Making the headlines:
EU Immigration to the UK and the wave of New Racism after Brexit

DRAFT

Abstract

This chapter explores the most discussed immigration-related topics in the news media during the EU referendum campaign in the UK (April- June 2016) and after (July- September 2016) and identifies a pattern of covering immigration topics during and after the EU referendum. The chapter argues that attitudes anti- EU immigration are a wave of 'new(s)' racism (van Dijk, 2000) in the UK and EU immigration is frequently used as an umbrella term for Eastern European immigration being often mixed with non-EU immigration and the Refugee crisis. The results both replicate and extend the findings of earlier work showing how news media have shaped people's attitudes during the EU referendum leading to general hostility to immigration. Our data shows that the prevalence of negative news stories has led to a distinctive immigration-narrative, confirming Hoffner and Cohen (2013)'s claim that members of minority groups are almost always associated with violent and threatening media content. Reflecting on the results of the EU referendum, we argue that 14 years of negative media exposure shaped the public's beliefs, confirming Gerbner (1998)'s theory and also Busselle & Crendall (2002)'s and Fujioka (2005)'s studies, that indicate that exposure to negative media messages can influence the perception of minority groups by the majority.

Key words: immigration, Brexit, EU referendum, media, new racism

Most European countries complain about the migration's effects on labour market, economy and society. According to Etchegaray and Correa (2015), 'in the context of globalization, immigration has become an increasingly relevant issue for many countries, and not only for those that traditionally receive foreigners, such as the United States' (2015: 3601). In the United Kingdom (UK), opinion polls show that immigration is high up on people's list of concerns. This is not surprising as more than twenty years of rising immigration have led to impressive figures that indicate

that more than 7. 8 million individuals who were born abroad now live in the UK (Wadsworth, 2015). There is an impressive number of people coming to the UK every year looking for better jobs or better quality of life, leading to an unprecedented rise in population, especially since the accession of the Eastern European countries to the European Union (EU) in 2004 and 2007. However, the UK is not the only European country to face huge immigration waves and it is not different from any other European developed country (OECD, 2014; Wadsworth, 2015); for example, Italy or Spain's net inflows are higher than to the UK (Tilford, 2015). Yet the UK is the first country to decide to quit the European project because of a falsely constructed perception that immigration is what stops it from being great, hence the desire to 'Take back control!' over immigration.

Even if more than one year has passed since the EU referendum, the number of people who fear a new upsurge in immigration remains high in the UK. Immigration was clearly one of the main drivers for the bitter and unexpected divorce from the EU, with 33 % of Leave voters stating that immigration was their most important reason for voting to leave the European Union (Bourne, 2016). Nevertheless, it is not clear that when the UK will not be part of the EU, immigration rates will drop. At the moment though, the most recent figures show that in June 2017 the number of EU citizens leaving the UK rose by 29% to 123,000 with 43,000 returning to their home country in the 12 months after the Brexit vote, but even so, more EU migrants are still coming into the country than leaving (ONS 2017). This is in line with existing research that predicted that immigration flows to the UK will remain high after Brexit (Carlos, 2016; Somerville, 2016).

