

UoMSJS



University of Manchester Student Journal of Sociology

Contents

UOMSJS Team.....	3
Editorial Note.....	4
Long Reads.....	5
Differential Educational Attainment in Adopted Children.....	6
Doris Begley	
Gender Differences in Political Interest and Participation in the U.K. from 2008 to 2016.....	17
Liubov Pilshchikova	
Short Reads	32
Exploring Why the Concepts of Identity and Community have become so Significant in Contemporary Social Thought.....	33
Xueqing Wu	
Queer Time and Place: Locating a Backward Future Through the Construction of a Queer Archive in Alison Bechdel’s Fun Home.....	38
Kimberley Mather	

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Editorial Note

Welcome to the first edition of the University of Manchester Student Journal of Sociology. This is an ambitious homegrown journal, for students and by students. The articles in this journal are edited by postgraduate students at the University of Manchester and reviewed by postgraduates locally, nationally and internationally.

This journal is created with three aims in mind:

To give sociology students the opportunity to cultivate their critical and creative faculties: by practising writing, reviewing and publishing. Skills that prepare them for a professional and academic career.

To provide a platform for sociology students to communicate and interact with other sociology students within the UK and across the world. We believe this will enrich the sociological conversation with keen and diverse perspectives.

To include students of all skill levels and abilities. Furthermore, we at UoMSJS strive to make our journal accessible to diverse learners, so that no one who loves to learn struggles to be a part of this journal, as reader or contributor.

The University of Manchester Student Journal of Sociology invites students of all levels in the UoM Sociology department to submit their work. The journal also extends an invitation to PhD students and post-doctorates to peer review articles.

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Long Reads

Differential Educational Attainment in Adopted Children

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Introduction

Informal adoption has always existed in the UK but had no legal basis until the Adoption of Children Act (1926), thereafter the practice of adoption has been increasingly regulated by law to protect the rights of children, biological parents, and adoptive parents. Despite this, the acknowledgement within academic fields of the social and psychological implications on both parents and children is relatively recent.

In 2014, for the first time, the Department for Education published data gathered from school censuses on children adopted from care on or after 30th December 2005. This data showed that, by key stage 2, only 49% of adopted children met age related expectations for reading, writing, and maths, compared to 75% of non-adopted children. This attainment gap continues to increase as children get older, so that 6% of previously looked after people attend university, compared with just over 50% of the general population of young people (DfE, 2015).

In 2018, AdoptionUK published a survey stating that 80% of adoptive parents feel that their children require more educational guidance than their peers, and 60% feel that because of this their child does not have an equal chance in school. Psychologically, 38% of children in adoptive families experience social, emotional, and mental health difficulties (Biehal et al., 2010), with 50% of adopted children having needed educational psychological involvement, and 55% receiving CAMHS involvement (Sturgess & Selwyn, 2007).

Adopted and previously looked after young people also encounter poorer outcomes in terms of employment (Hook & Courtney, 2011) and health (Dixon, 2008) than the general population, and are over-represented in the homeless (Davison & Burris, 2014) and prison populations (Centre for Social Justice, 2015); outcomes which are known to be associated with low educational attainment. A report from Public Health England showed that children with better mental wellbeing are more likely to be high achievers, make more progress in primary school, and be more engaged in secondary education (Brooks, 2014).

Despite this evidence, the overall mental wellbeing of children and young adults in the UK is in decline due to the stress and pressures of exams and increasing demands from an ever-expanding curriculum. For children who have previously experienced a traumatic event in early childhood, these added stresses can trigger a 'fight or flight' response, which too often results in a child's disengagement from education. This is because

the psychological impact of these early life experiences can be difficult to escape, and our education system often does too little to accommodate their unique challenges. Every adopted child has in some way suffered the loss of their birth family; the majority are removed due to abuse or neglect, at an average age of 3 years (DfE & PAC-UK, 2018).

Despite these very obvious issues and an ever-increasing number of children adopted from care, the majority of research on this topic has only occurred within the past 5 years. Previously, adoption research had been quantitative research based on statistical analysis (DfE, 2014), with little regard for the children as complex individuals. More recently, however, a series of reports (AdoptionUK, 2018) has used qualitative interview methods to investigate the emotional wellbeing of adopted children in schools, with recognition of its impact on educational attainment. This increase in qualitative data has led to a series of policy changes to support schools' accommodation of adopted children, such as training, consultation, and advice for school staff.

As well as this, the Pupil Premium Plus was introduced in 2014 to provide financial aid to schools supporting adopted children. In 2017, the introduction of the Children and Social Work act required schools to provide a designated officer to promote the educational achievement of adopted children, as well as requiring local authorities to provide advice and information. These changes are in response to a lack of involvement in educational funding from the Adoption Support Fund, whose primary goal is to provide therapeutic services for adopted children and their parents.

While every adopted child's situation is different and unique, the extent of the impact of the adoption process on overall educational attainment warrants exploration, since it has been proven that other social factors such as class, gender, and ethnicity can have a deciding impact on educational attainment (Merton, 1948). Within the subgroup of adoption there are further variables that can impact the educational success and mental wellbeing of a child (Brodzinsky, 1993).

This report evaluates the effectiveness of recent policies, systems of support, and measures created to tackle differential educational attainment for adopted children. Based on interviews with a small sample of adoptive parents in Manchester, this report highlights a lack of knowledge and understanding surrounding reasons for differential educational attainment, and a structural deficit in attempting to bridge the gap.

Literature Review

Much research into the field of adoption tends to be based on the psychological, rather than sociological, implications for children and families, as discussed here. Little detailed statistical analysis beyond the contribution of the DfE (2011, 2013) has been undertaken in the UK to identify key factors impacting adopted children's lower attainment, although such work is better established in the USA. Moreover, the implications of recent advancements in social policy in the UK remain to be explored.

Using quantitative data from the 2014 School Census, the Department for Education outline the main differences in educational attainment for adopted children. Key Stage 2 Attainment for Children Recorded as Adopted from Care is the first of its kind, highlighting a knowledge gap surrounding adopted children's attainment. However, these findings are based on self-declaring adoptive parents and, when compared with other data on adoption, it is suggested that these statistics account for only sixty percent of children adopted from care in the UK education system. In response to these findings, the Nuffield Foundation (2015) funded an exploration into the relationship between educational and care factors associated with the progress of children in care, the findings from which can be applied to an extent to adopted children.

The Department for Education (2017) and PAC-UK, an adoption support agency, commissioned a guide outlining how schools and teachers can help bridge the gap between adopted and non-adopted children; an accompanying report was published for consumption by adoptive parents on supporting their child through education, employing a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data. This takes into account the differences in emotional, social, psychological, and educational needs for adopted children, from the perspectives of parents and schools. In addition, Adoption UK (2018) carried out a qualitative survey with over two thousand adoptive parents exploring their perceptions of, attitudes to, and experiences of the UK education system, with focus on mental health as well as attainment. This report focused on bridging the gaps in our understanding, empathy, resources, and knowledge when considering the differential educational and psychological needs of adopted children; finding that 60% of adoptive parents do not feel their child has an equal chance in school, with 69% believing their child's learning is affected by problems with their emotional wellbeing. Similarly, Brooks' (2014) work, drawing on quantitative data from the Department for Education, acknowledges the link between educational attainment and mental & physical health, as well as the involvement and impact of a school's culture, ethos, and environment. However, this report lacks information on the differentiated needs of adopted children.

Brodzinsky's Adjustment to Adoption (1987) outlines the psychological implications and risks associated with adoption, leading to potential complications within more

universal social situations such as education and family life. This article acknowledges a need for reorientation within the field of adoption study to focus on the wellbeing of children as well as their adoptive parents, a recurring theme in more modern adoption literature (Andresen, 1992). Brodzinsky (1993) also identifies gender variables within the subcategory of adopted children, claiming that adopted girls lack in the areas of social interaction and academic success, and tend to have higher levels of psychological disorders. Brodzinsky identifies further variables, including age at adoption, sibling set order (see also Barclay, 2015), pre-placement history (see also Turney & Wildeman, 2017; Nadeem et al., 2017), international adoption (see also Bjorklund & Richardson, 2001), pre-natal conditions and genetic or biological facts, and the style of parenting employed by the adopters. Furthermore, the age at study impacts outcomes, as infant adoptees show little to no difference in temperament, motor-functioning, communication, or development. These differences arise in school-age children and are manifested as significant differences at around six years of age, implying that studies of adoption should avoid generalisations. Overall, adoptees are at risk of higher levels of personality disorders, eating disorders, substance abuse (Lester et al, 2012), ADHD, and learning disabilities.

Testa & Smith (2009) estimate that up to seventy-nine percent of children in foster care have been prenatally exposed to substances such as drugs or alcohol, leading to potential physical, developmental, learning, and behavioural issues (Bada et al, 2007). Rutter's scales for measuring behavioural difficulties (Rutter et al, 1970) are often used to screen for emotional and behavioural problems in children and adolescents, and can be applied to the psychological adjustment of adopted children (Andresen, 1992). A major contributor to the attainment gap highlighted by AdoptionUK (2018) is dyslexia, a learning difficulty caused by multiple genetic and environmental risk factors as they interplay. Extensive research into the neurocognitive influences on dyslexia address its manifestation through variables such as social class (Peterson & Pennington, 2015), yet neglect to consider the major developmental influences an early-age adoption can have on a child's neurological capability.

Evidently, extensive contribution has been made to the field of adoption study by psychologists, as well as social workers, legal scholars, doctors, and economists. Wildeman & Waldfogel (2014) call for a greater sociological involvement in the field due to its theoretical tradition and methodological diversity. From a more sociological perspective, Neil's (2011) study, based on qualitative interviews with adopted children, focuses on the integration of adopted children in social contexts. Neil considers peer groups and bullying, factors which have a large impact on a child's experience of education and, thus, their attainment.

In Heath et al's (1994) longitudinal study of foster children's educational attainment, it was demonstrated that that even children who have left the social care

system struggle to escape from disadvantage, implying that additional educational inputs are required in the future. One possible explanation given for this is the notion of 'self-fulfilling prophecies' (Merton, 1948) arising from low teacher expectations. This notion is cited frequently when discussing the sociological implications of education and attainment as having a lasting impact on a child's psychological and educational wellbeing. For many, this implies a need for improved education on the psychological intricacies and impacts of adoption. With reference to Durkheimian notions of 'social facts' (Durkheim, 1895), Udry (1995) raises a question of 'nature vs nurture' with regards to educational attainment and the biological factors that could underpin these differences. This also raises questions on the exposure to drugs and alcohol in utero and the possible effects later in life on educational attainment, investigated from a medical perspective by Nulman et al (2001). Similarly, Plug & Vijverberg (2003) found that, when considering family income as an environmental factor rather than inherited, at least seventy percent of children's academic ability can be attributed to genetic effects (Behram & Rosenzweig, 2002). Looking into other reasons for differential educational attainment, Hatcher (2006) explores the explanation of class differences in education.

When considering adopted children, it is important to consider the typically higher socio-economic status of their adoptive parents; with reference to Bourdieu's (1986) concept of 'capital', parents with higher socio-economic status have the ability to better support their child through education, as they possess a higher education themselves (Spear, 2009). As well as this, they often possess the economic ability to provide extra, enriching support, a process which Hamilton et al (2007) suggest compensates for their lack of biological ties and the extra challenges of adoption. However, it has been argued that middle class families with high economic and social capital may have difficulty coping with behaviour problems that contradict community norms (Schmidt, Rosenthal, & Bombeck, 1988). Zill (2015) explains the 'paradox of adoption', wherein the plentiful resources and strenuous nurturing efforts of adoptive parents do not produce higher levels of academic achievement, with reference to psychological theory such as attachment theory (Bowlby, 1998), traumatic stress theory, and behaviour genetics.

West (2015) explores the recent centralisation of power in the UK away from local government, drawing on three prominent coalition policy areas: academies, pupil premium, and free part time early education. The Pupil Premium Plus was targeted at children adopted from care and those in care, allowing their schools to provide support 'emotionally, socially, and educationally, to raise their attainment and address their wider needs'. Distinguished from the Pupil Premium grant (2011), designed to help students overcome difficulties caused by economic disadvantage, PP+ (2013) is a grant of £2300 per adopted student per year, allocated to their school. Carrier (1986) acknowledges the expansion of

special educational provision in recent years, providing a structural framework for analysis of special education, seeing it as a way for schools to fulfil their reproductive tasks by differentiating children and allocating different educational treatments. Although outdated, this analysis reinforces the idea that, as adopted children typically suffer behavioural and mental health difficulties, additional support is required within schools. This study could also support the decision by 20% of adoptive parents to send their child to a specialist school (Department for Education & PAC-UK, 2018). Further research into the adoption of SEN children and the impact on families and schools comes from Good (2016), outlining a need for better support throughout the process to bridge the attainment gap of adopted children.

Analysis of existing literature on adoption and educational attainment has identified sizeable gaps in surrounding contemporary knowledge. These gaps, in turn, inform the structure of my qualitative study, providing subtopics necessary for investigation.

Methodology

This research aims to answer two main questions:

What are the reasons for differential educational attainment?

What can be done about this?

Using a small sample of six adoptive parents in Manchester I carried out semi-structured interviews designed to gather opinions and experiences of the UK education system. My research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of recent policies, support, and measures on tackling differential educational attainment for adopted children, as well as uncover any deficiencies in the available systems of support. My interview guide (see appendix) contained themes such as support, relationships, behaviour, choice of school, and overall impressions. These topics would later make up my digitally administered questionnaire.

Previous studies

Previously, adoption research had been quantitative, based on statistical analysis, with little regard for the children as complex individuals. Quantitative research tended to be located in a clinical setting, which entails difficulties when generalizing to the broader population of adoptees. For example, a report from the Nuffield Foundation (2015) used quantitative data to explore the relationship between educational outcomes, care histories, and characteristics using the National Pupil Database and data on Children Looked After in England.

A possible reason for the prevalence of quantitative methods is the reliance of non-clinical studies on small groups of volunteers, or 'convenience' samples, potentially leading to unrepresentative results that are also not generalizable to the broader population of adoptees. For example, in the US, adopted children living with

two parents constitute for only one percent of the total population of children (Brodzinsky, 1993), and so are drastically underrepresented in national surveys.

Due to this and the ethical restrictions when studying children as a subject group, previous research has relied on parents as informants. Longitudinal studies into the effects of adoption risk the development of 'test-wise' subjects, those who have become accustomed to being interviewed, observed, and tested. These subjects will perform better on later tests not because they have developed, but because they have practice and experience of the situation.

