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**Sex, gender and constitutional attitudes:  
voting behaviour in the Scottish independence referendum**

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

## Abstract

The complex relationship between sex, gender and voting behaviour is a global research preoccupation. This thesis investigates an under-researched dimension of this relationship, focusing on the dynamics of gender, voting behaviour and constitutional change. The Scottish case is empirically interesting as a range of quantitative voting behaviour surveys has been conducted in Scotland since the 1970s with particularly rich empirical data post-devolution. Sex gaps in constitutional attitudes were a well-known feature of voting behaviour in Scotland before the 2014 independence referendum, which allowed citizens to influence constitutional futures directly. Patterns persisting in voting behaviour surveys from the 1990s indicated that women were less supportive of Scottish independence than men and more likely to be undecided about constitutional change. However, voting behaviour scholars have long grappled with understanding the sex gap and have highlighted the complexity and contingency of voting gaps as particular social and political contexts shape them. Significant gaps in knowledge remain regarding *which* women and men differ in their constitutional attitudes and *to what extent* and *why*.

This thesis utilises a feminist mixed-method approach to analyse the perspectives and experiences of voters and powerful actors related to the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. This thesis draws on insights from feminist voting behaviour research and argues that to understand women's political preferences through their voting behaviour; scholars must acknowledge the distinction between sex and gender as well as the heterogeneity of gendered voting groups. This thesis employs a problem-driven feminist methodology by centring the problematic of the sex gaps in constitutional attitudes and designing the methods around the puzzle. This thesis adds to the existing research with refreshed quantitative and new qualitative data collected from a top-down and bottom-up approach.

This thesis first builds upon existing research on the sex gaps in constitutional attitudes beginning with its top-down approach to the puzzle. Semi-structured elite background interviews were conducted with critical actors central to the independence campaigns to fill a gap in contextual understanding regarding the perspectives of powerful actors involved in the making and revising constitutional futures. This data also provides critical insights into how campaigns targeted gendered voting groups and subgroups to influence their constitutional attitudes. Then, I take a bottom-up approach from the perspective of Scottish voters. I build upon existing quantitative research on the sex gaps and offer a refreshed collated analysis of sex gap patterns in quantitative Scottish voting behaviour data across various relevant surveys. This analysis traces women's and men's constitutional attitudes in Scotland over time, highlighting quantitative patterns amongst

voter groups. Following this quantitative data analysis, I continued my bottom-up approach by designing and administering a large-scale quantitative data survey which asked survey participants about their voting behaviour history in support of Scottish independence. The survey was created to gain access to research participants for voter focus groups and interviews. The survey provided access to participants for voter focus groups and interviews and offered rich historical data on their voting behaviour histories in support of constitutional change in Scotland. Voters were placed in gendered groups and subgroups based on their vote choice and other background characteristics such as age, national identity, race, and location. Focus groups and interviews provide insight into the complexity and contingency of gender vote gaps and place them into context.

This thesis highlights the importance of lived experiences and identities on constitutional attitudes and demonstrates the heterogeneity of gendered voting groups and subgroups. Through its mixed-method multi-perspective approach, this thesis offers a comprehensive investigation into gendered constitutional attitudes in Scotland by examining both the electorate's perspective and the perspectives of those in political decision-making positions. This research suggests that when voter heterogeneity is acknowledged, we can better answer the question of *which* women and men differ in their constitutional attitudes and tease out how political belief systems are constructed and influence voter behaviour. In deepening the understanding of the full complexity of the relationship between sex, gender and voting in the context of constitutional change, the thesis makes wider contributions to both mainstream and feminist political science, offering innovative approaches and evidence to answering big questions around the dynamics of participation, identities, and change.

## Lay Summary

In September 2014, the Scottish Government held an independence referendum asking its citizens whether or not Scotland should be an independent country. Although the country voted No to independence, results from the referendum indicated a gap in support for independence between male and female voters. Female voters were more likely than male voters to be unsupportive of Scottish independence, and they were also more likely to feel undecided about their constitutional attitudes. This gap in support has been well-evidenced in voting behaviour surveys since the second devolution referendum. The gap between male and female voters in support for independence has been evidenced in other secessionist movements, including Catalonia and Quebec. Although well-evidenced, questions remain regarding *why* these gaps persist with regards to *which* groups of women and men. This study argues that to understand the gap in support between male and female voters, a feminist research approach must be used, considering how constitutions act as power maps to distribute power within society in gendered ways. This study establishes the need to make a distinction between sex and gender in the gender gap analysis of voting behaviour in order to further our understanding regarding *which* women and men differ in their constitutional attitudes. This thesis draws on insights from feminist voting behaviour research and argues that to understand women's political preferences through their voting behaviour; scholars must acknowledge the distinction between sex and gender as well as the heterogeneity of gendered voting groups.

In order to understand *which* women and men differ in their constitutional preferences, to what extent and why, I take a comprehensive approach that considers both voter perspectives and the perspectives of those in political decision-making positions. From the 'top-down,' I interviewed twenty-two critical actors related to the 2014 independence campaigns, who were instrumental in shaping the campaigns and targeting voters. From a 'bottom-up' approach, I created a large-scale quantitative voting behaviour survey which amassed over one thousand responses to understand better constitutional attitudes and access voter participants for focus groups and interviews. In total, I had 116 voters participating in interviews and focus groups. Voters were separated into subgroups to understand how voters with different lived experiences conceptualise and understand constitutional futures and how constitutional power is distributed within society. At first glance from voting behaviour surveys, men and women voters in Scotland seem to differ in their constitutional attitudes, with women being less supportive. Critical actor interviews with campaign strategists illustrated that the campaigns viewed voters in gendered ways and shaped campaign messaging and messengers around the gender gap. However, interviews with voters illustrated that

voter constitutional attitudes are highly contingent on not only voter sex but their gender, age, class, national identity, political belief systems, and other lived experiences.

This study provides a new and holistic analysis of the gender gap in support of constitutional change from multiple perspectives: refreshed quantitative analysis, new empirical contributions from voters and campaign actors, and subgroup analysis of voting groups. It emphasises *which* women and men differ and are similar in their constitutional attitudes and in what ways. I draw upon feminist understandings of power in order to conceptualise how voter attitudes are gendered to argue that further research analysing gender gaps in voting behaviour must take a comprehensive approach to analyse gendered voting behaviour by acknowledging contrasting and connecting voter identities in order to move away from essentialising conclusions about men and women voters.

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‘If your Nerve, deny you—

Go above your Nerve—’

Emily Dickinson

## Lists of Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>BES</b>	The British Election Study
<b>EBI</b>	Elie Background Interview
<b>EU</b>	The European Union
<b>DevoRef</b>	The 1997 Scottish Referendum Survey
<b>NA</b>	Data Not Available
<b>NI</b>	National Identity
<b>RCA</b>	Risk and Constitutional Attitudes Survey
<b>SCS</b>	The Smith Commission Survey
<b>SES</b>	The Scottish Election Study
<b>SNP</b>	The Scottish National Party
<b>SRS</b>	The Scottish Referendum Study
<b>SSA</b>	The Scottish Social Attitudes Survey
<b>SVB</b>	The Scottish Voting Behaviour Survey* <i>- Survey designed, circulated and analysed by author, Emilia Belknap</i>
<b>UK</b>	The United Kingdom
<b>US</b>	The United States of America
<b>WFI</b>	Women For Independence
<b>WWII</b>	The Second World War

## Participant Descriptor Summary

<b><i>Yes Voter</i></b>	A voter who supports independence
<b><i>No Voter</i></b>	A voter who opposes independence
<b><i>Undecided Voter</i></b>	A voter who is undecided about their constitutional attitudes
<b><i>Switcher Voter</i></b>	A voter who switched their vote from 2014 to the time of data collection
<b><i>Yes Woman</i></b>	A woman who supports independence
<b><i>Yes Man</i></b>	A man who supports independence
<b><i>Yes Non-binary Voter</i></b>	A voter who identifies as non-binary and supports independence
<b><i>No Woman</i></b>	A woman who opposes independence
<b><i>No Man</i></b>	A man who opposes independence
<b><i>Undecided Woman</i></b>	A woman who is undecided about independence
<b><i>Undecided Man</i></b>	A man who is undecided about independence
<b><i>Switcher Woman</i></b>	A woman who switched their vote from 2014 to the time of data collection
<b><i>Switcher Man</i></b>	A man who switched their vote from 2014 to the time of data collection

# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Lay Summary</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Lists of Abbreviations and Acronyms</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Participant Descriptor Summary</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>List of Tables and Figures</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>16</b>
1.1 Sex Gaps and Gender Differences.....	18
1.2 Research Questions and Contributions .....	22
1.3 Scottish Independence: Case Justification.....	23
1.4 Structure of Thesis.....	27
<b>Chapter 2: Voting Gaps, Gendered Constitutions and Contestations</b> .....	<b>30</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	30
2.2 Sex Gaps, Gender Differences and Political Behaviour .....	30
2.2.1 Early Studies.....	30
2.2.2 The Sex/Gender Distinction and Voting.....	33
2.3 Gaps in the Literature .....	36
2.3.1 Theoretical gaps.....	37
2.3.2 Empirical gaps .....	42
2.4 Conclusion .....	53
<b>Chapter 3: A Feminist Research Approach</b> .....	<b>55</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	55
3.2 Feminist Theory and Gender Sub-group Analysis.....	55
3.2.1 Feminist Theory .....	56
3.2.2 Gender Sub-Group Analysis .....	61
3.3 Feminist Methodology .....	63
3.3.1 Problem-driven Approach .....	63
3.3.2 Mixed-method Approach.....	65
3.3.3 Research Design: Top-down and Bottom-up Approach .....	76
3.4 Methods.....	82
3.4.1 Simple Descriptive Statistics with Secondary Data Analysis .....	82
3.4.2 Online Survey: The Scottish Voting Behaviour survey (SVB) .....	83
3.4.3 Qualitative Methods.....	87
3.4.4 Qualitative Method Analysis.....	97
3.5 Conclusion .....	98
<b>Chapter 4: Should Scotland be an Independent Country?</b> .....	<b>100</b>

4.1 Introduction.....	100
4.2 The Scottish independence referendum of 2014: a timeline .....	101
4.2.1 ‘How did we get here?’ .....	101
4.2.2 Calling the Referendum.....	103
4.3 The Campaigns: Yes Scotland versus Better Together (2011-2014) .....	104
4.3.1 Campaign Themes.....	105
4.3.2 Campaign Strategies: Beliefs and Myths (2011-2012) .....	107
4.3.3 Campaign Structure and Gender.....	110
4.3.4 Campaign Voter Data Collection.....	113
4.4 Targeting Voters.....	116
4.4.1 Knowledge of the Sex Gaps .....	116
4.4.2 Gendered Messaging for Gender Groups and Subgroups .....	118
4.4.3 Gendered Message Carriers .....	130
4.5 September 2014 – the result.....	134
4.6 Conclusion .....	134
<b>Chapter 5: Mind the gap? The Voters in Numbers.....</b>	<b>136</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	136
5.2 Analysing Existing Data.....	136
5.2.1 The Scottish Referendum Survey (1997) .....	139
5.2.2 Scottish Election Study.....	142
5.2.3 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey.....	148
5.2.4 Data from 2014: The 2014 Scottish Referendum Study and Illustrative Polls .....	154
5.2.5 Undecided Voters - Voting Behaviour Study Data Collated .....	160
5.3 Patterns from the Data.....	165
5.3.1 Age, Sex and Constitutional Attitudes .....	165
5.3.2 Class, Sex and Constitutional Attitudes .....	166
5.3.3 Party ID, Issues and Sex.....	168
5.3.4 National Identity and Sex.....	170
5.4 Conclusion .....	171
<b>Chapter 6: Contesting Constitutional Futures .....</b>	<b>173</b>
6.1 Introduction.....	173
6.2 <i>Yes</i> and <i>No</i> Voter Study Demographics.....	174
6.3 <i>Yes</i> and <i>No</i> Interview Format and Voting History.....	177
6.4 <i>Yes</i> and <i>No</i> Voter group findings: same or different?.....	179
6.4.1 Identity.....	180
6.4.2 Economic Fears.....	190
6.4.3 Power .....	194
6.4.4 The Importance of Risk .....	204
6.5 Conclusion .....	207

<b>Chapter 7: Choice, Change and Constitutional Attitudes</b> .....	<b>209</b>
7.1 Introduction.....	209
7.2 <i>Undecided</i> Voter Study Demographics, Interview Format and Voting History .....	209
7.3 <i>Undecided</i> Voter Findings .....	212
7.3.1 <i>Undecided</i> Voters and the Effects of Brexit .....	213
7.3.2 <i>Undecided Women</i> and Devolved Powers .....	220
7.3.3 <i>Undecided Men</i> and Taxation.....	224
7.3.4 Risk .....	228
7.4 Conclusion .....	230
<b>Chapter 8: Conclusion</b> .....	<b>232</b>
8.1 Introduction.....	232
8.2 Findings.....	233
8.2.1 Campaign Findings .....	233
8.2.2 Voter Themes .....	236
8.3 Contributions .....	247
8.3.1 Theoretical.....	247
8.3.2 Empirical .....	248
8.3.3 Methodological .....	250
8.4 Future Research .....	252
8.4.1 Future Surveys .....	252
8.4.2 Applying Mixed Methods.....	253
8.4.3 Expanding Contextual Timelines.....	254
8.4.4 Broadening the Intersectional Framework.....	255
8.5 Wider Implications .....	256
8.5.1 Gender and Political Science Research .....	257
8.5.2 Referendums and Pro-independence Movements Globally .....	257
8.5.3 Scottish Politics .....	259
8.6 Concluding Remarks .....	259
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>261</b>
<b>Appendixes</b> .....	<b>335</b>
Appendix A: Information Sheets .....	335
Appendix B: Ethical Consent Forms .....	339
Appendix C: Scottish Voting Behaviour Survey Skeleton Map .....	344
Appendix D: Focus Group and Interview Schedules .....	345
D.1 Focus Group Interview Schedule .....	345
D.2 Individual Interview Schedule.....	348
D.3 Elite Background Interview Schedule (Better Together Example) .....	350
Appendix E: Voting Behaviour History Results from Online Survey (n=1214).....	353
Appendix F: Participant Tables for Qualitative Methods .....	358

## List of Tables and Figures

TABLE 1.1: MOST LIKELY TO SUPPORT INDEPENDENCE ( <i>YES</i> VOTE) IN EXISTING DATA (SEX/GENDER VARIABLE) .....	24
TABLE 1.2: MOST LIKELY TO OPPOSE INDEPENDENCE ( <i>NO</i> VOTE OR <i>NOT</i> VOTE) IN EXISTING DATA (SEX/GENDER VARIABLE).....	24
TABLE 1.3: MOST LIKELY TO BE UNDECIDED IN EXISTING DATA (SEX/GENDER VARIABLE)..	26
FIGURE 3.1: POWER DISTRIBUTION OF POLITICAL INFLUENCE BETWEEN ELITES AND VOTERS..	76
FIGURE 3.2: TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP POWER PERSPECTIVES .....	79
FIGURE 3.3: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ACCESSING TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP PERSPECTIVES. ....	80
TABLE 3.1: RESPONDENT GENDER GROUPS BASED ON CONSTITUTIONAL PREFERENCE .....	87
TABLE 3.2: ELITE BACKGROUND INTERVIEW NUMBERS AND COMPOSITION .....	89
TABLE 3.3: MINI FOCUS GROUP COMPOSITION BASED ON GENDER, VOTE CHOICE AND AGE ...	93
TABLE 5.1: VOTING BEHAVIOUR STUDIES ANALYSED .....	138
TABLE 5.2: SCOTTISH CONSTITUTIONAL PREFERENCES IN 1997 WITH SEX, CLASS, AGE .....	140
TABLE 5.3: SCOTTISH EQUAL REPRESENTATION PREFERENCES 1997 WITH SEX, CLASS .....	141
TABLE 5.4: SCOTTISH ELECTION STUDY: MOST SUPPORTIVE OF INDEPENDENCE .....	143
TABLE 5.5: SCOTTISH ELECTION STUDY: MOST UNSUPPORTIVE OF INDEPENDENCE.....	144
TABLE 5.6: SES 2021 SEX, GENDER AND CONSTITUTIONAL PREFERENCES: VARIABLE ANALYSIS .....	147
TABLE 5.7: SCOTTISH SOCIAL ATTITUDES SURVEY: MOST SUPPORTIVE OF INDEPENDENCE ..	150
TABLE 5.8: SCOTTISH SOCIAL ATTITUDES SURVEY: MOST UNSUPPORTIVE OF INDEPENDENCE	151
TABLE 5.9: SCOTTISH REFERENDUM STUDY 2014: MOST SUPPORTIVE OF INDEPENDENCE .....	155
TABLE 5.10: SCOTTISH REFERENDUM STUDY 2014: MOST UNSUPPORTIVE OF INDEPENDENCE .....	156
TABLE 5.11: MOST SUPPORTIVE IN OTHER 2014 DATA.....	158
TABLE 5.12: MOST OPPOSED IN OTHER 2014 DATA .....	159
TABLE 5.13: MOST LIKELY TO BE UNDECIDED TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE IN SELECTED STUDIES .....	161
TABLE 6.1: YES PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN (N=49) .....	175
TABLE 6.2: NO PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN (N=49) .....	175
TABLE 6.3: SWITCHER PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN (N=7 OUT OF 97 YES AND NO TOTAL).....	175

TABLE 6.4: FOCUS GROUP COMPOSITION (N=10) .....	176
TABLE 6.5: ANTI-NATIONALIST FREQUENCY TABLE COMPARING NO GENDER GROUPS .....	185
TABLE 6.6: ANTI-ENGLISH FREQUENCY TABLE COMPARING NO WOMEN AND NO MEN .....	188
TABLE 6.7: IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT FEMINIST THEMES ACROSS YES AND NO GROUPS .....	195
TABLE 6.8: INCREASED LOCAL POWER COMPARING YES VOTERS BY GENDER.....	200
TABLE 6.9: DECREASED POWER IN LONDON OR LONDON-CENTRISM COMPARING YES VOTERS BY GENDER.....	200
TABLE 7.1: UNDECIDED PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER AND AGE (N= 18).....	211
TABLE 7.2: UNDECIDED PARTICIPANTS BY VOTING BEHAVIOUR HISTORY (N= 18).....	212
TABLE 7.3: INFLUENTIAL FACTORS FOR UNDECIDED VOTERS BROADLY.....	213
TABLE 7.4: FREQUENCY TABLE OF DEVOLUTION OR DEVOLVED POWERS IN UNDECIDED PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER .....	220
TABLE 7.5: FREQUENCY TABLE OF HIGHER TAXATION REFERENCES IN UNDECIDED PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER .....	224
TABLE F.1: VOTER DATA OVERALL NUMBERS .....	358
TABLE F.2: VOTER DATA GENDER IDENTITY OVERALL .....	358
TABLE F.3: YES PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN (N=49) .....	358
TABLE F.4: NO PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN (N=49).....	358
TABLE F.5: UNDECIDED PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN (N=18) .....	358
TABLE F.6: SWITCHER PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN (N=7) .....	359
TABLE F.7: CRITICAL ACTOR PARTICIPANT OVERALL BREAKDOWN (N=23) .....	359
TABLE F.8: CRITICAL ACTOR PARTICIPANT GENDER BREAKDOWN (N=23).....	359

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The complex relationship between sex, gender, and voting behaviour has been a global research preoccupation for at least five decades (Welch, 1977; Sapiro, 1981b; Quattrone and Tversky, 1988; Mueller, 1991; Norris, 1996; Kaufmann and Petrocik, 1999; Inglehart and Norris, 2000; Campbell, 2006; Abendschön and Steinmetz, 2014; Galais and Blais, 2019; Coffé and Lago, 2020). In investigating core questions around whether and how women's political preferences differ from men's, much of this research has focused on identifying and explaining 'gender gaps' in political attitudes and voting behaviour (Andersen, 1975; Wirls, 1986; Conover, 1988; Norris, 1996; Campbell 2006, 2016; Lovenduski and Hills, 2018). Studies have explored gender differences in political participation, political interest, political protest, political attitudes, party membership and political knowledge. This research has furthered our understanding of political behaviour in general and the relationship between sex, gender and voting behaviour specifically. It has also been used to support normative claims for political inclusion, contributing to broader debates over whether (and which) women have specific interests that are not fully represented in politics.