There is a global perception that immigrants are the source of all evil having an overall negative impact on the labour market, health services, social integration, local communities, education or social housing system of host countries. To address this general perception, empirical studies have emerged on migrants' impact on the labour market (Borjas, 1994; Friedberg & Hunt, 1995; Dustmann, Fabrini, Preston & Wadsworth, 2003; Lemos & Portes, 2008; Bell, Fasani & Machin, 2013; Wadsworth, 2015), health and health care services (Wadsworth, 2013), schools (Geay et al, 2013), or social housing (Battiston et al, 2014; Sa, 2015). Contrary to the public perception and the media discourse, these studies show that immigrants have little or no negative impact on the population from the host countries, yet they are contributing to the economic growth by paying higher taxes than the local citizens. Moreover, Bell et al (2013) found no effect of the increase in immigration on crime, whilst Geay et al (2013) found no effect of immigration on aspects of educational attainment. Wadsworth (2013) found no greater deficit of doctors and hospitals and, despite what the Leave campaign promoted in 2016, Giuntella et al (2015) found little effect on NHS waiting times and Nickell and Saleheen (2015) found small wage losses (of only 0.7%) for occupations with high increases in immigration. Furthermore, Battison et al (2014) show that immigrant households are less likely to be in social housing than people born in the UK and there is no empirical evidence that EU immigrants affect the labour market performance in any way (Lemos & Portes, 2008; Goujard et al., 2011). However, the only downsize effect of the rise in immigration identified by scholars is the fact that a rise in immigration is the increased competition for jobs among less skilled workers and pushing up house prices (Springford, 2013; Sa, 2015). In a nutshell, research conducted so far demonstrates that immigration has in fact little or no proven effect on the UK-born population living in the UK. On the contrary, the

aforementioned studies highlight the numerous advantages of immigration. Evidence found by researchers in their studies and mentioned in this chapter is what people never read in newspapers. Even if the British economy is dependent on migrant workers (Afonso & Devitt, 2017), no British newspaper will ever publish an article that fully explains how immigrants contribute to the UK's economical growth, reduce the budget deficit, how they pay more taxes than most of Britons and that most of them never claim benefits. Nor do the newspapers report how immigrants never use the NHS even if they pay for it because they prefer to go to the doctor in their own countries.

Since 2004, and more pronounced since 2007, when Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union, British voters have become increasingly aware of and concerned about the economic and cultural effects of immigration on their country (McLaren & Johnson, 2007). The news media constantly raises awareness on the effect of the rise in population and incessantly publishes widely on the topic. With immigration figures increasing from one year to another in the popular mind, immigrants are to be blamed for everything that goes wrong in the UK, from straining infrastructure and public services to the lack of engagement with the local community. Since 2004 the news media have constantly represented EU immigrants negatively, as being the main source of violence, deviance, and crime in the UK and during the EU referendum campaign this fell on receptive ears. EU immigrants are constantly portrayed as being 'different', and definitely representing a threat to the well-being and personal safety of the UK-born population. For years the media discourse has focused on constructing a negative and violent image of the EU immigrants who, amongst other, are assumed to be criminals, to steal jobs, take benefits, or have no respect for British values.

Gradually, the media discourse has constructed a conflict between "them", the EU immigrants, and in particular the East European immigrants, that are not welcome here and pose a threat to our society, and 'us' who were born here and belong here (van Dijk, 1987). Therefore, after years of daily consumption of negative news stories, there was no surprise that the British people decided to vote to leave the EU on June 23rd 2016. EU immigration is considered one of the main drivers behind the Brexit vote (Afonso & Devitt, 2017). Goodwin and Milazzo (2017) have similarly demonstrated that immigration influenced anxiety over its perceived effects and anti-immigrant attitudes that led to Brexit, stating that 'the public vote for Brexit was not simply driven by hostility towards immigration, but was also entwined with a general desire to 'regain control' over an issue that remains at the heart of Britain's political debate' (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2017: 452). Rightly so, there is a common perception that the infrastructure and the public services, especially the National Health Service (NHS) are unable to cope with the pressure of a growing population (Gietel-Basten, 2016). Carefully crafted stories of EU immigrants jumping the queue for housing or medical care were the final straw and Brexit became without a doubt not only a vote against the European Union but firstly, an anti-immigration vote (Bourne, 2016).

Using Gerbner's (1967, 1969a, 1969b, 1998) cultivation theory and Barker's (1981) and van Dijk's (2000) ideas on the new racism as a framework of analysis, this chapter identifies the immigration-related topics that were widely disseminated across the entire news media landscape during the EU referendum campaign in the UK (April- June 2016) and after (July- September 2016). We argue that attitudes towards anti- EU immigration are a wave of 'new(s)' racism (van Dijk, 2000) and we provide

empirical evidence that shows how news media have shaped people's attitudes about immigration during the EU referendum. Bringing together the media and the scholars' perceptions of immigration, this chapter deconstructs myths and shows that EU immigration has little or no effect on British society and economy, presenting facts and figures that offer a clear and unbiased perspective on the real impact of EU immigration on the UK-born population.