Equally significant in longitudinal studies is the effect of 'selective dropout', wherein those who are continually committed to participation tend to be more motivated and generally more well-adjusted, which can subtract from the degree of generalisability of the results. Another issue frequently encountered by researchers studying the effects of adoption is the employment of control or contrast groups within the study; should the control group environment be comparable to the biological family, or the adoptive family?

Little attention is given to the use of tools in sociological research in favour of methodological approaches, while advancements in technology, particularly recording technologies have facilitated changes in sociological methodology. Lee (2004) identifies the lack of any attempt within the discipline to develop an awareness of how recording methods influence the research process. He attributes the popularity of the interview method in sociological research to sound recording since the 1920s. The use of real time recording in my research allowed the development of an organic conversation in which I could be an active participant and focus my attention on the questions rather than the transcription.

Sampling

I opted for snowball, or referral, sampling; a method which has been widely used in qualitative sociological research. This allows the researcher to create a sample through referrals among respondents who share relevant characteristics to the research topic, and those who know of other similar people. Coleman (1958) suggested that this method is particularly suited to sociological research as it demonstrates natural interaction within society, generating a unique type of knowledge of social experience. Because of the inherent involvement of social networks in snowball sampling, the concept of 'social capital' (Bourdieu, 1984) is productive here, in which informants who possess social capital in the form of membership to a group have the ability to share, perform, or embody it for the researcher. This quality was of particular interest to the Chicago School of thought (Waller, 1932), who saw reality as emergent from social interaction, emphasising the importance of viewing the social world from the perspective of its members, especially those previously underrepresented or marginalised in social research. This sampling method

is favourable to those studying a potentially sensitive, underrepresented, or 'hidden' population which requires an element of insider knowledge on the subject.

For my research my initial contact was my mother, an adoptive parent and member of multiple adoption support groups, who reached out to her friends or acquaintances. I was lucky to have visible access to an initial respondent as although the adoptive parent population is not exactly hidden, it is a sensitive and personal topic which participants may be hesitant to discuss with a stranger. This form of 'respondent-driven' sampling can be limiting for the researcher, who is forced to relinquish some element of control to the participants. Another potential limitation of this method is interviewer bias, as the research participants are familiar with myself or my family, some questions could seem too personal to elicit an honest response, an example of the Hawthorne effect.

Despite its many convenient attributes, snowball sampling is somewhat limited in its ability to construct a widely representative sample. I found that my sample was highly localised in the Greater Manchester area, therefore my research provides rich data on a very specific school district. Due to the nature of my sampling method, a high percentage (50%) of my sample was in fact teachers, a potentially unrepresentative statistic. However, this created a more rounded view of the education system, allowing me to view the changes implemented by the DfE from the perspective of both the parent and teacher.

A larger funded study would have the ability to conduct a similar series of interviews across the country, in various school districts, to properly identify national problem areas. A larger study also has the potential to investigate in greater depth the further variables outlined by Brodzinsky (1993) that could contribute to differential behaviour and educational attainment in adopted children, factors which cannot be fully explored in my small scale investigation.

Interviews

To allow a deeper insight into the consequences of social policy and the unique experiences that entail, I employed qualitative methods in the form of semi-structured discovery interviews. The questions used in this research could be considered leading, as their design is based on the policy changes they are intended to evaluate, focusing on specific areas of education. These guided yet flexible conversations allow the respondent to share personal experiences, allowing thematic analysis of the responses to compare and identify recurring themes in their experiences and, ultimately, any issues with the education system as perceived by adoptive parents. Here, some element of structure is necessary so as to ensure cross-case comparability. Similar methods were employed by Komarovskiy (1946) in her study of women in higher education; in-depth interviews were used to study how cultural values intersected with women's gender role attitudes.

Initially, I had considered using the many online

adoption forums to identify a sample and potentially administer questionnaires. Eventually I decided that in order to facilitate a more organic, honest conversation and avoid geographical constraints, I would use face-to-face interviews with existing contacts. As some topics covered may be sensitive, especially to someone with such high involvement in the process, I felt that a face-to-face situation would be easier to navigate. It is also for this reason that I allow the interviewee to refuse to answer any questions, something which I felt would be easier in a face-to-face situation. On consideration, single respondent interviews allowed for individualizing discourses which then had the potential to be analysed for recurring themes.

I had also considered the use of focus groups in my research; however I believe that it would be easier one-to-one, for practical reasons, as assembling a group poses scheduling difficulties. While I had initially hoped that a focus group may allow the respondents to build on one another's comments, I was also mindful of issues surrounding the Hawthorne effect and focus groups, as the possibility of covert competition between parents could lead to inaccurate findings. One interview conducted included an adoptive couple; a situation which allowed them to recount easily their shared experiences with their adopted child, but may have proven problematic in a group of strangers. This couple's child had not been in education for 20 years, creating generational comparability rather than evaluation of policy changes.

I digressed from my outlined plan after the conclusion of my interview period, when I was still receiving replies from potential interviewees. To avoid the loss of their input from my research I devised a short, open-ended questionnaire for self-completion to administer by e-mail, consisting of the main questions I had asked in interviews, alongside the materials I referenced such as the DfE report and consent form (see appendix). This method is advantageous in terms of convenience for both the interviewer and interviewee, increased ability to compare easily between sets of data, and replicability through standardised questions. However it also poses potential problems in terms of understanding both the phrasing of the question and interpretations of the answers, and limits the potential for follow-up questions that would embellish the answers and provide depth of detail.

Ethics

To ensure anonymity of participants, all names of interviewees, children, and schools have been changed. All participants were fully informed of the research aims, objectives, and methods, as well as how the research will be used, and their rights as a participant were clearly stated. Both interviews and questionnaires included the option of not answering a question due to the personal nature of the research topic.

Findings and Discussion

This section will summarise the opinions put forth by my interviewees within the context of wider sociological research.

What has already been done?

Recent reports suggest that certain measures have been implemented within schools to bridge the attainment gap for adopted children, such as inclusive curricula, information sharing, and home-school partnership, as well as social policies such as the Children & Social Work Act (2017), Pupil Premium Plus, and training and advice for school staff. The DfE stated in a report that PP+ was intended to be used to help adopted children emotionally, socially, and educationally; this has been used in instances to fund in-school therapists, one-to-one teaching assistants, training on attachment disorders for school staff, and extra-curricular activities to improve social skills. In this sense, the PP+ is not there to support the special educational needs of adopted children, but the mental wellbeing of these children within education. For example, Gottman (1997) calls for emotion coaching for parents, children, and teachers, to deal with issues associated with attachment disorders (Bowlby, 1998).

Despite these policy changes, it is apparent from my interviews that there is still much room for improvement. Questioning the support offered with PP+ generated mixed reactions:

Patricia: *They used some of the pupil premium money to pay for her to see a private paediatrician to get assessed for ADHD, so that was really positive because we'd been fobbed off forever by CAMHS [...] [CAMHS] are about as useful as a leaky bucket.*

Patricia: [Pupil Premium Plus] was an acknowledgement that something needed to be done, but what actually came out of that I don't know.

The main reason for this was often cited as underfunding, leading to a deficit of trained, capable support staff. In a recent survey by the National Education Union (2018) 94% respondents said they are pessimistic about their school's budget prospects over the next few years, with cuts to Special Educational Needs being reported by almost two thirds. In the North of England, funding for pupils with SEN has fallen by 22% since 2015 (NEU, 2018). Many teachers are unequipped to deal with the additional, ongoing needs of adopted children, and the government refuses to fund additional support such as one-to-one tutors, counsellors, therapeutic rooms, and better-quality educators that are available to all:

Madison: *The more they cut budgets, the more they enforce tests, the more the government do, the less helpful it is for the children.*

Madison: *We do not have the money to provide the people for them, and the government is responsible for that.*

Patricia: *Support staff thought they could “counsel” [him] [...] but I refused [...] as they weren’t qualified and didn’t have the skills.*

Kath: *It is all bound up with a school system that is incredibly underfunded, and I think struggles to meet the needs of most children and all the, any intervention that seems to come is very inadequate.*

What are the alternatives?

– Private education

Because of this apparent lack of involvement from the government in tackling the attainment gap, many parents have taken a different route with their child’s education. According to the DfE, 20% of adopted children attend specialist schools. In my small sample of 6 adoptive parents, I found that 2 (33.33%) had taken the route of private education:

Madison: *I found a small school [...] who deal with children with dyslexia [...] it’s a private school [...] if I looked at the mainstream system there is just nowhere that I could put [her] absolutely nowhere and I just it just is so frustrating.*

Patricia: *We paid for him to go to private primary school because our experience with our eldest child was so bad I couldn’t face doing it again, so we paid for him to go to private primary school [...] we can’t afford a private secondary school so he is falling behind.*

The main reason cited for the decision to privately educate was the smaller class sizes, a luxury not afforded by mainstream schools who are suffering constant budget cuts, leaving them to stretch their resources between increasing class sizes at the expense of pupils.

Patricia: *The schools are draining their budgets to pay for staff to work with children with needs.*

Madison: *It’s set up for dealing with children with dyslexia because the class sizes are really small - if you’ve got a class size of 10 you can actually deal with it [...] but there’s nowhere in the mainstream, except like specialist school which usually are children with behavioural problems who have been excluded with a whole host of other issues.*

Kath: *I’ve heard of children that have been excluded and permanently excluded and having to go to behavioural schools, when actually if they were listened to and understood the help could have been put in place for them to help them stay in mainstream school.*

However, due to the financial implications of sending a child to private school, only parents with high economic capital (Bourdieu, 1984) can afford to provide their child with the higher levels of tailored support offered by smaller, private schools. Parents who possess high capital may, alternatively, have the resources to relocate to a school district with more funding or fewer children.

Madison: *It’s terrible that only parents who can afford it [can] pay for it.*

Half of my sample was trained teachers; these parents possessed social capital in terms of knowledge of appropriate schools for their children, as well as the cultural capital to gain entry to these schools. Parents with higher socio-economic status also possess the ability to better support their child within education as they themselves often have a high level of education (Spear, 2009). These parents and teachers were equipped to critique the education system as educators, while simultaneously comment on its specific effectiveness for adopted children as adoptive parents.

Kath: *The reason my child is at my school is because of that, and we are very play-based [...] I went looking round other schools and I wasn’t happy with [...] the information that they had.*

Kath: *I chose the school I worked in [...] which also had an excellent reputation for special needs support.*

Madison: *I wasn’t particularly pro the education system anyway, I was actually a trained teacher.*

What are the alternatives?

– Home-schooling

Madison chose to keep her child out of mainstream education, opting instead for a home-education approach to early learning:

The initial reason for not going into school is I just didn’t see that the school system was set up for children who are different.

I was aware she had a developmental delay [...] at 4, it was her fine motor skills [...] I felt that keeping her at home that delay it would catch up.

She’s quite quiet and I thought in a large classroom she would just get drowned out.

Developmentally [Laura] certainly wasn’t ready to do that and certainly the emotional side, I don’t think that school could have really helped with, I don’t think she could’ve got the support.

She has a high risk of ADHD [...] she wasn’t very good at keeping still, she needed to move [...] I just thought a formal school environments just not going to suit her [...] I think it would’ve come out in sort of other behavioural issues.

Madison explains that Laura’s birth sibling, adopted by a different family, was excluded from mainstream education and speculates that her child would have experienced the same outcome had she gone into school. However, due to a lack of support and funding offered by external services, she elected to enrol her child into mainstream education for the start of secondary school:

One of the things with being home-ed is that you’re very much out the loop, you don’t get any funding, you don’t get really any input.

What are the other contributing factors to differential educational attainment?

Schooling serves many functions alongside formal academic education, including the teaching of a value consensus (Parsons, 1968) to aid in social solidarity (Durkheim, 1964) and the development of social skills. Many adopted children struggle with social interaction as they often have an underlying fear of abandonment, and so are wary of relationships with both adults and children. It is also common for adopted children to experience bullying from peers surrounding their situation as an adoptive child (Neil, 2011), creating further difficulties in social contexts. Patricia acknowledges that her child had endured “a hideous amount of bullying” in school.

From this perspective then, especially for adopted children, the early years of education are paramount. This was acknowledged in the measures taken by the DfE to bridge gaps in educational attainment, including introducing free early education for 3-4-year olds (2010). 76% adoptees are aged between 1-4 years at adoption, while 20% are aged between 5-9 years; these children experience the transition to a new family alongside the stresses of education, often coupled with a change of school. For children with attachment disorders (Bowlby, 1998) this amount of upheaval can be detrimental to their mental and emotional health and is often expressed in behavioural differences. Recent research by SOCiAL (2017) explains how and why children who experience adversity in their early lives may show emotional and behavioural difficulties in later life.

Madison: It has to be taken as kind of a basic thing that any adopted child will have additional needs.

While there were many commonalities between each parent, every situation and every child is unique. Brodzinsky (1993) identifies many variables within the category of adoption which became evident within my research. For example, the style of parenting employed by the respondents varied widely, with one couple electing to not disclose the adoptive status of their child to the school, therefore treating any difficulties at face value:

Jill: We didn't really explain that [...] this is an adopted child so she was just treated as a child that they expect to behave in a certain way, and be in trouble if they're not.

This could be evidence of changing social norms and expectations, as this child was in the education system almost 20 years ago. Since then, a multitude of research and policies surrounding adoption have been carried out to further the understanding of difficulties faced by adopted children. AdoptionUK calls for a better understanding of adoption and the psychological implications, and the recognition that a child displaying challenging behaviour ‘is actually a child in distress and needs to be responded to in a way which will reduce, not increase, stress’ (Kath). A

recent study by AdoptionUK (2017) found that a high proportion of adoptive parents reported difficulties for their children, including emotional problems, problems with attention and concentration, and behavioural problems. These findings largely support the concerns raised by adoptive parents in my study.

Madison: I'm glad that George isn't in school [...] he would struggle within a large classroom of noisy children and he has a very strong temper and he would be in trouble in school.

Kath: A lot of children find things difficult [...] noises going in the dining room at school can be traumatic for some children [...] noises they might hear that may trigger memories from a difficult situation they may have been in.

This concern was reflected in my interview with Kath, an early years' teacher who employed differential classroom approaches to improve the quality of education for young adopted children. Kath emphasised the amount of self-educating she undertook after having an adopted child in her class, and the lack of material provided for such a situation. She considers herself privileged to have a head-teacher in her school who was proactive about educating others on adoption:

I am aware that doesn't happen in every school [...] none of the other schools have had that training.