In exploring sex differences and integrating theories of gender differences into studies of voting behaviour, many scholars have also highlighted the complexity and contingency of sex gaps in voting behaviour, which are shaped by particular social and political contexts. However, despite the 'institutional turn' in political science more generally, there has been relatively little exploration, until recently, of the relationship between voting behaviour and institutional and constitutional change (cf. Nadeau et al., 1999; Wenzel et al., 2000; Clarke et al., 2004; Hobolt, 2007; Curtice, 2014; Verge et al., 2015; Fisher, 2017). Constitutional referendums are particularly important to political science research as constitutions function as 'power maps' (Duchacek, 1968; Duchacek, 1973), organising political systems and eliciting cooperation and support with the governing political authority. Constitutions 'sit at the peak of the political and legal hierarchy' (Irving, 2008: 23), and the processes through which they are formed, supported and revised have significant implications for democratic institutions (Wenzel et al., 2000).

The question of what influences voting behaviour towards constitutional change is, therefore, an important one – particularly in referendums, which allow citizens to participate in direct democracy (Fisch 2006) and to make choices about the institutions that govern them (Wenzel et al., 2000, pp. 242-2). Considering this, constitutional change is theoretically meaningful, as mass attitudes are expressed through democratic means such as voting and are the foundation of legitimate institutions. The relationship between voting behaviour and constitutional change has become ever more relevant in recent years, with the use of referendums increasing worldwide (Marsh,

2017), particularly in the UK, with events such as the Scottish and Welsh devolution referendums in 1979 and 1997, the Scottish independence referendum of 2014 and the European Union referendum of 2016 (signalling the withdrawal of the UK from the EU) (cf. Marsh, 2017; Wenzel et al., 2000).

Independence referendums, such as the Scottish independence referendum, provide an 'ideal setting' for studying political attitudes and voting behaviour because they offer opportunities for citizens to choose between 'unknown futures' with enormous potential consequences, as they can change how politics is conducted thereafter (Ackerman, 1998; Nadeau et al., 1999; Bell and Mackay, 2013; see also Verge et al., 2015). In a global context, independence referendums have been held in polities such as Catalonia, Basque Country, Puerto Rico, South Sudan, Montenegro, and Quebec. In some cases, the legality and legitimacy of the independence referendum have come into question, which provokes questions regarding the relationship between democracy and constitutional change. The popularity of referendums is growing; Norris (1999b) stated that this increase was paired with the emergence of more 'critical citizens' or 'dissatisfied democrats' (p. 3). Independence referendums are an interesting site to study these themes, as independence from a multinational state is not about overthrowing democracy. Instead, independence referendums are about 'modifying territorial boundaries' due to contrasting political differences between the nation and the multinational state, all while still 'pledging to maintain democratic regimes' (Norris, 1999b, p. 80). Therefore, independence referendums offer a site for scholars to investigate themes related to identity (national/territorial), democracy, trust in the government, and state and government legitimacy.

Processes of constitutional change also offer those in traditionally marginalised groups an opportunity to 'stake their claims in re-envisaging and redrawing political communities' (Bell and Mackay, 2013, p. 259) and influence constitutional futures. Yet, in seeking to explain individual decisions to vote for or against institutional change, studies have pointed to persistent sex gaps in constitutional attitudes in the UK broadly (Wenzel et al., 2000, p. 263) and in Scotland, more specifically, in the case of Scottish independence (Johns et al., 2011; Ormston, 2013b; Henderson et al., 2014; Henderson et al., 2015). Sex gaps in support for independence have also been found in Catalonia (Verge et al., 2015; Verge and Alonso, 2015; Alonso, 2018) and Quebec (Leger and Leger, 1996; Henderson, 2015; Vallée-Dubois et al., 2020). The studies mentioned previously differ in terms of methods and sample sizes. However, they all indicated a trend that female voters were significantly less likely to support independence and that male voters were more likely to support

it. Further, these studies have also found that female voters are consistently more likely to be ‘undecided’ in their constitutional preferences.

This chapter foregrounds the thesis by introducing the thesis puzzle, the research questions posed and offers justification for the case study. The chapter also presents existing data which illustrates a sex gap in Scottish constitutional attitudes and has provided a quantitative foundation to study the puzzle. The chapter concludes by outlining the structure of the thesis and illuminates how I aim to answer the research questions.

## 1.1 Sex Gaps and Gender Differences

Drawing mainly on data collected from voting behaviour studies, scholars have sought to explore different explanations for these sex gaps, including gender differences in risk aversion (Henderson, 2015; Verge et al., 2015; Hobolt, 2006, p. 627; Nadeau et al., 1999, p. 524; Dion, 2010, p. 120; Johns et al., 2011, p. 595), national identity (Johns et al., 2011; Pattie et al., 1999; Verge et al., 2015), participation and representation (Kenny, 2014; Mackay and Kenny, 2009; Mackay and McAllister, 2012; Kenny and Mackay, 2014; Verge and Alonso, 2015; Henderson, 2015), and issue prioritisation (Henderson et al., 2014). Scholars have called for more in-depth research investigating the causal mechanisms behind these sex gaps to explore the relationship between sex, gender and constitutional attitudes contextually (cf. Verge et al., 2015; Johns et al., 2011). Much of this research, along with broader UK research (Wenzel et al., 2000), has called for further inquiry into the sex gap in support of constitutional change, with most arguing for a shift towards qualitative methods to tease out the complexity of these gendered patterns. Research points to various motivations beyond self-interest that drive support for institutional reform. For example, Wenzel et al. (2000) find that an individual’s vote choice is based significantly on ideological and philosophical beliefs regarding how the political system should work (Wenzel et al., 2000). These beliefs can be categorised as an individual’s *belief system* (Rokeach, 1972; Hah, 1973; Stimson, 1975; Dawson, 1979; Tetlock, 1984; Sartwell, 1992; Leduc, 2002). Therefore, understanding how and to what extent these beliefs differ across gendered groups of voters and influence constitutional attitudes is highly pertinent to understanding the cause of these gaps. As stated, constitutions function as political power maps and indicate how and where power is distributed. Therefore, how women view constitutional change is potentially linked to how women experience equality based on power distribution in political society.

Scholarship tells us that societal and institutional power structures can be highly gendered (Fenstermaker and West, 2002; Bell and Mackay, 2012). Connell (2006; 2020) argued that within

our society exists a hierarchical order of gender defined as the 'gender order'. Within the gender order exists a 'gender regime' where the pattern of gender relations in our society lies (Connell, 2006; Connell, 2020). Due to the patriarchal structures of society's institutions, men are traditionally at the top of the gender regime, dominating the political apparatus (Connell, 1990), including political participation and behaviour. In analysing political behaviour towards constitutional change, rational choice theory (RCT) contextualises a referendum as an event that prompts voters to rationalise their vote choice based on whether they 'win' or 'lose' under the newly posed institutional arrangement(s). While defining what 'winners' and 'losers' are and how these terms should be operationalised is difficult, 'the identity of these winners and losers is generally quite apparent' in the context of the institutional reform and is a point well established in political scholarship (Wenzel et al., 2000; for more, see Rae, 1987).

For example, evidence from the Scottish case found that the voters who believed Scottish independence would narrow the gap between the rich and the poor were more likely to vote for constitutional change (Henderson and Mitchell, 2015). These findings were mirrored in earlier findings on devolution by Surridge et al. (1998), who found through a rational model based on sociotropic evaluation or 'welfare rationality', that voters who supported devolution did so because they believed it would improve public welfare in Scotland overall (p. 46). Here, 'winners' can be defined as people who are better off in the current constitutional arrangement (the status quo) and are 'winning', and those less fortunate are 'losers.' From this analysis, it is evident, from a gendered lens, that there will be people in society who benefit more from existing institutions than others; therefore, those who are 'losing' are more likely to experience societal inequalities. Political institutions like the government are inherently patriarchal (Walby, 1989; Connell, 1990; Kenny, 2007) as they encompass power relations beyond 'formal public structures – politics and paid work' and into the private sphere like families (Kenny, 2007, p. 96). Therefore, because of the patriarchal nature of political institutions, people in less powerful positions, like women, are often underrepresented in decision-making positions of power and have arguably more to gain in an institutional change (Bell and Mackay, 2013). Under this assumption, if RCT suggests that a voter contextualises their vote depending on whether they are 'losing' under the current constitutional arrangement or that they could lose more in the context of a new arrangement, constitutional change such as independence offers 'possibilities for inclusion and equality, or conversely, exclusion and inequality' (Bell and Mackay, 2012, p. 260).

To better understand the interaction of power in the relationship between gender and political participation, Lovenduski (1998) argued that when studying men's and women's electoral

behaviour, it is crucial to use the gender variable as a form of measurement as opposed to the sex variable, as the latter can lead to essentialist claims of gender groups (p. 338). Lovenduski (1998) further stated that the sex variable should be used as a dichotomous variable in a 'closely specified, gendered context' (p. 340), as otherwise, the variable will distort because 'the effects of gender cannot be left to one side or held constant' since gender is 'embedded in individuals, relationships, institutions, and organisations' (p. 339). Lovenduski stated that in good political research, 'gender is always relational' and 'measured on a continuum' (1998, p. 340), as it is on a scale of 'attributes ranging from masculinity to femininity' (2005, p. 21). When research uses only the dichotomous sex variable as opposed to using it within the context of gender as an explanatory variable or without gender entirely, studies can have misleading findings that oversimplify the political difference between men and women. For example, when 'all women' or 'all men' statements are made in discussing and analysing gendered voting groups, normative and traditional gender stereotypes are perpetuated, and heterogeneity within gender voter groups becomes erased (Lovenduski, 1998; Campbell, 2006).

The distinction between the sex and gender variable, or the sex/gender distinction, is crucial in examining the relationship between gender and politics, as there are complex and nuanced ways that gender interacts with power in our society. Similarly, the literature on the relationship between sex, gender and constitutional change has often conflated sex and gender by reporting gender gaps when numbers reveal sex differences. Bitter and Goodyear-Grant (2017) find this is common in voting behaviour analysis; the distinction between sex and gender in voting behaviour research often collapses when sex is used as a proxy for gender (Bittner and Goodyear-Grant, 2017). Yet, analysing puzzles around voting behaviour through a gendered lens is complex.

Campbell (2006) faced these theoretical difficulties when investigating gender and voting differences in the UK. Campbell defined sex as 'man or woman' and gender as the 'interaction between biological sex and other locations of the identity' such as femininity and masculinity (Campbell, 2006, p. 7). Gender is defined, in Campbell's understanding, primarily as the social construction of biological sex. Campbell also sees sex/gender as intrinsically linked yet analytically distinct (cf. Butler, 1990; Lovenduski, 1998). Campbell acknowledges that 'the sex variable cross-cuts almost all other demographic variables and interacts with them to create gendered patterns of political behaviour' (2006, p. 7). To proceed in her analysis of sex gaps, gender differences and voting behaviour in the UK, Campbell (2006) operationalises gender by 'analysing differences between the sexes within sub-groups' (p. 7). Examining gender differences in constitutional attitudes is crucial, as examining voters' lived experiences and belief systems through a gendered

lens helps scholars understand how power interacts with their political beliefs. Shifting analysis from sex to gender allows researchers to go beyond only studying women's lives but also to analyse 'how political institutions are gendered, how and why power and resources are distributed unequally, and how gender enables and constrains political behaviour' (Tripp and Hughes, 2018, p. 243). Campbell states that an understanding of the sex/gender distinction is crucial for those who include the sex variable in their research so that theories of gender differences can be incorporated into the analysis, 'otherwise subtle and complex gender effects that influence behaviour and outcomes tend to be overlooked' (2006, p. 132). This thesis adopts Campbell's distinctive approach and applies gendered sub-group analysis to sex gaps found in support of constitutional change.

Sub-group analysis is a crucial part of the gender analysis of political participation as men, women, and non-binary<sup>1</sup> voters are not homogenous voting groups, and therefore, 'gender differences are likely to be mediated by other background factors' based on lived experiences and aspects of one's identity (Campbell, 2013; for more, see Campbell, 2006 and Lovenduski, 2005). Literature using intersectionality as an analytical tool identifies how various parts of a person's identity can intersect and thus interact with privilege and oppression in society (hooks, 1981; Crenshaw, 2017). For example, Black working-class women will have different experiences from white middle-class women as they can experience both misogyny and racism simultaneously based on the interaction between their gender and race (hooks, 1981; Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 1990). Second-wave feminism was highly critiqued for its tendency to centre the interests of white middle-class women as the interests of all women under the assumption that the demands and perspectives of all women were shared (hooks, 1981).

Affirming the diversity within groups of women (and men) is a 'central concern of contemporary feminist theory' (Lovenduski, 1995, p. 19) and can be accomplished through gender sub-group analysis of voters as this allows researchers to move beyond attributing a gender gap 'to one distinct sub-group without detailed analysis of the differences between women [and men], as well as the

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<sup>1</sup> Analysing gender as opposed to only sex allows for a spectrum of gender identities to be revealed beyond the gender binary (Westbrook and Saperstein, 2015; Bittner and Goodyear-Grant, 2017). Gender as a non-binary category is receiving relatively little attention (though increasingly so in discussions, particularly around survey research). Research has found that this is due to a lack of respondents, difficulties of generating meaningful analysis, and problems of historical comparison given the conflation between sex and gender as well as the question of gender identity being left out entirely (Medeiros et al., 2020; Bittner and Goodyear-Grant, 2017; Tripp and Hughes, 2018). Yet, as awareness of the gender spectrum becomes more prominent in social science spaces, gender identity questions including non-binary options are becoming more common, as seen in the 2021 Scottish Election Study, for example.

similarities they share' (Campbell, 1997, p. 23). For example, with gender voter sub-group analysis, older working-class women's political needs and interests can be explored as distinct from the gender sub-group analysis of younger middle-class men as they might have different experiences with inequality. With differing experiences of inequality come differing perspectives on what a fair polity looks like. When an opportunity to make institutional change is presented, the lived experiences of the voter will no doubt influence their vote choice, either supporting the status quo or going against it.

Although the conflation between sex and gender cannot be rectified in the secondary analysis of existing voting behaviour surveys, new voting behaviour research acknowledging the sex/gender distinction and utilising gender subgroup analysis can offer a refreshed feminist analysis of how power relations influence differences in gendered attitudes and preferences for constitutional change. By applying the theoretical sex/gender distinction to this puzzle and employing Campbell's (2006) approach to understanding gender differences in sex gaps, this thesis seeks to untangle further the complex relationship between constitutional change, sex, gender and voting behaviour differences. Going further, by applying Campbell's (2006) sub-group gender analysis to the analysis of vote choice towards the constitutional question, a greater understanding of how heterogeneous groups of voters conceptualise power relations and equality in political society can be gained.

Drawing on existing quantitative data and new, original qualitative data, this thesis investigates the following research questions.

## 1.2 Research Questions and Contributions

- 1) In what way and to what extent are women's political preferences with regard to constitutional change expressed through their voting behaviour, and how has this changed over time?
- 2) *Which* women and men differ or are similar in their constitutional attitudes?
- 3) What explains similarities and differences in men's and women's political preferences concerning constitutional change?
  - How do the factors identified in related research (age, risk, national identity) interplay with gender and support for constitutional change?

This thesis builds upon existing studies of gender and voting behaviour in Scotland. The thesis also presents new research, using a top-down and bottom-up approach to tease out attitudes towards Scottish independence in voter interviews and focus groups conducted by dividing voters

into gender subgroups based on characteristics of their identity (age, support for independence, national identity, and vote choice). It further considers not only how diverse groups of men and women express their constitutional preferences through voting behaviour but also, drawing on interview data from critical actors and elites related to the independence campaigns, contextualises how these different groups of voters were targeted by campaigns in the lead-up to the Scottish independence referendum in 2014.

### 1.3 Scottish Independence: Case Justification

The Scottish case provides a compelling and timely case to explore the relationship between voting behaviour and support for constitutional change in referendums. Two core justifications exist for choosing the Scottish case to explore sex gaps in constitutional attitudes as expressed through voting behaviour. The first is the persistent sex gap in Scottish constitutional attitudes exhibited in the wealth of Scottish voting behaviour data. The second justification is the salience of the Scottish constitutional debate, and the third is the gap in existing research located at the convergence of Scottish voting behaviour research, constitutional change research and feminist political science research.

Empirically, the Scottish case offers a wealth of existing data from long-standing quantitative voting behaviour surveys such as the Scottish Referendum Study of 1997 (DevoRef), the Scottish Election Study (SES), the Scottish Referendum Study (SRS) and the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSA). Survey questions in these studies have inquired into participants' voting behaviour history and attitudes towards constitutional change in Scotland. This data offers a reliable pulse point for political researchers to measure the saliency of Scotland's constitutional debate and attitudes. As stated, results from this data also point to a long-standing sex gap in support for constitutional change in Scotland. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 indicate the sex gap pattern in various research studies. For example, the 2007 SES found a consistent sex gap ranging from 6-7 percentage points in support of Scottish independence between men and women. Analysis of the 1999 to 2014 SSA data indicated that men were more likely to support independence than women (Schneider, 2014; Mullen, 2014). Henderson et al. (2014)'s analysis of the SRS supported previous data and found that men were more likely to support Scottish independence than women in Scotland with statistical significance. In the scope of this research, statistical significance is when the  $p$  value of a relationship is  $<0.05$ . In empirical research, 'all inferential statistical tests end with a test statistic and the associated  $P$  value (Andrade, 2019, p. 210). This thesis operationalises the meaning of statistical significance to mean a relationship where in which the  $p$  value means 'the probability that chance is responsible for the finding is less than 5% and that the probability that

the finding is true is more than 95%’ (Andrade, 2019, p. 210). The pattern of the sex gap can be seen in Tables 1.1 and 1.2, with findings as recent as 2021.

**TABLE 1.1: MOST LIKELY TO SUPPORT INDEPENDENCE (YES VOTE) IN EXISTING DATA (SEX/GENDER VARIABLE)**

Survey Name	Year(s) Analysed	Question Value	Sex/Gender	Further Significance
Devo Ref	1997	N/A	Male	
SSA	1999-2014	v=RefVote	Male	
SES	2007	v=post_q162	Men	
SES	2011	v=w2_co4	Men	Especially men 40-59
SRS	2014	v=scotReferendumTurnout	Male	
SSA	2015	v=ActRefV	Male	
SSA	2016	v=RefVote16	Male	
SES	2016	v=w2referendumrecall	Male	
SES	2021	v=w1uk10 (wave 1) <sup>2</sup> v= w2uk10 (wave 2) <sup>3</sup>	Men <sup>4</sup> Men <sup>5</sup>	

**TABLE 1.2: MOST LIKELY TO OPPOSE INDEPENDENCE (NO VOTE OR NOT VOTE) IN EXISTING DATA (SEX/GENDER VARIABLE)**

Survey Name	Year(s) Analysed	Question Value	Sex/Gender	Further Significance
Devo Ref	1997	N/A	Female	
SSA	1999-2014	v=RefVote	Female	Older women
SES	2007	v=post_q162	Women	
SES	2011	v=w2_co4	Women	Especially those 25-39
SRS	2014	v=scotReferendumTurnout	Female	
SSA	2015	v=ActRefV	Female	
SSA	2016	v=RefVote16	Female	
SES	2016	v=w2referendumrecall	Female	
SES	2021	v=w1uk10 (wave 1) v= w2uk10 (wave 2)	Men <sup>6</sup> Men	

<sup>2</sup> Wave 1 of the 2021 SES was conducted before the 2021 Holyrood election.

<sup>3</sup> Wave 2 of the 2021 SES was conducted after the 2021 Holyrood election.

<sup>4</sup> The relationship between the two variables, [genderID] and [uk10], indicated statistical significance (<.001), but the gap between men and women’s support for independence was 1 %; suggesting the sex gap was closing.

<sup>5</sup> In the second wave of the 2021 SES, men were more likely than women to say they supported independence by a margin of 2.4 %.

<sup>6</sup> In both the first and second wave of the 2021 SES, men were more likely than women to say they were opposed to Scottish independence by a margin of 4.5 per cent.