EU immigration – Cultivating the 'New (s)' Racism?

Cultivation theory, first formulated by George Gerbner in the 1960s, examines the long-term effects of widespread meanings disseminated by media (television in particular) on viewers or readers. Gerbner's original conceptualization has been the subject to a lot of criticism over the years (see Potter 2014 and Mosharafa 2015), but even so, cultivation theory remains in the top- three most-cited theories in mass communication research (Bryant & Miron, 2004) and has generated a huge number of scholarship; with more than 125 studies published since 2000 and over 500 up to 2010 (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). Gerbner (1973:567) argues that cultivation analysis 'begins with the insights of the study of institutions and the message systems they produce, and goes on to investigate the contributions that these systems and their symbolic functions make to the cultivation of assumptions about life and the world'.

Succinctly, the theory is based on the idea that frequent exposure to television messages shapes, in time, people's moral values, cultural standards and their beliefs about the world; television news being considered the only source of vital information about the world for individuals. Relevant to our study is that cultivation theory focuses on "long-term, cumulative consequences of exposure to an essentially repetitive and stable system of messages" (Morgan & Signorielli, 1990: 18). Therefore, even if limited and gradual, the media's long-term effect on audiences is cumulative and significant (Gerbner, 1998). Based on this, we argue that British peoples exposure to daily negative news stories about EU immigrants over a period of more than 12 years has led to negative attitudes towards EU immigrants and to the decision to leave the European Union.

Despite the fact that existing empirical research shows little or no evidence that immigration affects the prospect of getting a job, better wages, access to education, or healthcare for the UK-born people (Lemos & Portes, 2008; Goujard et al.,2011; Manaconda et al., 2011; Dustmann et al., 2013; Nickell & Saleheen, 2015), the public perception seems to reflect a different reality- people feel threatened by foreigners and feel that they do not have access to public services or benefits because of too many immigrants waiting in line. The public perception is not grounded on any scientific evidence or personal experience, so how is it that public perception differs so much from reality? We identify two main reasons for this: the news media coverage of the topic juxtaposed with the elites/politicians' discourse on immigration along the years.

The negative representation of immigrants in news started in 2004 when the EU8 countries joined the European Union but became more pronounced after 2007 when the EU2 countries (Bulgaria and Romania) joined the EU. The British news media have never stopped raising awareness on the number of EU immigrants coming into the country every year, constantly reporting on crimes and violent acts committed by

immigrants and contributing to a symbolic construction of a negative portrait of EU immigrants. The day Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU, some British journalists were waiting at the airport for cohorts of immigrants to invade the country. When only one person turned up, the headlines shifted from 'record numbers of Romanians and Bulgarians invading the UK' to 'one of so many more to come'.

Scholars have long suggested that exposure to negative media messages has the potential to change the audience's perception of immigrants, 'cultivate fear' (Mastro & Robinson, 2000: 394) and contribute to the reproduction of 'racial' and 'ethnic' negative perceptions and stereotypes (van Dijk, 2000: 33). Recent empirical research, continuing Gerbner's work, demonstrates that constant exposure to the symbolic and economic threat posed by immigrants or to threatening or violent news stories about immigrants or immigration affects people's attitudes towards immigrants and leads to negative attitudes towards them (Vergeer, Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000; Schmuck & Matthes, 2015; Seate & Mastro, 2016). The same holds true for the overrepresentation of immigrants as lawbreakers, criminals, the only ones to blame for raising crime rates that leads to the perception of immigrants as violent (Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Dixon & Linz, 2006; Dixon, 2008; Fujioka, 2011). While these studies focus on television news, our chapter focuses on online news that reaches out to even more people than television news. Our data shows that the prevalence of negative news stories has led to an immigration-narrative that includes the following elements: immigration is a threat for the society and UK-born population, immigrants are violent and almost all of them are criminals, would do anything for a job and are here to take what is ours, confirming Hoffner and Cohen (2013)'s claim that members of minority groups are almost always associated with violent and threatening media content. Reflecting on the results of the EU referendum, we argue that 12 years of negative media exposure shaped the public's beliefs confirming Gerbner's (1998) theory and Busselle & Crendall's (2002) and Fujioka's (2005) studies, which demonstrate that exposure to negative media messages can influence the perception of minority groups by the majority. The British people gradually started to believe in the social reality portrayed by the news media and the messages of violence and crime which were and are still frequently associated with immigration.