My head-teacher is very good as well she is on a lot of safeguarding panels [...] she makes people aware of things she's got lots of literature [...] about attachment adoption looked after children different areas of difficulties.

When I was being trained as a teacher when I was in university I hadn't heard about it at all [...] you do have to go looking.

Some other structural changes Kath had undertaken included introducing play-based learning as a priority, less mandatory homework at an early age, change in discipline style, and increased communication from teachers and assistants, especially when dealing with children with attachment disorders (Bowlby, 1998):

Time-out is they're being excluded again [...] 'thinking-time', 'calm-down-time', we need to call it something different.

I'm very curiosity approach sort of learning through play [...] I didn't want [her] going to a school where she would feel stressed [...] we don't pressure the children in any way shape or form.

[They have experienced] significant trauma and changes in their very young life [...] what we say is first of all you just need to love them and make them [...] feel safe and feel secure [...] the education side of it needs to take a back seat

So, what else needs to be done?

When asked what could be done further to bridge the gap in attainment for adopted children, the consensus appeared to support wider structural changes rather than

simply curriculum changes or extra training. Madison comments that:

There isn't the space for difference when you've got an education system that's based on academic achievement of getting through SATs, there is no room for children who are taking their time who have maybe got a delay because of their early life, who may come to fruition a few years later because by that time it's too late because by then they're already on set c.

And Kath agrees:

I never understood why they insisted on testing 7-year olds, research doesn't show that that's a positive thing.

These comments support research by AdoptionUK (2018) which found that 60% of adoptive parents do not feel their child has an equal chance in school, with 69% believing this is affected by their child's emotional wellbeing. In this sense it is the education system, and not the schools themselves, that require attention.

Many recognise that the emphasis placed on 'achievement' within education is detrimental to early development and mental health. Modern industrial society requires a highly-motivated, achievement-oriented workforce, and so governing bodies value this type of personality within formal education. For adopted children, however, a fear of failure can be translated into a fear of rejection and exclusion from classes or schooling in general, meaning that tests, for example, have much more complex connotations for them.

Kath: When you're dealing with children whose behaviour is not as the school feels it should be, and then they're penalised and ultimately excluded if there isn't an understanding of what they're dealing with [...] [it's] vilifying children who have a complex history anyway and it's just not serving any purpose [...] schools need to be treating adopted children differently because their backgrounds are so different [...] there is a reason for these behaviours.

Through the lens of labelling theory, if an adopted child is wrongly labelled as 'naughty' due to a lack of understanding surrounding their early life experiences, they may begin to see themselves in this way. The notion of a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948) argues that predictions made by teachers about the success or failure of a student tend to come true simply because it has been made. These predictions or prejudices may manifest in interactions with the pupil, shaping their self-concept. Gillborn & Youdell (2001) found that set placement was largely based on the teacher's assessment of ability, and not academic evidence; for this reason, working-class and ethnic minority students were likely to be placed in lower sets, ultimately denying them the knowledge to succeed past their perceived ability.

Responsibility for bridging the gap for educational attainment of adopted children is diffused through various external systems of support. Through a Marxist framework this can be understood as marketization,

or the 'business takeover of schools' (Rikowski, 2002) wherein the state raises prices for schools, leading more and more of the school's functions to be subcontracted to the private industry for profit, transforming educational activities into commodities. This is evident in the recent centralisation of power away from local government and the formation of academies (West, 2015).

Another common critique was of the support, or lack thereof, offered through adoption agencies:

Jill: *We weren't even aware of those things.*

Patricia: *Our experience of the support services has been appalling [...] it's a long process for not very much.*

Kath: *Adoption support services need to be more proactive about saying what's out there.*

Conclusion

Substantial research into the psychological and sociological outcomes of adoption has been produced by a number of bodies including official policy makers and independent researchers. In particular, AdoptionUK's Bridging the Gap (2018) outlines methods to be employed directly by schools, parents, and policy makers to bridge gaps in our understanding, empathy, resources, and attainment. This study suggests the understanding gap can be eliminated through continual professional development tailored to educational professionals, specifically to support adopted children. Similarly, the empathy gap should be reduced by alleviating pressure of academic achievement and prioritise emotional and social literacy in schools for all pupils, but especially those with existing difficulties; they cite the financial pressure and stretched resources suffered by schools, and reiterate a need for funding for specialist support for adopted children. Finally, they suggest a need for collection and analysis of data on educational outcomes for adopted children. These ideas were largely supported by the adoptive parents in my research, who called primarily for a restructuring of our general approach to education. To an extent, this is to be expected of a report which bases its questions on these suggested changes, however due to the semi-structured nature of my interviews, the majority of opinions were organically self-produced. Subsequent research is encouraged to explore the impact of adoption on educational attainment using a wider, more representative sample.

I was surprised that the majority of my participants were not aware of the reports I had referenced; their demographic as adoptive parents as well as educators (50%) should mean they are the primary recipients. I also struggled to obtain the report published by PAC-UK intended for adoptive parents, as it was not available online. I was also surprised to learn that Timpson's (shoe-makers) offer guides on adoption and fostering with emphasis on attachment disorders in their shops nationwide. This highlights a discrepancy on behalf of social policy makers and educators of the availability of their information.

I suggest it is not the availability of information at fault, but the willingness of governing bodies to take action. It is my hope that this report, along with other research on the topic, will highlight to educators and policy makers the profound discontent expressed by these parents and teachers with the current system of education. These participants called for changes in the way we view not only adopted children, but all children, within education. The restructuring called for by these parents will not only benefit adopted children, but the impact will radiate out into classrooms, families, and society as a whole.

Appendix

Figure 1: Interview guide

Does your child enjoy school?

Support from the school in terms of extra help in lessons, or with homework – does your child have an allocated support officer in school?

Do they have difficulty making friends? Is there a noticeable difference, for you, between their attainment/attitude?

Their choice of school – does the fact the child is adopted carry more weight when deciding on a school than geographical location? Was the S.E.N. program a deciding factor when considering schools? Did you ever consider moving house to be closer to a school with better support? Has your child ever had to change schools?

Behaviour in class – Does this differ from what you witness at home? Is your child uncharacteristically disruptive in class? Are they uncharacteristically quiet?

Have they experienced any negative relationships with teachers or pupils? Bullying or discrimination – could this be solved by a better understanding of adoption and the psychological effects?

Do you/your child receive any support outside of school for psychological or social issues? (Adoption Support Fund)

Are there any other factors (e.g. physical/developmental issues) that are not due to adoption?

Figure 2: Questionnaire administered via e-mail, based on my interview guide:

You have the option not to answer any questions you feel are too personal, or irrelevant. This will not affect your rights as a participant. You may also withdraw at any time.

Support: Does your child receive any extra support from their school in terms of extra help in lessons, or with homework? Does your child have an allocated support officer in school? Do you receive external support for psychological/social issues (e.g. from the Adoption Support Fund)?

Relationships: Have they experienced any negative relationships with teachers or authority figures? Have they experienced bullying? Do they have difficulty making or maintaining friendships?

Behaviour: Is their behaviour in school different to their behaviour at home? Are they uncharacteristically shy or disruptive in lessons? Do they have issues with attention?

Choice: Did their demographic as an adopted child affect your choice of school? Was the availability of support an important factor when considering this? Have they ever had to change school?

Overall: Based on your experience, what else should be done by schools to bridge the gap in educational attainment for adopted children?

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Gender Differences in Political Interest and Participation in the U.K. from 2008 to 2016

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Key words: *gender gap, political interest, political participation*

Abstract

Women's relative lack of interest and participation in politics has been researched by many scholars to understand the reasons for the gender gap which is disadvantageous for women. This research investigates the existence of gender gap in the UK over nine years since 2008 until 2016, if there is a decreasing trend in gender gap between men and women, and if there is effect of younger age and tertiary education on women's level of interest and participation in politics. The European Social Survey is used to look separately on political interest and on participation in politics. The results suggest that the gender gap is present throughout all years for the interest in politics and does not show a decreasing trend, women are not interested more at younger age, and tertiary education does not get women to the same level of interest as men. Political participation shows different results with effects of gender fluctuating with more women participating one year and more men in another. However, there is still no clear decreasing trend, and older women tend to participate more while tertiary education has fluctuating effects on women's participation in political activities. Looking at the participation in separate political activities, women participate more than men in certain things like voting, wearing a badge and signing petition. Thus, while women may participate more on average this is not a trend for all individual political actions, which should be considered when assessing actual levels of women's participation.

Introduction

Gender difference in political interest and involvement is a topic still relevant for researchers around the world as even in many liberal democracies. With the exception for Scandinavian countries, women tend to answer that they are less interested in politics and political discussion, show lower levels of political knowledge, and have lower levels of political engagement (Hooghe and Stolle, 2004). There are various factors that are theorised as causes for the gender gap. For example, socioeconomic factors such as income level, children (Verba, Burns, and Schlozman, 1997), age, education, work status, religiosity, race and ethnicity (Reingold and Harrell, 2009) and such have a various levels of effect on the women's political engagement and interest. Another factor that is highlighted by many scholars is that women's representation in the government increases political interest of the female citizens. C. Wolbrecht and D. E. Campbell (2007) in their research show that adolescent girls and women talk about politics

more, if more women are elected and have some political power.

In the U.K. many political actions such as voting and campaigning were reported by Welch to be at the similar rate by mid-1970s. However, men still showed more political interest, specifically towards political discussion and following politics (Hayes and Clive, 1993). These are worrying results as the lack of political interest and knowledge can affect participation in the political activities (Ondercin and Jones-White, 2011) and, thus, citizen engagement, which in turn would affect representation of the women's needs and interest on the political arena (Verba, Burns, and Schlozman, 1997). Thus, gender difference in political interest and participation in the U.K. is an important topic for exploration.

This research, therefore, investigates the existence of the gender gap between 2008 and 2016 by using evidence from the European Social Survey (ESS). It examines interest in politics and political participation of men and women during that period with the use of the ESS data for 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016. The research investigates if there is a gender gap between men and women and if this gap decreases over the years. Moreover, it looks at the age and highest level of education's roles in the gender gap. Linear regression and binary logistic regression are used to analyze the data with several models that include socio-economic explanatory variables, age, gender and educational level. The results show that the gender gap still exists – women are less interested in politics and the gap does not decrease; participation in politics seem to fluctuate with women participating less or more than men, however in both situations the gap is still present and such fluctuation means that there is no linear decrease. Thus, this research provides an assessment of the gender gap in the UK throughout nine years and shows that the gap still exists and there is still a need in increasing women's engagement with politics.

History and political importance

First prominent investigations of female participation and interest in politics appeared around 1970s in the USA and Europe, and showed gender gap between women and men. This gap has turned out to be persistent and is still found in most liberal democracies as women participate less in the political life, show less interest and mostly are underrepresented on the political arena. These differences were only attributed to the access to the resources. Thus, it was initially assumed that these gender differences would

disappear as women gain greater access to these resources. However, though the gap does decrease, it happens at a slow pace. That is why there are other factors being looked at, suggesting a more complicated interplay of reasons, including socialization, social division of labour and representation (Hooghe and Stolle, 2004).

The existence of gender gap is a political issue for democratic countries. Political interest and participation are part of the citizens' participation in the state's affairs. Lack of such participation can mean that women pay the price in terms of representation (Verba, Burns and Schlozman, 1997). If public officials do not hear about certain concerns of the citizens, then they may not pay attention to these people's needs and preferences (ibid.). Additionally, M. Russell, J. Lovenduski and M.-A. Stephenson (2002) write about three arguments for women's political participation, especially in the government – the justice, pragmatic and difference arguments. The justice argument states that it is unfair for one type of citizens to monopolize representation. The pragmatic argument says that women have concerns and experiences that should be addressed, and, thus, female politicians should be present and supported. The difference argument contends that more women in the elected office will bring new perspectives and change the nature of public institutions. Representation in the UK has had some improvement in 1997 when high number of female MPs was elected, however in the start of 2000s the numbers fell. In 2017 a record high of 32 percent female MPs were elected in the House of Commons, and in 2018 women made up 26 percent of Members of the House of Lords (Keen and Cracknell, 2018). In terms of participation rather than representation, in the UK research shows that there has been no significant difference in the turnout of women and men in the General Elections since 2001 – men on average are more likely to vote by 1 to 3 percent (Dempsey and Johnston, 2018). With this in mind, we can look at how men and women vote in General Elections. British Election Study (2017) writes that, for example, in 2015 men were more likely to vote for UKIP than women, and in 2017 women were voting for Labour in greater numbers than men. During the EU referendum in 2016, according to the data provided by the IPSOS Mori (2016) and Statista (2016) – women from the higher social class of professionals and those in managerial roles and aged 35-54 were 11 points more likely to vote remain than men, and peak share of remain voting came from 80 percent of women between the ages of 18 and 24. In some cases women have very distinct patterns of voting during big time period. S. Philpot (2018) writes that in the USA the majority of women have been consistently voting for the Democratic candidate in presidential elections. As far back as 1964, women maintain a proclivity to be more aligned with the Democratic Party, while men are more likely to align with the Republican Party. Moreover, women support of female Democratic presidential candidate is higher than men's, ranging from 5.9 in 2008 to 11.3 in 2000, reaching

13 percentage points in support for Hilary Clinton in 2016 elections. The existence of such trends shows the importance of women's participation as the lack of it can misrepresent the will of the majority of people affecting the state's democracy. This is also why it is important to be aware of the gender gap in other political activities and decisions as similar trends may be present there and are not accounted for, when women are not involved on the same scale as they are in national elections.

General trends in the gender gap

There are similar trends across European countries and the USA in political interest and participation that are quite persistent throughout the years. S. Verba, N. Burns and K. L. Schlozman (1997) in their American study investigate gender gap in politics and, supportive of previous research, they find that men are more interested and knowledgeable in politics, especially national politics, and more likely to feel politically efficacious. M. Fraile and R. Gomez (2017) in more recent study find that in spite of the gradual empowerment of women, gender gap in political interest is still persistent across European countries. On average declared interest in politics for women is 16 percent lower than for men. Political participation, which includes activities such as voting, campaign activity, contacting a politician and several other things, also has gender difference. Men are significantly more likely to contact a politician, join a political party, or attend a political meeting. Recent research shows that in mostly all of the 31 democracies men are more actively participating in political activities, though variation in the gap and activities exists across the countries (Kittilson, 2016).