Recently, data has indicated that the sex gap is closing (Curtice, 2020; Liñeira, 2021; Henderson et al., 2021). In 2020, Curtice (2020) analysed poll data and reported in a blog for ScotCen that the ‘gender gap between men and women regarding the constitutional question had disappeared’. According to Curtice’s (2020) analysis of nine different polls, the support for Scottish independence in October 2020 was 54 %, and men and women were polling ‘Yes’ at the same level in all polls. Yet, Curtice (2020) noted that a Panelbase study (2020) found men were still polling higher than women in support of independence by five percentage points in their four polls around the time of analysis. More recently, Liñeira (2021) analysed the British Election Study Internet Panel (BESIP) and found that the sex gap in support for constitutional change had reversed, and women were more likely than men to support independence in 2020 by five percentage points (p. 407). Data from the 2021 SES indicated that the sex gap in support of independence narrowed, with men only approximately one to two per cent more likely than women to vote in support of independence depending on the survey wave (Henderson et al., 2021).

Significantly, the sex gap in constitutional attitudes in Scotland has not been limited to only the *Yes* and *No* debates. Instead, the sex gap in constitutional attitudes is across all attitudes, including feeling undecided. The gap is best highlighted in the recent 2021 SES data. Although the sex gap in support for constitutional change in Scotland has narrowed according to 2021 SES data, data also showed that men were more likely than women to say they opposed independence. This persistent sex gap in feeling ‘undecided’ about independence explains the shift in men being both more likely to vote for and against independence in the most recent data. The survey measurement of being ‘undecided’ indicates that the participant is unsure about their attitudes toward independence. Data has demonstrated a consistent gap between men and women in the ‘undecided’ measurement across surveys and time contexts in Scotland. Table 1.3 indicates this pattern.

TABLE 1.3: MOST LIKELY TO BE UNDECIDED IN EXISTING DATA (SEX/GENDER VARIABLE)

Survey Name	Year(s) Analysed	Sex/Gender	Further Significance
SES	2007	Women	
SES	2011	Women	Ages 40-59
SSA	2014	Female	
SES	2014	Women	
RCA	2014	Women	The gap is by a margin of 18 %, and women are twice as likely to be undecided. <sup>7</sup>
SES	2016	Female	
SES	2021	Women	wave1 = margin of 4.5 % between men and women wave2 = margin of 6.1 % between men and women, with women twice as likely to be undecided

In Scottish voting behaviour research, women have long been depicted as more opposed to independence than men. Yet, it is more the case that women have been persistently more likely to be ‘undecided’ about independence than men. The pattern seen in Table 1.3 is crucial to the sex gap puzzle as it suggests a gendered difference in feeling sure about their constitutional attitudes. Before the Scottish independence referendum of 2014 was held, Bell and Mackay (2013) queried the differences in support for independence between men and women. Bell and Mackay (2013) suggested that there was a range of reasons why women were ‘likely to remain on the side-lines as the disengaged, the undecided and the sceptical’, including the argument that critical questions that were central to women’s lives were not being discussed (pp. 270-1). Bell and Mackay argued that these questions ‘link to the ambivalent relationship of women to constitution-making practice that has relevance beyond Scotland’ (2013, p. 262). The early critiques of the independence debates by these researchers raise questions that demand deeper contextual analysis into the experiences and perceptions of voters to begin to uncover the ‘why’ of gendered differences in constitutional attitudes. Yet, to understand themes central to women’s lives, acknowledging the heterogeneity of women’s lives is crucial to decipher *which* women are unsupportive, supportive or unsure about their constitutional attitudes and why. Although Bell and Mackay’s (2013) early investigation acknowledged the need for further research to understand the puzzle, this research has not yet been carried out.

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<sup>7</sup> Henderson et al., 2015

The constitutional question remains highly salient in Scotland as discussions of a second independence referendum continue to dominate Scottish political debates. Researchers continue to be engaged in questions related to the Scottish constitutional debate in a variety of political science disciplines and sub-disciplines concerning voting behaviour, national identity, territorial politics, party membership analysis and comparative referendum analysis (Johns, 2021; McCrone and Keating, 2021; McMillan and Henderson, 2021; Bennie et al., 2021; Douglas-Scott, 2022; Martill, 2022; Leith and Sim, 2023). As outlined previously, researchers acknowledge the sex gaps in constitutional attitudes (Curtice, 2020; Henderson et al., 2021; Liñeira, 2021). Nevertheless, there has been little dialogue between research on voting behaviour, constitutional change and gender studies to better understand the sex gap in constitutional attitudes through thick contextual analysis.

This thesis contributes to scholarly understanding by filling this gap in the literature in various arenas. Firstly, this thesis and its related findings contribute to the Scottish and British political field by offering new empirical data from voters and critical actors in the Scottish case and a new analysis of existing quantitative data by considering gender subgroups in sex gap analysis. This thesis is the first scholarly inquiry to take a feminist theoretical approach using the sex/gender distinction to the Scottish puzzle while bringing in theories of gender difference. The distinction between sex and gender has often been taken for granted in voting behaviour research, and this is highlighted through the labelling of sex differences as ‘gender gaps.’ Further, existing research has contributed to the methodological issue of placing women and men voters into monolithic groups. This thesis challenges this approach, illustrating the importance of assessing between- and within-group differences. Secondly, this thesis offers contributions to the discipline of gender and politics more broadly, as the findings of this thesis significantly contribute to the study of gender and voting behaviour by analysing the under-researched arena of gendered constitutional attitudes. Lastly, considering the aforementioned contributions to British political scholarship and the sub-discipline of gender and politics, this thesis addresses significant questions in political science concerning power, constitutions, identity, equality and representation.

#### 1.4 Structure of Thesis

**Chapter two** provides an analysis of existing literature on sex, gender and voting behaviour and identifies relevant gaps in the literature that this thesis fills. This chapter begins by outlining the foundations of sex gap studies globally and then moves toward the Scottish case by considering existing research on sex, gender and voting behaviour differences in the UK and Scotland. This

chapter highlights what we do not know about the thesis's central 'puzzle' and argues for a theoretical and methodological shift in investigating the sex gaps in constitutional attitudes.

**Chapter three** outlines the theoretical framework underpinning the work of this thesis and justifies the project's mixed-method methodological approach. In this chapter, I first outline how a feminist approach to the sex gap puzzle facilitates the investigation of the relationship between sex, gender, power, and equality. Then, I outline how a feminist problem-driven approach centres the puzzle and builds its methods around it. This chapter discusses the thesis's research design, which adopts a top-down and bottom-up approach, utilising qualitative and quantitative methods to answer the posed research questions. It concludes with a detailed review of data collection using quantitative data analysis of secondary data, a large-scale quantitative data survey, elite background interviews, and voter focus groups and interviews.

**Chapter four** contextualises the constitutional debate in Scotland, focusing on the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. This contextual chapter presents data from elite background interviews conducted with critical actors and elites central to the Scottish independence campaigns, including party leaders, campaign managers, and campaign strategists from either side of the independence debates. In doing so, it provides insights into how those in power-holding positions in the lead-up to the independence referendum categorised voters into gendered subgroups and how they strategised to influence gendered constitutional attitudes.

**Chapter five** presents the collation of and refreshed analysis of secondary quantitative data from large-scale Scottish voting behaviour surveys, centring on the sex gaps using sex and gender variables. Building from voter experiences upwards, simple descriptive statistics were conducted to depict the timeline of how different studies have researched the relationship between the sex variable and support for constitutional change in Scotland. This chapter highlights the need for a theoretical and methodological shift in the field and makes a case for further qualitative investigation into the relationship between sex, gender and constitutional attitudes.

**Chapter six** presents findings from voter data collected from interviews and focus groups with pro-independence (*Yes*) and anti-independence (*No*) voters and those that have changed (*Switcher*) their vote. Facilitated by gender subgroup analysis, this chapter highlights the various influential factors behind shaping constitutional attitudes through thematic analysis. This chapter underscores how complex, contingent, and contested gendered political behaviours play out on opposing sides of the constitutional debate. Further, the importance of contextual belief systems and political myths are also explored in this chapter.

**Chapter seven** builds on the previous chapter's analysis to present data from *Undecided* voters. As in chapter six, voter data is assessed thematically and structured around gendered subgroups. *Undecided* voters were split into two categories: voters who were undecided in 2014 and did not vote and voters who voted in 2014 but, at the time of data collection, felt undecided about how they would vote in the event of another plebiscite.

The thesis concludes with **chapter eight**, which synthesises key findings across empirical data collected. The concluding chapter reflects on the relationship between sex, gender, and constitutional attitudes from a feminist perspective, mapping how gender subgroup analysis highlights power relations in political society. It concludes by outlining the implications of the findings for further research and addresses the contributions of this research to the broader literature.

## Chapter 2: Voting Gaps, Gendered Constitutions and Contestations

### 2.1 Introduction

Sex and gender differences in political behaviour remain a core preoccupation in political science scholarship, evidenced by ample research on the relationship (Welch, 1977; Sapiro, 1981a; Welch, 1985; Hayes and Bean, 1993; Inglehart and Norris, 2000; Kanthak and Woon, 2014). Much of the research on so-called ‘gender gaps’ has focused on three areas: political participation, political engagement and political preferences (Verba et al., 1997; Campbell, 2006; Wenzel et al., 2000; Kittilson, 2016). This chapter considers all three of these areas and the interplay between them: for example, a voter’s political engagement in an election could depend on their political preferences and therefore impact their political participation. It reviews related research in political science from a range of sub-disciplines and addresses theoretical, empirical and methodological gaps in the related literature.

Firstly, this chapter reviews the foundations of scholarly inquiry investigating sex gaps, gender and political behaviour, outlining how gender gap studies became critical to political science research. It highlights a range of remaining gaps in this broad research area, centring around *what* these scholars study and *how* they study it. Focusing in particular on research on voting behaviour in the UK from a feminist perspective, the chapter critically evaluates the move in the field to look beyond ‘gender gaps’ and consider sub-group differences. Drawing on these insights and considering them in the context of specific research on sex gaps and gender differences in support of constitutional change in Scotland, the chapter argues the need for a shift in theoretical and methodological approaches to untangle the complex and dynamic interplay between sex, gender, power and constitutional attitudes.

### 2.2 Sex Gaps, Gender Differences and Political Behaviour

#### **2.2.1 Early Studies**

Definitions of what political participation means can vary to suit the context of research and can be ‘dependent upon the scholar’s assessment of the purpose of political participation’ and thus can be difficult to pin down (Fox, 2014, p. 496). Therefore, there is no ‘true’ definition of political participation (Verba et al., 1987). However, Verba and Nie’s (1978) definition of political participation provides a starting point, seeing political participation as behaviour that a citizen needs to actively engage in with the deliberate intent of influencing the government in their polity.

Verba and Nie (1987) argue that political participation is not limited to conventional or legal behaviour and that political participation can be undertaken by an individual but also by a broader institution or group, including a wider institution such as a territorial union or the European Union. Building on this definition, Parry et al. (1992) argue that political participation demands that the participant must seek to influence the government directly. Brady (1999) states that political participation must be both voluntary and observable. Brady's (1999) argument links with the work of Parry et al. (1992), who state that political participation's primary goal is influencing those in power. Meanwhile, Whiteley (2012) expands the definition by stating that political participation includes 'activities such as voting, lobbying politicians, attending political meetings, joining protest rallies and being active in political parties' (2012, p. 34). Voting behaviour – the focus of this thesis – falls squarely under this definition, understood as voluntary behaviour in which a citizen actively influences the government or the broader political institutions, related to their polity.

Women of specific demographics have been enfranchised in most polities for over a century. In the UK, partial women's enfranchisement was granted in 1918 and initially only granted to women over 30 who were married to or who were a member of the local government (Norris, 1999a, p. 333). Not until the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act of 1928 could all citizens over 21 vote in Britain. After enfranchisement, studies showed that women's voting participation was at a lower rate than men's participation in a comparative seven-country survey conducted between 1966 and 1971 (Verba et al., 1978). Kittilson (2016) argues that these sex differences in turnout were partly due to the delay of women's enfranchisement; meanwhile, subsequent data has shown that women voters have not only caught up with men but, in some democracies, have surpassed them in turnout (Kittilson, 2016). In the US, for example, women have been estimated to cast four to seven million more votes than men since the 1980s in presidential elections (CAWP, 2017) and have surpassed men entirely in voter turnout in every presidential election since 1996 (CAWP, 2022a). Gender trends in political participation in the UK mirror trends in the US. In 2004, Childs (2004a) found no gender gap in political participation between men and women and that they were voting at equal rates. More recently, research by Kostelka et al. (2019) investigated the gender gap in 29 countries including Canada, the UK, and many Western European countries, from 2010 to 2015 in elections at different levels of government and found no gender gap in turnout in national elections.

Research studying the different ways men and women vote ranges from the mid-1950s, starting predominantly in the US (Duverger, 1955; Lane, 1959; Campbell et al., 1960; for more, see Kenski, 1988). However, these differences were often only given brief attention and frequently suffered

the application of traditional gender stereotyping or were ignored altogether. However, in the mid-1970s to 1980s, an inter-party sex gap in women's political participation in the US was discovered when findings indicated women were more likely to support the Democratic Party than men. This sex gap, dubbed the 'modern gender gap' (Norrander, 2008), inspired research into differences in vote choice in the US. Scholars began to compare how wives voted compared to their husbands, and compared 'working wives' to 'housewives' (Hobson, 1980; Sorensen and McLanahan, 1987). Early survey research often concluded that sex gaps in voting behaviour were naturally occurring due to participation disparities between men and women related to women's existence in the private domain and men in the public (Duverger, 1955; Lane, 1959; Campbell et al., 1980). Many of these early studies came under an array of criticism as the field of gender and voting behaviour studies advanced (Bourque and Grossholtz, 1974; Goot and Reid, 1975; Welch, 1977).

Critiques of early studies argued that scholars put an excessive value on gendered differences that were small and not always statistically significant (Bourque and Grossholtz, 1974; Goot and Reid, 1975; Welch, 1977). Arguments were made that political participation and behaviour definitions must be redefined more broadly. Scholzman et al. (1994) argued that only measuring women's political participation through voting behaviour led early sex gap researchers to underestimate women's political involvement, as women were more engaged in 'alternative modes of participation' such as grassroots community activity, political organising and political protest (Scholzman et al., 1994, p. 964). Early studies also overlooked the gender differences in access to political resources. Novel studies in the US in the 1970s found that men were more politically active in traditional senses (e.g., voting, running for elections) than women, as they had the resources to facilitate political activity, including higher levels of wealth, education, and free time (Bourque and Grossholtz, 1974; Goot and Reid, 1975; Welch, 1977). Other critiques of early studies highlighted that just as there were gendered differences in terms of access and type of political participation, there were gender differences in 'processes of politicisation' (Scholzman et al., 1994, p. 964), meaning that the pathways into politics looked different for men and women at that time (Bourque and Grossholtz, 1974; Goot and Reid, 1975; Welch, 1977). Lastly, more recent critiques have argued that early research into sex gaps and voting behaviour often essentialised women voters, using gender stereotypes of women as conservative and politically uninterested without a heterogenous analysis investigating the differences *between* women voters (Campbell, 2006; Lovenduski, 2005).

Nevertheless, some early research was promising and helped shape an understanding of men's and women's different experiences in their political participation. Early studies found that women

differed from men in their voting choices towards policy preferences (Shapiro and Mahajan, 1988; Golebiowska, 1999), issue positions (Frankovic, 1982; Hurwitz and Smithey, 1998), approval ratings of presidents (Mattei and Mattei, 1998) and perceptions of the economy (Welch and Hibbing, 1992). The analysis of sex gaps and their relationship with voting patterns has evolved from the fringes of political science research to become a crucial recurring point of interest in the discipline of political science (Bourque and Grossholtz, 1974; Welch, 1985; Norrander, 1997; Norris, 1999a; Byrnes et al., 1999; Childs, 2004a; Campbell, 2006; Campbell, 2012; Ormston, 2013b; Mayer, 2015; Shepherd, 2015; Coffé and Lago, 2020; Ralph-Morrow et al., 2021; Campbell and Shorrocks, 2021). Overall, initial sex gaps in voter turnout in the studies mentioned spurred more scholarly investigation into influential factors behind differences in other voting behaviours, such as partisanship, ideological identification, and issue preferences (Norris, 1996; Norrander, 2000). Voting behaviour analysis has now grown to encapsulate studies of sex gaps from not only current 'Western' political systems but both single and comparative studies from a range of global states using a variety of methodological approaches (Mueller, 1991; Jelen et al., 1994; Hurwitz and Smithey, 1998; Golebiowska, 1999; Inglehart and Norris, 1990; Vincent, 2001; Gidengil et al., 2003; Giger, 2009; Desposato and Norrander, 2009; Fraile and Gomez, 2017; Harsgor, 2018; Galais and Blais, 2019; Solveid et al., 2021).

As described earlier, much of the early literature on differences in voting behaviour also failed to look beyond 'sex' and into the heterogeneity of voters within their 'gender' identities; this pattern in voting behaviour studies continues today. Operationalising the two terms, sex and gender, is difficult due to their inextricable links in scholarly understanding. The sex variable is most prevalent in voting behaviour studies and is used to attribute a voter's sex and, frequently, gender identity with no distinction between these two terms. Measuring gender differences in voting behaviour can prove difficult to scholars as many surveys, such as the British Election Study (BES), use the binary sex variable instead of including a gender scale to measure gender differences (Campbell, 2006, p.7). The distinction between the two variables, 'sex' and 'gender', or the sex/gender distinction, corresponds to a highly prevalent debate in feminist political science more broadly. The following section outlines the sex/gender distinction, the scholarship that has shaped this distinction, and the scholarship that has been impacted by it, with a particular interest in voting behaviour studies.

### **2.2.2 The Sex/Gender Distinction and Voting**

Some feminist scholars critique the exclusive use of the sex variable as a binary measure in voting behaviour studies (male and female), arguing it can produce dichotomous and essentialising results

of voters and voter identities (Campbell, 2004; Lovenduski, 2005; Campbell, 2006). When gaps are only measured by male and female measurements, conclusions explaining the differences between men and women can often be over-simplified and essentialising as they draw broad conclusions about monolithic groups, e.g., female voters are conservative and male voters are risk-taking. When voters are collectively considered as a monolith by their sex, other identity variables such as gender, age, race, class or disability are either flattened or completely erased (Winters, 2008). Further, feminist scholars such as Campbell (2004; 2006) and Lovenduski (2006) argue that sex and gender identity must be distinguished from each other in order to understand sex and gender gaps in voting behaviour.

Sex typically refers to a socially constructed biological category assigned at birth and has historically been coded as male and female in survey research. Gender, however, is societally constructed from human interaction and is a social power structure in itself.<sup>8</sup> Lorber and Farrell (1991) describe how gender construction begins at inception when a sex category is chosen for a baby. Then, the gender status of an individual is created based on processes which ‘gender’ the baby, such as choosing the baby’s name, how it is dressed, and what toys it has (Lorber and Farrell, 1991, pp. 112-3). From birth, gender identity is created and sustained based on how society perceives us, and gender roles are created. West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that an individual’s gender identity is constructed and can be upheld or subverted daily in everyday tasks, and when these tasks are performed, humans are ‘doing gender’ (p. 126). In these gender performances, gender identity is formed and sustained in our everyday lives based on how we perform our gender and how others perceive our gender performance (pp. 126-135).

Feminist research argues that gender is a societal power construct, and when humans ‘do gender’, social differences between gender identities are created (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Connell, 2013; Connell, 2020; Lorber and Farrell, 1991; Butler, 2011). These socially perceived differences between men and women are sustained every day by individuals but also by institutions with the power to govern and influence our lives. At an individual level, we can reinforce and subvert our gender identity, yet it is within and through powerful institutions that normative understandings of gender are upheld. Intersectionality is an analytical tool developed by Crenshaw (1989; 2017) to illustrate how citizens can be privileged and oppressed based on intersectional aspects of their

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<sup>8</sup> A deeper analysis of sex, gender and feminist theory will be provided in Chapter 3 which outlines this thesis’ theoretical and methodological approach.

identity, such as sex, gender, race, age, class, and ability. Those with marginalised identities, such as women and people of colour, experience power inequalities differently, and often a citizen's various identities interact and intersect to privilege or oppress them. These experiences influence and shape people's lives, social values, beliefs, and political attitudes. Therefore, acknowledging a voter's gender identity through an intersectional lens offers a deeper understanding than only analysing sex gaps based on whether the voter is male or female, as acknowledging voters through intersectional subgroups offers insight into how the voter experiences power and equality in political society.