Even if the news media use the umbrella term 'EU immigration', the attention is actually focused on the Eastern European immigration and all the negative stereotypes are, in fact, attributed to Eastern European immigrants and their impact on the British economy, education, local communities or health services. There are 2.9 million EU immigrants in the UK (OSN 2017) from all the 28 member states of the European Union, but when does anyone remember an article about the French, German or Italian people invading the UK, committing crimes or stealing jobs? French, German, or Italian people come to the UK for the same reasons that Polish, Bulgarian or Romanian people do, which is better jobs and a better quality of life. According to the Office for National statistics, 299,000 German, 220,000 Italian and 164,000 French people live in the UK (ONS, 2017).

In conjunction with the news media messages, for some British politicians, immigrants have also become an easy scapegoat and unfortunately these politicians were the most vocal during the EU referendum campaign. Tilford (2015) explains why this has happened and how British politicians have nourished this false popular representation of immigrants: 'It is easier to blame them [the immigrants] than

address the chronic policy failures driving the rise in anti-immigrant sentiment. (…) Successive UK governments have pandered to anti-immigrant sentiment rather than addressing the chronic policy failures behind it' (Tilford, 2015: 3). This idea is also supported by Gietel-Basten (2016) who claims that we should not ignore 'the wider context of a history of chronic underinvestment in infrastructure coupled with an austerity agenda that has sought to pare back public services—a set of circumstances that is as much a political choice as an economic reality' (Gietel-Basten, 2016: 676).

The EU referendum gave people the opportunity to opt out of the European Union after so many years of negative media exposure, when immigration issues had been at the forefront of British politics and news media. In this context, the EU referendum was seen as the unique moment to regain control over immigration. But, contrary to much of the British press coverage, in 2015 net EU immigration to the UK was 172,000 just below the non-EU immigration figure of 191,000 (Wadsworth et al., 2016). By voting to leave the EU, the UK chose to protect itself from EU immigration only, regardless of the non-EU immigration, which is at higher rates and therefore more likely to affect the quality of life in the UK than EU immigration. Tilford (2015) argues that the politicians' agenda shifted over the years from non-EU immigration to EU immigration because 'complaining about Polish immigration is not seen as racist in the way complaining about black or Asian immigration is' (Tilford, 2015: 3). Therefore, complaining about EU immigration gives everybody the opportunity to be a racist without risking being accused of racism. This is a subtle form of racism that reminds us of Barker (1981)'s ideas on the new racism. New racism (Barker, 1981) denies racism and is different from slavery, apartheid or segregation because it is respectable, subtle and civilised. New racism does not treat minorities as being biologically inferior, it treats them as being 'different' by identifying and highlighting a number of differences: cultural differences, religious, values etc. The news media are struggling to be more inclusive, and seek to overcome old racism and by doing so they actually encourage and reinforce modern racism (Entman, 1992; Entman, 2009) that does not stand out and is more difficult to understand and identify because 'it does not appear to be racism' (Sniderman, Piazza, Tetlock & Kendrick, 1991: 423).

Immigration Before and After Brexit

During the EU referendum campaign, immigration was one of the most discussed topics (see http://www.lboro.ac.uk/news-events/eu-referendum/) on the daily agenda of major broadcasters like the BBC, Sky News or ITV. Additionally, it was one of the strongest arguments used by the politicians who backed the Brexit campaign and wanted to see a cut in the number of people coming into the UK. EU immigration made the headlines almost every day, with the majority of negative news stories focusing on the Eastern European immigrants.