Investigating the reasons

There are various interplaying factors that are believed to be responsible for the gender gap. Some of them are established and have been used for decades but there are a couple of new factors that are investigated. The more established views focus on the fact that women have fewer resources in terms of income, education, time and civic skills (Verba, Burns and Schlozman, 1997). Lack of resources can arise from the social division of labour as it means that women have childbearing responsibilities, care for the family members, do house chores and other responsibilities. Thus, women have less discretionary time or resources available for political participation. Some authors point out the role of the institutions and that male-dominated culture of political parties prevents women from getting full access to the political realm (Hooghe and Stolle, 2004). As women's access to resources and social status has changed in Western countries, there are changes in what factors are significant as the gender gap explanation. M. Fraile's (2014) quite recent research finds that political knowledge, which is linked to political participation, is distinctly affected by age and education. The gap among higher-educated citizens is about twice

as small as among lower-educated people. It is important to point out that in the UK women are more likely to go into the higher education than men (Department for Education, 2017). Moreover, as a consequence of generational changes, the gender gap seems to increase with age (Fraile, 2014). M. Hooghe and D. Stolle (2004) in their research of anticipated political participation of American 14 year olds find that girls indicate more political actions they intend to engage in than do boys. Many researchers point out that this can be explained by the increasing numbers of women in politics who provide representation that encourages younger generations of women to be interested and participate in politics. C. Wolbrecht and D. Campbell (2007) analyse the European data and the results show that women and adolescent girls talk about politics more in the countries with more women serving in elective office and the gender gap narrows with maximum values for women in office. Results for adolescent girls show positive relationship between percentage of female MPs and anticipated political activity. Thus, the earlier discussed increase in representation of women in politics in the UK means that there is an increasing number of the role models who can give inspiration to women and girls to be politically active.

Hypotheses

The discussion of the previous research on the topic shows that there is a persistent gender gap in political interest, political knowledge and political participation in the USA and the European countries. In my research I want to focus on the UK and investigate the existence of the gender gap – look for changes and compare the results. This research is going to provide an overview of the UK political gender gap over 8 years from 2008 to 2016. Therefore, my first hypothesis (H1) is that there is a gender gap in political interest and participation during this period. The use of the European Social Survey (ESS) limits me to only look at the political interest and participation, however these are important in themselves to evaluate and look at throughout the number of years. The ESS provides an opportunity to analyze the gender gap between 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016. During this period as the data mentioned in literature review show the UK has had more women enrolling into the higher education and more women in the government. Moreover, Gender Equality Index 2017 shows that the UK has score of 71.5 out of 100, which is five points ahead of the EU average, though progress has stalled in recent years (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2018). Thus, my second hypothesis (H2) is that gender difference has a decreasing trend during the time period of 2008 to 2016. I am also interested in the magnitude of the effects from the positive changes in the educational and representational factors on women. Hence my third hypothesis (H3) is that women with highest level of education are interested and engaged in politics on the same level as men during the analyzed time period. Fourth hypothesis (H4) is that

younger women are more politically engaged and more interested in politics than older women.

Data and method

For the research the data from European Social Survey is used. The survey is conducted every two years in form of face-to-face interviews with newly selected cross-sectional samples (European Social Survey, n.d.). The ESS provides dependent and independent variables which fit the research question and have been previously used in the extant literature. The IBM SPSS software is used to analyze the data. To measure interest in politics a variable 'HOW INTERESTED IN POLITICS' is used as dependent variable. For political engagement similar variables are used to the ones in Wolbrecht and Campbell's (2007, p.925) research. These variables contain answers to the questions about various political activities in some of which a respondent should have participated during last 12 months. The activities are: voting in last national election, contacting a politician or government official, working in political party or action group, wearing or displaying campaign badge, signing petition and taking part in lawful public demonstration.

For independent variables the socioeconomic factors are used, similar to those used by Thomas (2012, p.342), which are available from the ESS datasets. These variables include gender, age, marital status, highest level of education, children in the household, household income and activity of last 7 days such as paid work, education, unemployment, disability, being retired, military service or housework.

Variable name	Label	Values
polintr	How interested in politics	1 = very and quite interested; 2 = hardly and not at all interested; 9 = else
vote	Voted last national election	1 = yes; 2 = no; 9 = else
contplt	Contacted politician or government official last 12 months	1 = yes; 2 = no; 9 = else
wrkprty	Worked in political party or action group last 12 months	1 = yes; 2 = no; 9 = else
badge	Worn or displayed campaign badge/sticker last 12 months	1 = yes; 2 = no; 9 = else
sgnptit	Signed petition last 12 months	1 = yes; 2 = no; 9 = else
pblmnm	Taken part in lawful public demonstration last 12 months	1 = yes; 2 = no; 9 = else
gndr	Gender	1 = female; 0 = male
agea	Age of respondent, calculated	999 = not available
marsts	Legal marital status	1 = legally married/live with partner; 0 = separated/divorced/none of these
chldhm	Children living at home or not	1 = children living at home; 0 = not at home/not applicable
secondeduc	Secondary level of education	1 = got secondary level; 0 = doesn't have it
terteduc	Tertiary level of education	1 = got tertiary level; 0 = doesn't have it
lowhshdinc	Low household income	1 = low household income; 0 = not low
highhshdinc	High household income	1 = high household income; 0 = not high
work	Main activity last 7 days - working	1 = yes; 0 = no
educ	Main activity last 7 days - in education	1 = yes; 0 = no
unmpl	Main activity last 7 days - unemployed	1 = yes; 0 = no
disbl	Main activity last 7 days - has disability	1 = yes; 0 = no
retired	Main activity last 7 days - retired	1 = yes; 0 = no
military	Main activity last 7 days - in military service	1 = yes; 0 = no
hswrk	Main activity last 7 days - housework	1 = yes; 0 = no

Table 1. Variables used in the regressions.

Results

The dependent variables for political interest and political participation are going to be analysed separately. The linear regression is used for participation and binary logistic regression is used for interest. Participation variables are combined into an additive index to use it as a continuous dependent variable in the linear regression (Wolbrecht and Campbell, 2007). Interest in politics variable is recoded, so that 'very interested' and 'quite interested' are coded as 1, and 'hardly interested' and 'not at all interested' are coded as 0. Thus, binary logistic regression represents a fitting tool to assess two states of interest of the respondents, as it requires a dependent variable to only be 0 or 1.

The independent variables, except for age, are recoded into the dummy variables. Respondent's gender is coded 1 for female, 0 for male. For marital status, respondents who are legally married or live with a partner are coded as 1. If children are living at home it is coded as 1, if not – as 0. Education is coded with two dummy variables: secondary and tertiary levels of education. Secondary education includes GCSEs and A-levels. Tertiary level includes Undergraduate degree, Master's degree and Ph.D. Effect of household income is measured with two dummy variables: for low and high incomes. Regressions are run separately for different years for which the data is available such as 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016, and then the results are compared.

Usage of the secondary data for the research means that there are no cost or time constraints involved in the data collection. Moreover, there are no ethical considerations for the researcher as the data is initially collected by the ESS with consent from the respondents and full anonymity is provided to them.

One of the main issues for the analysis is inability to control for women's representation in the regressions. Even though it is theorised by other scholars that representation has a positive effect on women's political interest and engagement, the ESS data has no variables to account for it. Therefore, while it is hypothesised that the increase in female representatives in the government has had an effect on younger women and, thus, that they have smaller gender gap, it is not supported by the analysis of the data.

Another issue is that the ESS data has no distinction between local and national political interest and engagement. Several studies show that if controlled for local politics women are as likely to be interested in it as men (Coffé, 2013, p.329). There also tends to be larger gender gap with more women than men participating in the local elections in comparison with national elections (*ibid.*, p.325). Hence, the analysis has a generalised notion of politics, and so findings may be different for divided international or local political interest and engagement of the U.K.'s women and men.

There are three models that have been run to look at the interest in politics, the gender gap and the effects of age and education. Model 1 includes gender and age explanatory variables. Model 2 adds socio-economic factors such as level of education, marital status, children living at home and household total income. Model 3 additionally includes activities of last 7 days such as work, education, unemployment, retirement, military or community service, disability and housework. Table 2 shows the coefficients for the variables of interest in Models 1 and 2 for all the ESS rounds since 2008. Model 3 is not included as it is not significant for several years according to the Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients, which means that this model does not explain more of the data variance over the baseline model unlike Model 1 and 2. As Table 2 shows gender, age and tertiary level of education (in relation to the secondary level) have a clear pattern of the coefficients (B) and odds ratios (OR). Being a woman decreases a probability of being interested in politics throughout the years. There are however some fluctuations: for both models it can be seen that gender odds ratios of being interested in politics are increasing for women after 2008, then decreasing again after 2012 and falling even lower than in 2008. In 2016 odds ratios are 0.53 (Model 1) or 0.48 (Model 2) to 1 of women to men. These results partially support H1 as there seems to be prevailing gender gap at least in political interest, where women are less likely to be interested.

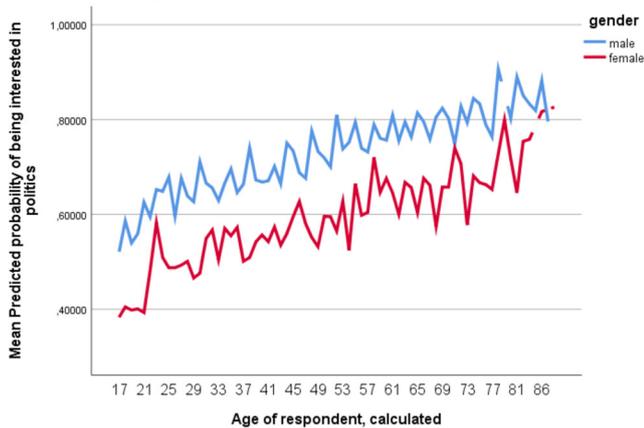
Moreover, H2 for political interest is not supported, because odds of women to be interested in politics are fluctuating throughout the years and in 2016 are similar to 2008, meaning that there is no linear decrease.

	Variable	Model 1				Model 2			
		B	signif.	SE	OR	B	signif.	SE	OR
2008	Constant	0.014		0.166	1.014	0.719	***	0.193	2.052
	Gender (1=female)	-0.617	***	0.109	0.539	-0.635	***	0.114	0.530
	Age	0.020	***	0.004	1.020	0.021	***	0.004	1.021
	tertiary level of education (base = secondary level)					0.791	***	0.118	0.453
2010	Constant	-0.069		0.245	0.934	-0.670		0.700	0.512
	Gender (1=female)	-0.454	***	0.147	0.635	-0.468	***	0.155	0.626
	Age	0.020	***	0.005	1.020	0.018	***	0.006	1.018
	tertiary level of education (base = secondary level)					0.747	***	0.159	2.110
2012	Constant	-0.469	**	0.229	0.625	-1.646	**	0.782	0.193
	Gender (1=female)	-0.450	***	0.140	0.638	-0.503	***	0.144	0.605
	Age	0.026	***	0.005	1.026	0.022	***	0.005	1.022
	tertiary level of education (base = secondary level)					0.799	***	0.147	2.223
2014	Constant	-0.507	**	0.224	0.602	-0.198		0.471	0.821
	Gender (1=female)	-0.652	***	0.139	0.521	-0.645	***	0.144	0.525
	Age	0.035	***	0.005	1.036	0.032	***	0.005	1.033
	tertiary level of education (base = secondary level)					0.748	***	0.150	2.114
2016	Constant	0.162		0.249	1.176	-0.835	***	0.673	0.434
!!	Gender (1=female)	-0.644	***	0.154	0.525	-0.725	***	0.160	0.484
!!	Age	0.027	***	0.005	1.027	0.026	***	0.006	1.027
!!	tertiary level of education (base = secondary level)					0.835	***	0.164	2.304

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$; OR = Odds Ratio

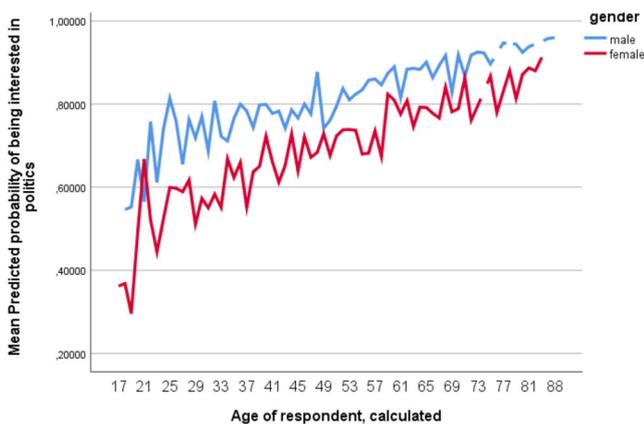
Table 2. Interest in politics: Binary logistic models 1 and 2.

Effects of age are staying mostly the same throughout these years. In 2008 increase of one year in age is making it 1.02 times more likely to be interested in politics whereas in 2016 increase of one year in age is making it 1.03 times more likely in both models. To visualise age's relationship with gender and with probability of being interested in politics graph 1 is created based on the Model 2 and its probability predictions. The gender gap can be easily seen along with the probability of political interest increase with age for both males and females. The same trend continues into 2016 as shown by the graph 2. These graphs do not provide support for H4 as older women seem to be more interested in politics than youth does, and the odds ratios for age are not decreasing throughout the years studied.

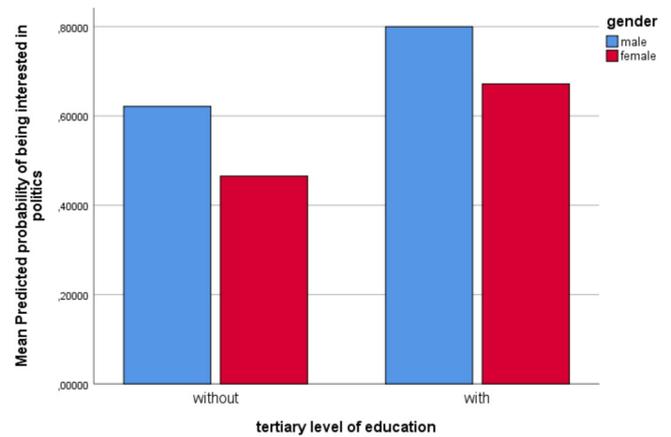


Graph 1. Relationship between gender, age and probability of being interested in politics in 2008.