For example, Bittner and Goodyear-Grant (2017) argue that voting behaviour research that distinguishes sex and gender allows for more accurate conclusions as the heterogeneity of intersecting voter identities can be explored. For example, Burns et al. (2001) found that mothers in the US with school-age children were more likely to be religiously affiliated and, therefore, more likely to be against abortion and vote against pro-choice policies. In this study, Burns et al. (2001) consider a voter's sex, gender, religion, parental status, and the age of their children to gain a more nuanced understanding of gendered voter stances on abortion. This finding exemplifies how different aspects of their identity can shape a voter's preferences. It also theoretically and methodologically showcases what can be missed when research flattens sex and gender, uses monolithic groups to categorise voting blocs (all women, all men), and fails to consider how identities intersect to influence political attitudes. Therefore, research which fails to consider the sex/gender distinction when investigating sex and gender gaps can lack accuracy in concluding the gaps as they lack a comprehensive approach to voter identity.

Another example of effective research which takes sex/gender into account is Burns et al.'s (2001) heterogeneous analysis of US voters, in which they found that the gap in political participation between men and women was a result of the 'cumulative advantages that men accrue earlier in the [participatory] process that leaves them with a larger stockpile of participatory assets to bring to political life' (p. 273). Burns et al. (2001) found that the sex gap in participation in political activity had no single cause and, instead, was the cumulation of inequality concerning the factors that facilitate political activity. They went on to point out factors such as a gender disparity in 'resources, recruitment, and psychological involvement' related to disparities in education levels, traditional gender roles in the home that propel fathers into work and mothers at home, gender discrimination at work, and women's greater involvement in religion and men's significant involvement in politics (Burns et al., 2001, pp. 272-3). Again, this example offers further insight into how power is

distributed within patriarchal Western democratic societies and illustrates how various gendered power relations interact to impact men and women differently.

Therefore, acknowledging the sex/gender distinction and considering intersectional aspects of a voter's identity is necessary to illuminate voter heterogeneity and truly understand sex and gender gaps in political behaviour. In doing so, as Campbell (2006) and Lovenduski (2001; 2005) argue, we can better understand how sex and gender separately and simultaneously influence particular political phenomena in our society as well as other crucial variables that influence political experiences such as race, class, age or national identity. In this way, scholars can move beyond monolithic descriptions of those with political agency (voters and elites) and reveal the complexities *between* and *within* voters and elites. In this way, decoupling sex and gender in voting behaviour research alleviates normative understandings of political actors and prevents essentialising conclusions from being drawn.

However, the theoretical and methodological implementation and implications of the aforementioned arguments have been underexplored in Scottish political and constitutional research more broadly. Further, within the field of gender studies and politics, feminist research analysing constitutional change and attitudes is also under-studied. Therefore, many gaps remain in knowledge related to the sex gaps in constitutional attitudes and how this is expressed in voting behaviour. The following section will outline where gaps exist in detail by reviewing related literature and critically assessing the need for a refreshed approach to get at the complexities of the research puzzle addressed by this thesis.

### 2.3 Gaps in the Literature

Much remains unknown about sex gaps in support for constitutional change and how voters' gender identity affects their political preferences regarding the constitutional change, such as independence. Puzzles around the sex gap in constitutional attitudes have been noted and studied in political science research and are the subject of increasing interest (Lindsay, 1991; Nadeau et al., 1999; Wenzel et al., 2000; Johns et al., 2011; Bell and Mackay, 2013; Ormston, 2013b; Henderson et al., 2015; Verge et al., 2015; Murtagh 2015; Verge and Alonso, 2015; Fowler, 2019; 2020; 2021). This research provides the foundation for understanding the relationship between sex, gender, and constitutional attitudes, yet empirical, theoretical and methodological gaps remain in the field.

The following sections will address the aforementioned gaps and first outline what related literature has found theoretically regarding voting behaviour and institutional change. Then, I focus on the

relationship between gender, institutions, constitutions and constitutional change, identifying what we know and do not know. I conclude this section by outlining empirical contributions and gaps.

### **2.3.1 Theoretical gaps**

#### **Constitutional Change and Referendums**

How citizens choose to restructure their institutions can have enormous consequences on the political futures of polities. While institutions are a key focus of political science research (Riker, 1982; March and Olsen, 1989; North, 1990; Connell, 2006; Mackay, 2014), the investigation into the relationship between public opinion and institutional change was underdeveloped until recently (Wenzel et al., 2000). Matters of institutional choice matter considerably and can vary depending on the country and context. In the US, institutional change can often occur following national and state elections (Karp, 1995; Bowler and Donovan, 1998). In newly democratised states, such as those in Southeast Europe (Alexander, 2008) or Hong Kong (Zhang, 2011), institutional change can be initiated by both political elites and citizens. Yet, the success of institutional democratisation can depend on internal and external opposition in the political sphere (Alexander, 2008). Yet, even for long-established democracies such as the UK, constitutional questions remain prominent due to devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Keating, 1998; Brown et al., 2002; Chaney and Mackay, 2007; Mackay and Mcallister, 2012; Henderson and Mitchell, 2018; Henderson et al., 2021).

Keating (1998) states that due to the doctrine of parliamentary supremacy and the unwritten norms of the UK constitution, it was historically challenging for the British government to negotiate constitutional reform (pp. 220-3). Consequently, Keating (1998) argues that constitutional change came to the UK ‘piecemeal, as a result of short-term political pressures without any overall design’ (p. 233). Although demands<sup>9</sup> for Scottish self-governance were made throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Mitchell, 1996b), devolution marked a pivotal point in the UK’s constitutional history. Devolution moved constitutional change to the forefront of the UK political agenda (Henderson et al., 2015) as it radically changed the UK’s power map (Duchacek, 1983) to distribute power from the central government, Westminster, to the new devolved parliaments (Keating, 1998). Consequently, after the success of Scottish and Welsh devolution referendums in 1997 and the devolution of Northern Ireland shortly following, more opportunities for the UK electorate to

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<sup>9</sup> The Scottish devolution referendum of 1979 was the culmination of efforts of such demands (Pattie et al., 1999).

directly shape institutional reform were presented, with events such as the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. In 2016, the Conservative-led government posed the question of the UK's place within the European Union (EU) to voters and constitutional change, again, was brought to the forefront of UK politics with Brexit. While referendums are typically rare globally (Marsh, 2017), they have become more popular than ever (Contiades and Fotiadou, 2016), as evidenced by the increase in constitutional change referendums held in the UK since devolution. Therefore, understanding constitutional attitudes in the UK and globally remains highly relevant in political science research. Further, the question of how aspects of a voter's identity influence constitutional attitudes to support or oppose constitutional change is crucial.

Referendums serve as an essential type of constitutional reform for political scientists to study voting behaviour, as referendums offer the electorate a direct vote on a political issue. Yet, a distinction must be made between the types of referendums which occur to avoid conflation of related political behaviour patterns, as each referendum is unique in its context. Direct votes differ from an indirect vote made by, for example, a democratically elected political representative. In referendums, voters do not begin with a blank slate (Marsh, 2017) and, instead, can be potentially influenced by a variety of factors, such as their perceptions of cost and benefit (Clarke et al., 2004; Bell and Mackay, 2012), national identity (Johns et al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2015), political knowledge (Morisi, 2016), partisanship (Mitchell et al., 2017; Greene et al., 2018), age (Mullen, 2014), sex (Fowler, 2021; Green and Shorrocks, 2021) and gender identity (Lindsay, 1991; Bell and Mackay, 2012; Verge et al., 2015).

Morel (2018) defined referendums as policy-making devices that differ in many ways: the extent of power that is being given to the people; the necessity (required or not required) of the referendum; the initiator of the referendum (the people, the institutional minority, the legislature or the executive); the author (who writes the words of the policy/issue); the legal impact; and the nature of the question(s) being posed to the electorate. The question's distinction can be differentiated between 'institutional, international, territorial, socio-economic, environmental and individual rights' (Morel, 2018, p. 31). This thesis focuses specifically on independence referendums which propose territorial and constitutional changes. Since the 1960s, the number of independence referendums held globally has increased, with only a slight decline since 2000. This slight decline is 'relativised by the previous explosion of the number of referendums since the 1990s' (Morel, p. 47). Concerning the case of this thesis, the Scottish independence referendum of 2014 was not a referendum of the legal or constitutional requirement. Rather, the 2014 independence referendum was proposed by the SNP-led Scottish Parliament and proposed

altering the UK's constitution by offering direct democratic power to the people of Scotland in a *Yes or No* question. The UK government granted the Scottish Parliament the power to hold the referendum in the Edinburgh Agreement in 2012.<sup>10</sup>

Independence referendums are a type of constitutional change that therefore offer direct democracy and power-redistribution opportunities to citizens but are unique in that they are rare and offer a monumental change in the form of state independence. They can therefore act as critical junctures in the constitutional futures of a polity (Henderson and Mitchell, 2018) and have the potential to amplify or mitigate existing divisions or inequalities (Bell and Mackay, 2012). Independence referendums have therefore attracted much attention in a variety of political science sub-disciplines, including from the perspective of scholars in territorial politics (Cetrà and Harvey, 2019; Keating and McEwen, 2020), electoral and public opinion (Morisi, 2016; Henderson and Mitchell, 2018), constitutionalism (Mitchell, 2016a; 2016b), partisanship (Johns et al., 2011; Johns et al., 2013; Bennie et al., 2021), feminist and gender studies (Lindsay, 1991; Bell and Mackay, 2012; Kenny, 2014; Verge et al., 2015; O'Hagan, 2015; Alonso, 2018; McAngus and Rummery, 2018; Rodó-Zárate, 2020) and national identity research (Johns et al., 2009; Johns et al., 2011; Liñeira and Cetrà, 2015; Henderson et al., 2015; Rodó-Zárate, 2020).

The breadth of recent scholarly work studying independence referendums highlights how they can offer rich insights into various questions crucial to political science, such as power relations, identity, party politics, constitutions and political participation. Here, we see a melange of issues relevant to sub-disciplines in political science, such as feminist and gender studies, territorial politics, electoral and public opinion studies and constitutional studies. At the convergence of many of these sub-disciplines lies feminist research, which examines the impact of sex and gender on constitutional attitudes in support of independence as expressed through voting behaviour.

As argued, much remains unknown regarding how and in what ways sex and gender identity influence constitutional attitudes and support for constitutional change. Largely absent from existing research is in-depth research that accounts for the sex/gender distinction and investigates how different aspects of a voter's identity intersect simultaneously to influence how they envisage constitutional power relations. This thesis operationalises Duchacek's (1968; 1973) argument that constitutions act as power maps, and argues that the sex gap puzzle in constitutional attitudes must

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<sup>10</sup> The events and timeline of Scottish independence will be presented and supplemented with empirical data in Chapter 4.

be studied alongside societal gendered power relations. In choosing between different constitutional futures, voters also make choices about equality, inequalities, and gendered power relations. Therefore, to understand the relationship between sex, gender and constitutional attitudes, understanding the relationship between gender and constitutions is crucial. Voting behaviour research which investigates sex gaps in constitutional attitudes, particularly in the Scottish case, has left theoretical approaches to the relationship between gender and constitutions underexplored.

### **Feminist Constitutionalism**

Historical institutionalists such as Thelen (2009) describe institutions as sites of ongoing political conflict where institutional change occurs in specific historical contexts influenced by differing interests and alignments in political structures such as the electorate. While historical institutionalists rarely use the language of ‘power’ (Kenny, 2007), Thelen’s (2009) conceptualisation of institutional change as a site of political struggle highlights how, in this arena, power maps of constitutions (Duchacek, 1973) can be restructured. In the power restructuring that institutional change initiates are opportunities for those left out of institutional frameworks to take part in, reframing existing institutional frameworks, such as constitution-making (Lindsay, 1991; Bell and Mackay, 2012). Feminist constitutionalism offers an analytical framework which argues that because historically, men have been ‘assigned a superior social position and power and worth over women’, women’s voices have been largely absent from constituting processes (Mackinnon, 2012, p. 398).

The field of feminist constitutionalism uses a feminist lens to analyse how constitutions can be gendered and how women can influence constitution-making (Irving, 2008, 2017; Beckwith, 2000; Mackinnon, 2012; Vickers, 2017). Irving (2008) describes the recent political era as a ‘fresh start’ for constitutions, as more than half of the world’s constitutions have been framed post-1970s. Yet, a critical understanding that is core to feminist constitutionalism is that although many of the world’s constitutions are seemingly gender-neutral, they are already gendered in their over-representation of men’s interests due to the patriarchal nature of political institutions in which men dominate positions of power (Mackinnon, 2012; Vickers, 2017; for more see Beckwith, 2000). Feminist constitutionalists such as Vickers (2017) argue that ‘states make gender’ through the enactment of ‘policies, laws, practices, spending patterns, judicial decisions and discourses about how men and women should act’ (p. 175). Vickers (2017) argues that this relationship is reciprocal, as ‘gender makes states’ with the influences of ‘gender norms and expectations becoming embedded into constitutions, institutions, practices and discourses (p. 175). This argument is

substantiated by Lovenduski (1998), who finds that patriarchal constitutional models become embedded in political cultures. Mackinnon (2012) concurs, stating that constitutions establish, define and bind governments, nations and states (p. 397). This argument suggests that when a constitution is adopted and reformed, power structures deriving from the gender regime are embedded into constitutional texts, traditions, and interpretations. Because constitutions have been created and shaped predominantly by men to influence the lives and experiences of men and women, they are inherently gendered by men until they are challenged and reformed (Vickers, 2017, p. 175; Mackinnon, 2012).

Those left out of initial constitution-making extend beyond women to people of colour and others in minority groups, dependent on the state context (Lindsay, 1991; Bell and Mackay, 2012; Chaney et al., 2007). Further, when intersecting aspects of women's identities converge, such as sex, gender, race, class, disability, education level, age, sexuality, and religion, the inclusivity of constitutions is challenged due to the predominance of white, wealthy men in powerful political positions (Irving, 1999). Therefore, as Kenny (2007) states, gender is a 'crucial dimension in the study of institutions and power' (p. 94) as power is redistributed in constitutional reform and contemporary constitution-making. Globally, women often mobilise during periods of institutional reform to be present in the process of constitution-making and reframing to make demands regarding societal equality and inequalities (Chaney et al., 2007). This was certainly the case in terms of Scottish devolution, which is perceived as an example of successful feminist constitutional activism (Lindsay, 1991; Chaney et al., 2007; Bell and Mackay, 2012; Mackay and McAllister, 2012; Kenny, 2013; Mackay, 2014) and latterly during the Scottish independence referendum (Kenny, 2014; Mackay, 2014; Morrison, 2016; O'Hagan, 2016; Mellon, 2016; Alonso, 2018; McAngus and Rummery, 2018; Ritch, 2019; Mackay, 2021).

As sex gaps have been found in constitutional attitudes in polities holding independence referendums (Quebec: Erickson and O'Neill, 2002; Scotland: Henderson et al., 2014, Catalonia: Verge et al., 2015), this thesis contends that there is a link between the sex gaps, hierarchal gendered power relations, and constitutional change. Studies of women's constitutional activism indicate a relationship between gender, constitutional change and power redistribution in Scotland, where women have been engaged in constitutional debates relating to devolution (Lindsay, 1991; Bell and Mackay, 2012). Yet, questions regarding why men and women vote the way they do in referendums remain as sex gaps have long been recorded to indicate women are less supportive of Scottish independence.

Thus far, feminist constitutionalist research of devolved nations in the UK is limited, with notable contributions in contexts such as Northern Ireland (Skeet, 2007; Ashe, 2022). Even less research has been conducted from a feminist constitutionalist lens regarding how constitutional attitudes are expressed through voting behaviour in the UK (Ashe, 2022). Feminist constitutionalism provides a theoretical framework to investigate how institutional power relations influence gendered constitutional attitudes and is, therefore, a useful approach to understanding the gaps found in related literature. However, as stated, related literature has investigated the sex gap puzzle in constitutional change through different approaches. The following section will present what we know empirically regarding sex, gender and voting in support of constitutional change and point to gaps regarding what is not yet known.

### **2.3.2 Empirical gaps**

This section will present existing empirical contributions and gaps related to the puzzle and research questions. This section moves from the broad to the specific, beginning with what we know regarding British voting behaviour and gender more broadly. Then, it outlines existing empirical research improving the understanding of voter heterogeneity by utilising gender subgroup analysis. Lastly, it presents empirical findings in existing research in the Scottish context regarding sex gaps and constitutional attitudes, while highlighting gaps.

#### **Gender and Voting in the UK**

At the beginning of the women's suffrage movement in the UK, political party leaders were confident that giving women the right to vote would mean a swing in votes towards the Conservative Party (Collins and Teele, 2017, p. 6). Norris (1993) found that, from 1945 to 1992, British women were more supportive of the Conservative Party than other parties. Before the mid-1970s in Britain, Norris (1993) found that the gender gap in vote choice between British men and women was in the double digits, ranging from 11 to 17 per cent. However, during the 1980s and 1990s, young women moved towards the left, and whatever sex gap in party preference that previously existed in the UK began to dissolve (Norris, 1999a; Campbell, 2006). This alignment is explained using Inglehart and Norris' (2000) realignment thesis, which found that as more women entered the job market and more households became double-earning, gender differences between men and women's voting behaviour began to diminish as women moved away from the right (conservatism) and towards the left (p. 441), thus 'realigning'. In her gender analysis of voters, Norris (1993; 1999a; 2000) utilised contextual variables such as age and marital status to examine gendered voting patterns. By doing so, the realignment of gendered voters could be identified and explained as she considered varying aspects of a voter's identity and gender identity.

Another example where gendered voting behaviour was examined using other aspects of a voter's identity is Norris' (1999a) examination of UK voting behaviour from the 1990s and early 2000s. In this study, Norris used sex gap data from a series of British Election Surveys (BES) and found that while there was indeed a class gap in terms of voting behaviour in Britain, 'a gender-generational gap' also emerged in which older women and younger women were deeply divided in their voting preferences (Norris, 1999a; 1993). Norris found that from 1964 to 1997, younger women were significantly more likely than older women to vote for the Labour Party (Norris, 1993). In comparing longitudinal data, Norris asserted that from 1964 to 1997, younger women were the least likely to vote for the Conservative Party (Norris, 1993). Norris discovered that socio-economic indicators that historically accounted for voting behaviour differences in the UK, such as 'class, housing tenure and union membership', worked 'differently' for women than men (1993, p. 15). Norris concluded that although there was a convergence of voting behaviour between British men and women, 'this did not mean that the influences upon them were necessarily the same' (1993, p. 15). Again, we see how scholars can offer explanations for UK voting behaviour patterns more comprehensively by analysing multiple aspects of a voter's identity as opposed to only using the sex variable. Norris explained that younger women of that generation were leading lives different from their parents, and their values and political attitudes were changing from traditionalist views to potentially more progressive ones (Norris, 1993, p. 136). Here, we can see how Norris draws conclusions utilising contextual understandings of the experiences of women's lives to dig deeper into understanding sex gaps in voting behaviour (1993). While Norris did not conduct qualitative methods following this research, in-depth contextual investigation could have further substantiated her conclusions.

Norris (1993) also provided another explanation for the gender generational gap in the UK between younger and older women: the mobilisation of the women's movement in politics. Political parties were becoming more aware of critical issues to women, and women, more than ever, were represented in political parties. Scholars have defined this shift as 'party feminisation' in the UK (Childs, 2001; Childs et al., 2009; Childs and Murray, 2014). Party feminisation, broadly, occurs when parties improve the representation of women descriptively and substantively in the interest of attracting women voters and representatives (Lovenduski, 2005, p. 12; for more, see Norris and Lovenduski, 1995). Norris (1993) clarified that the inclusion of women's political interests in political party manifestos also accounted for the gender generational gap in the UK, as parties began to use manifestos to make explicit appeals to women voters using a variety of policy pledges intended to attract them. These findings are supported in further research (Campbell and Childs, 2010; 2015a; 2015b; 2017; Celis and Childs, 2014).

