, 'A New Way to Inoculate People Against Misinformation'.

[1537] Plus notable absences, as in 9.4 Changing subjects and objects.

[1538] E.g. Japanese. "Japanese speakers often use the passive voice in situations where they want to convey a sense that they are a 'victim'." Coto Japanese Academy, 'Using the Passive Voice in Japanese'.

10. Conclusion

10.1. Summarising the research

This thesis began with a discussion of blame in politics, and specifically in the context of the Brexit referendum. While previous work has explored whether or not blame is done, 'how much' blame is accrued, and how it is or is not 'shifted' to other parties, there has been insufficient work done on the vilifying effects of exogenous blame on audiences. This is vital, as it is why blame in politics matters. After all, if blame did not affect the people who hear or read it, then why would politicians try to avoid it, or justify themselves, or scapegoat somebody else? In what ways does blame make villains in politics?

With this in mind, the present research centralised the effects of blame, working in an abductive 'research spiral' that cycled between theory and data and ultimately focusing on the *emotional* effects of blame, framing this as part of a process of *vilification*. This phrasing was used because blame engenders negative emotions towards blamees, and a 'villain' is one type of character for whom we feel such negative emotions. Furthermore, it not simply that blame makes people we don't like—these disliked actors are interpreted through cultural narratives, such as a 'Rescue narrative' wherein a victim must be rescued from a disliked, feared, or hated villain by a hero.[1539] Such narratives have previously been identified on the political stage, including in the specific context of the Brexit campaign.[1540] They help to explain how alliances come to be created between heroic figures such as Nigel Farage for the Leave campaign and supporters on one side, and a villainous EU and its minions in the form of Remain voters on the other—ultimately leading to affective polarisation between the different sides of the debate and potentially resulting in democratic backsliding.[1541] There becomes a dividing line between good and bad, strong and weak, and an overarching narrative by which people can understand a given situation.

This research then set out to generate theory—not generate *a* theory—about the vilifying effects of exogenous blame per 1.5.1, as examined through the lens of a Brexit case study. In doing so it made theoretical and conceptual contributions to the field of blame research and work on discourse and polarisation more broadly, while incidentally making specific findings about constructions of the EU during the Brexit referendum campaign and showing how associated campaigns used—or did not use—blame. As a critical work, it also identified a range of strategies by which exogenous blame is contested, with implications for mitigating its effects as discussed in E5 and in 10.4 below.

[1539] Lakoff, *The Political Mind*.
[1540] Spencer and Oppermann, 'Narrative Genres of Brexit'.
[1541] Orhan, 'The Relationship between Affective Polarization and Democratic Backsliding'.

10.1.1.   Conceptualising blame

Blame and its effects demonstrated that, to date, little attention has been paid to the emotional effects of blame on audiences in political science—with Markus Wagner stating that "providing a clearer causal account" between blame and emotions "should be a task for future research".[1542] The present research takes up this challenge; it further and unprecedentedly considers the role of third-party actors who are not part of 'normal' domestic politics—in this case the Leave campaign—in blame games. As discussed in E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation, such parties have greater scope for whom they can blame, as unlike parties in government or opposition, they have little to lose by doing so.

Meanwhile, work in (social) psychology demonstrates how blame interacts with cultural context, its role in constituting groups, and its emotional nature. Endogenous blaming[1543] of an Other is associated with *anger*—a negative, 'villain-type' feeling. This work is useful, but has limited external and ecological validity, and certainly has not considered the effects of blame in the political sphere—which may be different from, for example, blaming oneself for 'missing study group' and other situations that affect only the individual.[1544] This is important given there may be something 'social' about blame: it is a method by which others—whether harmed, having witnessed harm, or simply telling stories about harm—can shape our collective understanding of reality.

Next, blame for 'doing' something is divided from blame for 'being' something, analytically separating blame from name-calling. Drawing from Malle et al, Hansson, Weaver, Jasper, and work on post-dialectic argument by Paliewicz and McHendry, it was noted that blame can persuade people whether or not it is 'true', and it interacts with context such that people 'fill in the gaps' with contextual information. Blame can look like an argument, or like a moral judgment, but it is not limited to either.[1545]

Ultimately, and building on such previous research, blame is minimally defined as *a discursive practice in which a speaker claims a party did, or has done, a harmful thing*. This makes a contribution in that it divides blame from the related discursive practices of credit (helpful in the past), threat (harmful in the future), and promise (helpful in the future), with credit and threats returning in E5 when discussing Britain Stronger in Europe's contestation of blaming from the Leave campaign. Two fallacies are presented in connection with blame, including the established fallacy of scapegoating (blaming others because they are disliked) and a new informal fallacy of 'bad-be-gone' (getting rid of disliked others will make underlying problems go away).

[1542] Wagner, 'Fear and Anger in Great Britain', 700.
[1543] Blame that emerges within the individual after observing harm, rather than blame arising within third parties.
[1544] Smith et al., 'In Search of the" Hot" Cognitions'.
[1545] Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, 'When Good Arguments Do Not Work'. Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame'; Hansson, 'Analysing Opposition–Government Blame Games'.

10.1.2. Conceptualising characters and emotions

Jasper et al note the predominance of 'flat' characters in the public sphere; caricatures of good and evil, unlike popular culture's more nuanced characters.[1546] Constructing villains and emotions points out that the *process* of vilification is often conflated with the end result of 'villain', meaning that villains just *are*, rather than being made. This is problematic, as pointed out by Jacoby in her studies of another character—that of victim.[1547] It renders invisible how some characters become salient and others do not, and does little to explain *why* we feel about a certain agent. People are not born feeling the EU is a villain; villains are *made*. But how?

The chapter goes on to show tendencies in how villains are conceptualised: they are bad, strong, and active,[1548] and we feel negatively towards them. While the first three can be identified discursively, as in blame—where somebody is 'bad' because they have done harm, 'strong' enough to do so, and 'active' in carrying out their agenda—the present research formalises the inclusion of emotions in character creation as a 'missing link' in explaining who becomes a villain and who does not. If a blamee commits harm, and we feel negatively towards that blamee as a result, then vilification has been successful. This means that audience *emotions* are a way to identify whether or not vilification via blame has been successful. Emerging these emotions is a more accessible way to locate villains than explicit labelling or metaphor, because 'villain-type feelings' precede calling villains names.[1549] This means that through examination of emotions, not only can successful vilification be more readily identified, but research can be conducted in cross-cultural scenarios where villain metaphors—what villains are called—may differ.

With the creation of characters clearly linked to emotions, Constructing villains and emotions goes on to discuss what emotions actually *are*. While there are several traditions of emotion research in political science and international relations, they have largely relied on outdated conceptions of emotions as 'natural kinds', or in some sense 'real'.[1550] Rather, emotions "are real in the same sense that money is real—that is, hardly an illusion, but a product of human agreement."[1551] Reasons to understand emotions as constructed are discussed, and the present work extends work on constructed emotions in political science by clearly relating overall group 'feeling structures' to individual bodies using Feldman

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[1546] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*.

[1547] Jacoby, 'A Theory of Victimhood'.

[1548] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*. See also Kushkaki, 'Unmasking the Villain'; Klapp, 'Heroes, Villains and Fools, as Agents of Social Control'; Klapp, 'The Folk Hero'.

[1549] We can 'feel' somebody is a villain without ever labelling them one. This implies that villain-type feelings are more frequent than explicit labelling.

[1550] Some work does go beyond this; for instance, Jonathan Mercer speaks of 'emotional beliefs', though this focuses on the role of emotions in decision-making Mercer, 'Emotional Beliefs'.. A recent volume from Simon Koschut et al presents a range of perspectives on emotions as constructed in IR, but as discussed in that chapter, these are not related to the human body where emotions are 'felt'. Koschut, *The Power of Emotions in World Politics*.

[1551] Introduction in Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

Barrett's Theory of Constructed Emotion.[1552] The ramifications of this for how emotions may be recognised in research are discussed, and to ensure validity and replicability alike, the researcher analyses only explicit emotions given in the data—study participants say what they are feeling, rather than selecting from options provided by the researcher.

10.1.3.   Operationalisation

Methodology begins by outlining the critical realist ontology/epistemology used for the research, whereby there are three 'realities': an 'empirical' reality, where we experience effects; an 'actual' reality where effects happen, whether we experience them or not; and a 'real' reality where the mechanisms that lead to effects are located.[1553] Blame is described as having 'causal power'—the potential to cause effects—though this may be countered by other mechanisms.[1554] The example of the sun's causal power to burn skin is used throughout the research, such that the sun always has the potential to burn skin, but other factors—sunscreen, shade, melanin—can interfere. This implies that while blame always has the causal power to make villains (when enacted by others, such that blame itself does not have independence nor agency), vilification is not always successful.

Methodology explicates the abductive approach used to generate theory, illustrating the steps with a 'research spiral' that begins with the central concept of 'effects of blame', then cycles through four iterations of theory and data. It ultimately finds that exogenous blame leads to vilification when it engenders villain-type feelings—such as annoyance—at the blamee, or compassion for their victims (the 'compassion backhand'); further, effects are mediated by the existing knowledge of the audience. This approach is complemented by a retroductive investigation of points of resistance, absences and silences, resulting in the identification of modes of contestation that could mitigate the effects of blame.