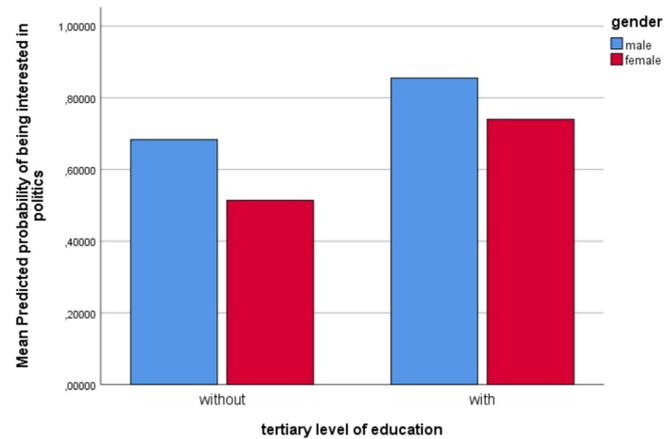
Tertiary level of education has an increase in its impact. After 2008, it causes respondents to be 2.1-2.3 times more likely to be interested in politics than those with secondary level. To visualise education level relationship with gender and probability of being interested in politics the bar charts are created based on the second model. Bar chart 1 and 2 shows that people with tertiary education both male and female are more likely to be interested in politics than people with only secondary education in 2008 and 2016. Bar charts for other years that are included in appendix provide the same results. However, for both secondary and tertiary levels of education women have lower probability of being interested in politics. The difference between genders does fluctuate since 2008 and seems smaller in 2016 but still the gap exists, which means that H3 is not supported.



Graph 2. Relationship between gender, age and probability of being interested in politics in 2016.



Bar chart 1. Relationship between gender, age and probability of being interested in politics in 2008.



Bar chart 2. Relationship between gender, age and probability of being interested in politics in 2016.

Similar to the interest in politics, there are three models that have been run to look at the political participation, the gender gap and the effects of age and education. The models use the same explanatory variables and are presented in tables 3 and 4. Model 1 includes gender and age explanatory variables. Model 2 adds socio-economic factors such as level of education, marital status, children living at home and household total income. Model 3 additionally includes activities of last 7 days such as work, education, unemployment, retirement, military or community service, disability and housework. Unlike the results for the gender in interest in politics, effects of gender in participation in politics are fluctuating throughout the years from positive to negative. It means that depending on the year being a man seems to affect participation less than being a woman. According to Model 3, effect of being a woman on political participation is positive in 2008, 2012 and 2014, while it is negative in 2010 and 2016. These results support H1 as there seems to be prevailing gender gap in political participation, where women and men in turn are less likely to participate in political activities. Moreover, H2 for political participation is not supported, because the effects of gender are fluctuating, meaning that there is no clear linear decrease of the gap but rather a change in the direction of correlation between gender and the index throughout the years. Age effect is consistent throughout the years and is positive - meaning that increase in age by one year causes a small but positive

increase in political participation index, which varies a bit between the years. To investigate relationship between gender, age and political participation index, the graph is created. Graph 3 shows how age, gender and predicted values of political participation index interact. It can be seen that some gender gap is always present at different ages. Moreover,

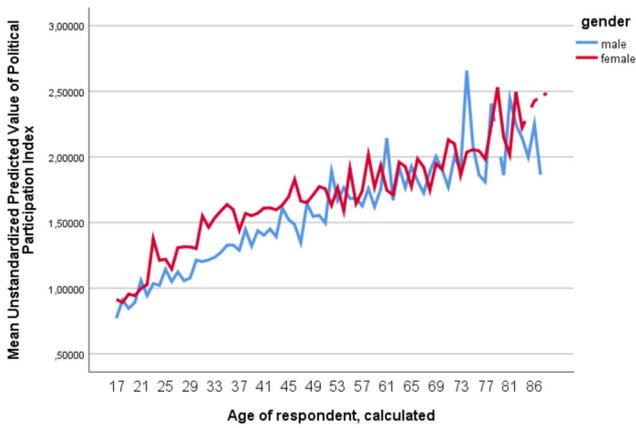
political participation index increases the increase in age of the respondents for both males and females. Thus, H4 does not hold as younger women seem to participate in politics less than older women. The same effect of increasing age is present in 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016.

	Variable	Model 1				Model 2			
		B	SE	t	signif.	B	SE	t	signif.
2008	Constant	0.600	0.094	6.396	***	0.282	0.105	2.678	***
	Gender (1=female)	0.143	0.062	2.320	**	0.138	0.061	2.266	**
	Age	0.019	0.002	9.982	***	0.018	0.002	8.941	***
	tertiary level of education					0.463	0.062	7.427	***
	(base = secondary level)								
2010	Constant	0.642	0.144	4.444	***	-0.155	0.399	-0.387	
	Gender (1=female)	0.009	0.087	2.108	**	-0.028	0.087	-2.325	**
	Age	0.022	0.003	6.921	***	0.022	0.003	6.610	***
	tertiary level of education					0.512	0.091	5.656	***
	(base = secondary level)								
2012	Constant	0.657	0.135	4.870	***	0.225	0.441	0.510	
	Gender (1=female)	0.079	0.082	1.962	**	0.078	0.081	1.966	**
	Age	0.021	0.003	7.874	***	0.018	0.003	6.223	***
	tertiary level of education					0.476	0.084	5.632	***
	(base = secondary level)								
2014	Constant	0.781	0.138	5.644	***	0.471	0.285	1.652	*
	Gender (1=female)	0.002	0.086	2.027	**	0.002	0.085	2.028	**
	Age	0.023	0.003	8.529	***	0.021	0.003	7.130	***
	tertiary level of education					0.536	0.092	5.833	***
	(base = secondary level)								
2016	Constant	1.206	0.147	8.205	***	0.538	0.397	1.356	
	Gender (1=female)	-0.035	0.089	-2.396	***	-0.056	0.087	-2.652	***
	Age	0.017	0.003	5.864	***	0.014	0.003	4.387	***
	tertiary level of education					0.548	0.095	5.762	***
	(base = secondary level)								

Table 3. Political participation: Linear regression Models 1 and 2. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

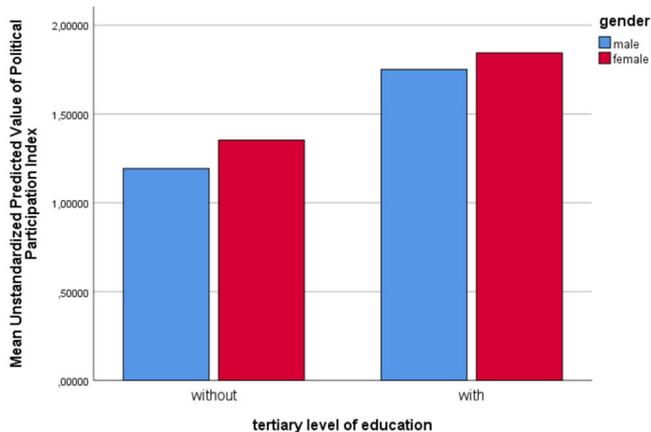
		Model 3			
	Variable	B	SE	t	signif.
2008	Constant	0.303	0.158	1.020	*
	Gender (1=female)	0.127	0.063	2.002	**
	Age	0.019	0.003	6.920	***
	tertiary level of education	0.455	0.062	7.342	***
	(base = secondary level)				
2010	Constant	-0.295	0.430	-0.687	
	Gender (1=female)	-0.013	0.089	-2.149	**
	Age	0.024	0.004	6.004	***
	tertiary level of education	0.502	0.091	5.539	***
	(base = secondary level)				
2012	Constant	0.153	0.476	0.322	
	Gender (1=female)	0.082	0.084	1.975	**
	Age	0.020	0.004	5.193	***
	tertiary level of education	0.488	0.085	5.750	***
	(base = secondary level)				
2014	Constant	-0.172	0.348	-0.495	
	Gender (1=female)	0.037	0.087	2.432	***
	Age	0.023	0.004	5.784	***
	tertiary level of education	0.551	0.092	0.186	***
	(base = secondary level)				
2016	Constant	0.397	0.434	0.916	
	Gender (1=female)	-0.067	0.088	-2.760	***
	Age	0.014	0.004	3.317	**
	tertiary level of education	0.580	0.096	6.029	***
	(base = secondary level)				

Table 4. Political participation: Linear regression Model 3. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

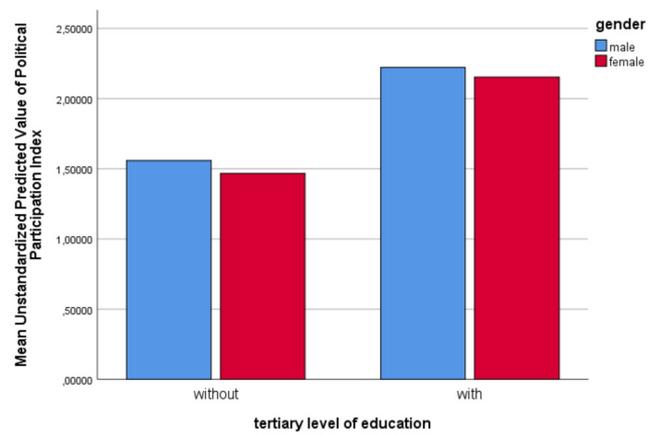


Graph 3. Relationship between gender, age and predicted value of political participation index in 2008.

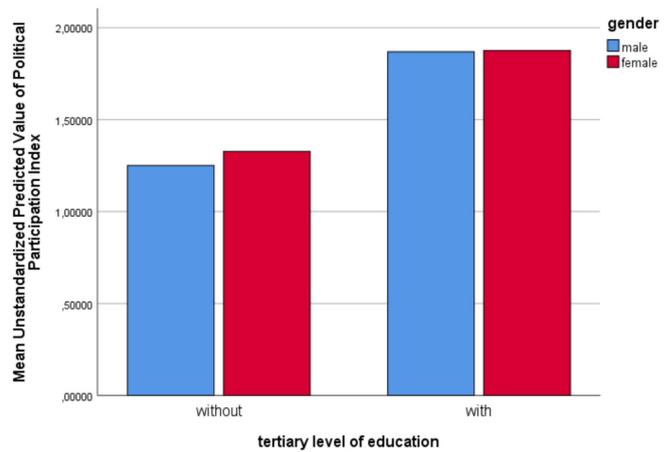
According to Model 3, tertiary level of education has positive impact on the political participation index which is higher than secondary education's effect. While there is small fluctuation in its effect it is positive and significant throughout all years used. To visualise education level relationship with gender and probability of being interested in politics the bar charts are created that are based on the third model. Bar chart 3 shows that women with tertiary education seem to have higher predicted value for political participation index than men in 2008. However, in 2016 women with tertiary education have lower predicted value of participation in politics than men, according to bar chart 4. The same fluctuations happen in 2010 and 2014. In 2012 women and men seem to have nearly identical index when they have tertiary level of education as can be seen from bar chart 5. However, overall the results do not provide clear evidence to support H3.



Bar chart 3. Relationship between gender, education and predicted value of political participation index in 2008.



Bar chart 4. Relationship between gender, education and predicted value of political participation index in 2016.



Bar chart 5. Relationship between gender, education and predicted value of political participation index in 2012.

The gender gap in political participation seems to be in favour of women in several years, however when looking separately at political activity in the data during these years via crosstabs, it can be seen that women tend to participate more than men in certain activities, while being mostly equally or less engaged in others. In 2008, when there is positive effects of being female on political participation index, women tend to engage more than men in voting, wearing a badge and signing a petition. It can be seen from the tables 5, 6 and 7. Tables for other activities are included in the appendix.

Voting * Gender			
		Gender	
		Male	Female
Voting	no	311 30.6%	323 29.5%
	yes	705 69.4%	771 70.5%
Total		1016 100.0%	1094 100.0%

Table 5. Cross-tabulation between Voting and Gender in 2008.

Badge * Gender			
		Gender	
		Male	Female
Badge	no	1085	1125
		95.4%	93.4%
	yes	52	80
		4.6%	6.6%
Total		1137	1205
		100.0%	100.0%

Table 6. Cross-tabulation between Badge and Gender in 2008.

Signing petition * Gender			
		Gender	
		Male	Female
Signing petition	no	761	691
		67.0%	57.4%
	yes	374	512
		33.0%	42.6%
Total		1135	1203
		100.0%	100.0%

Table 7. Cross-tabulation between Signing petition and Gender in 2008.

The trend continues in 2010 with wearing badge and signing petition being more engaging for women than men, with 5.4% of women wearing badge comparing to 5.2% of men, and with 27.3% of women signing petitions comparing to 25.0% of men. In 2012 there are similar tendency of women to participate more in voting, wearing badge and signing petition than men. There is a change in 2014 with women also working for political organisation slightly more than men – 3.1% to 2.7%, while still being more engaged in voting, wearing badge and signing petition. In 2016 women again tend to vote more than men – 78.5% to 74.7%. Moreover, in this year women also work for non-governmental organisation more than men – 7.7% to 7.1%. This trend is important to point out, because while being female may have positive effect on the index of political participation it does not mean that they are more likely to participate across all political activities. Participation in some activities stay lower or equal to men throughout the studied years, while few have a tendency to be more engaging for women.

Discussion

The results suggest that there is a persistent gender gap in political interest among men and women that with the latter being less interested in the politics throughout the years included in the research. The results for the index

of political participation also suggest the existence of the gender gap which however fluctuates from year to year – disadvantaging women in some years or men in others. That suggests that first hypothesis should not be declined as some level of unequal interest and participation is present. Moreover, the results do not suggest that there is clear decline in the gender gap as gender effect on both interest and participation does not have linear decreasing trend. Thus, second hypothesis is not supported. Age increase positively affects both men and women in both political interest and in participation in politics; therefore, the fourth hypothesis cannot be accepted. While education is an important factor and tertiary education has a significant positive effect on political interest and participation for both genders; women with tertiary education are still less likely to be interest in politics than men whereas for political participation the gap fluctuates between women and men being more involved, however they are not equal. Therefore, the third hypothesis is not supported by the data.

The results for political interest repeat previous research such as S. Verba, N. Burns and K. L. Schlozman (1997) and M. Fraile and R. Gomez (2017) who have found that interest is lower for women in comparison to men. Moreover, while British women have been more likely to go into the higher education than men since 2006/7 academic year (Department for Education, 2017) the gap is still present. One of the proposed explanations as C. Karpowitz and T. Mendelberg (2014) write is that women enjoy lower returns from the education due to the social setting and content of the education which devalue women's experiences and construct women as less authoritative than men by focusing on men in power, by lacking female teachers and lecturers, and through overall gender attitudes in places of higher education.

