

Collective victimhood in populist media about Brexit: Rage against the machine?

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Background

- referendum 23 June 2016
- venomous campaign and public debate



image from twitter.com

- anti-immigration sentiment, low trust in politicians (Abrams & Travaglino, 2018)
- racism, defence, and betrayal (Durrheim et al., 2018)
- collective victimhood (Vollhardt, 2020)
- competitive victimhood (Noor et al., 2008)
- relative deprivation (Abrams & Grant, 2012)
- relative gratification (Dambrun et al., 2006)

Methods



image from i24news.tv

- media analysis
 - British news outlets
 - around 2016
 - ca. 125 pieces in main data
 - 3 additional student projects
- thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)
- discourse analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987)

Study 1: Andrew Layton

- newspaper & social media comments, before & after

sovereignty under threat

the arrogant elite

“Project Fear”

saboteurs

Brexit means Brexit

“our parliament will be nothing more than an EU department implementing their rules and laws. ... we’ll be shackled to an unelected group of faceless people”

“Get rid of remoaner traitors that are working against the national interest.”

Study 2: Anesu Jemwa

- left-wing & right-wing publications & reader comments

out of touch

“these widespread misconceptions are the result of a concentrated campaign by left-liberal political, media and cultural elites to depict British society the way they wish it to be rather than as it is.” (Daily Mail, 6 June 2022)

weakness

“Mrs May’s deal fails to free us of EU trading rules and would keep us in a permanent Customs Union. It would create great uncertainty for British business and frustrate our ability to make trade deals across the world. Theresa May would split the Union... This contradicts her oft-stated intention to protect ‘our precious union’” (Daily Telegraph, 12 December 2018)

fear

“When British voters eventually cast their ballot in the In/Out referendum, the EU’s near-criminal failure to protect its 500million citizens from extremist killers will be one of the deciding factors” (The Sun, 23 March 2016)

Study 2: Anesu Jemwa

- left-wing & right-wing publications & reader comments

control

“Robert Oxley, of Business for Britain, said: ‘A majority of businesses are unhappy with the EU status quo and want to see the UK take control back.’”
(Daily Mirror, 17 September 2015)

mistreatment

“... Brexit has indeed mined a generation of scattered grievances and forged them into a single demand to leave the EU and that immigration was one of those grievances.” (The Guardian, 14 December 2020)

Study 3: India Volkers Poile

- Mail Online, June 2016

threat of
immigration

“What is certain is that if nothing is done to curb the numbers, Britain will cease to be recognisably British even sooner than officially recorded trends suggest” (Daily Mail, 2 June 2016 – 21 days before the referendum)

a Great
Britain

“A vote to leave would enable us to fulfil our destiny as one of the world’s greatest trading nations [...]. But there is nothing petty-minded about being proud of our traditions and history as a great seafaring country, with enterprise in our DNA, unafraid to reach out to Europe and beyond. [...] Our ancestors shed oceans of blood to uphold and defend this country’s right to govern itself, pass its own laws, raise its own taxes and — most pertinently — get rid of politicians when they abuse our trust” (Daily Mail, 21 June 2016 – 2 days before the referendum)

Study 3: India Volkers Poile

- Mail Online, June 2016

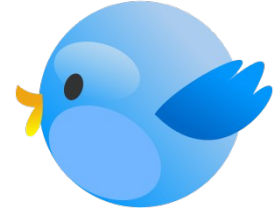
championing
the everyman

“This is a magnificent day for Great Britain. We should celebrate our new freedom — and pay tribute to the countless ordinary Britons who showed so much more wisdom than the self-serving political and financial elites that for too long have ignored their anxieties and aspirations” (Daily Mail, 24 June 2016 – 1 day after the referendum)

Next steps

- analysis of the main data set, potentially with another researcher
- potentially another student project focusing on the aftermath

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thisisablogabouteverything.wordpress.com/

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