Experimentation is important in critical realist research: it helps unveil what mechanisms such as blame do by artificially creating a closed system in an attempt to get ever-closer to an accurate explanation of 'real' reality.[1555] Experimentation is therefore selected as one method in this research, as part of a pragmatic mixed methods approach[1556] whereby reality is examined by whichever tools are best suited to do so. This is particularly important in this case study, as data collection took place *after* the Brexit referendum: there was thus a need

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[1552] E.g. Barrett, 'Emotions Are Real.'

[1553] Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*.

[1554] Per Danermark et al, causal power means a mechanism is "not only existent when A leads to B, but also when A does not lead to B" (Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*, 65.) While Richard Lebow's concept of 'inefficient causation' has some appeal in that it also incorporates "frames of reference, processes, mechanisms, and other features of context"—reflecting notions of context and assemblage in the present research—it is more concerned with causal chains that led to a particular event in international relations, for instance by working backwards and creating a compelling narrative. This is less helpful when considering specific effects of one particular discursive practice. It does however employ an amount of transcendental thinking in that it requires asking what must have happened in order for a particular event to have been possible. Lebow, 'Inefficient Causation', 66; Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*; Collier, *Critical Realism*.

[1555] Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*, 1.

[1556] Creswell and Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*.

to triangulate people's remembered experiences of blame in the campaign with evidence of vilification from experimentation 'in the moment'.

The selection of Brexit as a single exemplifying case study for the research is justified with reference to the critical realist framework, as during periods of crisis—such as Brexit—underlying mechanisms from 'real' reality become more visible.[1557] It is a case *of* blame[1558] that permits tracing of the process from pre-referendum performance of blame through the vilification of the EU that ensued, enabling an intensive examination[1559] of the effects of blame and shedding light on how it works to make villains in politics.

Next, a data analysis framework is developed that permits for investigation of discursive *effects*. Applied to the current research, such that the vilifying effects of blame in the Brexit campaign specifically may be investigated, it calls to (1) *identify context* surrounding the Brexit referendum, including background issues such as EU–UK relations, concurrent issues in the lead-up to the referendum, the Brexit 'assemblage'[1560] as the parties and organisations involved in the campaign, and who voted for and against Brexit; (2) *performance* of blame during the campaign, including the discursive contexts in which it is used (what is blamed for?) and who the subjects and objects of blame were; (3) the *effects* of blame like that performed in the referendum campaign on audiences, and specifically those effects important to vilification—primarily, what emotions people feel after consuming exogenous blame; and (4) *points of resistance and contestation*—ways in which blame and its causal power are contested and potentially mitigated.

The chapter goes on to explicitly discuss how the performance of blame is identified per the definition in 2.4 Defining blame, and likewise for the identification of villains, victims, emotions, and contestation per the framework. Data sources are selected in accordance with this framework—a survey-experiment ('SE'), focus groups and interviews ('FGIs'), Metro newspaper and campaign content and commentary. These are aligned to the framework such that effects are examined through use of SE and FGI data, campaign materials inform context and help identify people involved in the Brexit campaign, and all materials are analysed for evidence of the performance of blame and points of resistance and contestation. Overall, this chapter provides a theoretical contribution in its data analysis framework that permits meaningful evaluation of the effects of discourse in a relatively stable social 'reality'.

10.1.4.   The empirical chapters

The empirical chapters align with the data analysis framework, beginning with establishing contextual background (E1), proceeding through performance (E2), effects (E3 and E4), and contestation (E5). It is through the deep examination of the Brexit case study and

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[1557] Bhaskar, 'On the Possibility of Social Scientific Knowledge and the Limits of Naturalism'.

[1558] Kotz points out that case studies are always cases *of* something. Klotz, 'Case Selection'.

[1559] Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 67.

[1560] Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, 'When Good Arguments Do Not Work'; Deleuze and Guattari, 'A Thousand Plateaus'.

concordant process-tracing that theory on the vilifying effects of exogenous blame is generated.

E1: The Brexit context sets the stage for the specific case study of Brexit. It starts with the socio-political and historical *context*, including a history of Euroscepticism in the United Kingdom. The Brexit 'assemblage'[1561] is illustrated, showing who spoke in the campaign, and who perhaps did not—which becomes relevant in E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation. The participants in the current research are presented and compared to who voted in the Brexit referendum, establishing that this research uses a sample with appropriate ecological validity and showing underlying differences between Leavers and Remainers.[1562] Considering context gives meaning to blame that is performed by campaign actors, while also permitting the discussion of points of contestation and silences that are necessary to a fuller understanding of the vilifying effects of blame and hence theory generation.

Next, E2: Blame campaign considers *performance* of blame in the Brexit context. It shows pro-Leave parties blamed more frequently than the public in the lead-up to the referendum, while the Remain campaign—even when speaking about similar topics to the Leave campaign—was blame-free. The EU appeared as the predominant blamee, followed by the UK government—meaning multiple blamees and likewise multiple possible villains. The UK/Britain was meanwhile consistently portrayed as a victim, with similar themes appearing in post-referendum performance of blame. These tendencies informed development of the survey-experiment and focus group/interview questions, ensuring the integrity of the process-tracing necessary to theory generation via this case.

E3: Effects, the first of the *effects* chapters, begins with people's own explanations of how blame made them feel about the EU—selected as the most common, albeit not only, blamee and hence potential villain mentioned during the campaign. It starts with FGI data, wherein participants verified through explicit labelling that they came to see the EU as a villain, and revealed two ways in which blame turned them against the EU. The first was experiencing villain-type feelings towards it: where FGI consumed blame of the EU during the campaign, they felt angry at it, and could no longer support it. The second pathway was compassion, whether for fellow UK citizens or those of other countries and particularly Greece: participants turned against the EU because they felt sorry for its victims.

E3 next turned to survey-experiment data, starting by analysing the vignettes used in the research. Every SE participant read one of four vignettes, blaming the EU, UK, 'ourselves', or containing no blame.[1563] *Annoyance* as a negative, villain-type feeling was the predominant emotional effect of reading blame. Effects were mediated by existing knowledge and allegiances—indicating discourses to which people had been subjected—such that those who would prefer to leave the EU ('VP Leavers') said they felt annoyed at the EU in response to the EU-blaming vignette, while VP Remainers instead felt annoyed at the text author. The

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[1561] Paliewicz and McHendry Jr, 'When Good Arguments Do Not Work'.
[1562] For instance, education level.
[1563] See Methodology and 7.3.1 Analysing the vignette.

chapter contributed to literature on blame by examining its villain-making effects through experimentation, adding nuance in that creating villains via blame is not just about anger per existing research, but also other villain-type feelings including the more banal 'annoyance' and new finding of compassion; using realistic materials and audiences rather than theoretical situations and captive undergraduates, and ultimately demonstrating that not only can the effects of discursive practices be meaningfully tested, but that emotions are essential to understanding blame in politics. It demonstrates the efficacy of survey-experiments for this type of research.

E4: Blame and underlying characteristics continues the investigation of *effects* by interrogating the previous chapter's findings. Was voting preference truly important to comprehending results, or given the differences between Leavers and Remainers outlined in E1, was there something else at play? Per 2.3.8, existing research suggests people's underlying characteristics may circumscribe people's reactions to blame,[1564] which is important in light of the Cambridge Analytica scandal whereby people were 'micro-targeted' using personality profiles.[1565] The chapter therefore explores possible correlations between emotions before and after reading one of the vignettes; between voting preference and post-vignette emotions, victim identification and uncreation, or (re)blaming as endogenous blame;[1566] between those same items and underlying characteristics including sense of agency, agreeability, in-group values, Just World Beliefs, health, mental health, and education level; and conducts cross-tab analyses of victim (un)creation and (re)blaming against area of greatest interest, most important General Election voting issue, and how people self-identified. What the chapter shows is that, with the exception of Just World Beliefs—itself a story about how the world works—these underlying characteristics had no relationship with the villain-making effects of exogenous blame. The causal powers of blame are not mediated by what we *are* but what we already *know*—the discourses we have been subjected to, as with voting preference in E3. This complements existing work on the mediating role of partisanship per 2.3.6.

The effects chapters show blame does not always appear to 'work' to make villains—why? This is addressed in the final empirical chapter, E5. It locates three different ways of *contesting* blame in the data—that is, ways in which blame's causal powers may be mitigated. These included direct methods—talking about the blame, including counter-blaming, rebuttal, and naming and shaming blame as an unacceptable behaviour; indirect methods—using opposing practices, such as credit and threats as discussed in 2.4 Defining blame; and by changing subjects and objects, which relates to the assemblage identified in

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[1564] For example, an already-angry person would be more likely to feel angry as a result of blame, as would less-agreeable people. Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff, 'Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism'; Meier and Robinson, 'Does Quick to Blame Mean Quick to Anger?'

[1565] Wylie, *Mindf*ck*.

[1566] Victim identification is used to establish whether people consuming blame noted any victims to theoretically feel compassion *for*. Victim 'un' creation was where people identified a victim but attacked their legitimacy as a victim, for instance by saying they did not care, or that the victim had caused their own problems.