The data for political participation shows that while index of political participation may be higher for women, there are certain political activities that women are more likely to participate in than men and vice versa – voting, wearing a badge and signing a petition. This trend has some level of support in the previous research by other scholars. For example, C. Karpowitz and T. Mendelberg (2014) write that while women lag in some modes of participation, they have closed the gap in others. For example, women in the USA and some Western European countries have been voting at slightly higher rates than men since the 1980s. Moreover, M. Hooghe and D. Stolle (2004) in their work about anticipated political participation among American 14 year olds find distinct patterns in boys' and girls' choices of political activities. The distinction is the most visible in relation to volunteering, voting, collecting money and signatures, which is similar to the results uncovered in the present research. The boys lean more towards becoming party members and seek office, and they are overwhelmingly interested in more confrontational actions in comparison to girls. S. Childs (2004) also writes about the UK that there is no gender gap in voter turnout at national,

regional or local elections and women are more involved in 'cause oriented' activities such as signing petitions while being less likely to participate in campaign oriented activities like contacting politicians. C. Karpowitz and T. Mendelberg (2014) suggest that such results could be due to already interiorised gender roles at the age of fourteen. This may also be why the trend seems to continue among older women in the works discussed above and in the present research.

The results for political interest show that women are continuously less interested, and that the gap is overall bigger than when there is a same gap in political interest. One of the possible explanations could be the lack of distinction within the data between local and national level of interest, so that the respondents and researcher cannot account for it, which may increase the gap. H. Coffé (2013) points out that most existing research of political interest measures it in general without specifying particular policies or issues, and it can be argued that this approach is gender-biased because local politics are related to home and domestic sphere while national politics can be seen as a men's game. Coffé's research finds that women are more likely to be interested in local issues and less than men in national and international ones. This suggests that there is a need to clarify the concept of 'politics' in the research like this so to move towards the notion that men and women may be interested in different issues rather than women not being interested in politics on same level as men.

Assessing the models used in the present research, there are other explanatory variables that could have been included to improve the reliability of the results or should have been but are not available in the ESS datasets. For example, M. Hooghe and D. Stolle (2004) point out that some authors focus on the role of the institutions and their male-dominated culture, which inhibit women from participating in the political realm. To account for that level of female representation in the government could be included to account for the possible level of inclusivity. S. Verba, N. Burns and K. L. Schlozman (1997) in their research find that part of the gender gap is explained by political knowledge and efficacy, which could not be included in the models of the present research as variables representing them are not included in the ESS data. M. Fraile and R. Gomez (2017) in their study of political interest across European countries in addition to socio-economic variables include the respondents' trust in the institutions, media exposure and gender attitudes. Media exposure can affect the level of access to the news about politics and increase the interest through getting the respondents' attention. Trust in the institutions may affect the willingness to participate in politics in form of many activities such as working for a political organization, voting or contacting a politician, and it may also affect interest as people could feel like their government fails them. Gender attitudes can affect the level of inclusion of women in political discourse and activities as more conservative gender attitudes can promote gender roles

that do not support women's interest and participation in politics. These factors are not included in present research as they are not included in all rounds/years of the ESS data that are being researched.

Conclusion

Women being less interested and participating less in politics are an issue that has been investigated by many researchers who have been uncovering the factors behind the gender gap. The variety of factors have been found and while women are gaining more power and equality in relation to education, socio-economic factors and political representatives – there is still a gap present in many European countries (Fraile and Gomez, 2017). The existence of gender gap is a political issue for European democratic countries like the UK. Political interest and participation are part of citizen participation in the state's affairs and lack of it can cause women to pay price in terms of representation of their needs, concerns and preferences (Verba, Burns and Schlozman, 1997).

The findings of this research suggest that British women are still less interested in politics than men and that the gap does not seem to decrease. There is evidence that increase in representation of women in the parliament would provide girls with role models making them more interested in political matters (Wolbrecht and Campbell, 2007), however even though in the UK representation has increased (Keen and Cracknell, 2018) the lingering gender gap along with no substantial increase in interest among younger women does not suggest strong enough effects on younger generation. Moreover, tertiary education does not seem to equalize men and women's interest in politics, even though more women than men in the UK are in the Higher Education (Department for Education, 2017).

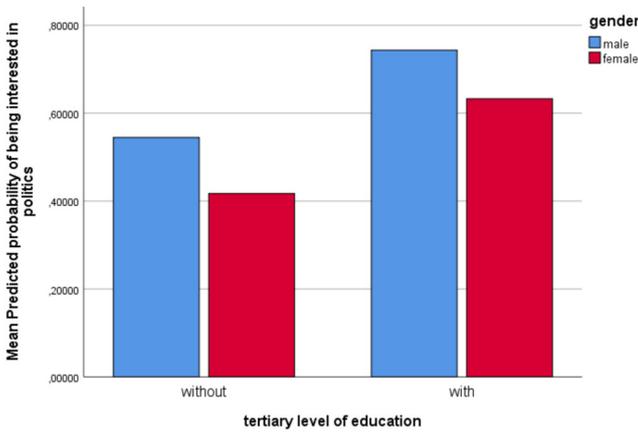
The results for political participation are not as clear as they show a fluctuation of the gender effect on participation in politics but the gap is still present even when the effect is positive for women – men are then less likely to participate. Looking separately at the political activities included in the statistical models of this research, it can be seen that women tend to participate in certain activities and the increase in those causes overall positive effect for women's participation. Thus, it can be argued that women are not yet participating in politics equally with men.

Overall, there is still a gap between men and women when it comes to politics, which should be addressed through research and policies to understand the issues of women, to include their opinions on the national matters – to have a democratic state, where women's voices are heard and counted.

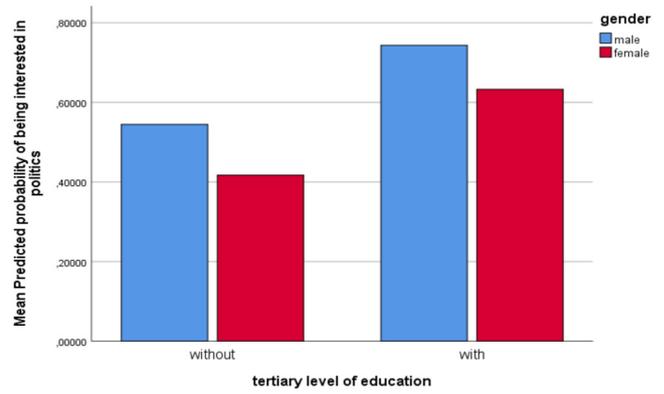
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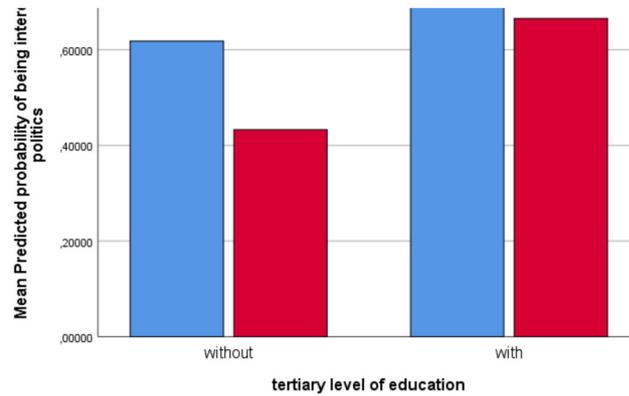
Appendix



Bar chart 1. Relationship between gender, education and probability of being interested in politics in 2010.



Bar chart 2. Relationship between gender, education and probability of being interested in politics in 2012.



Bar chart 3. Relationship between gender, education and probability of being interested in politics in 2014.

Contacting politician * Gender			
		Gender	
		Male	Female
Contacting politician	no	951	1008
		83.6%	83.7%
	yes	186	197
		16.4%	16.3%
Total		1137	1205
		100.0%	100.0%

Table 2. Cross-tabulation between Contacting politician and Gender in 2008.

Working in political org-n * Gender			
		Gender	
		Male	Female
Working in political org-n	no	1110	1183
		97.6%	98.2%
	yes	27	22
		2.4%	1.8%
Total		1137	1205
		100.0%	100.0%

Table 3. Cross-tabulation between Working in political org-n and Gender in 2008.

Working in political org-n * Gender			
		Gender	
		Male	Female
Working in political org-n	no	1110 97.6%	1183 98.2%
	yes	27 2.4%	22 1.8%
Total		1137 100.0%	1205 100.0%

Table 4. Cross-tabulation between Working in non-governmental org-n and Gender in 2008.

Working in non-governmental org-n * Gender			
		Gender	
		Male	Female
Working in non-governmental org-n	no	1053 92.6%	1133 94.1%
	yes	84 7.4%	71 5.9%
Total		1137 100.0%	1204 100.0%

Table 5. Cross-tabulation between Participating in lawful protest and Gender in 2008.

Short Read

Exploring Why the Concepts of Identity and Community have become so Significant in Contemporary Social Thought

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Key words: *identity, sociology, globalization, community, social thought*

Introduction:

The concept of “identity” is central to modern sociological thought (Bendle, 2002). Identity and identification are present in every aspect of our daily life so we need to understand these concepts in order to do good sociology and make connections between individuals and their communities. (Jenkins, 2004). In the past few decades, there has been various developments in the theory of identity and community. The concept of identity is also strongly linked to individual, community and nation. Throughout the years, scholars further developed theories about personal identity, collective identity and social identity. However, with these rapid developments and globalization, some scholars have also become concerned about an identity crisis. Due to the tighter connection among individuals and the social movements that request for equality brought by globalization, contemporary identity and community are worth discussing in sociology.

In this essay, the concept of “identity” and theories about identity will be discussed to answer the question: “Why have the concepts of identity and community become so significant in contemporary social thought?”. In the first section, the development of identity theories and the importance of collective identity will be demonstrated. Then, the crisis of identity in modern life will be analysed in terms of globalization and social movements. In the final section, the identity of a minority group in China will be analysed as a case example.

The development of identity theory

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the term “identity” originally came from the Latin word “idem”, meaning “who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others” (Turner, 2006). Although this term is part of the psychological vocabulary, it nevertheless relates to identity theory in sociology, which at times incorporates ideas and concepts from psychology (Burke and Sets, 2009). In this way, identity is related to every single individual’s life and people’s attitude towards themselves. In Burke and Sets’ (2009) Identity theory, many scholars have been developing identity theories since the last century and they are based on a series of ideas of symbolic interactionism, which is a framework for a better understanding of how people interact through generating symbolic meaning as a reference. The roots of it are traditional

and structural symbolic interaction, which are focused on actor’s meaning- the role of self as “me” and the person’s action under the “me” guidance. Traditional symbolic interaction believes that the social structure is always in an unstable state with constantly creating and recreating selves (individuals), action and society so we are not able to develop theory because of such a society, while the structural symbolic interaction perspective is completely opposite. In this phase, the theories are still linked to psychology and sociopsychology. Moreover, in more recent years, the current emphasis on identity theory has changed a lot. In terms of interactional emphasis, Stryker and Burke (2000) are another two important early inventors in identity theory. Their emphasis on structural aspects in identity theory originated from Mead’s (1938) social psychology theory, and ideas from role theory- the conventional dimension of identity that emphasized on salience hierarchy’s commitment. It is believed that individuals have multiple role identities and, as such, they claim more than one role for one’s identity and these identities can form an organization into a hierarchy within oneself. Then, Burke (2009) himself further developed the control model to be applied in the research in a perceptual way that contains identity standard, perceptual input, comparator and behaviour, laying stress on the meaning dimension of identity.

It is listed above that the root of identity theories is traditional and structural symbolic interaction. Contemporary sociologists further developed interactional, structural and perceptual emphases. After going through the development of these theories, it is important to discuss different categories of identities. Although there are some overlaps and differences between personal identity and social identity, the role of them and their features are also worth mentioning.

Personal identity is self-designed and self-attributed. It has a personal feature that is attributed and its meaning also attributes to oneself by the actor. When people are cast into insulting and demeaning social roles or categories, personal identities are likely to be asserted by interaction. In this process, other involving in social identities are considered to be conflicted, but they are not comparable among each other because “the relative salience” of social roles or category membership about personal identity could be rather varied (Snow & Corrigall-Brown and Catherine, 2015).

Social identities are identities imputed to others with an attempt to situate them in the social space. The social identity establishes different social roles which works as ground of sociological theory (Stryker and Burke, 2000).

The significance of identity in globalization and social movements

According to Jenkins (2004), the complex and extensive ability to know and exchange ideas about “who and what’s what” (in another word, the identity of each creature) makes it possible for the human world to be prosperous. Individuals and collective concerns about identity and identification are not new to the modern world, and the increasing theories in the sociological field in this discourse about identity’s meaning to human beings reflects the global attitude in general. Identity is also a produced and reproduced narrative, rhetoric and representation in discourse and material, as a result of identification in practice. As an interactional product of “external” identification, individual and collective identity are of “internal” self-identification.

After understanding the theories of identity and the role of identity to contemporary social thought, it is not difficult to relate it with globalization. According to Delanty (2003), globalization at present offers opportunities of forms of communication that also provide a method to construct community, which leads to a notion about the community in practice that it is not a form of social integration but is an open-ended system of communication about senses of belonging.

However, the crisis of identity is also a reason why identity and community are worth discussing in the academic field. With the influence of media and politics groups, “we are locked together” (Croucher, 2018, 10) and this tendency affects many aspects of lives. With people from all over the world using the same brand of product, speaking the same language and holding a similar point of view under the influence of globalization, individuals from different cultures are losing their distinct identity gradually and this is becoming one of the concerns of sociologists since the 21st century. According to Bendle (2002), the acquisition and maintenance of identities in highly modern culture would become problematic. “The contemporary crisis of identity thus expresses itself as both a crisis of society and a crisis of theory. The crisis of identity involves a crisis of ‘identity’” (Bendle, 1-3). This issue is related to four problems in regard to the self in high modernity. Firstly, the origin of identity theory is problematic. Secondly, there is the process of problematizing of self-knowledge that the concept of self-used to be invisible and uninteresting in pre-modern time. Nevertheless, since the beginning of 20th century, the self has been a vast area in the psychological field (for example psychoanalysis) that is worth exploring. Thirdly, with industrialization and urbanization, the human potential was “valorised” and modern secularization placed individuals achieving self-realization in priority position instead of staying unchanged and waiting for others. This is the consequence of “the breakdown of feudal hierarchies, the rise of individualism and social

For example, ‘teacher’ or ‘mother’, or in wider and more inclusive social categories, such as gender, ethnicity and nationality. Thus, they are often described as ‘role identities’ (Stryker and Burke, 2000) and ‘categorical identities’ (Calhoun, 1997). Regardless of what the certain sociocultural bases are, social identities are the foundation of social interaction on account that they give aspects of orientation “to ‘alter’ or categorize ‘other’ as a social object” (Snow & Corrigall-Brown and Catherine, 2015).