Norris' early work investigating gender differences from sex gaps, including other aspects of a voter's identity such as age, occupation and class, is an example of how gender subgroup analysis can reveal crucial details about gendered voting behaviour but also how political institutions and policies are gendered. Further, these selected studies highlight vital themes important to political scientists, such as the labour force, economy, partisanship and identity. Norris' findings allowed for a deeper investigation into the understanding of British voters and moved away from essentialising claims about all women or all men voters as the contextualisation of other aspects of a voter's identity indicates levels of voter heterogeneity (e.g., how young women vote, how working-class men in their fifties vote). Given these trends in early gender and voting behaviour research in the UK, gender and political science scholars were further prompted to research heterogeneous subgroups of gendered voters to understand better voting behaviour and gender in the UK in its new 'realigned' landscape (Campbell, 2004; Lovenduski, 2005; Campbell, 2006; Campbell and Winters, 2007; Campbell and Winters, 2008; Winters, 2009).

### **Gender Subgroup Analysis**

Political science research has consistently shown gender differences in political attitudes in the UK. Yet, feminist voting behaviour scholars argued that historically there was 'little systemic analysis of how gender differences in attitudes impact upon voting behaviour' (Campbell, 2006, p.1). As stated in earlier sections, there was a failure to consider sex/gender distinction in early voting behaviour studies, predominantly those using quantitative data, with notable exceptions outlined in the previous section. Because of the historical tendency of voting behaviour studies to use sex as a proxy for gender (Bittner and Goodyear-Grant, 2017), comprehensive critical research on voting behaviour and heterogeneous gendered voting groups has only become more advanced in the past few decades (Campbell, 2004; Lovenduski, 2005; Campbell, 2006; Fontana et al., 2006).

Campbell (2004; 2006) built on Norris and Lovenduski's foundational analysis of gendered voter heterogeneity to define how gender voter subgroup analysis can be orchestrated using a feminist approach. Campbell found that as the voting behaviour field evolved in Britain, gender differences were ignored altogether (2006, p. 131). Campbell also found that in contemporary UK voting behaviour analysis, the common trend in analysing gender differences was that sex/gender was used 'as a control variable, but significant results [were] usually not discussed and not explored further' (2006, p. 132). Campbell (2004) made the argument that sub-group sex differences in voters 'highlight the necessity of integrating the study of sex differences with other demographic factors, to avoid making essentialist claims about the nature of the sexes' and to 'analyse rigorously the impact of the sex variable on political attitudes' (p. 41).

This argument was founded on Campbell's (2004) discovery that younger women in the UK were more likely to prioritise education in their political preferences. In contrast, older women were more likely to prioritise healthcare. This work underpinned Norris' gender generation gap theory which stated that while a gender gap no longer existed in Britain, a generational gap within gender groups existed between age groups (Norris 1993; 1996; 1999a). Further, Campbell (2004) found that, in the UK, men in their mid to late 50s were twice as likely to be concerned about the UK's relationship with the EU. As Campbell's work progressed, she fine-tuned her approach to look beyond gender gaps in voting behaviour by 'considering sub-group differences between the sexes as well as motivational gender gaps in political behaviour' (2006, p. 5) through following Lovenduski's (1998) approach to studying gender and sex. In this way, voters were analysed in gender subgroups by age and location (e.g., men aged 55-59 living in Northern England) to understand the causal mechanisms behind these voting differences.

Lovenduski argued that when investigating gender and political behaviour, sex and gender need to be operationalised to 'subsume sex under gender in empirical research' so that researchers do not need to 'deny biological sex to use gender as an analytical category' (1998, p. 338). Instead, Lovenduski (1998) argued that sex could be viewed as a dichotomous variable 'located in a gendered frame of reference' to avoid its distortion' (p. 339). By doing this, Lovenduski argued that political researchers could utilise gender-informed feminist research to understand how masculinities and femininities interact in political 'organisations, institutions and processes' (Lovenduski, 1998, p. 339). Indeed, by distinguishing between sex and gender when investigating voter differences, Campbell created a fuller picture of gendered voting behaviour in the UK through gender subgroup analysis based on 'sex gaps'. Campbell countered claims against a UK gender gap in voting behaviour when she broke men and women into subgroups using multivariate intersectional factors such as parenthood. Campbell (2006) found that while a gender gap in the party vote did not exist when controlling only for sex/gender, gender gaps existed in gendered subgroups of variables.

For example, Campbell found in earlier work that motherhood impacted women's vote choice in Britain (Campbell, 2004). This type of analysis was based on Norris's (1993) work on the gender generational gap, and when Campbell (2004) added 'parenthood' as a variable in their quantitative analysis, divergent patterns in gendered voting behaviour in the UK were present. For example, Campbell (2006) found that mothers with either a middle or high income were likelier than other women and men to support the Labour Party and the least likely to support the Conservative Party. Campbell argued that this finding suggests 'the rational choice or feminist standpoint

explanations of the gender gap might provide better explanations than the ethics of care as mothers may prefer better education and healthcare provision' whereas men 'may prefer lower taxes' (2006, p. 98). Yet, Campbell posits that women may support the Labour Party more because of the perceived emphasis on education and health, and low-income men believe a vote for the Labour Party will help their financial gain (Campbell, 2006, p. 98).

However, this example of how motherhood affects vote choice is crucial as it exemplifies how Campbell made a significant contribution to contemporary British voting behaviour studies by arguing that certain aspects of an individual's life, such as sex, gender, income, class, age, and even parenthood could influence a person's vote choice. When Campbell (2006) approached gendered voting groups as heterogenous, it became evident that gaps existed beyond sex, gender and age (Norris, 1993) and by multivariate and intersectional factors. Campbell (2006) substantiated the argument that social characteristics in a voter's identity must be considered when investigating gendered voting behaviour as these factors influence voters' experiences and belief systems, which then, in turn, impact their voting behaviour. Further, to identify and explain the gaps in voting behaviour, we need to integrate theories of gender difference into existing models and frameworks.

For example, Campbell (2004; 2006) questioned whether men and women in Britain thought about politics differently regarding issue preferences. There are several different theoretical approaches relating to gender differences in political ideology, such as Carol Gilligan's ethics of care (Gilligan, 1982) or rational choice theory (Green and Shapiro, 1994; Quattrone and Tversky, 1988; Tseblis and Tseblis, 1990). Largely, these theories rest on the assumption that societal gender roles impact how women and men vote. Traditionally, women are considered caretakers, while men are providers. These societal gender roles contribute to the differences between men's and women's experiences of power in society. Therefore, these differences shape voting differences and thus create gender gaps in voting behaviour. For example, Gilligan's (1982) ethics of care has been operationalised to measure whether women are more concerned with social welfare than men in their vote choice due to their role as mothers and primary caretakers in society. Rational choice theory (RCT) is an alternative model which can be used to measure whether women are more likely to vote for social welfare, as they are most likely to become the beneficiaries of it (Campbell, 2004, p. 20: for more, see Kornhauser, 1987; Box-Steffensmeir et al., 1997; Chaney et al., 1998).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> These theoretical approaches will be comprehensively considered in relation to this project in Chapters 3, 6 and 7.

Campbell (2004; 2006) generated a hypothesis utilising the two gender difference theories positing that women would be more likely to support parties concerned with social welfare exhibited in their policy programmes, such as Labour. In her 2001 and 1997 BES data analysis, Campbell (2004) analysed issue importance and cross-examined issue preferences with social characteristics such as age, sex, education, occupation and religion. She concluded her heterogenous analysis of voter subgroups by stating that while men and women vote aggregately the same, differences were most stark amongst subgroups of voters. For example, she stated that men aged 55-59 were more likely than other subgroups to care about the UK's membership to the EU (p. 41). Campbell moved beyond age and dug deeper into other social characteristics such as occupation, religion and race. Campbell (2004) stated that white-collar women were more left-leaning than white-collar men (p. 35), and women with A-levels or a degree were also more left-leaning than men with the same qualifications (p. 35).<sup>12</sup> Campbell found that Roman Catholic women were more liberal in their political ideology than Roman Catholic men (2004, p. 35). Campbell also found a significant mean difference in ideology between non-white men and women, but her small sample size destabilised further extrapolation (2004, p. 35). Campbell (2004) stated that the data points she used did not include whether the participant was a parent, and therefore prohibited a 'thorough investigation' as to whether gender difference theory, such as RCT or ethics of care, could offer the most accurate account of differences (p. 42). Yet, in 2006, Campbell returned with 2001 and 2002 BES data, including parenthood data (Campbell, 2006). Campbell stated that women with children were 70 per cent more likely to support the Labour Party than the rest of the sample (2006, p. 94).

Further, being a mother to children under eleven years of age had a 'significant' impact on women's vote choices which was not mirrored amongst fathers in the sample (Campbell, 2006, p. 94). Campbell also established that middle/high-income mothers were more likely to support Labour than middle/high-income fathers, and therefore, RCT or feminist standpoint theory provided better explanations for the gender difference than ethics of care (Campbell, 2006, p. 98). Yet, after her focus group analysis, Campbell (2006) concluded that the choice between only ethics of care and RCT to explain differences in men's and women's political attitudes is 'simplistic' (p. 126), as the 'nature and direction of any difference is dependent on the social and political environment of the time' (p. 129). Gender difference theory can explain how societal gender relations shape

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<sup>12</sup> Women with a CSE or comparable qualification were more right leaning than men with similar qualifications (Campbell, 2004, p. 35).

political attitudes. However, using gender difference theory to explain differences between men and women voters is simplistic as it fails to investigate differences *within* groups of men and women (e.g., young working-class mothers or older men from an Asian background). In Campbell's (2006) work, we see how researchers can utilise subgroup analysis of gendered voting groups to draw findings through the marriage of multi-method analysis, sex gaps, gender difference theory and feminist theory. Through this heterogeneous lens, Campbell significantly contributed to current understandings of gendered voting behaviour in the UK and what we know about UK voters in a broader sense.

Campbell considers how hierarchal power relations in society influence women's political behaviour, such as motherhood, income, race, class and education, as all these factors are highly gendered (Connell, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; Chodorow, 1999; Norris and Lovenduski, 1995). In the case of Campbell's findings in 2004, we see that groups of voters in the UK differ beyond only sex and differ when other social characteristics intersect (age, occupation, education, race). Campbell's 2006 findings support the argument that when societal gendered power relations are considered, we are offered a deeper understanding of gender differences in political behaviour, such as women being the primary caregivers in society. Campbell's work offers the most recent comprehensive and systemic analysis of gender and voting behaviour in Britain using a feminist approach which acknowledges the sex/gender distinction and voter heterogeneity. Many scholars investigating differences in vote choice have built from her work using her theoretical and methodological models (Shorrocks, 2017; Duncan, 2017; Thomas and Bittner, 2017; Sanders and Shorrocks, 2019; Ferrín et al., 2020; Shorrocks and Grasso, 2020). Campbell's (2006) analysis of UK voters provides a blueprint for this thesis to fill in contextual gaps in her work by investigating gendered voting behaviours in the UK's devolved nations such as Scotland.

### **Gender and Support for Independence**

Explored theoretically in the previous section, early in the UK voting behaviour field, scholars identified theoretical and empirical gaps in the literature investigating the relationship between sex and support for institutional change in the UK (Wenzel et al., 2000). However, as described earlier, recent independence referendums occurring in different global polities have inspired new voting behaviour studies and, thus, produced more data investigating who does and does not support independence, while also pointing to sex gaps in constitutional attitudes between men and women within the context of independence referendums. These sex gap patterns were mirrored in polities such as Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland. I will now illustrate the empirical contributions related to

how sex gaps concerning constitutional attitudes have been studied in political science. I will also point to empirical gaps in existing studies, highlighting opportunities for further research.

In Canada, researchers found a small sex gap in the 1980 referendum on the sovereignty of Quebec, where male voters were more likely to support independence than female voters (Blais and Nadeau, 1984), but this phenomenon was found in households where only one member of the family was working (generally a man). When both household members worked, the sex gap in support of sovereignty disappeared (Blais and Nadeau, 1984). This finding is essential as considerations beyond sex are being considered regarding support for sovereignty, such as occupation and household dynamics. Although not considered statistically significant, this sex gap was also evident in 1985, with male voters voting in support of independence at a rate 12 per cent higher than female voters (Blais and Crête, 1986, p. 17). More recently, a 2017 voting behaviour study found female voters less supportive of Quebec's independence than male voters (Vallée-Dubois et al., 2017). Vallée-Dubois et al.'s (2017) study also found that the generation born between 1945-59 was more likely to support Quebec sovereignty, but ultimately argued that 'support for Quebec sovereignty cannot be reduced to generational change' as they did not have contextual information related to voting, as the Blais and Nadeau (1984) study did (Vallée-Dubois et al., 2017). Here, it is evident how quantitative analysis can point to patterns, but further contextual analysis is needed to draw conclusions regarding *which* men and women differ in their constitutional attitudes. When scholars understand how men and women differ in their constitutional attitudes *within* gender groups, we can understand the *why* aspect of the sex gap puzzle. Vallée-Dubois et al.'s (2018) research stated that the gap did not vary depending on age and gender together (a gender generational gap; for more, see Norris 1993) and, instead, that male voters of all generations were more likely than female voters to support the constitutional option of sovereignty for Quebec. Concluding, Vallée-Dubois et al. (2017) stated that fluctuations in support for Quebec sovereignty needed to take contextual factors into account and that the 'influence of context must not be underestimated' (p. 360). They also reflected on previous voting behaviour research on Quebec sovereignty, stating that 'existing studies overestimated the effect of [age, period, and cohort] because they did not consider the impact that context could have on public opinion' (Vallée-Dubois et al., 2017, p. 359).

Henderson considered lessons from the Quebec sex gap in her analysis of the sex gap of the Scottish independence referendum (Henderson, 2015). Henderson posited whether the gap in support for independence in Quebec was due to women responding to risk messaging more than men (2015). She also suggested that perhaps the Quebec sex gap in support could be due to women

being more likely to be exposed to particular social services expected to be affected by independence referendums, such as care responsibilities and/or having heightened interest in educational opportunities due to being mothers. Henderson (2015) also argued that women tend to be over-represented in groups of voters who are unemployed or have lower incomes due to their roles as mothers and caretakers. She posited that women are thus more likely to be responsive to risk messaging, as voters within these groups are more likely to be vulnerable. In her analysis, Henderson (2015) applies gender difference theory to sex gaps as she considers how societal power hierarchies could make independence riskier for women.

In Catalonia, independence referendums from Spain were held in 2014 and 2017, yet neither was considered legitimate by the Spanish government. Verge et al. (2015) analysed voting behaviour studies to investigate the possibility of a sex gap in support of Catalan independence and the influence of risk on constitutional attitudes. In their quantitative analysis of voting behaviour studies, they found that sex differences were observed (Verge et al., 2015, p. 508) by comparing the sex variable with support for constitutional change. Similar to other voting behaviour scholars using secondary quantitative data analysis, Verge et al. (2015) utilised the sex variable as a proxy for gender in their analysis (Verge et al., 2015, p. 508). They found that men were more likely to vote to support Catalan independence than women. With statistically significant sex differences sustained over time, women were more inclined to say 'No' to Catalan independence (Verge et al., 2015). Due to the literature suggesting a significant relationship between risk aversion and gender, they also conducted a survey experiment with risk aversion as the primary independent variable in their static model to measure 'gender' differences in voting behaviour support of independence. The experiment confirmed 'that risk aversion produces heterogeneous effects by gender', and that when they were confronted with scenarios deemed to be negative, 'risk-averse women will be less likely to support independence than men with a similar psychological disposition' (Verge et al., 2015, p. 514).

Verge et al. (2015) found their results to follow the same pattern as the Quebec case, where the gap in support narrowed nearer to the date of the referendum. They suggest that this gap narrowing was due to the salience of the debate (Verge et al., 2015, p. 517). However, they concluded that 'experimental nor regular surveys are usually rich enough to delve into the reasons behind the heterogeneous effects of risk aversion across gender' (Verge et al. p. 518). Yet, in conclusion, they appealed that 'in-depth qualitative research' was required to tease out the relationship between risk, gender and heterogeneous groups of gendered voters (Verge et al. 2015, p. 517). Furthermore, Verge et al. (2015) stated that a qualitative approach to this puzzle 'could

provide valuable insights’ as it could highlight the consequences of risk on constitutional attitudes and how risk is moderated within uncertain political situations such as independence referendums (p. 517). Throughout their analysis, Verge et al. (2015) compare Catalonia’s case to the Scottish case due to various similarities. Firstly, both independence referendums occurred in 2014. Secondly, research on both referendums indicated that national identity and the threat of economic consequences were influential in support for constitutional change (Kopasker, 2014; Muñoz and Tormos, 2014). Thirdly, Verge et al. (2015) argued that support for independence grew rapidly in both contexts (p. 502) and that both *Yes* campaigns were structured around ‘instrumental and welfare maximising reasons’ (p. 502: for more, see Muñoz and Tormos (2014), including membership to the EU (p. 501)).<sup>13</sup> Post-referendum studies indicated a statistically significant relationship between sex and support for independence.

### **The Scottish Case**

Empirically, there has been much scholarly research investigating voting behaviour in Scotland, as voting behaviour studies have been conducted in Scotland for well over fifty years.<sup>14</sup> Results from voting behaviour studies such as the Scottish Election Study (SES), the Scottish Referendum Study (SRS), and the Risk and Constitutional Attitudes (RCA) Survey have offered researchers robust data within which to explore patterns, similarities and differences. The data in these studies has provided opportunities for researchers to investigate patterns in political preferences and attitudes towards supporting Scottish independence. Additionally, this data provided the first insights into sex gaps supporting independence. These studies, as well as the following research analysing these sex gaps, provide a foundation for this thesis and assist in creating a better understanding of why sex gaps persist in support of independence in Scotland.

As outlined in Tables 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 in Chapter 1, the sex gap in support for constitutional change in Scotland has been well documented in data from voting behaviour. In 1999, Pattie et al. analysed data from the 1997 Scottish Referendum Study and found a sex gap indicating that female voters were ‘substantially’ less likely to support independence than male voters (pp. 311-2). Pattie et al. (1999) posited that the sex gap suggested the ‘relative conservatism among women [as] a feature

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<sup>13</sup> Yet, Verge et al. (2015) argue there were some key differences between the Scottish case, most notably that the *Yes* movement was not monopolized by one party, the political process was ‘bottom-up’ with civil society leading Catalan independence campaigns, and that the campaigns of the *Yes* camp were much more feminized (p. 505; for more see, Kenny, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> The first Scottish Election Study (SES) was conducted in the 1970s, yet a big gap remained in Scottish voting behaviour analysis until 1992. From 1992, voting behaviour studies in Scotland were continuous.

of the Scottish population' (pp. 311-2). From 1999 to 2016, SES surveys indicated a sex gap between male and female voters, with male voters more likely to support Scottish independence by a statistically significant margin. Voting behaviour data from the SRS (2014) and SSA surveys (1999-2016) support these findings.

The research investigating sex gaps and support for independence was not limited to voting behaviour studies in referendums alone but also extended to studies investigating sex differences in support of pro-independence political parties. Johns et al. (2011) found that female voters were less likely to support the Scottish National Party (SNP), the majority pro-independence party in Scotland, than men. Johns et al. (2011) used quantitative data from previous SES surveys to control for support for independence and gender. They found that there was indeed a sex gap in support for the SNP, yet concluded by highlighting the need for further research which investigates how and why independence was less popular with women (Johns et al., 2011, p. 596). They conclude that further research would be 'more than an academic interest' and, therefore, vital to understanding sex gaps and the relationship between gender and constitutional change (p. 596). Going further, Johns et al. (2011) highlight that understanding the sex gap would be crucial as it could guide political parties in how to frame the independence issue to voters for the maximum advantage (p. 596). In another study, Mitchell et al. (2012) analysed SNP membership data, finding that, at that time, the SNP attracted more men than women. More recently, Mitchell et al. (2018) investigated a recent surge in SNP membership since the 2014 referendum and found that while this new surge in party membership changed the demographic profile of the SNP to be younger and less male, overall, the SNP was still struggling to attract younger members and women.