5.3 The Brexit assemblage and background contextual information as highlighted in the Blame and its effects and Constructing villains and emotions chapters, and which here involved limiting speakers, uncreating victims, and 'no-blaming'. While demonstrating some of the ways in which blame's causal powers to create villains may be interrupted and thereby mitigated, the chapter incidentally highlights how the Remain campaign failed to defuse blame in the Leave campaign, ultimately positing Leave's strong and villainous EU against Remain's weak or absent hero. The Leave campaign won the battle of character creation. The chapter highlighted how exogovernmental 'challenger parties'[1567] can be particularly effective in using such blame. Moreover, it moved beyond examining how politicians refute blame or pass it on to others, to consider how individual voters contest—and potentially mitigate—blame. It thereby contributed to understandings of how blame may *not* make villains in politics, bolstering existing work on blame avoidance and contestation, and supporting theory generation in this research by surfacing limits to blame.

10.1.5.   Outcome

Ultimately, as a result of the present research, our understanding of exogenous blame's effects becomes more complex and nuanced than simply "if we blame them, we won't like them". It develops the theory that exogenous **blame makes villains in politics where it engenders negative, villain-type feelings (notably annoyance) towards a blamee, or compassion for their victims**; that its causal power to do so is *mediated* by the audience that consumes the blame—and specifically what they already 'know' or prefer; and may be *mitigated* through a range of newly-identified contestation strategies. It incidentally indicates that psychometric targeting may not be as fearsome as previously suggested; identifies a wider toolbox for contesting blame by political campaigns, the EU, and citizens alike; clarifies blame, how it relates to other discursive practices, links to fallacies, and may be identified; and convincingly demonstrates that in the specific case of Brexit, blame had a profound role to play in vilification of the EU and concordant polarisation against it and its supporters alike.

With the research summarised, the remainder of this chapter now moves beyond the Brexit case study to consider wider implications of the theory generated herein; highlight this thesis' original contribution and outline areas for further research; outline theory-driven reflections on contesting the blame|vilification link; and present an impact plan for translating the research into practical outcomes.

10.2.   Beyond Brexit

Does successful vilification of the EU via blame in the Brexit case have wider implications? As the present work aims to generate broadly applicable theory on how exogenous blame makes villains in politics (while illustrating the mediating nature of the audience and possibly mitigating contestation strategies) and not merely examine how the EU was

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[1567] Vries and Hobolt, *Political Entrepreneurs*.

constructed as a villain by the Leave campaign during the referendum campaign, this is vital to consider.

As highlighted in Constructing villains and emotions, emotions are constructed, and feeling structures can vary per place, language, time, and culture. This means that not only is it possible to imagine people feeling different things as a result of blame—with implications for vilification[1568]—but they may express those feelings differently.[1569]

That said, the present research should in principle hold wherever:

(a)   blame is performed similarly—i.e. the perpetrator is not erased by 'no-blaming' per E5, which could happen in languages that make more use of the passive voice;[1570]

(b)   there are similar cultural stories of heroes rescuing victims from villains—and it is difficult to imagine a culture in which this story is not apparent, particularly given the spread of cultural stories via popular media highlighted in 3.3.4.a) Culture and acculturation;

(c)   there are broadly similar feeling structures, such that we feel negatively towards villains and compassion towards victims—enabling both pathways for villain generation rather than just the one;

(d)   local villains are not associated with *additional* conditions beyond bad/strong/active/villain-type feelings. For instance, Will Wright includes 'wilderness/civilisation' in describing different characters in old American Western movies—a particular cultural context—and these appear to have little to do with the blaming done in the present research.[1571] Jasper et al argue that this division is "more salient in Westerns than in other narratives", and that the divide is really an iteration of good (nature) and bad (civilisation). Nevertheless, this illustrates that it is possible to design and comprehend alternate narratives, and it could be that far-flung cultures typify villains differently to the present research, with some kind of element that is *not* implied by blame.

These conditions are not difficult to meet. It is therefore understood that the theory developed in the present research,[1572] established using the lens of Brexit as a case study, is applicable to a wide range of other settings. This may be particularly apparent in places similar to the UK: WEIRD[1573] and English-speaking countries and cultures in the first instance, including the USA, Canada, Ireland, and Australia. Further case studies in other locations and languages would verify that blame has the causal power to make villains in other

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[1568] See also following section, 10.4 Theory-driven reflections on disrupting the blame|vilification link.

[1569] E.g. Saying 'annoyed' rather than 'angry'. See Table 8 in 4.3.5 Recognising emotions.

[1570] E.g. Japanese. "Japanese speakers often use the passive voice in situations where they want to convey a sense that they are a "victim"." Coto Japanese Academy, 'Using the Passive Voice in Japanese'.

[1571] Wright, *Six Guns and Society*., cited in Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*, 19.

[1572] I.e. That exogenous blame makes villains in politics where it engenders villain-type feelings such as annoyance towards the blamee, or compassion towards the blamee's victims, and that this is mediated by the audience and potentially mitigated by a range of contestation strategies.

[1573] Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, Democratic

spaces. This would also enable researchers to further test the mediating effects of what people already know, as well as test and even emerge further contestation strategies. When examining the vilifying effects of exogenous blame in future in other contexts, researchers should then consider audience emotions resulting from the instance of blame, focusing on ~annoyance and compassion as key to vilification; audience knowledge and beliefs that may interact with the blame and thereby mediate it, as in the case of existing political allegiance and also environment-related knowledge in the current work; and the items listed in (a)–(d) in the previous paragraph. They may also wish to consider people's own explanations for the ways they feel and why, taking a mixed methods approach as in the current research, as well as the ways in which audiences and others contest blame. This ongoing work is important given concerns over affective polarisation that links to vilification, and concordant democratic backsliding,[1574] rendering the present work and area of study highly relevant.

This latter also implies that the contestation strategies indicated in E5, as well as the theory-driven reflections below, become particularly salient in political battles against affective polarisation and manipulation via blame, whether the source of such blame is politicians, third-party campaigns, or even our social media communities.

10.3. Contribution

This research set out to generate theory about the vilifying effects of exogenous blame, using the case study of Brexit to do so. In the process it has made theoretical and conceptual contributions to the field of blame research and work on discourse and polarisation more broadly, while incidentally making specific findings about use of blame and construction of the EU during the Brexit referendum campaign.

10.3.1. Explanations in the Brexit case study

In the specific case of Brexit, the present research showed that the Leave campaign blamed the EU extensively, with the UK portrayed as its villain (E2). Through triangulating data from focus groups/interviews and a survey-experiment (E3), it demonstrated that such blame is *effective* in creating villains, then showed that that Remain campaign's attempts to contest blame were absent or ineffective (E5). It follows that the Leave campaign used blame to great effect, which speaks to not just ongoing perceptions of the EU as a villain in the UK, but to affective polarisation more broadly—with lines drawn between those minions who supported the EU and those who helped battle against it.

Overall, the present research paints a rather bleak picture of how blame worked to create a villain of the EU in the Brexit referendum campaign, making the vote to leave perhaps inevitable. Voters were angry and annoyed at the EU for things they had been told the EU had done; meanwhile, others felt sorry for the EU's victims, likewise turning them against the body. The research thus contributes to work that aims to understand how Brexit

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[1574] Orhan, 'The Relationship between Affective Polarization and Democratic Backsliding'.

happened—particularly in light of the upward trend in wanting to stay in the EU depicted in 5.2.2. It enhances our understanding of the emotions and narratives of Brexit per Vasilopoulou and Wagner, and Spencer and Opperman alike, supporting that existing work. It enables us to better understand how the EU is constructed as a character and object of emotions and thus complements work on Euroscepticism and how it comes to be. It supports and extends the work of authors such as Hobolt and Tilley on blaming the EU,[1575] particularly as it pertains to blaming of the EU by third-party challengers and the role of perceptual shields, and identifies ways in which blame of the EU was contested in the Brexit case study. This in turns permits an exploration of how blame of the EU may be contested and thereby the prevention of its characterisation as a villain, concordant affective polarisation against it and within domestic audiences, and even EU exits.

Although the UK has left the European Union, it continues to be a blamee of choice for actors such as Nigel Farage. On February 16 2021 he published a video under the heading 'Remainers are not happy with this video' blaming the EU's non-existent 'Human Rights Act' for curtailing the UK's right to deport refugees and insufficient checks on potentially illegal migrants from within the EU.[1576] This suggests EU-blaming may continue to be a feature of UK politics. Given how effective it is, this must be understood as dangerous to any ongoing relationship between the EU and UK, rendering the mitigation strategies revealed in the present research vital.[1577]

10.3.2.   Vilification via blame

Previous research, outlined in 2.3.7 Blame is emotional, finds that endogenous blame of an Other can cause anger.[1578] In these situations, both the blame and the resultant emotions are done by the same person. Such work has issues of considering endogenous blame only, has tended to have low ecological validity (e.g. drawing only from undergraduate American students),[1579] and has included constrained emotion choices (e.g. drop-down lists of

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[1575] See discussion in 2.3. Vasilopoulou and Wagner, 'Fear, Anger and Enthusiasm about the European Union'; Wagner, 'Fear and Anger in Great Britain'; Spencer and Oppermann, 'Narrative Genres of Brexit'; Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*; Koller, Kopf, and Miglbauer, *Discourses of Brexit*.

[1576] Farage, *Scrap the EU Human Rights Act.* "We need to leave the European Convention on Human Rights, and then Brexit will be complete". The ECHR is neither part of the EU nor associated with membership.