In terms of collective identity, it is also rooted in the interaction between actors, and its core is the process of social actors. Collective identity theories hold the view that it generates “a sense of ‘we,’” but then emphasizes the process by which social actors regard themselves as a whole (collectivity), acknowledging that this process is more significant to theorizing it than any subsequent product or property. The primary projected collective identity might be transient and is subjected to changes in the environment and even transformation in the process of the course of ongoing collective (inter) action. In social groups, the underlying collective identity often interacts among participants and, by emerging these collective identities and group members’ personal and social identities, are also reflexively shaped (Snow & Corrigall-Brown and Catherine, 2015).

To analyse collective identity of a certain culture, we need to first understand the code of collective identity. There are three ideal codes of identity that are affiliated to specific social groups or communities and these carry symbolic codes and functions constructing collective identity (Bendle, 2002). The first one is primordial codes that are original and unchangeable and pay more attention to gender, kinship, ethnicity and race. This code provides a base for hierarchy and is beyond the control of the voluntary, resulting in a possible lack of trust (Bendle, 2002). The second is civic code which is based on familiarity with a set of clear rules of conduct, traditions and social routines that construct and demarcate collective boundaries (Bendle, 2002). The cultural code is the third type that links the constitutive boundary between “us and them” by the relation of collective subject and “Sacred”, not by nature compared with the first code (Bendle, 2002).

Identity theories developed during the last century from psychological theory and three major sociologists further concertized and were enhanced by Stryker (2000) inputting his ideas about social structural identities. This was followed by McCall and Simmons (1978), theorizing interactive levels of identity, and Burke (2002) adding concept on personal identity. The development of theories of personal, social and collective identity also contributed to identity theories, especially the third one in terms of analysing certain culture or cultural phenomenon.

mobility, and the potential for radical social change all provided access to new identities to be pursued in this world” (Bendle, 2002,3). Lastly, there is the new flexibility of defining oneself: as a result of this last point, the previous way of identity definition had declined which meant identity had to be on the basis of shifting and non-absolute foundations instead of rigid and predictable social structures or processes (Tajbakhsh, 2001). To sum up, there are historical reasons for the crisis of identity and it is also significantly related to globalization.

At the same time, social movements, such as feminist movements were also widely seen in many countries as the consequence of globalization. At present, in the stage of highly modern society, there is a growing tension between demand and capacity of the selves, and this was caused by globalization and individual’s spontaneous responses to it. Sociological analysis reflected on this high modernity and criticized the imprecision of the current situation (Bendle, 2002). Castells (2004) interprets this influence of globalization on social movement: Globalization makes more intensive sharing of information by enacting networks of wealth, technology, and power and this is one of the major transformations in the contemporary world. This has an influence of enhancing productive capacity, cultural creativity, and communication potential, depriving the privileged in societies. On account of the basis in culture, history, and geography in state and organizations in civil society, the existing politics and hierarchy are disintegrating facing the acceleration of globalization. Individuals all over the world are facing the crisis of identity by losing control over their life, jobs, counties, economy, culture, governments and the surrounding environment. As a result, social movements come in to resist domination, against those who empowered the powerless people and challenge the inequality in the new global order in unusual formats, proceeding in an unexpected way (Castells, 2004).

The following paragraph will analyse identities in the social movement in a more general way by using a worldwide example- the feminism waves (movements) in the western world. Before going into detail, it is important to understand the association of identities and social movements (also other collectivity). There are two underlying assumptions: 1. The congruence among individual identities are aggregated or converged to contribute to collective identities. 2. Every parallel personal identity matter to collective identities, in other words, social movements are based on these (Reger, 2008). According to Roth (2008), there have been three feminism waves since the 1960s from the United States’ white women’s liberation in the New Left and the civil rights movements. He demonstrated how the feminism political identity formed by accommodating minority leftists to emergent identity as feminists. He described how white women’s emergence in perusing for gender equality, placing emphasis on the discussion of gender difference and the changing of feminist theories. “White women’s liberationists’ (Roth, 2008, 10) forming of a feminist

collective identity was clearly a case of (re)building “pre-existing movement identity” (10). Feminism, therefore, is made within complex and crowded political condition in which constructing collective identity rests on the reconstruction and redrawing of boundaries. The collective identity approach to understanding feminism goes a long way toward understanding the differences in feminist agendas over time and space which then concluded that “the feminist movement has a vis-à-vis positive influence on collective identity too” (Eisenstadt and Giesen, 270). By analysing the feminism movement, he argues that the complex process of reconstructing collective identity within oppositional communities involves controversy about the consequence of reacting to difference and the creation of new communication mechanisms. Feminism movement challenged the opposition of a group of collective left-wing activists that produced by gender inequality. Feminists worked for years to reform males in debating the meaning of hostility of feminism within its organization, shifting its audience from males to all individuals in society and eliminating the boundary between the oppositional community and the rest of the society (Eisenstadt and Giesen, 1995).

Above all, this section mainly discussed identity and community’s significance under the discourse of globalization and social movements. The development of globalization makes the concept of identity and community a heated topic in the sociological field due to the crisis of identity resulted in globalization. Social movements are also the area that identity and community are widely discussed, especially collective identity. By citing the feminism movement, this part analyses the connection between collective identity and feminism movement for equality and provide a better idea of how the theories of collective identity shaped social movements.

A case study: the Uyghur in Xinjiang, China

When individuals communicate with each other, language is used as a set of significant symbols. With communication, the meanings inside language are shared by the user and the acceptor. As it is mentioned above, the concept of identity is symbolic interactionism and it has tended to only focus on symbols because it constructs the foundation of thought, language, communication, and interaction. Therefore, identity and language are strongly connected and various of the previous studies have showed that language has the influence of creating collective identities, and this perspective is not categorical or universal but a phenomenon that limited by space (Lapresta and Huguet, 2008). In this part, the example of minority ethnic group Uyghur in Xinjiang, China will be cited and how Uyghur people’s collective identity was formed through interacting with Han ethnic (the

majority). Within these studies, language or language education was used as a media or guidance to analyse the root of their identities.

China is a multi-ethnic country with fifty-six ethnic groups where Han ethnic is the majority and others are considered a minority. Uyghur people speak Uyghur language that is very different from other dialects. With the popularization of Mandarin, the students in schools are taught both Mandarin and Uyghur language. In this way, they are educated under bilingual culture. According to Smith Finley et al (2015), since 1996, the government had abolished the so-called “separate-but-equal” parallel education system that is using either Uyghur language or Mandarin as a compulsory course but instead, Mandarin Chinese is used in all primary, secondary and higher education schools as a sole medium of instruction. However, it is believed that Uyghur people still prefer to use Uyghur language in a professional area and they still consider it as their mother tongue that is central to their identity (Smith Finley et al, 2015).

A quantitative research with four studies was carried out in 2014 among Uyghur undergraduate students about ethnic group's differences in interdependent self-constructed identity (Smith et al. 2015). The first study has shown that Han regarded the private-self as more important than the collective-self but Uyghur exhibited the opposite pattern instead, valuing collective-identity more. In this regard, the concept of collective identity was more significant to Uyghur people than Han's. The following three studies were about the interaction between Uyghur and Han on Uyghur's infinity. Three follow-up memory experiments showed that Han participants have better memories about mother-referenced information than the information related to famous people, but on the other hand, Uyghur participants showed a remarkably good memory of information about their own group. This provided evidence of the difference in interdependent self-constructed identity between the Han and the Uyghur, that is, the Han had their identities emphasised on relational self-construction while the Uyghur placed more emphasis on collective self-construction (Smith et al. 2015). In addition, there are Uyghur minority students in other areas of China who immigrated with their parent from the west (Xinjiang province) to the more developed eastern China. In terms of second language acquisition, a study discussed the way these kinds of students formed their identities through experiences of learning English in a prestigious east coastal university in China (Guo and Gu, 2016). Those students were exposed to multiple languages including Mandarin as the medium of instruction, English as second language-acquisition, and other dialects from their peers. Moreover, another research has been carried out in the Uyghur community in a University in Shanghai by interviews. It showed that compared with Han ethnic students, the minority elites were faced with more problems of learning English, however, they developed powerful identities that were based on the collective Uyghur elite identities which were helpful for them to

imagine multilingual and multicultural memberships, facilitating them to adapt into the new community in the university (Mamat, et al, 2014).

To sum up, Uyghurs, especially high-educated youth in Uyghur minority ethnic group in China, built a strong collective identity through language and language-learning. According to these studies, the Uyghur emphasised their collective-identity more than self-identity, and as a result, when communicating, memories about their own group and words in their own language were more likely to be referenced. In the aspect of language acquisition, although they face a lot of problems under trilingual circumstance, their strong identities were able to help them overcome the problems. In this case, identity and collective identity (community) play a significant role in the empirical study.

Conclusion:

Above what has been demonstrated, the concept of “identity and community” is very significant in contemporary social thought on account of the well-established theories based on identity and collective identity, the heated discussion of the globalized identity crisis in the sociological field and the social movements rooted in the rights of personal identity and community. Also, it is very important for analysis in empirical studies according to the case study.

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Queer Time and Place: Locating a Backward Future Through the Construction of a Queer Archive in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*

Kimberley Mather

Key words: *archives, temporalities, queer, Bechdel, autobiography*

Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* (2006) is an autobiographical graphic novel which is described by the author as a Family Tragicomic. Bechdel, an American cartoonist, presents a memoir which interweaves memories from her childhood, adolescence and adulthood, with the reproduction of documents exploring her father's sexual history and closeted homosexuality. Through this essay I will explore the idea of *Fun Home* as a queer archive and an "archive of feelings" (Cvetkovich, 2003). I will argue that it is through the construction of this archive that Bechdel creates a queer temporality which allows for the possibility of a backward future (Love, 2007). I will define these concepts in relation to *Fun Home* whilst also acknowledging how the reproduction of documents and the subversion of conventional narratives throughout the text queer both time and space and how these different elements combine to create a queer archive of feelings and the location of a backward future.

Cvetkovich (2003) introduces the concept of an archive of feeling as a way of focusing on affect and trauma and as a way of challenging how history should be recorded. An archive of feeling is distinct in its focus on recognising and archiving everyday accounts of trauma, its aim of dismantling public/private boundaries and in moving away from pathologising discourses of trauma (Cvetkovich, 2002, 2003). This foregrounding of trauma is, for Cvetkovich, a way of making space in academic debate and historical narratives for new modes of expression, such as testimony and memory (2002: 7). As an archive of feeling, *Fun Home* blurs the boundaries between private and public and between truth and artifice whilst also challenging what it means to be historical (Rohy, 2010: 343). The archive created in *Fun Home* allows Bechdel to invoke a queer temporality which moves away from the need to know what really happened and focus instead on the affect of history. We witness the gathering, compilation and redrawing of photographs, memories and words that draw on feelings of shame, concealments, secrets and guilt in an attempt to piece together a story that would otherwise be absent from historical archives. This production of a queer archive foregrounds Cvetkovich's (2002, 2003) claim that an archive of feeling challenges conventional ideas about the remembering and recording of history and the uses of historical archives. It is the gathering and reproduction of documents and memories in *Fun Home*'s archive of feelings, and the queer temporality invoked by this, which allows us to imagine what Heather Love (2007) describes as a "backwards future"; defined by Love as "a future apart from the reproductive imperative, optimism and the promise of redemption" (2007: 147). For Love,

this idea of backwardness offers an affective model for queer historiography (Love, 2007: 149) and involves looking backwards to the past, and to a long history of queer suffering, trauma and shame. It is this looking backwards which, according to Love, allow us to imagine a queer future and a transformative politics that moves away from assimilation as its goal (2007). This idea of looking backwards is present throughout *Fun Home* and, as I will go on to demonstrate, is invoked through Bechdel's construction of a queer archive that looks to the past in order to understand both her own and her father's identity.

Although described as an autobiography, *Fun Home* is not just Bechdel's story. Bechdel's father Bruce is also central to the narrative. *Fun Home* is infused with a queer spectrality (Freccero, 2007) in the figure of Bruce Bechdel. The idea of queer spectrality was introduced by Freccero to offer a tool for writing history. Queer spectrality involves the idea that the past is always present, always haunting the current moment, and a queer spectre appears as "a non-living person in the living present" (Freccero, 2007: 23). Bruce Bechdel appears as this spectre and, in many ways, he haunts the narrative. One of the difficulties in analysing *Fun Home* in relation to this spectrality is that we risk positioning Bruce Bechdel as a product of a different cultural era and thus, placing Bruce and Alison in opposition; the tragic closeted queer against the modern liberated queer. We could read both Bruce and Alison in terms of how their lives and identities are informed by their relationship to the closet as a consistent presence in the shaping of gay identities (Sedgwick, 1990). Bechdel's relationship to the closet is in many ways different to that of her father's but it could be said that it was, for both of them, "still the fundamental feature of social life" (Sedgwick, 1990: 68). For Bechdel her coming out is voluntary; it constitutes an "authentically public speech act" (Sedgwick, 1990: 74). However, Bruce Bechdel chooses to remain in the closet with only a few people knowing about the 'secret' double life he leads. He is however, outed posthumously by his daughter. Bruce Bechdel, it could be argued, in appearing as a queer spectre, becomes positioned as the product of a different historical moment, characterized by his relationship to the closet and homophobia. As such, his world becomes both spatially and temporally different to the world of his daughter. This dilemma of claiming her father as a victim of homophobia is addressed by Bechdel; "there's a certain emotional expediency to claiming him as a tragic victim of homophobia ... that's a problematic line of thought... For one thing, it makes it harder to blame him" (2006: 196). She ruminates on alternative histories that could

have occurred if her father had lived in a different time and was able to live his life out of the closet; he could have died of AIDS; she may not have been born. In searching for the connection between her own and her father's sexual history and identity, Bechdel is "willing to claim her father for herself and hence for history, insisting that his story be incorporated into a more fully historicized present" (Cvetkovich, 2008: 124). In looking backwards Bechdel is able to use her father's history and spectrality to problematize the present and embrace a queer temporality which rejects progress narratives (Cvetkovich, 2008: 124). Therefore, in looking backwards Bechdel is able to bring the questions raised by the spectre of her father, and of his secrets, into the present whilst managing to avoid presenting herself as a modern queer subject in opposition to her father's repressed queerness.