Considering the context of both the Catalan and Quebec cases reviewed previously, the sex gap in support of constitutional change in Scotland is, therefore, not necessarily a new phenomenon. However, theoretically and empirically, much is unknown regarding sex gaps in constitutional attitudes in Scotland. Gaps remain regarding *which* women and men differ in their constitutional attitudes, how constitutional power relates to the relationship between gender and constitutional attitudes, and whether gender difference theory can explain the gaps. Yet, due to the breadth of voting behaviour data in Scotland, Scotland presents an interesting and important case to study gender differences in constitutional attitudes.

As stressed throughout this chapter, women and men are not homogenous voters and will have political preferences that vary from each other concerning their different cultural, political, and socio-economic backgrounds. These preferences will undoubtedly shift across electoral contexts and time (Campbell, 2006). Voting behaviour in support of constitutional change offers an

interesting arena to explore voter subgroup differences as constitutions serve as power maps that restructure and redistribute societal power (Duchacek, 1973). Further, gender differences in constitutional attitudes are under-researched from a feminist perspective. As feminist political scholarship is primarily influenced by the relationship between power, gender and equality, a feminist analysis of the sex gaps provides new pathways to understanding the causal factors.

## 2.4 Conclusion

How political science scholars study sex, gender, and voting behaviour has evolved significantly over time. Feminist theory calls on political science researchers to adopt a more comprehensive approach to sex and gender puzzles in political arenas through the sex/gender distinction. Further, insights from feminist constitutionalism point to the crucial importance of independence referendums for questions of gender and power and improve our understanding of how powerful institutions are inherently gendered and can contribute to societal inequalities. Methodological approaches to puzzles, such as gender subgroup analysis, allow researchers to explore voter heterogeneity in gendered and intersectional ways and offer a broader understanding of similarities and differences among voters.

This chapter, however, has identified theoretical and empirical gaps in current voting behaviour scholarship concerning the relationship between sex, gender and constitutional attitudes. It has illustrated that much literature exists on concepts related to the research questions separately, such as Scottish voting behaviour, constitutional attitudes and feminist approaches to analysing voting behaviour. Yet, this chapter stresses that a gap remains that investigates the relationship between sex, gender and constitutional attitudes, which acknowledges gendered power relations in political society.

As stated, analysis has been conducted regarding the sex gap in support of constitutional change in Scotland in the case of the independence referendum (Johns et al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2015; Liñeira and Henderson, 2015). However, this chapter has critiqued this work and work in other polities that has conflated sex with gender and applied gender difference theory to sex gaps. This chapter has illustrated how this widespread application common in mainstream voting behaviour analysis has often contributed to monolithic labels regarding men and women. Often, findings regarding the explanatory factors of the sex gaps rely on normative gender stereotypes, leading to the essentialising of gendered voting groups (all men are more nationalistic than women, or all women are risk-averse or conservative voters). Further mixed-method work is essential to explore ‘competing theories of causation’ by researching ‘the motivations of different [gender] subgroups

of voters' (Campbell, 2006, p. 23). The study of gender subgroups will be explored in the next chapter.

Constitutional change broadly allows scholars to investigate critical themes crucial to political science, such as power, identity, institutions, representation and inequality. This chapter has further justified the selection of the Scottish independence referendum as an interesting case to investigate this relationship. There is a large amount of voting behaviour data in Scotland; a sex gap trend has been persistent in support of independence; scholars have been left puzzled as to what causes these gaps, and existing data has called for future mixed-method and qualitative research to add to existing knowledge. Constitutional change in Scotland offers fertile ground to understand heterogenous gendered voting behaviour for the reasons outlined in this chapter.

This thesis argues that a feminist approach is needed to untangle the intersection between sex, gender, power and constitutional attitudes, given the focus feminist political science gives to societal power relations. While this thesis complements existing literature, it also adds a valuable dimension by applying gender subgroup analysis to the Scottish case for the first time using supplementary knowledge from critical actors and conducting qualitative data analysis. The following chapter will outline the methodological approach and research design of this thesis.

## Chapter 3: A Feminist Research Approach

### 3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 outlined existing debates and findings regarding sex gaps in voting behaviour, focusing on constitutional attitudes. This chapter addresses the thesis' approach to answering its research questions inspired by existing findings in related literature outlined in Chapter 2. This chapter is structured in two sections, first outlining the contributions of a feminist theoretical approach to understanding gender differences in political behaviour. The chapter brings insights from gender sub-group analysis and intersectional feminist thought to examine differences between and within different groups. The chapter then goes on to outline the dissertation's methodological approach and argues for a problem-driven approach rather than one that is method driven to answer research questions. The last section outlines and justifies the thesis' mixed-method approach. This last section elaborates why and how qualitative (focus groups, voter interviews and elite background interviews) and quantitative methods (simple descriptive statistics and a quantitative and qualitative large-scale online survey) were applied to improve understanding of the relationship between sex, gender, constitutional attitudes and power relations in Scottish political society.

To better understand the relationship between sex, gender and constitutional change, this thesis argues that a feminist problem-driven approach is required. Refreshed analysis of existing quantitative data and new qualitative contributions in this thesis fill a gap in existing understanding by providing further insights into how gender influences constitutional attitudes by acknowledging voter heterogeneity and societal power structures. Further, a feminist theoretical mixed-method approach offers insights on power, revealing how and in what ways gendered voting groups relate their lived experiences to how constitutions are made and changed. With closer attention to the role of intersecting identities and power relations, a feminist approach can enhance the investigation of the causal and explanatory factors behind the sex gap.

### 3.2 Feminist Theory and Gender Sub-group Analysis

As outlined in the previous chapter, a state's constitution acts as a power map (Duchacek, 1973), and consequently, constitutions inherently wield and distribute power in a state's society. Therefore, to understand differences in constitutional attitudes between men and women, scholars must understand the gendered power dimensions within and across society. Feminist theoretical approaches are primarily concerned with how and in what ways power influences gender in society. Yet, how a scholar operationalises feminist theory to produce knowledge is contingent on the

researcher and can fluctuate based on the problematic, the case, and the social location of the researcher.

### **3.2.1 Feminist Theory**

Establishing how this thesis operationalises sex and gender is crucial to understanding the theoretical approach of this work. This study's theoretical driver is that gender is a socially constructed structure of power (Connell, 2013) that exists as an element of an individual's identity measured on a spectrum instead of a binary (Monro, 2005). Consequently, this theoretical understanding of gender relates to the belief that sex and gender are distinct.

#### **Sex, Gender, and the Distinction Between**

Connell (2013; 2020) argued that gender is a social structure wherein which a pattern of gender relations is upheld in society by the 'gender order'. Connell defines the gender order as the hierarchy where some gender identities hold more power than others and can fluctuate depending on the society within which the body exists. This hierarchical gender order thus creates the 'gender regime' in which masculinity is held higher over femininity and subordinated masculinities, illustrating how gender is not just socially constructed but also a structure of power (Scott, 2007; Butler, 2011; Vasterling, 2003; Connell, 2020). Scott (2007) stated that paying attention to gender hierarchies throughout history reveals a 'crucial part of the organisation of equality or inequality', as 'hierarchical structures rely on generalised understandings of the so-called natural relationships between male and female' (p. 74). Scott highlights the importance of how gender is ordered in society over time, as this has long-term impacts on contemporary power inequalities. The gendered coding of our society elicits 'normative definitions of gender which are reproduced and embedded' in our cultures (p. 75), which influences who holds power and who does not. Lovenduski (2001) argued that these inequalities are why 'any examination of gender politics needs to consider both femininity and masculinity', and contemporary feminist research is particularly interested in *gender* differences as opposed to *sex* differences (p.180). Research investigating gendered experiences highlights how the lives of men and women are shaped by power structures leading to inequality, privileges, and oppression in our society. At the beginning of an individual's life, when sex is identified at birth, gendered power structures and institutions deriving from societal constructs immediately come into play to shape the individual's future. Here is where the distinction between sex and gender lies, but their connected relationship contributes to how power is held and distributed within our society.

### **Production of Knowledge and Power in Institutions**

De Beauvoir (1998) stated that due to patriarchal structures, ‘the representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men’ and therefore, when the world is studied, ‘men describe it from their point of view, which they confuse with the absolute truth’ (de Beauvoir, 1998, p. 196). In this argument, de Beauvoir (1998) links how the world is represented and constructed with how the world has been historically analysed using androcentric understandings developed by men for men. De Beauvoir (1998) critiques how knowledge is made and shaped by those in society who have the most power (men) and illustrates how this power imbalance skews societal perceptions of ‘the truth’. De Beauvoir’s argument links with the aim of feminist political study, which feminist researchers argue, is to ‘challenge and rethink what is *claimed* to be knowledge from the perspective of women’s lives’ (Tickner, 2006, p. 21; for more: Reinharz, 1992: emphasis added). Unlike traditional positivist forms of social science inquiry, which seek to understand the ‘pure truth’ of issues presented (Harding, 1987), feminist investigations in the social sciences look to ‘change [the marginalised group’s] conditions, how forces beyond it shape its world; how to win over, defeat, or neutralise those forces arrayed against its emancipation, growth, or development’ (Harding, 1987, p. 9). A feminist ‘problem-driven approach’ therefore, starts from the perspective of the marginalised group to produce knowledge to address inequalities or differences.

How women’s experiences are centred in political science research illustrates how the gendered lens is used to understand puzzles. The second-wave feminist movement stressed the importance of raising the consciousness of women’s experiences. It brought the focus on ‘the personal’ to the forefront of the feminist movement by highlighting that ‘the personal is political’ (Hanisch, 1969, pp. 76-7). MacKinnon (1982) argued that this claim meant that within personal-private spheres, ‘women’s distinctive experiences as women occur within [the] sphere that has been socially lived as the personal-private...’ and argued that ‘to *know* the *politics* of women’s situation is to know women’s personal lives’ (p. 535: emphasis by MacKinnon). MacKinnon’s (1982) claim argues that patriarchal ideologies construct our public political domain. By studying the personal-private domain of women’s lives through their individual experiences and perspectives, scholars can better understand how sex and gender interact with power in political society.

### **Theories of Masculinity**

As stated in Chapter 1, this thesis considers gender as ‘relational’ and is therefore ‘measured on a continuum’ (Lovenduski, 1998, p. 340). Therefore, developing a comprehensive understanding of gendered attitudes in political behaviour requires investigation beyond women’s behaviours. Gender theory largely considers the implications of societal power structures on ‘attributes ranging

from masculinity to femininity' (Lovenduski, 2005, p. 21). My research questions highlight the need to understand why women have been historically less supportive of constitutional change and why men have been more supportive. Consequently, the integration of theories of masculinity is necessary and strengthens the theoretical framework of analysis of sex and gender gaps in political behaviour.

Connell's (1995) theory of masculinity provides a sociological and critical feminist analysis of masculinities by addressing their hierarchical nature and highlighting their multiplicity across contexts, space and time. Connell coined the term 'hegemonic masculinity' and outlined how hegemonic masculinities were distinct from traditional masculinities as they exerted power over subordinated masculinities and femininities through power, control and violence. Hegemonic masculinity embodied the 'most honored way of being a man' and 'required all other men to position themselves in relation to it' (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). This embodiment of hegemonic masculinity changes depending on the context, yet what remains constant is the global subordination of non-hegemonic masculinities and femininities to the hegemonic ideal.

Yet, Connell was not the first scholar to investigate men's sociological nature of masculinity. In social psychology, Hacker (1957) explored the nature of masculinity and how changes could occur in men's conduct based on their social situation. In the 1970s, gender role norms were criticised by scholars and the oppressive nature of masculinities was further drawn out (Altman, 1972; Brannon, 1976). Altman (1972) utilised concepts such as power and difference to explore how men could be oppressed and oppressors depending on the context. Queer liberation scholarship, which investigated homosexual masculinities, challenged and subverted normative understandings of gender power relations (Altman, 1972; Brannon, 1976; Broker, 1976; Plummer, 1981).

The study of masculine identities through an intersectional lens highlighted the subordinated nature of non-white masculinities and homosexual masculinities in relation to heterosexual and/or white masculinities (and white femininities). Masculinity and theories of masculinity have been studied and integrated into scholarship belonging to various disciplines such as health, education, criminology and economy. For example, scholars found that masculinity plays a key role in men's risk-taking in relation to their medical and sexual health, their difficulty in responding to disability, and their ambivalence to seeking help after injury (Gerschick and Miller, 1994). In political science research, scholars have explored the relationship between masculinity and military, war and peacekeeping (Duncanson, 2009; Hinjosa, 2010; Enloe, 2014). For example, Duncanson (2009) finds that the traditional links between masculinity and the military are strengthened by the continued subordination of the 'feminised and racialised 'Other' (p. 63).

A growing body of work investigates the impact of masculinity on political behaviour. Contributions from relevant research highlight that while examining gendered political behaviour through women's experiences is crucial, researchers must also 'take masculinity seriously as a gender dynamic that shapes politics' (Ralph-Morrow et al., 2021, p. 427). In relation to this work, the study of masculinities needs to be considered from two perspectives: a top-down (the campaigns) and a bottom-up approach (the voters). The first perspective, bottom-up, is understanding the relationship between masculinity and voter support for constitutional change with a particular focus on the link between nationalism and masculinity. Scholars have long investigated the link between nationalism and masculinity to better understand gendered political behaviour due to the masculine features of nationalist movements, national identity, and nationalist ideology (Nagel, 1998; Blom et al., 2000; Mayer, 2012; Rodó-Zárate, 2020; Deckman and Cassese, 2021). Research investigating the link between masculinity, nationalism and constitutional attitudes is also established in the Scottish case (Abrams, 2006; Ferrebe, 2007; Mitchell et al., 2009; Johns et al., 2011; Gibbs and Scothorne, 2020) and in the Catalan case (Rodó-Zárate, 2020).

The second perspective, top-down, is to understand how campaign actors view subgroups of masculinities and to what extent and in what ways these groups were targeted in gendered ways. In their study of gendered representation, Bjarnegård and Murray (2018) argue that 'investigating how men represent men' is crucial to 'identifying whether hegemonic masculinities privilege the representation of some men while neglecting others' (p. 265). By understanding the multiplicity and heterogeneity of voter masculinities projected by and in campaigns, scholars can better answer the why questions this thesis poses concerning the sex and gender gap in constitutional attitudes from both voters and key actors (Mackay and Waylen, 2014; Ralph-Morrow et al., 2021; Sanders and Flavell, 2023).

This thesis begins with the issue of the sex gap in constitutional attitudes in Scotland. It develops the theoretical framework, methodological approach and methods centring on the perspectives and experiences of women voters in Scotland to produce knowledge about how constitutional power, constitutional attitudes, sex, and gender differences interact and intersect. This thesis asks how and to what extent women's constitutional attitudes are expressed in their voting behaviour, and what explains similarities and differences in men's and women's political preferences. Hanisch (1969) and MacKinnon's (1982) claims link to the research questions of this thesis by supporting the argument that to understand women's constitutional attitudes expressed through their voting behaviour, scholars must understand their subjective experiences within political society as they influence their political attitudes and behaviour.

In order to untangle the complexities of the sex gaps, qualitative approaches offer opportunities to collect thick contextual data which centre women's experiences and perspectives. Accessing political perspectives with detailed description is often difficult with only quantitative methods. As outlined in Chapter 2, researchers in the UK found that feminist theories of gender difference allow political scientists to 'develop models of gender and voting behaviour' when investigating sex gaps and gender inequity in voting behaviour (Campbell, 2006, p. 5; for more, see Lovenduski, 2005). Methodologically, both Campbell (2006) and Achen (1992) found that when the sex variable is plugged in to analyse quantitative voter survey data that is already complete, little is shown theoretically regarding how factors such as class, age, income and other demographics interact with women's vote choice. To ameliorate this, Campbell (2006) suggested an alternative approach to investigating explanatory explanations for sex gaps in voting behaviour by acknowledging the structural relationship between social characteristics. Campbell stated that these demographics 'designate life experiences to members of particular groups, or holders of certain attributes', and can indirectly affect a voter's political participation, voting behaviour, and political attitudes (2006, p. 2). As a result, a researcher can gain insight into the political preferences of groups of voters when they are aware of the social characteristics that influence the experiences of an individual voter.

For example, an individual voter who is a mother working part-time as a nurse might prioritise issues that are salient to her, such as healthcare, education, and public health. In the context of constitutional change in Scotland, if these three priorities are relevant to the proposed constitutional change, such as Scottish independence, the researcher must acknowledge these characteristics in research as they can, directly and indirectly, influence their constitutional attitudes. Campbell's (2006) alternative approach to researching sex gaps in voting behaviour links with Hanisch's (1969) and MacKinnon's (1982) arguments regarding how aspects of a voter's identity and lived experiences can impact their voting preferences and attitudes. Therefore, understanding the subjective experiences of an individual across their various intersecting identities offers a deeper understanding of political attitudes and how they are expressed in voting behaviour. However, how a scholar moves from explanatory findings regarding the individual voter to surmising understandings about a group is also complex. Campbell's (2006) methodological proposal and gender subgroup analysis is outlined in the following section to investigate how social characteristics can influence voting behaviour.

### 3.2.2 Gender Sub-Group Analysis

This thesis investigates a key question which asks *which* women are less supportive of constitutional change in Scotland and why. Campbell (2006) argued that to understand the explanatory reasons behind or causal factors of a sex gap, scholars must first identify *which* gendered groups differ. Campbell developed a research model entitled ‘gender sub-group analyses’ to analyse the indirect effects or background characteristics of gendered voting groups by separating them into subgroups based on their background characteristics (pp. 2 – 3). I employ Campbell’s (2006) gender subgroup modelling approach to understand the heterogeneity of Scottish voters better and move away from essentialist one-size-fits-all understandings of constitutional attitudes in the case of Scottish independence. I will now explore the feminist theoretical understandings underpinning Campbell’s approach and how I advance the intersectional dimensions of Campbell’s model.

Campbell argues that men’s and women’s political preferences and voting behaviour in the UK differ in intricate ways but that these differences are most evident within gender sub-groups as opposed to at the aggregate level (2006, p. 128). By considering sub-group differences between the sexes, Campbell argued that scholars could look ‘beyond the gender gap’ and understand how *gender* (not just sex) shapes political behaviour (2006, p. 5). In her analysis of sex gaps in the UK, Campbell found a structural relationship between variables such as age, class, and gender that can impact vote choice and used a modelling approach to analyse separate groups of gendered voters. Campbell (2006) proceeded to apply models to sub-samples of women and men (p. 2) following the main steps of the funnel of causality (Campbell et al., 1960) based on her hypothesis regarding parenthood, gender and voting behaviour. Campbell (2006) argued that background characteristic variables such as class, income and education have gender dimensions and therefore input those background characteristics into her blocs of gender subgroups. Here, Campbell’s analyses of how sex and gender interact with other aspects of our identity show how while sex and gender are distinct, they are linked with aspects of our identity such as class, age, race, gender and more. While Campbell’s gender sub-group modelling is not explicitly outlined as intersectional, considering how aspects of an individual’s identity intersect with their political behaviours within and across political power structures can be considered intersectional.

Identities such as race, gender and class, when analysed alone in regard to political attitudes and vote choice, can elicit a one-dimensional understanding of political preferences. As outlined in Chapter 2, Crenshaw’s (2017) intersectional lens allows researchers to explore how intersecting identities work together to influence and shape political attitudes. For example, in the 2016 US presidential election, there was an 11 per cent sex gap between men and women supporting Donald

Trump, the Republican candidate (CAWP, 2017). Research shows that since 1996, the majority of women in the US support the Democratic candidate (CAWP, 2017). Yet, these figures do not show *which* women are voting in this way, as it only looks at one variable, sex. When multiple background characteristics are considered, such as race and age, a clearer picture of sex, gender differences, and vote choice in the US is revealed. In the 2016 election, 98 per cent of Black women and 67 per cent of Hispanic women voted for Clinton, whereas a majority of white women voted for Trump<sup>15</sup> (Belknap and Hawkins, 2020). This example indicates how taking two background characteristics, such as sex and race, when considering voter attitudes and preferences, can offer a multi-dimensional understanding regarding voting groups. When the singular approach is taken, results can be misleading. While causal findings are not immediately found by considering multiple background characteristics, a deeper understanding of women's and men's voting patterns develop.

