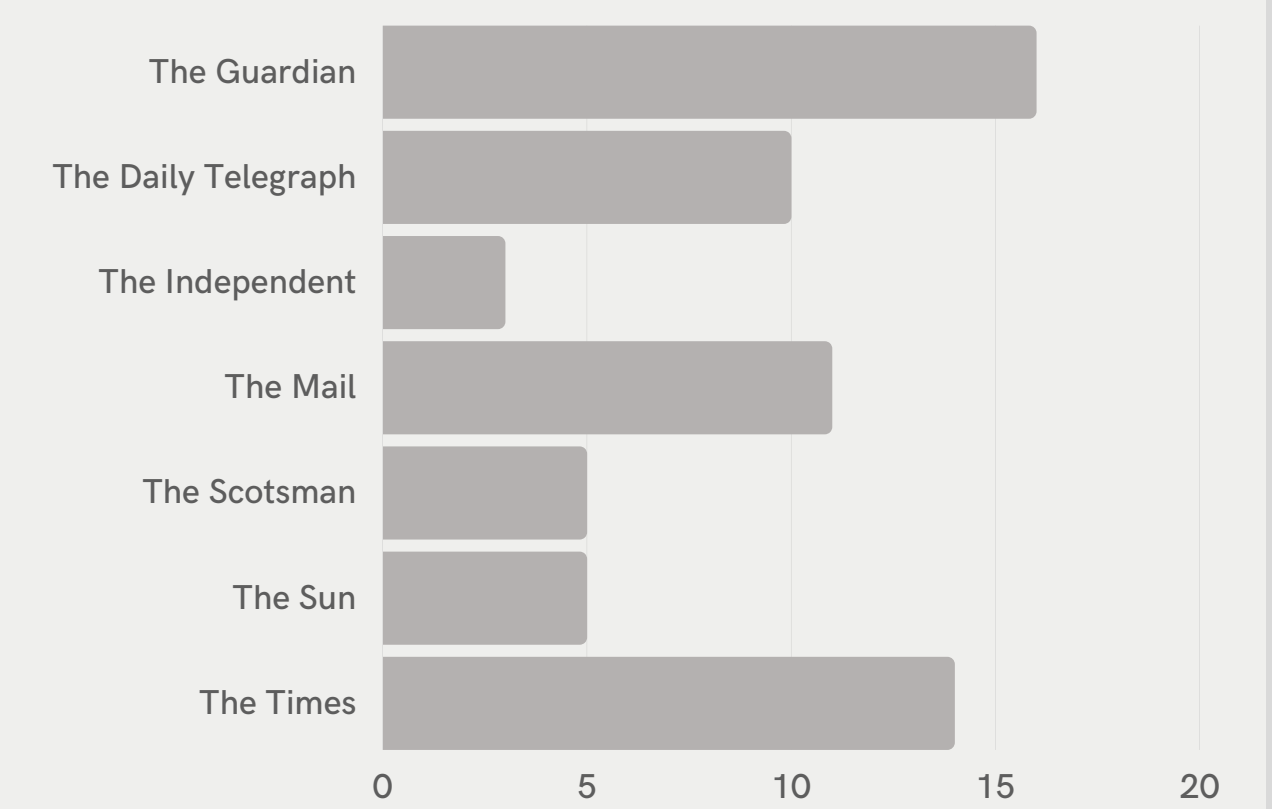
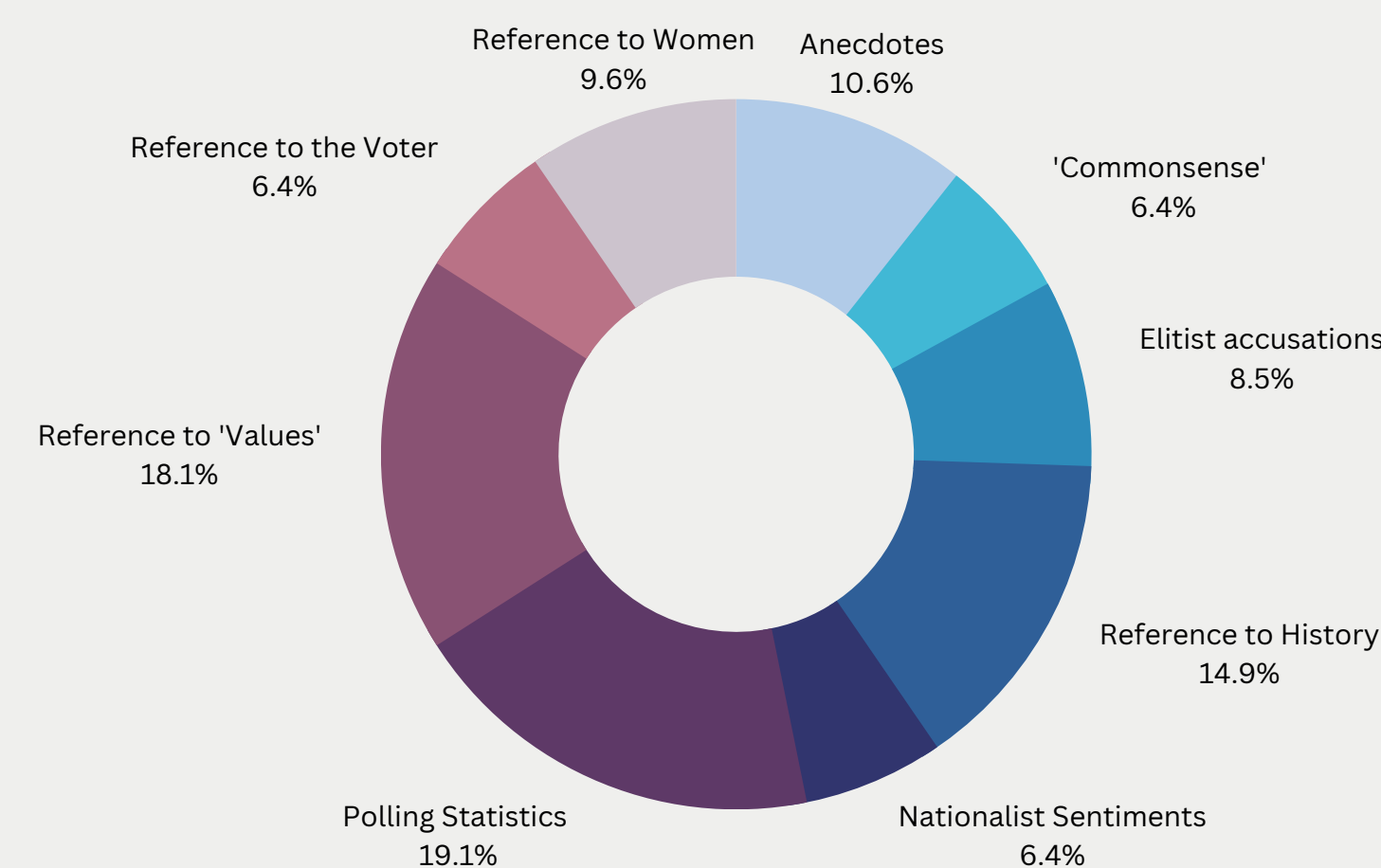