[1577] As of April 2021, the majority of polled citizens in 11 of 12 EU countries saw Great Britain as a 'necessary partner' with whom Europe must cooperate, rather than an 'ally' that shares European interests and values (Denmark was the exception). More than 20% saw it as Europe's 'rival' or 'adversary'. Dennison and Puglierin, 'Crisis of Confidence'.

[1578] Neumann, 'The Causal Influences of Attributions on Emotions'; Sheikh and McNamara, 'Insights from Self-Blame and Victim Blaming'; Aquino, Tripp, and Bies, 'How Employees Respond to Personal Offense'; Smith et al., 'In Search of the" Hot" Cognitions'; Kim and Cameron, 'Emotions Matter in Crisis'; Lerner, Goldberg, and Tetlock, 'Sober Second Thought'; Lerner and Tiedens, 'Portrait of the Angry Decision Maker'; Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff, 'Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism'; Quigley and Tedeschi, 'Mediating Effects of Blame Attributions on Feelings of Anger'; Meier and Robinson, 'Does Quick to Blame Mean Quick to Anger?'

[1579] The present research extends blame research to a new audience, in the form of the UK voting public—though per 5.4 Who voted for Brexit?, the sample skews towards younger age groups. Almost all people who identified a generational attachment were Millennials (up to approximately age 40) or younger.

emotions).[1580] Meanwhile, while villains are bad, strong, and active, and we feel negatively towards them, it is not clear where villains *come* from, or how political actors are successfully put into the 'villain' role. There is little explicit connection made between blame and villains, other than in Jasper et al, who do not detail what the connection actually entails.[1581]

The present research addresses these gaps, showing that blame makes villains in politics directly where it engenders villain-type feelings—notably annoyance—at a blamee, and indirectly where it engenders compassion for its victims (E3: Effects). Emotions join morality, strength, and activity level as a fourth pillar of character construction and identification, with this ability to identify effective characterisation through emerging audience emotions— rather than relying only on explicit labelling—forming a contribution in the current research that complements notions of interlinkage between cultural narratives and emotions per Lakoff.[1582] Further, while exogenous blame always has the causal power to create villains, this causal power is *mediated* by the audience who consume the blame (E3, E4), and may be *mitigated* by contestation strategies employed by those audience members or others (E5).

While exogenous blame of an Other leads to a range of villain-type feelings, *annoyance* is primary. This adds nuance to existing research on characterisation and blame alike—it is not just about anger;[1583] even something as innocuous and seemingly banal as 'annoyance' is an important contributor to vilification. This contribution to understanding how villains are made helps bolster work such as that of Klapp and Flinders, who help highlight the circumstances of characterisation and some of the features of characters, by locating both specific emotions and the role of the specific practice of blame in constituting villains.[1584] It verifies and builds upon Jasper et al's position that blame helps create villains as public characters.[1585]

Notably, it is only through allowing people to put emotions into their own words that this finding could be made. It is important given different emotions can be associated with

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[1580] See 2.3.7 Blame is emotional.
[1581] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*. See also Jasper 1997, wherein the author describes the need to build a 'sense of threat' from negative emotions when blaming an actor and creating a potential villain. He does not undertake experimental work to precisely identify causal mechanisms. Jasper, 'Not In Our Backyards: Emotion, Threat, and Blame', 134.
[1582] Lakoff, *The Political Mind*.
[1583] This is not to say that anger is not important; anger did appear both in FGI and SE responses. It was simply not as frequent as annoyance. However, while the 'affective turn' has seen scholars in IR and political science more generally start to consider the role of anger, annoyance has not made such an appearance. See e.g. Vasilopoulou and Wagner, 'Fear, Anger and Enthusiasm about the European Union'; Linklater, 'Anger and World Politics'., and various historical typologies of anger and its related emotions in Potegal and Novaco, 'A Brief History of Anger'.
[1584] E.g. Klapp, 'Heroes, Villains and Fools, as Agents of Social Control'; Flinders, 'The Demonisation of Politicians'.
[1585] Jasper, Young, and Zuern, *Public Characters*.

different appropriate behaviours under local feeling rules (see also 10.4 Theory-driven reflections on disrupting the blame|vilification link).[1586]

Further, the current research finds that compassion for victims can, in at least some circumstances, lead to vilification of the perpetrator—a novel finding. This supports Pfattheicher et al's work on compassion for victims increasing third-party punishment,[1587] but is not apparent in prior blame research. It is a compelling alternative to 'the other side are just angry people'—a frequent explanation for the winning Leave vote, as well as for Trump's success in the 2016 US Presidential Election. It is not just that people are *angry*; they also experience pro-social emotions and want to help others. This story highlights that the 'other side' are not monsters, and opens possibilities for de-escalation of affective polarisation and future collaboration.

Lastly, this research emerges a new target for blame that has not been considered in previous work on the emotions of blame: 'ourselves amongst others' as blamee. Per E4, when 'we' are blamed, there appear to be different emotional effects to when we as individuals are blamed. The projected shame and guilt do not appear. This is interesting in that voters tend to be depicted in blocks—Leavers and Remainers, Democrats and Republicans, Liberal Party and Greens supporters—and speaks to different effects of exogenous blame when 'own groups' are blamed. It may help us understand how we unmake our *selves* as villains in politics and thereby maintain secure identities. This should be investigated further in additional research.

10.3.3.   Defining and mitigating blame

While there is a long history of critical discourse analysis in political science and international relations, wherein discourses and their associated subjectivities and points of resistances are emerged, it is a challenge to identify the *effects* of such discourses.[1588] At the other end of the scale, recent large-scale quantitative work on 'moral emotions' and similar focus on the presence of single words, divorced of the context that gives them meaning.[1589] Blame lies between these two extremes—as a discursive practice it plays a role in creating and upholding certain discourses and forms of power; it does though take a certain form, with multiple words used for a similar semantic meaning, and this enables it to be identified, reproduced, and its effects analysed.

[1586] Sasley, '"On Monday, Our National Humiliation Will Be over. We Will Finish with Orders from Abroad" – Status, Emotions, and the SYRIZA Government's Rhetoric in the Greek Sovereign Debt Crisis', 76. See 3.3.2 Feeling structures.

[1587] Pfattheicher, Sassenrath, and Keller, 'Compassion Magnifies Third-Party Punishment.'

[1588] E.g. "Unlike in poststructuralist discourse theory, with critical realism, discourse can be differentiated from the realm of extra-discursive practice, placed in dialectical relation to this wider realm of social relations, and analysed as a possible causal mechanism in the generation of social phenomena, alongside these other mechanisms, as a way to better determine discourse's actual effect on events" Banta, 'Analysing Discourse as a Causal Mechanism', 379.

[1589] E.g. Brady et al., 'An Ideological Asymmetry in the Diffusion of Moralized Content on Social Media among Political Leaders.'. See also discussion of the necessity of establishing context in Methodology and E4: Blame and underlying characteristics in particular.

This work reviews and synthesises existing work on (social) blame, such as that of Malle et al and Weaver,[1590] to present a minimal definition of exogenous blame as a discursive practice. This allows blame to be identified in text and talk, permitting operationalisation and experimentation, and helping to separate it from criticism, name-calling, and so on. It also usefully enables the identification of related practices—credit, threats, and promises—that appear as strategies for contestation and potential mitigation in E5. The framework for analysis of discursive effects established in Methodology may now be usefully applied to those discursive practices, opening not just a research agenda but a useful toolset for political and communications professionals.

Previous work on blame had considered how people endogenously blame differently according to how 'accountable' or 'responsible' the blamee is, or how 'intentional' the harm.[1591] However, this related specifically to people's internal processes of allocating blame, and does not speak to how they react when they consume exogenous blame. Malle et al posited a role for warrant, though explicitly acknowledged that the social role of blame is under-researched.[1592] Meanwhile, work in political science focuses on how politicians shift or avoid blame—but this renders invisible contestation strategies from audiences consuming blame, and speaks only to where the politician shifting blame is the same as the person *being* blamed, which is the not the case in the current research.[1593] This is important, as blame can be done by third parties (like the Leave campaign); it can also be done across borders, whether the EU is blamed for something—or perhaps other actors, such as Russia or China.   The present research then introduces the concepts of audiences and third-party actors as actively able to produce, and contest, blame. Audiences are discussed as active co-producers of discursive effects, not mere passive objects. The audience becomes a site of blame contestation—and potential mitigation of effects—contributing to literature on blame attribution and avoidance, supporting work that considers how audiences (re)blame differently after exposure to exogenous blame, and complementing existing work on blame contestation such as that of Hood, Weaver, and Hansson.[1594]

To this end, E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation identified multiple ways in which blame is and may be contested whether *directly* (counter-blaming as in previous research; rebuttal; naming and shaming blame), *indirectly* (using alternative discursive practices such as credit or threats), or *changing subjects and objects* (limiting who speaks, uncreating victims, and

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[1590] Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame'; Weaver, 'The Nays Have It'.

[1591] E.g. Malle and Knobe, 'The Folk Concept of Intentionality'; Baron and Hershey, 'Outcome Bias in Decision Evaluation'; Hershey and Baron, 'Judgment by Outcomes: When Is It Justified?'; Alicke, 'Culpable Control and the Psychology of Blame.'; Lagnado and Channon, 'Judgments of Cause and Blame'; Zultan, Gerstenberg, and Lagnado, 'Finding Fault'; Guglielmo and Malle, 'Enough Skill to Kill'; Schlenker et al., 'The Triangle Model of Responsibility.'; Rogers et al., 'Causal Deviance and the Ascription of Intent and Blame'.