The theoretical implications of using a multi-dimensional approach to voter characteristics are that as more characteristics are analysed, explanatory factors to political behaviours and attitudes begin to emerge, which can illustrate power relations in a society. The example of Black women as voters in America allows us to understand how voter attitudes and preferences are highly related to the power structures within a political context. For example, in 2019, a poll indicated that Black women stated that a top political priority for themselves and their communities had shifted from 'Hate Crimes/Racism' in 2016 to 'Criminal Justice/Police Reform' (Belknap and Hawkins, 2020). Police brutality and violence against African Americans were central themes in the 2020 presidential elections considering the context of the election following the murders of George Floyd and Brianna Taylor. The backdrop against these events illuminated the more significant systemic issue of racial inequality in the US, thus signalling how different demographics of voters could influence the 2020 presidential election.

From existing voting behaviour studies in Scotland, it is evident that constitutional attitudes differ across background characteristics of voters beyond only sex, such as age, class, party ID and national identity. I argue that gender sub-group analysis of voters using an intersectional frame can assist in better teasing out these interacting relationships between variables to indicate *which* women and men differ in their constitutional attitudes. Then, scholars can begin to untangle the *why* and

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<sup>15</sup> Forty-seven per cent of white women voted for Trump and 45 per cent voted for Clinton, indicating a small majority of two percentage points. Only one per cent of Black women voted for Trump and 28 per cent of Hispanic women for Trump (Belknap and Hawkins, 2020).

the ‘*so what*’ questions which concern the sex gap in constitutional attitudes in Scotland. In the following section, I outline how my approach informed my methodology and successive methods to answer the research questions that this thesis poses concerning sex, gender differences and constitutional change to highlight gendered power relations in Scottish political society. Then, I describe how I blend Campbell’s (2006) approach using gender sub-group analysis with a more explicit intersectional lens.

### 3.3 Feminist Methodology

In the previous section, I outlined the *what* and *why* of this thesis’ theoretical approach and justified applying a feminist theoretical approach to untangle how sex and gender intertwine with power concerning the sex gaps in constitutional attitudes. This section will outline the *how* of this thesis by explaining what methodology and methods were used to understand sex gaps in constitutional attitudes from a feminist theoretical perspective.

As described in the first section of this chapter, feminist political research begins with selecting a puzzle or problem centred around power inequalities or differences between groups in political society. Then, the feminist researcher develops a ‘problem-driven approach’ investigating the perspective of the marginalised group to produce knowledge to address the inequality or difference. This section will first outline what a problem-driven approach is. Secondly, it will outline the benefits of a mixed-method approach and how it can fill gaps in existing research. Then, I illustrate this project’s research design and outline how each method will answer the research questions.

#### **3.3.1 Problem-driven Approach**

Feminist scholars have argued that ‘traditional’ methods in social sciences originated with the predominant consideration of the experiences of white, Western, wealthy men. Therefore, a paradigm shift of methods was needed. This was because social scientists often researched questions those men of privilege wanted to be answered (Harding, 1987, p. 6). Early writing on feminist methodologies had an antipathy towards quantitative methods (Campbell and Wasco, 2000) due to the ‘partial and distorted accounts’ of women’s experiences in research findings (Harding, 1987, p.1). For example, Harding (1987) and Nielsen (1990) found that quantitative research findings often contributed to normative understandings of women by using theoretical considerations which provided homogenous insights into the female (and male) psyche, distilling the female experience into a monolith.

Mies (1983) and Keller (1985) found that insights from early positivist social science research regarding the female experience were often sustained in quantitative methods, which rendered women's experiences into predetermined categories contributing to normative understandings. Further, these insights into the female experience were 'largely ignored' (Nielsen, 1990, p. 47). For years, feminist social science research methodology was largely qualitatively focused, with qualitative methods argued to centre women's discursive experiences and assist researchers in understanding how women construct their social realities through discourse and language (Campbell and Wasco, 2000).

However, as feminist social science research has grown, the field's reliance on qualitative methods has been contested as it is not the methods used which are feminist, but instead, the 'uses to which such tools are put and the perspectives that researchers bring to bear on them' (Griffin, 2017). Using Griffin's definition (2017), a feminist methodology places gender as the central concern of the research. While there is no single feminist methodology, there is a 'distinctive feminist approach to methodology and methods' (Krook and Squires, 2006, p. 45). When using a feminist epistemological perspective,<sup>16</sup> choosing one method over the other is a choice not of technicality but an epistemological choice driven by the problem(s) the research question(s) address. Krook and Squires (2006) explain that 'problem-driven research should be cultivated at the expense of method-driven work' (p. 45). They go on to argue that feminist problem-driven research offers a 'new way forward' as it answers questions that have long endured in political science (p. 46). Feminist research typically aims to reduce societal inequalities and spur social change by studying power relations and asking questions that differ from traditional political science research (Tickner, 2005; Krook and Squires, 2006). When addressing issues of power dynamics in democratic structures, giving due preference to the gender 'problem' presented in the puzzle is essential (Krook and Squires, 2006). Therefore, there has never been a singular 'feminist way' to produce research (Reinharz, 1992, p. 243). Further, neither quantitative nor qualitative methodology can guarantee to be bias-free. Because of this, the debate as to which method, quantitative or qualitative, is best for feminist research has diminished (Weldon and Htun, 2013; Stauffer and O'Brien, 2018; Tripp and Hughes, 2018).

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<sup>16</sup> Some feminist scholars prefer to use 'epistemological perspective' opposed to methodology to illustrate that the research project is ongoing and does not cease when the project is considered complete. In other words, feminist work is never complete, as a main aim is to remain critical and question what is deemed to be as universal and/or objective (Reinharz, 1992, p. 241).

What remains central to feminist critical approaches to social science methodologies is that they work to shift thinking away from ‘the universal’ as people ‘come only in different classes, races, and cultures: there is no [singular] ‘woman’ and no ‘woman experience’ [...] women’s and men’s experiences, desires, and interests differ within every class, race and culture’ (Harding, 1987, p. 7). Harding (1987) argues that class, race, and culture are categories *within* gender as the experiences of women and men differ *according to* class, race, and culture. Harding’s (1987) argument linked with Crenshaw’s (2017) intersectional lens described in the previous theoretical section to show how feminist theoretical approaches can shape methods to move away from essentialising results and appreciate the heterogeneity of individuals and their privileges and oppression in political society. Yet, Crenshaw’s intersectional lens also critiques the primacy of gender, arguing that race and other intersectional characteristics are not necessarily *within* gender (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991, emphasis added). The plurality of experiences of men and women is vital to understanding the plurality of feminism and feminist approaches to methodology. Feminist research is characteristic of producing multifaceted research findings by centring the issue through a problem-driven approach and remaining sensitive to the relationship between gender and power.

Therefore, feminist methodologies demand the investigation of power pathways that have not yet been studied concerning the puzzle. This investigative problem-driven research often uses various methods centred around untangling the relationships relevant to the research questions. This methodological variability of feminist research illustrates how feminist research is adapting and how processes change to consistently question what has been unquestioned or normalised in political phenomena and by other political scientists. The following section will illustrate what mixed methods can offer with a problem-driven approach. I justify my utilisation of both quantitative and qualitative methods and illustrate how a mixed-method approach will answer this thesis’ research questions regarding what to extent men and women have different constitutional attitudes, which men and women have them, and why.

### **3.3.2 Mixed-method Approach**

Feminist political science often strategically combines ‘interpretive methods with more traditional positivist methods and tools’ to answer specific questions about societal power distribution (Kenny, 2013, p. 51). Feminist scholars find that both quantitative and qualitative approaches are necessary for understanding varying social phenomena, and the epistemological shift towards a mixed-method approach in feminist research has increased (Campbell and Wasco, 2000; Campbell, 2006; Krook and Squires, 2007; Kenny, 2013; Weldon, 2014; Tripp and Hughes, 2018). Feminist political science is characterised by its methodological pluralism, as using many methods can

highlight the multitude of experiences of both the many and the individual. This thesis uses qualitative (interviews and focus groups) and quantitative methods (a survey and secondary quantitative data analysis) in a mixed-method approach to comprehensively untangle the relationship between sex, gender, constitutional attitudes and power. Mixed method approaches can provide benefits and barriers to research. A significant value of mixed method research is that researchers can utilise both the benefits of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups provide subjective and contextual meaning to a puzzle to gain insights into women's and men's experiences. Qualitative methods from a feminist approach establish the participant as the 'expert' in data collection since they understand their experiences at an expert level (Reinharz, 1992). Quantitative methods such as survey data struggle to capture themes, feelings, experiences, identity, memory and changing perspectives on a political topic over an extended period with the same sample. Therefore, to gain a deeper understanding of the sex gaps support for constitutional change in Scotland, I used multiple qualitative methods to centre the experiences and perspectives of voters and actors to supplement the knowledge gap in research.

Positive critiques of qualitative research argue that qualitative research can be highly specific and can have low external validity (Clark, 1998). Although qualitative research does not strive for generalisability, there are strengths to combining qualitative methods to quantitative methods. Quantitative research offers opportunities for high external validity and generalisability where qualitative methods can fall short. Quantitative methods such as survey research and statistical analysis are well suited to identifying numerical margins in voting behaviour, such as sex gaps. Nevertheless, in terms of understanding explanatory powers and causal mechanisms, qualitative methods allow a closer look at individual experiences of individuals and can offer insight into what shapes their political behaviours. When employed together, however, qualitative and quantitative methods can offer a fuller investigation of the research problem. Collecting both quantitative and qualitative data related to a particular puzzle or problematic can offer a more comprehensive approach to answering research questions, introduce new relationships within and across data, and also reinforce findings from different datasets.

In research, Weldon (2014) argues that researchers should use 'a wide range of measures and methods to study institutions', as using a variety of approaches can 'chart such complex phenomena meaningfully' (p. 661). When both quantitative and qualitative techniques are applied to research questions, the data can inform each other and illuminate unexplored power structures. From a feminist perspective, institutional norms and patterns can be analysed and challenged using

a variety of standpoints and evidence. Weldon (2014) states that qualitative methods can ‘soak and poke’ at contexts relevant to the puzzle, as qualitative analysis offers deep contextual data wherein the researcher can be fully immersed in the context and probe participants where necessary to uncover institutionalised norms (p. 664). Combined, Weldon (2014) argues that statistical analysis can inform qualitative analyses’ ‘soak and poke’ data by summarising large amounts of data (such as voting data). Using statistical analysis, quantitative data can also estimate the significance of variable relationships (p. 664). This thesis adopts a mixed-method approach as both qualitative and quantitative analyses are needed to answer questions regarding long-term patterns of voting behaviour in Scotland (quantitative data) and untangle complex, influential factors that impact constitutional attitudes from the voter’s perspective (qualitative data).

While there are strengths to be found in using both methods, there are also epistemological challenges to employing mixed methods. As stated, there is no singular feminist approach to research. Therefore, feminists do not have one singular epistemological perspective, and due to the variety of epistemological positions feminists hold, there are varying perspectives regarding whether and how a singular researcher should employ mixed methods (Leckenby and Hesse-Biber, 2013, p. 265). Further, even non-feminist mixed-method approaches face critique as ‘mixing methods requires reaching across what has been traditionally a paradigmatic chasm’ to engage in positivist or interpretivist empirical research (Hesse-Biber, 2013, pp. 265-6). As outlined previously, the benefits of each method (quantitative and qualitative) are their unique abilities to tease out questions in different ways. Qualitative work is generally interpretive, in which research is more inductive and grounded in meaning-making and lived experiences of subjects. Quantitative work is typically deductive and driven by the researcher’s hypothesis. Thus, quantitative work is broadly positivist or postpositivist. Due to the diverging nature of the epistemological standpoint of qualitative and quantitative approaches, these two methods are often seen as opposing poles.

Feminist research typically centres on the subject’s experience and critiques quantitative approaches to understanding a person’s lived experiences. It questions whether a subject’s experiences can be quantifiable through objectivity. Greene and Caracelli (1997) outline this critical view as that of epistemological purists who argue that ‘different inquiry frameworks or paradigms embody fundamentally different and incompatible assumptions’ (p. 8). Purists pose the two poles in opposition by arguing that researcher approaches can be positivist or interpretivist. Thus, blending quantitative and qualitative methods is highly incompatible due to the opposing nature of the epistemological and philosophical underpinnings of each method’s approach. Feminist scholars Sprague and Zimmerman (2004) argue that any commitment to the purity of either

qualitative or quantitative approaches only reinforces longstanding traditions supporting the opposition of the approaches. Sprague and Zimmerman (2004) state that these opposing approaches bring a dualism and tension between ‘object/subject, rational/emotional, [concrete/abstract]’ (p. 39).

When analysed through a more critical lens, these opposing dualities can signify the tension between the masculine and feminine, with objectivity, rationality, and concrete evidence leaning on what is deemed to be socially constructed as the more masculine. Subjectivity, emotion, and abstract understanding are traits societally deemed to be more feminine. I argue that in these tensions, the opposition between the masculine and feminine nature of methodological and epistemological approaches is reinforced and upholds normative and traditional research endeavours, which can be limited in their approaches. Rather, I take a pragmatic approach in utilising mixed methods as I acknowledge the differences in the philosophical approaches needed to undertake quantitative and qualitative work. These philosophical approaches are seen as ‘logically independent’ from the paradigms of research inquiry and can be ‘mixed and matched, in conjunction with choices about methods, to achieve the combination most appropriate for a given inquiry problem’ (Greene and Caracelli, 1997, p. 8). Thus, while there may be epistemological divergences in quantitative and qualitative understanding, exercising pragmatism in the application of mixed method research allows the researcher to ‘seek to answer the question at hand most fully and deliberately without [...] losing themselves in epistemological debates’ (Leckenby and Hesse-Biber, 2013, p. 270). To better substantiate how I pragmatically substantiate my mixed method research design, I now outline and justify how each method, quantitative and qualitative, will inform each other methodologically and within the context of this thesis’ puzzle, research questions and case study.

### **3.3.2.1 Qualitative Methods**

Beginning with qualitative analysis, feminist approaches to political science pioneered qualitative methods in the 1970s and early 1980s (Reinharz, 1992; Ezzy, 2002; Kenny and Mackay, 2017). At the time, qualitative methods recorded what had not been recorded before, which captured critical insights regarding who held power and who did not, thus illuminating power inequalities in patriarchal societies. Early feminist qualitative research methods such as analysing oral histories and interviews were considered the ‘key’ to feminist understanding as they centred marginalised experiences that had otherwise been unheard of in early social science research. Feminist research profoundly impacted political science by shifting importance onto ‘individual case-based interpretation’, although this impact is ‘now little recognised’ (Vromen 2017). As political attitudes

and behaviours constantly shift within and through different contexts (Campbell, 2006), qualitative data offers a variety of rich information in a particular political snapshot of time.

Qualitative data also gives insight into belief systems by providing a thick description of participants' experiences. Belief systems are crucial in voter behaviour as they shape voting behaviour. Establishing people's perceptions of political events is interesting, as how actors (citizens and elites alike) interpret and make meaning of the world around them influences their political attitudes (Fishbein and Coombs, 1974; Azjen and Fishbein, 1975; Stimson, 1975; Dawson, 1979). Findings in social psychology show that individuals become deeply entrenched in their belief systems not based on whether their perceptions are fact or myth, but on what they believe to be true (Hahn, 1973; Sartwell, 1992; Goertzel, 1994; Durnan and Trafimow, 2000). These political belief systems are based on an individual's social values, a hierarchical collection of beliefs across various situations (Rokeach, 1973). As political ideologies are described as a 'set of beliefs about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved', beliefs are substantive for voters and indicate concrete ideas which help individuals understand the world they live in and how it should be (Erikson and Tedin, 2003, p. 64; for more, see Geoghegan and Wilford, 2014 and Jost et al., 2009). A behaviour such as casting a vote depends on which beliefs are activated and whether the related beliefs the individual holds to the vote are negative or positive (Mohanachandran and Govindarajo, 2020).

Further, the significance of particular political narratives shaped by voter beliefs can be studied using qualitative methods. Different political narratives dominate events such as elections and referendums, and some narratives become more dominant than others, dependent on the political behaviour of both powerful actors and citizens. In his analysis of opinion change and voting behaviour in referendums, Leduc (2002) finds that in referendums which concern an issue familiar to voters, voters make their decisions quickly by utilising strong cues based on partisanship, beliefs and political ideology. Political belief systems can often go beyond partisan identification and have been found to 'constrain and condition voter behaviour' (Farney and Levine, 2009, p. 196). For example, Van de Vyer et al. (2018) found that if voters believed the world was dangerous and held conservative values, they would be more likely to vote to leave the European Union in the 2016 Brexit referendum. This finding highlights how belief systems and politics influence behaviours in referendums.

Nevertheless, a researcher cannot observe beliefs directly and beliefs are difficult to measure (Rokeach, 1972; Tetlock, 1984). Qualitative methods allow researchers to use 'effective probes and strategies to unearth deep and complex beliefs' (Irez, 2007, p. 18) or, as Weldon (2014) states, to

‘poke’. Qualitative interviews provide insight into the significance and contradictions in voter political belief systems that thin description often produced by quantitative findings cannot. A gendered lens further assists in analysing individual gendered experiences, which contribute to thematic understandings of the broader structural context related to the puzzle of how gendered power relations influence constitutional attitudes. In the case of this thesis, a feminist approach to the sex gaps in constitutional attitudes is utilised by conducting data analysis on women’s experiences and unearthing how belief systems influence constitutional attitudes. For example, in understanding the narratives around how the nation is built and how constitutional power is distributed, findings emerge regarding how women envision constitutional futures. Therefore, to understand the *why* question the sex gap puzzle presents, qualitative methods are necessary to get at the complexities regarding how gender interacts with political belief to shape constitutional attitudes and, thus, constitutional power structures in society.

### **3.3.2.2 Quantitative Methods**

In terms of voting behaviour research, quantitative data such as representative voting behaviour data surveys provide high external validity to the research. The addition of quantitative analysis to qualitative endeavour provides ‘a mechanism for legitimating women’s knowledge building by testing out new theories, as well as placing women’s lived experience in a broader socio-political context’ (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 132). However, early feminist critiques of quantitative surveys argued that surveys signal and reinforce normative gender stereotypes amongst participants (Bourque and Grossholtz, 1974; Randall, 1994). Critiques of quantitative analysis centre the appropriateness of positivist methods in feminist research, which primarily develops systems of analyses through the meaning-making of subjective experiences. Stauffer and O’Brien (2018) find that the antipathy towards quantitative survey methods centres around its relation to positivist research traditions, which place ‘a premium on objectivity’ with statistics offering the ‘facts of a puzzle or relationship’ (p. 5; for more, see Brooks and Hesse-Biber, 2007).

Yet, when combined with a feminist methodology, quantitative methods can prove useful for feminist researchers seeking a broader understanding of behaviours and patterns in a population (Weldon, 2014). Weldon (2014) states that statistical analysis can ‘uncover relationships, including associations, interactions, and linear and nonlinear relationships’, that are important to feminist scholars who explore power dynamics in institutions (p. 665). For example, statistical analysis of voting behaviour data can indicate whether a relationship is significant, whether the significance is due to chance and whether the pattern is likely to happen again. However, using a feminist

approach to quantitative methodologies carries specific implications in the research design and structure.

For example, Stauffer and O'Brien (2018) find that when feminist researchers develop surveys, they must 'understand the surveys they use, exercise care in the construction of questions and survey implementation and recognise the limitations and biases of survey measures' (p. 13). As described in Chapter 2, much feminist voting behaviour research stresses the importance of the sex/gender distinction in survey creation and analysis as it can offer richer data that acknowledges voter heterogeneity. Bittner and Goodyear-Grant (2017) argued that surveys which use a dichotomous 'gender' identity variable risk alienating communities of individuals who do not see themselves within a binary and further reinforce normative understandings of sex and gender. Therefore, as gender socialisation is central to the lived experiences of voters, merging feminist theoretical approaches with various empirical methodologies offers fruitful outcomes and 'complete understandings of political attitudes and preferences' (Stauffer and O'Brien, 2018).