For the purpose of this study, we analysed 425 articles published during the EU referendum campaign (April- June 2016) and 425 articles from after the EU referendum (July – September 2016). The methodological approach was content analysis. A sample was chosen from the BBC news website which was the obvious choice because of its unique position as a publicly funded broadcaster. The second obvious choice was to include in the analysis one newspaper that backed up the *Remain* campaign and one that backed up the *Leave* campaign to offer an unbiased perspective on the issue. We chose *The Guardian* that backed the *Remain* campaign,

telling voters to 'vote for a united country that reaches out to the world, and vote against a divided nation that turns inwards' and *The Daily Telegraph* that backed up the *Leave* campaign, asserting that 'we are not harking back to a Britannic golden age lost in the mist of time but looking forward to a new beginning for our country'. Data collection took place exclusively online in two blocks, before (April- June 2016) and after the EU referendum (July – September 2016). Once the data collection period was complete an SPSS spreadsheet was compiled. Articles on immigration equating to a total n=850 (425 articles in each block) provided a substantial amount of data presented in this chapter as both raw numbers and proportional percentages.

Results show a number of 9 most discussed immigration- related topics during the EU referendum campaign (see Table 1). The first was the EU immigration effect on the UK economy, followed by its impact on illegality and national crime rates, wage losses, employment, health services, education, local communities and house prices. The majority of articles from both IN and OUT newspapers underlay how the UK-born population is likely to suffer a wage loss or face unemployment because of the EU-immigrants who are willing to accept lower salaries for the same work. Other major concerns highlighted by the news media were: immigrants claim benefits (NHS), immigrants steal jobs, high immigration rates weaken the budget or immigration is affecting our children's future. All the articles included in this analysis spotlight Eastern European immigrants, especially Polish, using interviews to contend that British people feel threatened by them and other Eastern European immigrants that are flooding the country, depleting its resources. Equally important is the tendency to deliberately mix EU migration to the refugee crisis by the newspapers that backed the Leave campaign. There was deliberate confusion between EU immigration, non-EU immigration and the refugee crisis, making the vote to leave or remain in the EU a vote about the global phenomenon of immigration and its effects. The EU immigrants were constantly being framed as criminals, violent, desperate for jobs, willing to work more and for less money than the UK born citizens, not being able to adapt, not caring for and not engaging with the local communities, not able to speak English, or coming to the UK only to claim benefits. The majority of articles found on *The Guardian's* and the BBC's website are presenting a balanced analysis of immigration and its impact on the UK-born population, listing both the advantages and disadvantages of having EU immigrants in the country but despite this, the tone of the articles is not as passionate as in the articles from *The Daily Telegraph*. Further, the headlines are not as visible and are notable for the lack of vigour, being always listed third, fourth or fifth in the search list and rarely (only 2 times) first in the list of top stories.

Table 1- Most prominent immigration- related issues during the EU-Referendum campaign

Story	The Daily Telegraph	The Guardian	BBC News website	Total

1. Burden for the society and the UK economy	35 (8.3%)	27 (6.4%)	29 (6.8%)	91 (21.5%)
2. Illegality and Crime (National)	39 (9.2%)	18 (4.2%)	11 (2.6%)	68 (16.0%)
3. Employment/ Impact on the labour market	24 (5.6%)	13 (3.0%)	23 (5.4%)	60 (14.0%)
4. NHS/ Health services	22 (5.2%)	16 (3.8%)	12 (2.9%)	48 (11.9%)
5. Social housing (benefits)	17 (4.0%)	15 (3.6%)	9 (2.1%)	41 (9.7%)
6. Wage loss	14 (2.6%)	11 (2.6%)	12 (2.9%)	37 (8.1%)
7. Education	16 (3.7%)	6 (1.4%)	8 (1.9%)	30 (7.0%)
8. Lack of integration/ community engagement	12 (2.8%)	5 (1.2%)	10 (2.3%)	27 (6.3%)
9. Rent and house prices	9 (2.1%)	8 (1.9%)	6 (1.4%)	23 (5.4%)
				425 (100%)