METHODOLOGY

This project took a case study approach, looking at the **Black Lives Matter movement** and **transgender issues**. These were chosen as they encompassed the prominent themes of culture wars such as identity and values. Using the database Lexis+, I compiled a sample size of 70 UK newspaper articles. For a representative sample, there was a spread of both broadsheet and tabloid-style newspapers, distributed along the political spectrum. I took advantage of the advanced search setting by putting in specific terms related to the case study e.g. "taking the knee" and "statues" alongside the names of politicians to find suitable content.

ANALYSIS

I undertook a process of emergent coding which consisted of going through the data I had collected to identify reoccurring themes and then allocating them to a code in the software Nvivo. Below is a graph of these themes and to the right is an overview of the sources used.



LITERATURE REFERENCES

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Finlayson, A. (2007) 'From Beliefs to Arguments: Interpretive Methodology and Rhetorical Political Analysis', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 9(4), pp. 545-563.

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CONCLUSION

This analysis has outlined the reason why using reference to public attitudes can be a power rhetorical device, by appealing to pathos, ethos and logos, this further founds the idea that this is done with tactical and persuasive intention. This research, with the use of data, explored the different ways this can be implemented in practise. Then, under further analysis I examined the themes and nuances within said references to public attitudes, concluding that principally public attitudes can be interpreted and constructed in many ways.



INTRODUCTION

My research sought to commentate on the use of referencing the public as a rhetorical device. Rhetorical political analysis (RPA) was used to do so, in addition I explored the occurrence of themes that emerged alongside ref to public attitudes. This rhetorical political analysis drew attention upon explicit references to public attitudes as outlined in the question, but also explored how rhetorical strategies employed by the media and politicians are used to construct what 'public opinion' is.

The objective of this research was to explore how prominent political figures and mainstream media both respond and contribute to the notion of culture wars, as a contemporary and emerging issue it means there are significant gaps in related research. The potentially divisive and emotive nature of culture war issues means that the way they are engaged with can have significant implications on society.

"On political matters, one can compromise; on matters of ultimate moral truth, one cannot" - Jameson D Hunter, 1991

"...the Culture War today is deeply personal...the Culture War is visceral: it is about who we are" - Rob Liddle, 2018

KEY FINDINGS

Interpretivist view of public opinion

Public opinion is inherently contentious and subjective, this means there are often multiple actors referencing the public to make contradictory arguments. For example, the tabloid media accusing politicians of not following 'common sense' or failing to represent the 'silent majority'.

The use of anecdotes

Anecdotes are a direct example of referencing the public with clear advantages for the user as it creates the impression they are 'in touch' with the general public - thus bolstering their ethos (Atkins and Finlayson, 2013). Anecdotes can be selectively cited to contribute to the construction of a particular reality that strengthens the politicians/ media's desired argument.

Identity and Values

Reference to national values and collective history are seen frequently within discourse on culture wars. Politicians and the media can utilise the very nature of culture war issues by drawing upon such themes related to identity to strengthen their position through invoking emotion (pathos). Once identity has been 'constructed' through the discussion of values that the nation possess, and presumably the individual identifies in themselves too (Byrne, 2014), it is then used as a proxy for public opinion. Perceived threats to this identify is then seen as challenging what the public wants.

How do UK Politicians and the Media Justify Positions in 'Culture Wars' with Reference to Public Attitudes?

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WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO MY SUPERVISOR NICK RANDALL

'Culture war' is sometimes seen as an imported term from America, with it originally being coined by J.D Hunter (1991), however, within recent years the use of the phrase in the UK has increased, making it an equally salient topic in UK political discourse. Culture war issues are characterised by their emotive capacity, with topics directly relating to one's concept of **identity, values, and moral ideals**.