[1592] Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe, 'A Theory of Blame'.

[1593] E.g. Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance'; Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game'; Hansson, 'Defensive Semiotic Strategies in Government'; Hansson, 'Brexit and Blame Avoidance'; Hansson, 'Discursive Strategies of Blame Avoidance in Government'.

[1594] E.g. Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game'; Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance'; Hansson, 'Discursive Strategies of Blame Avoidance in Government'.

removing perpetrators as in 'no-blaming'). It thus provides a toolkit for political communicators wanting to defray blame and its vilifying effects; moreover, it opens a research agenda into how discursive practices work and may be mitigated. Further research could test the effectiveness of each of these strategies in contesting blame and its vilifying effects.

The present research also identifies a new informal fallacy in 'bad-be-gone', the notion that removing a disliked person will make one's problems disappear, that—like scapegoating—appears in connection with blame.[1595] This is primarily a practical contribution, adding to the toolset of reasoning, but may have broad application in depolarisation, contesting blame, assisting in reframing of interpersonal disputes at all levels, and re-centring attention on victims as those who suffer the most. This last is important given the present research has shown that exogenous blame appears to distract attention from victims—thus empirically verifying the positions of Ryan and Resodihardjo.[1596]

10.3.4.   Mediation of effects

Claims by organisations such as Cambridge Analytica suggest that micro-targeting audiences with messages according to their underlying characteristics can help manipulate them towards a desired (electoral) outcome.[1597] Similar notions appear in previous blame research, with suggestions that Just World Beliefs are correlated with higher levels of endogenous blaming,[1598] or that less agreeable people should both (re)blame more and experience more anger as a result of the blame they do.[1599] (See 2.3.8.)

With the exception of Just World Beliefs, where this research *contradicted* prior work (discussed in 10.5), no evidence for these claims was found. E4: Blame and underlying characteristics comprehensively demonstrated that it is not what we *are*, but what we *know* that appears to mediate the vilifying effects of blame.[1600] This is seen with voting preference in E3, where VP Leavers read blame of the EU and become annoyed at the EU, while VP Remainers were instead annoyed at the text author. People with environmental affiliations—for instance, by identifying as a Greens supporter—acted differently again after reading about the harmful environmental situation in the vignettes. This points to the need for a deep understanding of context when analysing blame. Moreover, future blame research must gather information about the discourses to which people have already been

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[1595] Formal fallacies are based on structure, while informal fallacies are based on content. Bennett, *Logically Fallacious*.

[1596] Ryan, *Blaming the Victim*; Resodihardjo, *Crises, Inquiries and the Politics of Blame*.

[1597] Wylie, *Mindf*ck*; Cambridge Analytica, 'Select 2016 Campaign-Related Documents'; Kaiser, 'Written Evidence'.

[1598] E.g. Lerner and Simmons, 'Observer's Reaction to the" Innocent Victim"'.

[1599] Meier and Robinson, 'Does Quick to Blame Mean Quick to Anger?'

[1600] This complements the findings of Hobolt and Tilley, who state that "citizens rely on their in-group biases when making judgements about who is to blame". The present research goes beyond this to understand how such 'biases' circumscribe vilification—not just perceptions of responsibility—and by considering exogenous third-party blame rather than blame emerging within the individual themselves. Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*, 141.

subject—political or otherwise—to accurately understand what blame is likely to do in any given situation. This supports existing work on the interaction between cultural discourses and endogenous victim-blaming,[1601] though extends it to situations where the blamee and victim differ, and exogenous blame more broadly.

This research, in considering the effects of exogenous blame on Leavers vs Remainers, supports existing work on partisanship as mediating the effects of blame such as that of Hobolt and Tilley. It thereby complements experimental work on blame attribution and reattribution as discussed in 2.3.6. The example of Leavers with environmental commitments interacting differently with blame verifies discursive approaches that comprehend people's knowledge as constructed and contingent, over those that reify underlying characteristics such as moral foundations or psychometric profiles—at least for blame, and at least for the characteristics examined herein.[1602]

10.3.5.   Emotions and political science

Recent work on emotions in international relations, such as that of Koschut et al, comprehends them as constructed—for instance, as appropriate in a given situation—but does not explain how they are experienced by the individual.[1603] Emotions are therefore nonintuitively divided from the bodies that experience them. For this reason, this work draws from the Theory of Constructed Emotion,[1604] which encompasses both the individual experience and larger social structures (as the site of 'emotion concepts'), meaning there is a direct link between emotions, the human body, and lived experience. The present research firmly embeds itself in literature on emotions as constructed and acts as a 'missing link' in political science, enabling more meaningful discussion of emotions—and what to do about them—in the field going forward. It also adds to the growing literature on the relevance, if not primacy, of emotions when considering human behaviour, including in the political sphere.[1605] Lastly, and curiously, it notes that those with voting preference 'Leave' had a lower level of emotional expressivity than did people of other voting preferences. This unexpected gap appears to be a novel finding, both vis-à-vis Brexit audiences and more widely. It complements the work of Alain Van Hiel et al that shows a link between emotional abilities and right-wing attitudes, and would prove a fascinating topic for future research.

[1601] Becker and Tinkler, '"Me Getting Plastered and Her Provoking My Eyes": Young People's Attribution of Blame for Sexual Aggression in Public Drinking Spaces'; Eigenberg and Policastro, 'Blaming Victims in Cases of Interpersonal Violence'.

[1602] See for example Tilley and Hobolt, 'Is the Government to Blame?'; Hobolt and Tilley, *Blaming Europe?*; Suhler and Churchland, 'Can Innate, Modular "Foundations" Explain Morality?'; Lakoff, *The Political Mind*.

[1603] E.g. Volume edited by Koschut. Koschut, *The Power of Emotions in World Politics*.

[1604] Exemplified by Lisa Feldman Barrett's work and that of her lab, e.g. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

[1605] Haidt's metaphor of a 'cognitive' (reasoning) rider on an 'emotional' elephant is helpful. Consider also Kahneman's 'thinking fast' (heuristically, with emotions as the driver) and slow (systematically). Mercer points out there is no 'rationality' without emotions; one without emotions is incapable of rationality. (Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*; Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*; Mercer, 'Emotional Beliefs'.) This in turn calls for an end to the 'Cartesian divide' that helps render some people and some emotions acceptable, and others unacceptable and therefore ineligible for power. See also critiques of this divide in the work of Emmy Eklundh, amongst others. Eklundh, *Emotions, Protest, Democracy*.

10.4.   Theory-driven reflections on disrupting the blame|vilification link

E5 identified some of the ways in which the Brexit campaigns and public alike contested blame. These were ways to 'undo' blame in a sense, and thereby prevent concordant vilification from being possible.

Based on the Theory of Constructed Emotions ('TCE') used in this research,[1606] it is also possible to envisage ways in which the *emotions* provoked by blame are disrupted, such that blame can still take place but vilification does not.[1607] This involves modifications to underlying 'feeling structures' and rules that circumscribe what emotions are appropriate and when.[1608] Per Constructing villains and emotions, people experience an emotion when a particular emotion prediction wins over others based on what emotion has successfully kept somebody alive and functioning in similar situations in the past. They are constructed based on a combination of certain *knowledge* (including emotion concepts), *context*, and *affect* (bodily information).

This notion of emotions as actively *predicted* and constructed, rather than passively received, is important.[1609] It means that when somebody experiences 'villain-type feelings' towards a party, they are more likely to predict those emotions towards that same party in similar situations in future; the emotional prediction becomes 'stronger', and vilification entrenched. If it were possible to problematise and even disrupt the blame|vilification link, it could help to reduce affective polarisation—where people do not like those of the 'other side'—as experienced in countries including the UK.

This section therefore gives brief consideration to several of the methods by which 'villain-type feelings' could be mitigated or prevented from happening, per TCE—whether in the UK, EU, or elsewhere.[1610] It thereby complements E5 in developing a toolkit that may help to redress political outcomes such as affective polarisation, manipulation via blame, or even further EU-exits.

[1606] Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.; see also 3.3 Constructing emotions.

[1607] Note also discussion in 2.3.7 Blame is emotional; Sher claims we do not get angry in the same way when blaming a loved one. Sher, *In Praise of Blame*.

[1608] Sasley, '"On Monday, Our National Humiliation Will Be over. We Will Finish with Orders from Abroad" – Status, Emotions, and the SYRIZA Government's Rhetoric in the Greek Sovereign Debt Crisis', 76. See 3.3.2 Feeling structures. Note that change is possible in social reality, which is only 'relatively stable' when compared to the natural world (Danermark et al., *Explaining Society*.). There is already some evidence of emotional contestation in the survey-experiment responses in E3: Effects, where for example people felt 'good' after reading a blame-containing vignette rather than recording any villain-type emotion or compassion.

[1609] See 3.3 Constructing emotions.

[1610] Neither inoculating against disinformation nor changing cultural narratives, e.g. 'Rescue narratives' involving heroes rescuing victims from villains, are considered here. See though Lakoff, *The Political Mind*.