The topics we identified as most prominent during the EU referendum campaign coincide with those identified by van Dijk (2000):

' -   New (illegal) immigrants are arriving.
-   Political response to, policies about (new) immigration.
-   Reception problems (housing, etc.).
-   Social problems (employment, welfare, etc.).
-   Response of the population (resentment, etc.).
-   Cultural characterization: how are they different?
-   Complications and negative characterization: how are they deviant?
-   Focus on threats: violence, crime, drugs, prostitution.
-   Political response: policies to stop immigration, expulsion, and so on.
-   Integration conflicts.' (van Dijk, 2000: 38).

Following on from van Dijk(2000)'s analysis, during the EU referendum campaign the news media was so eager to show the British people that immigration is bad for their country that it focused mostly on only five of the topics listed by van Dijk (2000), namely: new immigrants arrivals, reception and social problems, threats and the resentment of the population. The British were represented in the news media as a victim because they have to live with the burden of EU immigrants and endure the negative effects of EU immigration but also as a hero as the destiny of the nation was now in their hands and the only solution to put an end to this, and therefore to save the future of the British nation, was voting to leave the EU. It almost became a mythical fight against evil forces that had to be named, shamed and expelled from the country. Even if there were a few politicians and online articles that tried to construct a counter-discourse and explain the real effects of immigration on the UK-born population, mentioning how immigration contributes to the national budget, they were not as visible as the negative headlines. This confirms that 'violence and crime of minorities will typically appear in (big) headlines, and prominently on the front page, whereas this is seldom the case for other news about them' (van Dijk, 2000: 41).

Most British people have no daily personal negative experiences with EU immigrants, so they rely on the news media and the elite to tell them what these people are like, certifying, to a certain extent, Gerbner (1969b)'s theory on mass-produced messages that can develop "a common culture through which communities cultivate shared and public notions about facts, values, and contingencies of human existence" (Gerbner, 1969b: 123). For local readers/viewers that have never interacted with immigrants, the news media anti-immigration discourse had a powerful impact, again emphasising to a certain extent, Gerbner (1969b)'s theory on mass-produced messages. The news media anti-immigration discourse was stirred and enhanced by the discourse of the political elite, particularly by the leaders of the Brexit campaign but also by those from the Remain campaign that had a pale and lifeless reaction to the topic. Interestingly, more than 40% of the articles mix EU immigration with the refugee crisis, creating confusion amongst voters who started blaming the European Union for global immigration. With this daily negative news bombardment and in the absence of alternatives or dominant counter-ideologies to counterbalance the prevailing anti-immigration discourse, it was no surprise that when the British had to cast their vote they decided to vote to leave the EU driven by an overwhelming desire to reduce immigration, not only because they are indeed affected by it or really think it is bad but mostly because 'everybody says it's bad'.

The significant finding from our data is that after the EU- referendum hate crime has become the most debated immigration-related issue (see Table 2). In the aftermath of the EU referendum, some British citizens felt that their national identity or position was being threatened by the EU immigrants and wanted them gone the day after the results of the referendum were announced. Public discontent that was reflected in the Brexit vote was now also reflected by incidents against EU immigrants across the country as people were trying to 'take back control' of their local communities that they believed were under siege from immigration. This is what the then UK's Defence Secretary Michael Fallon said in an interview with Sky News back in 2014 (https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/oct/26/michael-fallon-comments-tories-disarray).
Interestingly, opposed to the public's reaction, the news media discourse on immigration got milder after the EU-referendum, with many articles addressing topics

like: EU citizens claiming British citizenship, or how Brexit is going to destroy families, how the EU immigrants are subject of abuse and how much money they have to pay for permanent residency or citizenship and how the UK's economy will be weaker if immigration rates dropped. Suddenly, the EU immigrants were not the main concern anymore even though only a few weeks back, the same online portals were presenting them as villains and a threat to British welfare.