Sedgwick states that "in many, if not most, relationships, coming out is a matter of crystallizing intuitions or convictions that had been in the air for a while already and had already established their own power circuits of silent contempt, silent blackmail, silent glamorization, silent complicity" (1990: 79-80). This quote is particularly relevant to *Fun Home* as we see Bechdel's retroactive looking back at her father's life for "clues" of his queerness. We are also led to question how much Bechdel's mother knew about her husband's secret life, as well as questions about whether Bruce's suspicions about his daughter's sexuality affected his relationship with her. These questions of knowing come up throughout *Fun Home* as Bechdel acts as a witness to her past. She uses memory and physical evidence of her father's history to revisit the past for the signs of her father's sexuality that she did not see at the time (Cvetkovich, 2008). This gathering of evidence becomes Bechdel's only way of knowing, as her father's sexuality was something that remained unspoken between them. The only conversation between Bechdel and her father in relation to their sexuality is a series of panels where nothing much is spoken, emphasising the unspoken and unspeakable nature of her father's secret and the unknowability of his history. Bechdel and her father are pictured in the claustrophobically confined space of the car, accentuating the link to the closet. There is a lack of eye contact between them and the conversation is focused on the exchange of books, something that has always been a foundation of their relationship and which has often come to stand in for emotions they are unable to share. This conversation is the only time in the book that they discuss their shared sexuality in person. Bechdel asks her father if he gave her a book by Colette because he knew she was gay. Bruce responds, "I guess there was some kind of ... identification" (2006: 220). However, the conversation stops when she asks her father if he remembers her childhood cross-gender identification: "I wanted to be a boy! I dressed in boy's clothes! Remember?" (2006: 220). The significance of this unanswered question hangs in the air between them and the silences and unspoken truths which surround their relationship are brought into an uncomfortable focus. We are left asking

if he remembers, or if he is refusing to remember, the animosity caused by his reluctance to accept his daughter's childhood cross-gender identification. What would be the trauma of this remembering? Does he make the link between his own repressed sexuality and gender expression and that of his daughter? Is the silence for himself or for his daughter? So much is left unspoken that as a reader we are left with these questions and are left as frustrated and uncomfortable as Bruce and Alison. Following this conversation, we see Bechdel questioning their parent/child relationship; "I felt distinctly parental listening to his shamefaced recitation" (2006: 221). In learning her father's secret, the parent/child relationship between Bechdel and her father becomes queered in the sense that it is turned upside down, against the norm of conventional parent/child relationships.

As a lesbian autobiography, *Fun Home* opens up new and alternative narratives in relation to time and space. In queer life stories we often see a disruption of conventional life narratives that focus on longevity, or on the move from childhood to adolescence to adulthood (Halberstam, 2005). We see this disruption throughout *Fun Home* as Bechdel offers an alternative queer temporality that is not bound by the logics of time or conventional narrative. It is recursive. It is out of order. We go backwards and forwards in time. We start and end in the same place. We return frequently to the same events. Pearl states that lesbian autobiography offers a "generic disruption" to the rules of autobiography as "the available parameters of autobiography will not do for lesbians" (2015: 169) as their lives do not fit into available or conventional narrative structures. The backwards and forwards in time and space throughout *Fun Home* demonstrates a queering of conventional narrative structures and the rejection of the futural promises of sequential narration (Freccero, 2015). This use of queer time, however, does leave the reader with questions about truth and veracity. It may lead the reader to question the authenticity and truth of Bechdel's story. She becomes unreliable as a narrator as we are left with doubts about what actually happened to her father and whether his death was a suicide or an accident. We are relying on Bechdel for the truth but, of course, we never find this out. We are given no closure to the narrative and this lack of closure emphasises the indeterminate and unknowable nature of history. *Fun Home*, as both a graphic novel and as an archive, is a construction that is pieced together and redrawn by Bechdel, thus, exposing the constructed nature of archives and history. Whilst highlighting the fact that this story is not available in traditional archives, *Fun Home* also exposes itself as a fabrication, forcing the reader to acknowledge that we can never fully know the truth of history.

These questions of truth are further emphasised through the use of memories. As a queer archive, *Fun Home* relies on memories as a mode of knowledge in place of other forms of evidence. For Cvetkovich, this focus on memory is important for a queer archive as it allows us to "address traumatic experiences through

witnessing and retelling” (2008: 110). This reliance on memory, Cvetkovich claims, often means that queer archives become fragmented and incoherent. Bechdel presents a multi-layered approach to the re-telling of memories as she often returns to the same childhood memories as well as recalling the memories told by other family members. This use of memory illustrates how lesbian and gay history demands an archive that includes new kinds of evidence as well as viewing evidence itself as an emotional category (Cvetkovich, 2008: 137). In *Fun Home* we see the emotional and affective nature of evidence is multifaceted as we encounter its discovery, collation and interpretation by Bechdel. Bechdel recalls the memory of her grandmother retelling her memories of Bruce’s childhood (2006: 40-42). The retelling of these memories, presented as something that happened several times over the years by her grandmother in an almost ritualistic manner (Bechdel offers a list of reoccurring memories told by her grandmother, of which the story of her father becoming stuck in the mud is presented as the story), becomes a defining element in familial relations. This retelling becomes a foundational element not only in Bechdel’s relationship to her grandmother, as we see her asking to be retold these memories, but also her relationship to her father; “the tale was endlessly compelling. By day, it was difficult to imagine Dad ever helpless, naked, or trussed up in the oven” (2006: 42).

In the construction of the queer archive of *Fun Home* we see the creation of a queer space and a visible queer public (Cvetkovich, 2003, 2008). Bechdel makes visible a queer history that would otherwise be invisible. In creating and publishing this story as a graphic novel Bechdel creates a space for this queer history as well as making contemporary lesbian/queer cultures visible. We see the significance of this visibility in the formation of identity when Bechdel recalls the memory of witnessing female masculinity for the first time, or at least the first time this witnessing was significant for her (2006: 117-118). This encounter, described initially by Bechdel as an unsettling sight, becomes significant as it presents her with a possible future that she may not otherwise have felt was available to her; “I didn’t know there were women who wore men’s clothes and had men’s haircuts. But like a traveller in a foreign country who runs into someone from home-someone they’ve never spoken to but know by sight-I recognised her with a surge of joy” (Bechdel, 2006: 118). In this figure of female masculinity, Bechdel finds similarity, recognition and belonging. In the next panel we witness Bruce Bechdel witnessing the recognition that Alison sees in this figure. When her father asks her if that is what she wants to look like Alison says no, denying this recognition. She then states, as an adult looking back at the significance of this event, that “the vision of the truck driving bull dyke sustained me through the years as perhaps it haunted my father” (Bechdel, 2006: 119). Whereas Bruce Bechdel becomes a queer spectre in Bechdel’s life, this figure of masculine/lesbian potentiality becomes a queer spectre in Bruce’s life.

This memory becomes more significant when juxtaposed against Bechdel’s memories of her father chastising her when she failed to perform a conventional heterosexual femininity. Perhaps it was the haunting of a potential queer future which led to Bruce Bechdel’s reinforcement of these gendered expectations onto his daughter? But again, we cannot know this for sure as we are reliant on the retelling of the memories of an unreliable narrator.

Fun Home creates and illustrates multiple levels of queer space, from the physical spaces such as the queer bookshop and the reference to Stonewall to a more metaphorical queer space in terms of Bechdel’s retroactive rereading of her father’s decoration of the domestic sphere as queer. I use the term ‘queer space’ to refer to the “place-making practices...in which queer people engage” as well as “the new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counter publics” (Halberstam, 2005: 6). The graphic novel format of *Fun Home* allows for this construction of queer space. Pearl (2008) comments that this choice of a graphic novel over conventional prose allows Bechdel to redraw and reclaim the ornate domestic space of her father and in doing so she gains agency over that space as well as her life story. This also enables her to further establish herself as the opposite to her father; something that she sets out early in the narrative: “I was Spartan to my father’s Athenian. Modern to his Victorian. Butch to his nelly. Utilitarian to his aesthete” (2006: 15).

This choice of a graphic space over literary prose could also be read in line with the questioning of words throughout the novel. As a child Bechdel questions her own words and this doubt becomes obsessive to the point where her words become obscured by symbols (2006: 143). Despite this doubt and the trauma that it caused it seems that sometimes the words still matter. In a panel that contains no images, only words, Bechdel writes “and with my father’s death following so hard on the heels of this doleful coming-out party I couldn’t help but assume a cause-and-effect relationship” (2006: 59). Pearl (2008) states that *Fun Home* was written by Bechdel as a way of coming to terms with the guilt that her words, her declarative speech act of coming out, caused her father’s death. Bechdel’s guilt and trauma becomes unrepresentable in this panel. As Pearl states, “there is hardly a way to say it, and no way to illustrate it... Naming the unspeakable killed him... But if she did kill him then her words mattered. He listened. In some horrible way she needs to have killed him” (2008: 299). Bechdel needs to feel the guilt over her father’s death as she needs to know that her words matter. We see that despite overcoming the Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder that overtook her diaries as a child, Bechdel still feels the power and doubt of her words. This speech act in particular mattered as Bechdel imagines her coming out as “an emancipation from [her] parents” but is projected “back into [the parental] orbit” (2006: 59) following her mother’s revelation about her father’s sexuality. In trying to escape from her family, from the normative performance and expectation of family life, in deliberately placing herself on a different path she

interrupts and exposes “the line that Dad drew between reality and fiction” (2006: 59) and it is this that she feels causes his suicide.

This combination of doubt and dependence on words occurs in other parts of the novel as we see Bechdel searching for words to describe both her own and her father’s identity. In the absence of other public archives Bechdel attempts to locate this understanding in an official archive; the family’s Webster’s Dictionary. However, she fails to find that understanding in the dictionary entry for the word “queer,” (2006: 57) and this failure to find a definitive, historically defined meaning of her father’s identity becomes bound together with her desire to find out the truth about his death and her failure to do so. This failure to find an adequate understanding in the dictionary exposes the failures of dominant archives whilst also stressing the importance of queer archives and its role in the formation of identities. It illustrates a distinction between queer knowledge and its absence from public discourse; the distinction between what we know to exist and its exclusion from history. Bechdel also looks up the definition of ‘father’ in the dictionary (2006: 197) and this also proves insufficient in understanding her father, necessitating the turn towards a queer archive and its focus on feelings and affect over truth and historical accuracy.

Bechdel did find a definition of lesbian in the dictionary as an adolescent and she explains how this discovery led to her having “qualms” about her sexuality (2006: 74). On this same page we also see Bechdel in a book shop discovering lesbian books. She equates this moment to the discovery of the sexuality and its alignment with her “bookish upbringing”. She describes this discovery as “a revelation not of the flesh but of the mind” (2006: 74). These texts, also part of a queer archive, become important for Bechdel in locating her own identity. This reliance on literature in the discovery of her identity becomes more significant when juxtaposed against the reliance on literature in negotiating her relationship to her father. It is significant that she must move outside of the home, of her father’s domestic artifice, to access this queer archive. Despite the prominence of books in her house and her “bookish upbringing”, certain stories and narratives are not available to her. This locates queer history and archives as something that is out there, outside the domestic sphere. She needs to leave home, with its association of conventional heterosexual temporality, to find it. Bechdel’s search for and collating of her father’s queer history resituates queerness within the domestic sphere allowing Bechdel to look backwards and claim the home, her father’s space, as a queer space.

The uses of documents and artefacts are important in establishing *Fun Home* as a queer archive and allow Bechdel to situate her family history within a larger public context and in a certain time and place. These documents and artefacts, described by Cvetkovich as “technologies of memory”, become sites of memory and trauma, allowing for an “archival mode of witness” (2008: 115). One of the strongest artefacts offered as evidence of Bruce’s secret life is the

photograph of Roy, the children’s babysitter and Bruce’s lover (Bechdel, 2006: 100-101). This photograph is discovered by Bechdel after her father’s death and is reproduced in *Fun Home* as a double page spread demonstrating its importance in the discovery of her father’s identity. In revealing that the image was taken on a family holiday and her father’s attempt at censorship (he blocked out the dates and sealed the negatives) Bechdel exposes the boundaries between “public appearance and private reality” in Bruce’s life (2006: 101). Cvetkovich describes this photograph as allowing Bechdel to revisit her childhood from a queer perspective and to re-situate herself within her own family narrative (2008: 115). Through this photograph Bechdel becomes a witness her father’s homoerotic desire. When questioning why she is not shocked by this picture Bechdel concludes “perhaps I identify too well with my father’s illicit awe” (2006: 101). It is significant that this image immediately follows the panels where we see Bechdel and her father looking at a male model in a magazine and witnessing each other’s desire. Just as the male model becomes the object of desire under their gaze, so too does Roy. The modes of desire experienced by both Bechdel and her father become distinct but bound together at the same time. This is explored further by Bechdel (2006: 120) when she compares photographs of herself and her father. She contemplates the physical similarities between them and asks if the photograph of her father was taken by his lover just as her lover took the photograph of her. In posing this question Bechdel places them both as the objects of a queer erotic gaze in an attempt to find a connection between them.

The concluding images of *Fun Home* illustrate its power as a queer archive and the queer temporality that it envisions. We see the truck that killed Bruce followed by the image of Bechdel as a child jumping into her father’s arms in a swimming pool. This image reflects the very first image in the novel in terms of the positioning of their bodies. In the accompanying words Bechdel states “in the tricky reverse narration that impels our entwined stories, he was there to catch me when I leapt” (2006: 232). Rohy (2010) states how the impossibility of this moment turns event into metaphor and predicts Bruce’s fall, which in this queer narrative has already occurred and yet not occurred simultaneously. In ending where we started, we are refused a linear narrative closure and we still do not know the truth of Bruce Bechdel’s life.

Fun Home illustrates the compilation of a queer archive. It demonstrates both the struggle and the need to create an alternative historicity and how this looking backwards allows the creation of a “backward future”. *Fun Home* forces questions about how we use and understand history. Using memory and artefacts, Bechdel offers a queer temporality that turns away from conventional linear narratives of progress allowing the “backward future” requested by Love. This is a future that both acknowledges and makes space for alternative historicities and which focuses on the power of affect rather than empirical truth.

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