10.4.1.   Changing affect

One of the components of constructing an emotion is 'affect'—embodied information. It implies that making people feel better physically can disrupt negative emotions. For example, if a person associates being in a certain place with stress, then changing their location (and therefore sensory information and predictions) can disrupt stress predictions.[1611] It is the difference between arguing when stranded by the side of the road at 3am in the rain, and arguing in a cosy location while well-rested and with a nice cup of tea. By making people feel *physically* good, they are less susceptible to villain-type emotions; the blame|vilification link could thus be disrupted. This calls for policy that prioritises quality of life, including good health and mental health care, and ensuring people's ability to meet their basic needs.[1612]

It is unlikely in the extreme that Britain Stronger in Europe ('BSIE') as the Remain campaign was in a position to improve the affective situation of UK voters; however, individuals could have chosen to consume confronting, blame-containing materials whilst in a state and location that would see them less likely to feel bad, disrupting potential vilification as an outcome of that blame.[1613] Politicians in other contexts may aim for affect-improving policies that prevent blame-related manipulation and disruption by challenger parties and bad actors.

10.4.2.   Emotional granularity and improving 'emotional intelligence'

Emotion concepts can vary from person to person and have various degrees of granularity (specificity).[1614] This is the difference between feeling general 'sadness' or a more fine-grained 'despair', 'loss', or 'saudade'—each with their own prescriptions for action. Knowing we are 'hangry' not 'angry' means we can recognise the need to eat, and thereby relieve the hanger; granularity is related to improved outcomes for the individual. Barrett et al have found a correlation between greater negative emotion granularity and "greater emotion regulation, especially as emotion intensity increas[es]".[1615]

[1611] Other activities can be undertaken by people so that they can disrupt their own affective experience, such as taking a break, getting fresh air, doing exercise, practicing mindfulness meditation or yoga. E.g. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*. Addressing the mind-body link is also the basis of somatic therapy. E.g. Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*.

[1612] This may be particularly important for younger groups, as people's interoceptive ability—the ability to link internal body sensations to emotions—lowers from midlife onwards. Older people's emotions are somewhat less related to affective experiences. MacCormack et al., 'Aging Bodies, Aging Emotions'.

[1613] Note that per 5.4 Who voted for Brexit?, Leavers had poorer health, were more likely to be below lower-middle class, live in areas with fiscal cuts, be retired or living on benefits (or working blue collar jobs), and have lower levels of life satisfaction. This implies they may generally experience more negative affect and therefore be more prone to constructing negative emotions; this is beyond the scope of the present research.

[1614] See 3.3.3.d) Emotions as concepts.

[1615] Barrett et al., 'Knowing What You're Feeling and Knowing What to Do about It', 719.. See also Kircanski et al, who showed that arachnophobes who were asked to uses phrases talking about their feelings ("I feel

Emotional granularity can be improved via methods including learning new emotion concepts intentionally (emotional/mental health education; explicitly studying words for emotions);[1616] being exposed to new emotion concepts via pursuits such as reading, drama, art, or other forms of human expression;[1617] talking about feelings with others to fine-tune shared concepts; and introspection (including therapy such as talk-based therapies that help people to identify their feelings in a given situation, practicing mindfulness, gratitude, and yoga).[1618] These can be undertaken at both individual and group levels, for instance via updating educational curriculums, and funding and destigmatisation of mental health initiatives. Improving emotional intelligence is elsewhere associated with improved communication and conflict resolution.[1619]

There is also the possibility of developing an emotion concept specific to blame. As 'hangry' prescribes eating something, a blamee-specific annoyance (for example) could prescribe focusing on the underlying situation, and/or helping the victims, rather than just the perpetrator.[1620] This would not necessarily preclude the 'compassion backhand' from occurring.[1621]

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anxious the disgusting tarantula will jump on me") were able to approach closer to said tarantula and to act less scared, than were individuals who were asked to reappraise the situation ("Looking at the little spider is not dangerous for me") or think about something else ("There is a television in front of my couch in the den"). Kircanski, Lieberman, and Craske, 'Feelings into Words', 3. 'Emotional regulation' refers to "processes that are engaged when individuals try to influence the type or amount of emotion they (or others) experience, when they (or others) have them, and how they (or others) experience and express these emotions". Halperin, Sharvit, and Gross, 'Emotion and Emotion Regulation in Intergroup Conflict'.

[1616] E.g. Hoemann et al., 'The N400 Indexes Acquisition of Novel Emotion Concepts via Conceptual Combination'.

[1617] See discussion of emotional acculturation in 3.3.4.a) Culture and acculturation.

[1618] Lieberman et al found that processing an emotional image 'linguistically' by identifying and talking about related emotions, led to reduced response in the brain's limbic system, and that "putting negative feelings into words can help regulate negative experience". Lieberman et al., 'Putting Feelings into Words', 427. Somatic therapy may be of particular interest; this treats emotional disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder through psychotherapy in conjunction with physical forms of therapy and while focusing on physical sensations—i.e. affect. E.g. Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*.; see also Fridman et al., 'Applying the Theory of Constructed Emotion to Police Decision Making'; Kircanski, Lieberman, and Craske, 'Feelings into Words'; Lieberman et al., 'Putting Feelings into Words'; Barrett et al., 'Knowing What You're Feeling and Knowing What to Do about It'; Lindquist, Satpute, and Gendron, 'Does Language Do More than Communicate Emotion?'; Barrett, Lindquist, and Gendron, 'Language as Context for the Perception of Emotion'; Hoemann et al., 'The N400 Indexes Acquisition of Novel Emotion Concepts via Conceptual Combination'; Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*.

[1619] E.g. Fisher and Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating an Agreement without Giving In*; Halperin et al., 'Can Emotion Regulation Change Political Attitudes in Intractable Conflicts?'; Halperin, Sharvit, and Gross, 'Emotion and Emotion Regulation in Intergroup Conflict'; Halperin, 'Emotion, Emotion Regulation, and Conflict Resolution'.

[1620] See Hoemann et al., 'The N400 Indexes Acquisition of Novel Emotion Concepts via Conceptual Combination'., where the authors demonstrate participants' success in labelling and learning new emotion concepts. This has been popularised through books such as the 'Emotionary', a "dictionary of words that don't exist for feelings that do". Sher and Wertz, *The Emotionary*..

[1621] See also footnote 430 on page 1.

10.4.3.   Individual reappraisals

It is possible to actively attempt to reappraise situations in ways that do not generate undesired emotions, for example by changing which part of a situation is the focus—perhaps considering victims rather than perpetrators. This is a form of reframing used to great effect in conflict mediation, where parties are guided to refocus from 'me against you' to 'us against the problem', and from their 'positions' (what they say they want) to their 'interests' (what they actually want).[1622]

Reappraisal forms the basis of therapies such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, and can be initiated via discussion with people who do not share one's perspective—though for this to work, people must be motivated to regulate their emotions.[1623] It is not clear that such motivation would have been present during the Brexit referendum campaign, but does imply ways in which the affective polarisation between Leavers and Remainers can be redressed—by focusing on different parts of their relationship, or underlying commonalities.[1624] Such work is currently being undertaken by a range of organisations at small scales, including (but not limited to) 'More in Common' in the UK, Europe, and US, and Mediators Beyond Borders International practitioners throughout the world.

10.4.4.   'Prospective' reappraisals

Whereas reappraisals above take place *after* something has happened, it is possible to be more proactive. Edward De Bono wrote about 'six thinking hats' that can be used when generating ideas: people mentally put on a green 'creativity' hat, a white 'facts' hat, a yellow 'benefits' hat and so on and then apply associated techniques and ways of thinking.[1625] Prospective reappraisals work in a similar way: people are asked to take different perspectives, and those perspectives can affect people's appraisals even months after exposure. Eran Halperin et al tested this in two studies with Israeli participants, exposing groups to provocative materials about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict while asking them to respond 'like scientists'—making an attempt to be cold, detached, objective, and analytic.[1626] Notably, "even 5 months after the manipulation, participants in the reappraisal condition continued to feel less anger toward Palestinians than control participants did, and expressed more support for peaceful politics."[1627] Taking a new perspective, or reappraising a situation while inhabiting another set of emotion concepts (as those of a scientist) can therefore have an enduring effect. This notion could be used to encourage people to read otherwise-inflammatory materials, such as those including blame, 'like a scientist'.

[1622] Fisher and Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating an Agreement without Giving In*.
[1623] Halperin et al., 'Can Emotion Regulation Change Political Attitudes in Intractable Conflicts?'
[1624] The organisation More in Common show that UK voters can be divided into seven groups with overlapping perspectives and possible alliances, and not just the two of Leave/Remain or Conservative/Labour. More in Common, 'Britain's Choice, More in Common's New Report on the UK'.
[1625] De Bono, *Six Thinking Hats*.
[1626] Halperin et al., 'Can Emotion Regulation Change Political Attitudes in Intractable Conflicts?'
[1627] Halperin et al., 4.

10.4.5.   Media and actor reframing

What people focus on changes how they feel.[1628] By focusing on a different part of a situation, the media can then play a role in affecting audiences' emotional experiences, with earlier framing more effective than later framing.[1629] This implies that focusing on situations and/or victims prior to considering perpetrators may help avoid vilification via blame. The media can also show different perspectives to generate new interpretations of events. This highlights a need for independent media who subscribe to norms of journalistic integrity, and the negative consequences of clickbait style headlines that give one inflammatory perspective.[1630] In the Brexit context, this would have required that people consume quality journalism, avoiding disinformation or provocative content.[1631] The same lessons may be applied elsewhere.