Table 2 – Most prominent immigration- related issues during the EU-Referendum campaign

Story	The Guardian	The Daily Telegraph	BBC News website	Total
1. Hate crime	42 (9.9%)	29 (6.8%)	30 (7.1%)	101 (23.8%)
2. Crime (National)	39 (9.2%)	19 (4.4%)	15 (3.5%)	73 (17.1%)
3. Local tensions	15 (3.5%)	25 (5.8%)	27 (6.3%)	67 (15.6%)
4. Business	14 (3.3%)	11 (2.6%)	10 (2.3%)	35 (8.2%)
5. Education	10 (2.3%)	12 (2.8%)	5 (1.2%)	27 (6.3%)
6. NHS	14 (3.0%)	18 (4.1%)	8 (1.9%)	39 (9.0%)
7. Brexit unlikely to cause fall in immigration	12 (2.8%)	8 (1.9%)	12 (2.8 %)	32 (7.5%)
8. EU citizens claiming British citizenship	5 (1.2%)	8 (1.9%)	13 (3.0%)	26 (6.1%)
9. Public services	11 (2.6%)	8 (1.9%)	6 (1.4%)	25 (5.9%)
				425 (100%)

The news media and British politicians helped fuel a steep rise in racist hate crimes after the EU referendum campaign. Immigration was not seen as a right of passport holders to enter the UK, or as natural global phenomenon, both during and after the

EU referendum campaign Instead it was constructed as a permanent threat (van Dijk, 2000). Our data shows that, after the EU referendum, immigration has immediately stopped being a threat and the attention shifted towards how Brexit will destroy families, how immigrants contribute to the national budget, or how the system is being unjust and EU immigrants have to pay enormous taxes to get British citizenship. Interestingly, in the aftermath of the EU referendum, the news media started promoting the idea that Brexit is unlikely to cause a fall in immigration rates, albeit it excessively discussed how voting to exit the EU is the only solution to get control over the borders and over immigration. Both during the EU referendum campaign and in the months that followed, EU immigration was the overarching term used by all the news media channels as a disguise term for Eastern European immigration. None of the analysed articles used the terms 'race', 'racism' or 'discrimination', all of them claiming only to explain the EU immigration's impact on the UK society and economy, even if overlooking important data that shows that EU immigration has very little or no effect on the UK born population (Wadsworth et al., 2016). The Eastern European countries were treated like second tier countries and Eastern European immigrants were deliberately mixed with non-EU immigrants and refugees, making the EU referendum not a referendum about the advantages and disadvantages of the UK as a member state of the EU but a vote against immigration of all sorts.

Conclusion

More than a year has passed since the EU referendum and immigration is still ranked by the British citizens as 'the most important issue in the country' (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2017:451). Research shows no evidence that EU immigrants affect the labour market performance of native-born workers (Lemos and Portes, 2008; Goujard et al, 2011), health care services (Wadsworth, 2013), schools (Geay et al, 2013), social housing (Battiston et al, 2013; Sa, 2014) or crime rates (Bell et al, 2013). The fears about apocalyptic disastrous consequences of rising immigration are utterly incorrect and have no academic ground, yet in defiance of up to date research, the news media's anti-immigration discourse has led to a mind set and a distorted perspective on immigration's impact on the host countries. In fact, empirical evidence shows that immigration is a must for the well-being of the British economy. For example, Dustmann and Frattini (2014) find that EU immigrants make a positive fiscal contribution because they pay more in taxes than they receive in welfare payments, while UK nationals receive more in benefits that they pay in taxes (Wadsworth et al., 2016). Experts in the field support the idea that lower immigration will push down the UK's living standards. If net immigration would suddenly be reduced to 0, the UK's national debt will be 40% higher than now in 2062 (Office for Budget Responsibility 2013). In addition, reducing immigration would generate the closing down of many companies and small local businesses that will not afford to stay in business and this would generate greater austerity and more cutbacks (Dhingra et al., 2016). Boubtane el al (2015) find that a 50% decrease in the net immigration rate would reduce UK productivity growth by 0.32% per annum. This gloomy scenario reveals that about a decade after Brexit, UK GDP per capita would be about 1.6% lower than it would have otherwise been (Wadsworth et al., 2016: 15).
Research clearly demonstrates that immigration has in fact little or no proven effect on the UK-born population living in the UK. Nevertheless, the UK's vote to leave the EU was definitively a vote against immigration. The British nation wanted to have

control of its border and be able to decide who enters the country and when. The Leave's campaign slogan "Take back control" resonated with the public perception of the threat represented by the EU immigrants as 'it was on the topic of immigration where the desire to take back control was most keenly felt' (Gietel-Basten, 2016: 674). This chapter deconstructed the public perception on immigration and provided evidence that shows that immigration is in fact not such a big problem for the UK as the news media have made everybody believe. This is because its advantages outnumber the disadvantages. We have identified and analysed the immigration-related topics that were widely disseminated across the entire news media landscape during the EU referendum campaign in the UK (April- June 2016) and after (July-September 2016), contributing to the wider literature on EU-immigrants representation in news. The chapter builds the cornerstone of two strong arguments: 1. EU immigration was used as an umbrella term for Eastern European immigration during the EU referendum campaign and after, and the news media anti-immigration discourse led to negative attitudes towards and resentment of immigrants, these anti-EU immigration attitudes being a wave of new racism; 2. Exposure to negative and violent news messages about the EU immigration and immigrants has led to Brexit as a result of news media contributing to the reproduction of the new racism on all platforms. Our perspective, therefore, assumes an interaction between news media and the political elites discourse on immigration that, in this case, helped with the reproduction of racism. The reproduction of new racism has led to a significant rise in hate crime in the months after the EU referendum vote. Hate crime was seen as the immigrant's fault, because if they were not here then this wouldn't have happened.

We also found support for the idea that the news media have shaped people's attitudes about immigration during the EU referendum and for years before the EU referendum, on all platforms, using Gerbner's (1967, 1969a, 1969b) cultivation theory as a framework of analysis. Thus highlighting the news media 'symbolic power' and its role in the reproduction of racism (van Dijk, 1989: 203). The news media and politician's immigration narrative over the years left no room for positive messages on the matter. The news media's influence on attitudes and behaviours is of course subtle, complex and has inter-mingled with other influences, all of them leading to the vote against remaining in the European Union. Results show that news media and the "Brexiteers" politicians (UKIP leaders being the most vocal and visible) exacerbated the negative effects of EU immigration during the EU referendum campaign, only to become less interested in the topic after the EU referendum vote, as if immigration did not pose a real threat any more.

Finally, Brexit was about voters showing their discontent with and power over the political elites. In the wake of the UK's decision to leave the EU, this work suggests that news media play a vital role in the social dynamics, cultivating negative emotions and attitudes towards certain EU immigrants (Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian in particular). Results show that articles often mixed EU immigration with the refugee crisis in order to create confusion and panic so EU membership has become 'synonym in many voters' mind with uncontrolled immigration' (Tilford, 2015: 2). The carefully constructed hostility to immigration by the news media and political elites over the last 14 years will cost the country its EU membership in 2019 and the British voters are likely to remain Euro-skeptics because as long as 'concerns over immigration remain salient, voters will remain instinctively supportive of a policy that distances Britain from the EU' (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2017: 462). This situation could have

been prevented if successive governments would have refused 'to link immigration with social and economic problems, and by facing down populist sentiment in the media rather then pandering to it' (Tilford, 2015: 3). Further research should expand this analysis and compare our results to a non-electoral period. Another avenue that could be explored is conducting an extensive qualitative study using questionnaires to compare news media discourse with people's perception of immigration.

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