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While these strategies may prove helpful in the longer-term, they could not generally have been implemented by the Remain campaign. Individuals could have taken steps to reduce the villain-type feelings they experienced as an outcome of blame—but to do so, they would have needed to both *know* about the strategies, and be motivated to implement them. It is not clear that this would be the case. The strategies instead inform *future* policy where there is a desire to reduce vilification via blame, whether in the UK or elsewhere, with specific calls to improve voters' quality of life, regulate and support journalism, fund endeavours that help people learn new emotion concepts—for example, arts and culture access and education—and ensure adequate access to health and mental healthcare. It also points to possibilities for reconciliation between Leavers and Remainers—or Democrats and Republicans, for instance—through employment of reappraisal and mediative reframing techniques.

10.5.   Recommendations for further research

The present research has noted several challenges and limitations.[1632] Primary is the problem of establishing a direct relationship between a particular set of words and any given effect, because people, and social reality, are complicated. While use of mixed methods enabled demonstration of vilification as a result of blame, without knowing a

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[1628] E.g. Blame diverted attention from victims and was associated with more annoyance. This appeared particularly effective for people who disagreed with the blame, as for VP Remainers after reading the blame-EU vignette.

[1629] Halperin, Sharvit, and Gross, 'Emotion and Emotion Regulation in Intergroup Conflict'.

[1630] E.g. Marantz, *Antisocial*.

[1631] Interestingly, social media networks including Facebook have since taken steps to demote content from pages or groups that publish clickbait, sensationalised claims, and 'engagement bait' that primarily aims to have people engage with the content and thus reach a greater audience. See article from former UK Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg—now Vice President of Global Affairs at Facebook. Clegg, 'You and the Algorithm'.

[1632] See also 4.6 Limitations and mitigation.

person's underlying preferences and the discourses to which they have already been subjected, it is difficult to predict whether any given individual will vilify the 'correct' blamee as given by a third party. Thus this research shows that blame makes villains in politics; it shows that this may be mediated by the audience and mitigated via contestation strategies; but its predictive powers are limited to where audiences' existing preferences are known (though such information tends to be known to political campaigners and canvassers). Further research that takes place over the course of a campaign would help to supplement the findings of this research, particularly by focusing on swing voters. The latter may not be *committed* to an existing story, and thus they would provide further insight into how blame makes villains.[1633] Collecting data over the course of a campaign, rather than after it has ended as in the current research, would enable location of *shifts* in beliefs and voting preferences, seeing vilification via blame in action. Conversely, testing 'how much' blame is needed before people with existing beliefs change their minds could be of interest, though raises ethical concerns.[1634]

On a more optimistic front, despite the furore over Cambridge Analytica, E4: Blame and underlying characteristics suggests that psychometric targeting may not be effective, at least for exogenous blame, and at least for the characteristics measured in this research. It showed little if any correlation between underlying characteristics such as agreeability and the villain-making effects of blame, whether as located in emotions, victim (un)creation, or (re)blaming. That said, the survey-experiment did not attempt to gather information on 'conscientiousness' or the 'dark triad' characteristics that were targeted by Cambridge Analytica,[1635] so there remains a possibility that these exceptionally do mediate or moderate the effects of blame on audiences. This could be investigated in further research, given Cambridge Analytica's model and data continues to be used by its partner organisations.[1636] That research should be extended to include right wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation, as each of these is associated with lower emotional abilities (such as granularity and regulation).[1637] This is important, given blame engenders villain-type emotions in audiences.

[1633] This echoes Chong and Druckman's concerns regarding the duration of framing effects, whereby examining impacts over time, where individuals are "exposed to streams of competing information" would permit researchers to examine "how various rates of learning and forgetting influence the magnitude of framing effects", and moreover identify those "conditions under which individuals might become inoculated against attempts to manipulate their preferences." Chong and Druckman, 'Framing Theory', 118.

[1634] It could also be interesting to investigate why non-voters endogenously (re)blamed at a lower rate than those with voting preference Remain or Leave; what does this say to the nature of apathy and vilification via blame? See 7.3.3 (Re)blaming in the .

[1635] Wylie, *Mindf*ck*.. The 'dark triad' are Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism. 'Conscientiousness', like 'agreeability', is one of the 'Big Five' used in personality measurement. The other three are openness, extraversion, and neuroticism.

[1636] See 5.3 The Brexit assemblage.

[1637] Emotional abilities are "ability to (a) identify emotions; (b) understand emotions in terms of the likely appraisals, action tendencies, bodily reactions, expressions, and feelings that are elicited by goal-relevant situations; and (c) know how to regulate emotions"; Van Hiel et al., 'The Relationship between Emotional

One notable exception was Just World Beliefs, where there *was* a correlation with the vilifying effects of blame. The present research found that, contrary to existing work,[1638] people who do *not* see the world as an essentially 'just and fair' are more annoyed as a result of blame. Further research could investigate how having higher Just World Beliefs helps *mitigate* blame's causal power to make villains.[1639]

A novel finding of the present research was the role of compassion for victims in vilifying blamees—the compassion backhand. While this was apparent amongst focus group/interview participants, the effect was not anticipated, and questions on the survey-experiment did not do much to verify its prevalence. Pfattheicher et al suggest that people turn against perpetrators when they experience compassion for victims but are unable to help those victims;[1640] SE responses included emotions such as sadness and sympathy that indicate compassion for victims, with people saying they wished to help victims and feel like they 'had tried', but there was no follow-up question asking what they would do if they were unable to assist victims. This was partly a result of SE *questions*, and partly of overall design—whereas FGI participants consumed blame over time, and likewise 'turned against' the EU *over time* as a result of compassion for victims, SE participants read one vignette featuring blame and simply reacted. That element of time and space to change their mind or fail to help victims was not apparent. Longitudinal research could assist in verifying the compassion backhand is not a post hoc rationalisation, while FGIs would help identify conditions under which it appears. Further research in this area then necessitates a mixed method design like in the current project.

An unexpected finding in E4 was that exogenous blaming of the self appears to have distinct effects to blaming of an Other amongst at least some groups—and interestingly, the emotions of shame and guilt associated with blame of the self in previous research were not apparent.[1641] It was posited that this may be partly because, in the survey-experiment, the 'blame-selves' vignette did not blame a specific individual, but rather the individual reader *amongst others*.[1642] Nevertheless, it appears that exogenous blame of one's own group may produce yet different results to those when an Other or the individual self is blamed. This is interesting in light of FGI participants blaming Remainers for abusing them for their support

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Abilities and Right-Wing and Prejudiced Attitudes.', 1. See also 10.4 Theory-driven reflections on disrupting the blame|vilification link.

[1638] Lambert and Raichle, 'The Role of Political Ideology in Mediating Judgments of Blame in Rape Victims and Their Assailants', 861. Lerner and Simmons, 'Observer's Reaction to the" Innocent Victim"'. See E4: Blame and underlying characteristics.

[1639] That said, what are 'Just World Beliefs' if not another discourse about how the world is and should be? See also 8.5 The stories we tell.

[1640] Pfattheicher, Sassenrath, and Keller, 'Compassion Magnifies Third-Party Punishment.'

[1641] Neumann, 'The Causal Influences of Attributions on Emotions'; Sheikh and McNamara, 'Insights from Self-Blame and Victim Blaming'; Smith et al., 'In Search of the" Hot" Cognitions'; Lerner and Tiedens, 'Portrait of the Angry Decision Maker'.; though see also Stuewig et al., 'Shaming, Blaming, and Maiming: Functional Links among the Moral Emotions, Externalization of Blame, and Aggression'., who find shame correlates with externalisation of blame.

[1642] 'We' did this. See also full vignettes at Annex: Vignettes, and analysis of the vignette in 7.3.1 Analysing the vignette.

for Leave, per E3—what would this mean for an individual Remainer who was member of that group, or entrenchment as a member? Further research could prove enlightening, specifically insofar as identifying the ways in which we unmake our *selves* as villains in politics, and what this means for how we see ourselves and the 'other side'.

An additional curious finding was the gap in emotional expressivity between VP Leavers and Remainers. It raises questions as to whether some people are more manipulable than others—including via blame—or more or less able to regulate the emotions that result, and where this difference in emotional expressivity comes from. Are people Leavers because they are less emotionally expressive, or the other way around? And given the link between the ability to label one's emotions and the ability to *regulate* them, what does this imply for the role of emotions in UK politics specifically, and for political messaging more generally? Does a similar gap in emotional expressivity divide liberal and conservative voters in other locations and contexts? This emotional silence, in addition to those items discussed in 10.4 Theory-driven reflections on disrupting the blame|vilification link, would prove a fascinating topic for future research.

E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation found several new ways in which blame was and was not contested by audiences and campaigns alike in the Brexit case study. One puzzle that remains is how *effective* these strategies are in mitigating the effects of blame. How much credit can counterbalance how much blame? Does naming and shaming blame mitigate its vilifying effects? What about no-blaming? Or identifying fallacies such as scapegoating and bad-be-gone? Such research would be entirely novel, given previous work on blame contestation in politics has been limited to just blame-shifting and -avoidance by politicians who themselves are blamed (the effects of which have not been extensively studied),[1643] and provide a valuable toolkit for that is rendered possible as a result of the current research. The theory-driven reflections outlaid above could likewise be verified through further research.

10.6.   Impact planning

The final step in conducting a critical study, per 4.2.4 Eight steps for conducting a critical study, is considering "practical application of analytical results".[1644] This has already been partly addressed in E5, where the implications of blame—and ineffective contestation thereof—were discussed vis-à-vis the Brexit campaign, leading to specific communication and campaign recommendations that would help prevent further EU-exits, and lessons that may be applied to other political contexts. Likewise, the theory-driven reflections above suggested particular policies as a result of this research that would help reduce affective polarisation and manipulation via blame, in the UK, EU, or elsewhere. Finally, this section outlines an impact plan that translates the research into real-world applications. This brief

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[1643] E.g. Hood, 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game'; Weaver, 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance'.
[1644] Wodak and Reisigl, 'The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)', 33.

plan is based on established impact categories[1645] and outlines what I as a researcher intend on undertaking. This does not mean that other impact opportunities could not exist. Items selected are based on their applicability to mitigating vilification via blame, particularly as it pertains to reducing affective polarisation and the prevention of further EU-exits as a particular concern of mine, and based on the specific expertise gained in the course of this thesis. The lessons of this work are though envisaged to be applicable more broadly, meaning there are multitudinous potential outcomes that redress affective polarisation and manipulation via bad actors elsewhere—whether it relates to political membership as in the Brexit case, situations such as climate change inaction and denial resulting from blaming strategies, vaccination hesitance associated with blaming of doctors and academics, and so on.

10.6.1.   Political/policy impact

My research has identified several areas for improvement when campaigns are engaging with blame, as exemplified by the Remain campaign, and areas where communication could be improved. Particularly, there is a clear need for a more activist communication strategy from the EU institutions, which claims credit and enables the EU to constitute itself as a heroic entity rather than simply waiting to be cast as a villain. Further, the EU may be able to defray blame against it by having fora in which citizens can have their complaints heard.[1646] I have developed networks with political communication professionals in the course of my research, and have several standing invitations to consult. While availing of these opportunities, I will prepare briefs aimed at improvements in EU communications specifically, and prepare a toolkit for engaging with blame for campaigns more generally.

10.6.2.   Academic/theoretical impact

This work has opened a new research agenda into the vilifying effects of blame specifically, and discursive practices more generally, with opportunities for further research identified above. In order for the present research to reach academic audiences and therefore prove impactful, I aim to publish several papers in open-access peer-reviewed journals. In the first instance, these would share the findings of E3: Effects, E4: Blame and underlying characteristics, and E5: Can EU not? Limits and contestation.

I would like to extend the present research through an additional case study, so that I may later write a public-facing book; also investigating the effectiveness of contestation strategies in mitigating blame, including verifying whether training in identifying the 'bad-be-gone' fallacy—a fallacy intervention—helps refocus attention to situations rather than perpetrators. To this end, I have been seeking the advice of workplace mentors[1647] around

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[1645] Particularly Godin and Doré's typology of categories of impact, Lakey, Rodgers, and Scoble, 'What Are the Different Characteristics of Research Impacts', 38.

[1646] It is possible that the Conference on the Future of Europe will constitute such a venue, though this is not an *ongoing* forum. See also Annex: Accountability in the FGIs.

[1647] While completing my PhD, I have been working as Executive Director of the International Mediation Institute, a prestigious worldwide organisation with the vision of professional mediation worldwide. As a

the establishment of a lab in conjunction with mediation institutes that would permit for the development of practice-based solutions grounded in research that are of practical use both in interpersonal mediation and depolarisation at societal levels.[1648]

10.6.3. Cultural impact

In February 2021 I was an invited speaker at a Rotary International peace conference, where I spoke on the topic of 'building a mediative culture'. This drew together my knowledge of mediation principles with my work on blame and concordant vilification, on the basis of parallels between interpersonal conflicts on the small scale—as in dispute mediation or in peacebuilding efforts—and societal conflicts. In mediated disputes, as on the wider scale, there is polarisation of both *positions* (what we say we want; political desires and values) and *people* (polarisation *against* the other party and destruction of the relationship; affective polarisation).

In mediated disputes, low-sophistication users tend to view conflicts as zero-sum, and 'fairness' as them winning. They want to defeat the disliked other and get what they want. High-sophistication users, who have been socialised into the mediation process, are able to move beyond their surface 'positions' to 'interests' (what they *actually* want) and 'needs' (why they want it); are less adversarial, more collaborative and creative, and focus on the relationship rather than winning.[1649] That is, by learning different conflict resolution strategies and communication styles, individuals are able to overcome polarisation at the micro-scale. What would happen were mediative principles taught at a wider scale?[1650] They are already used by global actors in resolving other types of conflict, so why not teach such skills to citizens?[1651]

To this end, in the medium term, I intend on working with mediators and peacebuilders to promote such a mediative culture, grounded in this and other research as above. This would involve speaking with a wide range of stakeholders, potential lobbying activities, developing toolkits, and writing op-eds for the public.

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result, I have developed extensive networks of mediators and peace-builders, as well as gaining the support of organisations working at the intersection of polarisation and mediation.

[1648] In the words of Mediators Beyond Borders International's CEO Prabha Sankaranarayan about my research, working "at both the grass-roots and grass-tops".

[1649] Hutchinson and Litchfield, 'The GPC North America Report'.

[1650] Mediative principles would include moving beyond positions to underlying interests, respecting mutual humanity; inclusion and respect for others; cooperation and collaboration; expanding the 'pie' by generating creative solutions that meet people's needs rather than zero-sum division; and overall lead to relationship transformation. See for a primer Fisher and Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating an Agreement without Giving In*; Moore, *The Mediation Process*., and on non-violent communication Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication*.

[1651] Some fantastic initiatives in this space are already being undertaken. In April 2021 I had the privilege of presenting at an international mediation conference based in Argentina, where the program 'Agree Online' was demonstrated to delegates. This teaches young people to resolve disputes online through mediation, acting both as advice-seekers and mediators. See their website at Ashwall, 'Agree Online'.

Overall, this research has found two ways in which exogenous blame makes villains in politics: directly where it engenders villain-type feelings such as anger and annoyance towards a blamee, and indirectly where compassion for victims turns people back on the ostensible perpetrator. It shows that blame's causal power to make villains is mediated by audiences' existing knowledge and beliefs, and may be mitigated using a rich suite of contestation strategies that can be employed both by campaigns and audiences. The present work therefore has salience, if not urgency, for redressing vilification and affective polarisation against political actors and their supporters alike.

References

The below image (Figure 69) shows the genders of unique first authors cited in this work. Organisations are excluded, as are two people whose gender was unavailable. 35% of unique first authors were women, and 65% men.

Figure 69: First author gender breakdown
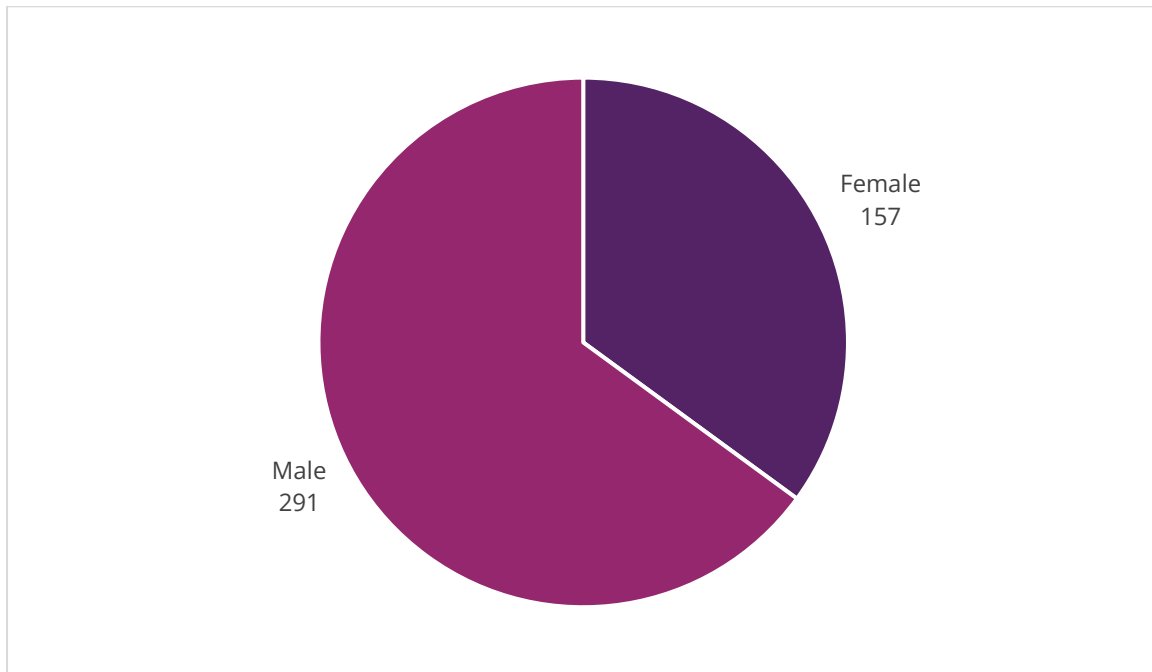
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