The overarching goal of feminist research is to identify how, why, and to what extent multiple forms of oppression impact the lives of those marginalised in society. Utilising multiple methods to untangle a puzzle's intricacies allows researchers to increase the layers, or the triangulation (Natow, 2020), of meaning-making to understand women's experiences from their perspectives and compare patterns in quantitative voting behaviour over time. Triangulation is when two methods are used to analyse 'a singular data set that answers a particular question' (Leckenby and Hesse-Biber, 2013, p. 274). Leckenby and Hesse-Biber (2013) state that triangulation is a powerful tool for a feminist mixed method researcher as triangulation allows for 'showing the most thorough picture' (p. 274) through complex data layering. Triangulation highlights the multifaceted aspects of a feminist mixed method research design as it pushes past 'disciplinary boundaries and challenges many of our capacities at once' (Reinharz, 1992, p. 202). Mixed-methods research provides feminist scholars with a strategy to respond to the 'traditional' and androcentric forms of knowledge by applying 'a range of methods to assist them in seeking out subjugated knowledge that dominant perspectives on knowledge-building often miss' (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 132).

This section has illustrated the benefit of the mixed-methods approach by outlining the aims and objectives of quantitative and qualitative methods separately and depicting how they can be used effectively in conjunction with one another to inform and challenge norms and understandings. This section has also outlined the challenges of using a mixed method research design. The following section will outline my positionality while connecting to literature on methods in political science.

### 3.3.2.3 Positionality

Positionality refers to how qualitative researchers manage the personal, cultural, and political dynamics between themselves and study participants during knowledge production (Hopkins, 2007). Positionality asks researchers to reflexively engage with intersectional dimensions of their identity, such as sex, gender, race, age, class, sexuality, education, religion, nationality, ability and geographic location (Stone, 2018). Feminist researchers and other critical researchers highlighted the necessity of researchers to reflect critically on their multiple positionalities when undertaking research (Hopkins, 2007, 386). When considering one's position in a context, researchers can then posit how and in what ways their various positionalities or identities can shape and influence the processes, encounters and outcomes of their research (Hopkins, 2007). While critiques of the consideration of research positionality are largely framed around the obsession with the self (Peach, 2002; Kobayashi, 2003), reflexivity in positionality is commonplace in feminist research due to the relationship between power hierarchies and feminist work. As feminist work often seeks to question and challenge power structures in society, considering how and in what ways a researcher is privileged and experiences oppression due to the normative power structures in our society is essential.

In terms of my positionality in the frame of this work, I am uniquely placed to pose questions regarding gendered constitutional attitudes in Scotland. I am an Iranian American cis-gendered woman. While racially, I am from a mixed-minority group; I am white-passing with a Western name. At the time of my data collection, I was in my late twenties and living in Edinburgh, Scotland. I moved to Scotland to begin my PhD research and only visited the country twice before beginning my studies. During my studies, I married a Scottish cis-gendered man. In terms of investigating constitutional attitudes through voting behaviour in Scotland, my positionality brought a range of advantages, complications and demands to the research endeavour which will now be outlined.

Firstly, my nationality (and inherently my accent) meant that in both experiential knowledge and to my participants, I could initially be understood as an outsider looking in. The timeframe of this work is also linked with my position as a researcher. The research process of this thesis began in 2017, and therefore, the Scottish Independence Referendum and its corresponding campaigns have long passed. When beginning fieldwork, I could not legally vote in Scottish elections. However, in early 2020, the right to vote in the Scottish Parliament and local government elections was extended to foreign nationals with various residency statuses (The Scottish Government, 2020). This right to vote extended to me, which meant that while I did not vote in the Scottish

Independence Referendum or in any Scottish elections broadly, I eventually could. Again, while I could be considered an outsider as a non-Scottish person, due to the context of this work, my position as an outsider became further complicated with the granting of voting rights and my status as a Scottish resident. This status became further entrenched when I got married to a Scottish man. The outsider status, which I presented externally on the phone or during video calls with participants, became challenged and complicated internally as the work progressed.

Chavez (2008) states that in positivist traditions, the outsider perspective is optimal because it offers the most objective view of the field and is, therefore, arguably more accurate (p. 474). Conversely, researchers who were seen to be insiders had contextual insights regarding the population they were studying and, therefore, could hold biases which would complicate their interpretation of the study and data collected. Yet, many scholars (Merton, 1972; Naples, 1996; Banks, 1998) have refuted these claims due to both insiders and outsiders facing similar methodological challenges. Chavez (2008) summarises these methodological issues to be related to the researcher's 'self and situated knowledge' they possess as a result of their position in the social order (p. 474). For example, an outsider could glean more data due to their distance from the subject or they could be seen as someone with 'diminished credibility' in the eyes of participants and subjects and this could then inhibit data collection (Ackerly and True, 2020, p. 45).

In relation to this research, both voter and elite participants externally understood me to be an American studying Scottish independence with little experiential knowledge of Scotland, the independence referendum, nationalist or unionist communities, and voting. Largely, I was considered by participants to be an outsider due to be distance from Scotland in 2014. This understanding or belief had substantial advantages as participants would largely paint a rich story for me as I was not present in Scotland during the time of the independence referendum. While I often had a clear understanding of what occurred regarding chronological events, participants' personal and lived experiences provided robust and thick contextual descriptions regarding what and who shaped their constitutional attitudes over time.

As Staeheli and Nagar (2002) argue, a researcher's positionality is not about their identity and does not give them empiric authority. Instead Staeheli and Nagar (2002) argue that positionality is about a researcher's *relationship* with their participants. As I was not Scottish or British, participants considered me less likely to have an opinion on Scottish independence and the broad constitutional debate. Participants, therefore, expressed that they felt more comfortable sharing their political views (the good, the bad and the ugly) with free reign. Often, participants stated they found the interview process therapeutic due to the anonymised nature of data. In focus groups, participants

felt more comfortable expressing views to those with similar beliefs, yet this will be discussed more in the following sections. Although, over time, I became an outsider who was socialised within the community (Chavez, 2008, p. 476) due to my personal experiences in Scotland, my external identity as an outsider generally allowed for participant comfort and for rich, thick contextual discussion similar to storytelling (Carter et al., 2014). This is due to the outsider advantage of ‘detachment from the field’ (Chavez, 2008, p. 478).

Insider and outsider conceptions are not fixed nor static, as previously outlined. Yet, being conceived as an outsider carries dangers such as the ‘imposition of the researcher’s values, beliefs and perceptions on the lives of participants’ (Chavez, 2008, p. 475). In order to mitigate researcher biases which would skew data collection, I had all survey, focus group and interview schedules go through a peer-review process, which included scholars from a variety of demographic backgrounds as well as scholars from both political science and social policy disciplines. Sampling was randomised and from a general sample of the public and was not initially exclusive to any particular population. General sampling denotes the systematic selection of a representative cohort of participants or elements from an overarching population with the aim of conducting a scholarly inquiry or investigation. The overarching objective of general sampling is to extrapolate findings about the broader population by scrutinizing the characteristics and behaviours manifested within the selected sample (Murthy, 1967). Random sampling is ‘when each member of a population has been given an equal chance of being included in the study, members are selected randomly, and their selection is independent of one another’ (Dillman et al., 2014, p. 75).

However, as stated, I am from a Western English-speaking country. My native language is English, and the UK’s primary language is English. In terms of data collection processes, the online survey which gained access to participants was in English, and no further language translations were offered. This means that the population of my study must understand English and have access to a computer. Consequently, there will be a part of the Scottish population that will be excluded from this research due to the technological and language constraints of this work. Due to the limited resources of this work, I could not offer translations or provide door-to-door or mail service to distribute the SVB survey. All qualitative data collection processes were conducted in English and written in English. Although these limitations were considered and all possible adjustments were made to access participants who were not as technologically literate (e.g. phone interviews over virtual video calls), it is important to consider how my positionality links to the technological and Anglo-centric nature of the research design (Ackerly and True, 2020; Hesse-Biber, 2007).

In terms of my positionality as a feminist researcher studying gendered attitudes, again, there were barriers and facilitators. Feminist researchers have long grappled with challenges in relation to researcher positionality (Riesman, 1987; Visweswaran, 1994; Wolf, 1996; Hesse-Biber, 2007; Ackerly and True, 2020). As stated, feminist researchers are primarily interested in investigating and challenging imbalances and relationships in societal power structures. Feminist researchers accept that due to the nature of the exchange between the researcher and the participant, there is a hierarchical power dynamic, with the researcher often seen to hold more power.

Hesse-Biber outlined the importance of reflexivity for feminist researchers to practice reflexivity during their qualitative endeavours to keep the researcher mindful of their personal positionality and that of their respondent(s) (p. 117). For example, Hesse-Biber (2007) encourages feminist researchers to posit, 'How does my positionality affect how I gather, analyse and interpret my data, and from whose perspective?' (p. 131). Awareness of one's positionality and reflexive exercises can offer feminist researchers opportunities for reflection regarding privilege, oppression, equality and inequalities present in the power dynamics internal and external to the research. The verbal language, body language and listening strategies employed by the researcher can have crucial impacts on data collection and the research outcome broadly (Wolf, 1996; Hesse-Biber, 2007; Ackerly and True, 2020). Therefore, in approaching my research subjects, feminist considerations were made to mitigate power inequalities in the discussion.

Ackerly and True (2020) describe the importance of 'honesty in relationships' between the researcher and participant in feminist political science research (p. 45). Participants were all made aware of the gendered aspects of the research in the information sheet. The title and aim of the project offered full transparency not only in the particular interest of sex and gender gaps but of the approach to be used to understand the differences and similarities between men and women. When participants asked about my background or experiences, I also offered full transparency regarding what I knew and what I did not know in terms of my knowledge, my experiences and my background. In one-on-one interviews, power dynamics in terms of equalities and inequalities were more facile to mitigate due to the intimate nature of the discussion between only the participant and me. Yet, in focus groups, considering power equalities or inequalities amongst and across participants was crucial. Again, these power hierarchies regarding gender and background between participants were considered and are outlined further in this thesis.

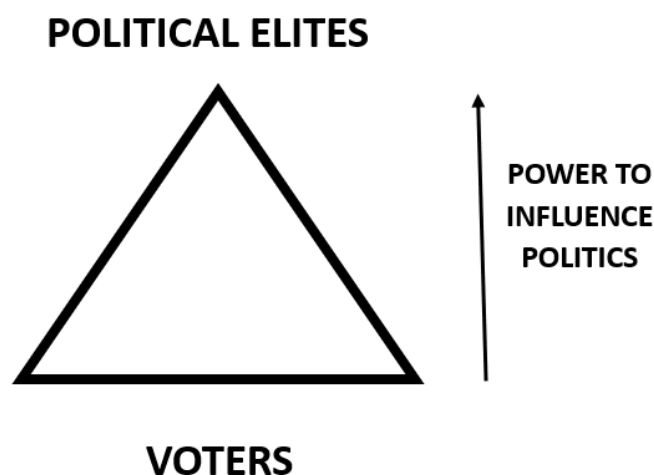
Ultimately, I was guided by feminist research ethic in terms of the approach I took to consider my positional standpoint reflexively. I considered my situatedness, or sociopolitical location, often throughout the timeline of this work to critically consider 'the power of knowledge and

epistemology, boundaries, marginalisation, silences, intersections, and relationships and their power differentials' (Ackerly and True, 2020, p. 20). The following section will illustrate how power is conceptualised concerning this thesis' methodological research design.

### 3.3.3 Research Design: Top-down and Bottom-up Approach

Qualitative and quantitative methods prompt a mixed-method approach to understanding the sex gap puzzle from a top-down and a bottom-up feminist problem-driven mixed-method approach. The features of this thesis' top-down and bottom-up methodological approach to the sex gaps are visualised in the following figures. The first figure, Figure 3.1, indicates how the power to influence politics is distributed between political elites and voters. When working to understand power and power relations in society, qualitative methods such as elite background interviews offer researchers the opportunity to look through the lens of those with power to understand how decisions in political society are shaped. In the context of this research, interviews with powerful actors related to the independence campaigns provide insights regarding to what extent and in what ways influential actors perceive voters' political behaviour and identities.

FIGURE 3.1: POWER DISTRIBUTION OF POLITICAL INFLUENCE BETWEEN ELITES AND VOTERS



Mikecz (2012) states that elites are heterogenous and their position in power can decrease and increase over time. Therefore, the term 'elite' does not point towards one type of powerful political actor. Harvey (2011) argues that an elite is distinguished from non-elites by their 'ability to exert influence [in] social networks, social capital and strategic position within social structures' (p. 422). Mikecz (2012) argued that elites are considered elites not through their 'job titles and powerful positions' but through the level of impact they make on society (p.485). Therefore, I operationalise

the term elite to mean an individual who was a ‘key decision makers and/or had major influence’ in the Scottish independence referendum of 2014 (Mikecz, 2012, p. 485).

Elite interviewing is favoured in feminist political research and is used by researchers to understand broader beliefs regarding gender issues held by those with political power (Childs and Krook, 2006; Considine and Deutchman, 2008). Elite background interviews allow elites and actors to provide ‘frank and confidential information which would often be withheld in a survey’ (Considine and Deutchman, 2008, p. 6). Childs and Webb (2012) conducted critical actor interviews and party member focus groups to investigate the role of gender, women’s representation and the UK Conservative Party. Childs and Webb (2012) found that rather than focusing only on bottom-up approaches (what members of the electorate do), scholars should tap into what occurs at the ‘top-level’ and investigate what specific actors related to the research’s puzzle and questions do (p. 33). Childs and Webb (2012) state that utilising elite perspectives allows researchers to reveal ‘the contextual environments in which representatives act’ (p.33) and, in the context of this thesis, trace processes they take to react to events such as sex gaps in voting behaviour. Therefore, in-depth elite interviews have a keen advantage over surveys in understanding actors’ reflections on the Scottish independence referendum of 2014 but also voter identities and how campaigns were shaped.

Bennie et al. (2021) found that the Scottish independence movement ‘*encompass[ed]* political parties and other groups and actors’ (emphasis by authors, p. 1185) and that parties, especially the SNP, dominated the campaign for Scottish independence. They also found that the independence movement ‘contained a variety of groups and actors and movement-style action repertoires’ (Bennie et al., 2021, p. 1194). In the lead-up to the Scottish independence referendum of 2014, partnerships were formed amongst the Scottish political parties to form two opposing sides of the campaigns: one pro-independence and one anti-independence. Scottish political parties were divided across the constitutional question, with the SNP, the Scottish Greens and the Scottish Socialists on the ‘*Yes*’ or pro-independence side. Political parties against Scottish independence comprised of the Scottish Conservatives, Scottish Labour and the Scottish Liberal Democrats. Politicians often were instrumental to the respective *Yes* and *No* campaigns and included in televised debates, advertisements, and messaging. Bennie et al. (2021) found that party cues played a significant role in the independence campaigns. I expected that the long-standing sex gap would influence the opposing campaigns to target women voters intentionally. This expectation was based on previous findings in the UK regarding sex gaps and critical actor influence.

In the UK, Campbell (2016) found that ‘political parties provide the linkage between voters’ preferences and policy programmes’ and how policy makers ‘respond to women voters is shaped by both the information they receive about women voters’ preferences from the news media, pollsters, and other sources, and by gendered party type’ (p. 587). When women voters’ behaviour is perceived to be distinct from men’s, parties and campaigns ‘may be more responsive to demands to represent women’s interests if they anticipate gaining an electoral advantage’ (Campbell, 2016, p. 588). How gendered power structures influence political decision-making is highlighted by Campbell (2016), who found that androcentric ideals largely dominate the UK political sphere. Historically, frames created to attract women have emphasised family concerns, access to abortion, healthcare, childcare, and education (Carroll, 1999), based on normative understandings of women as voters. Although scholars found women’s and men’s voting preferences in the UK to differ little aggregately (Abzug, 1984; Norris and Lovenduski, 1993; Campbell, 2006), evidence shows that in the past, male-dominated parties proactively targeted women voters when they believed that women might vote as a block (Campbell, 2016, p. 588; Azbug, 1984, pp. 3-4). As the sex gap in support for Scottish independence has been long-standing, understanding *how* and *in what ways* the party-led campaigns targeted gendered voting groups and subgroups is instrumental in understanding the sex gap in support of constitutional attitudes. Investigating the sex gaps from influential decision-makers’ perspectives offers an insight into societal gendered power structures. Scottish voters form the sex gaps found in Scottish voting behaviour studies. Yet, political elites influence the sex gaps in two ways: 1) elites have the power to influence constitutional change (argue for a referendum, support a political party against or for it, lobby activists, interact with the media), and 2) elites react to the sex gaps and arguably this shaped elite behaviours—consequently, this thesis’ methodological approach centres on political elites’ and voters’ perspectives and experiences.

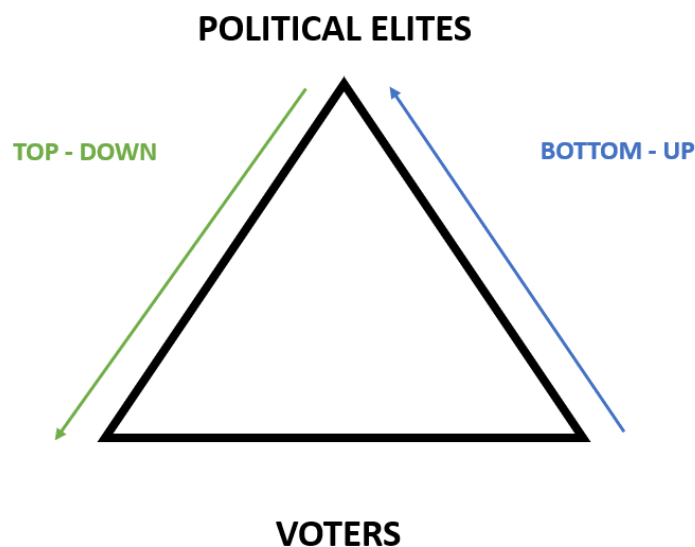
Farrell and Schmitt-Beck (2003) argue that a political campaign aims to influence both the processes and the outcome of governance (p. 3). In the case of a referendum, campaigns focus on achieving victory by targeting voters, and political campaign actors play an integral part in their power to shape the campaign and influence voter attitudes and behaviours (Farrell and Schmitt-Beck, 2003). Thurber and Nelson (2001) find that referendums create a highly competitive environment where opposing ‘campaign warriors’ compete in an ‘arms race’ and will use whatever tools they can to their advantage to maximise their power potential (p. 3). In a political referendum, a leverage tool could be a policy issue or even a voting group. Thurber and Nelson (2001) argue that campaign actors impact political candidates, voters, and the outcome of campaigns, and can

ultimately influence policy development and governance (p. 2). Campaign actors are integral to how campaign messages and issues are delivered to voters, and therefore, understanding campaign actor perceptions of the referendum is integral to understanding voter attitudes and behaviours.

Figure 3.1 illustrates this relationship and depicts how political elites have greater influence individually due to their role in decision-making positions (Mikecz, 2012). Voters distribute their political power towards electing/supporting political elites to make critical decisions, as elites are at the forefront of how political power is distributed in society. Therefore, political elites are at the top of the power triangle, whereas voters are at the bottom. In the context of this thesis, campaign actors represent the political elites, as campaign actors have the power to shape various aspects of the campaign to influence voter behaviour.

In Figure 3.2, I demonstrate my approach centred around the sex gap problem. It can be argued that political elites and voters mutually shape political society, as political elites react to voter behaviour and voters react to the political outputs and behaviours of elites. This relationship is explored in more detail in Chapter 4. Therefore, to better understand the sex gaps, I analyse both perspectives.

FIGURE 3.2: TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP POWER PERSPECTIVES



The top-down approach analyses how political elites view the sex gaps in constitutional attitudes and how this is expressed through voting behaviour. The bottom-up approach analyses how voters react to elements of constitutional change proposed by political elites on both sides (for and against). In the case of the Scottish independence referendum of 2014, the bottom-up approach analyses how individuals *perceive* and *experience* Scottish independence, their reactions to the

respective campaigns, the politicians, the related movements, and their political peers. How I propose to do this methodologically is outlined in Figure 3.3.

FIGURE 3.3: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ACCESSING TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP PERSPECTIVES

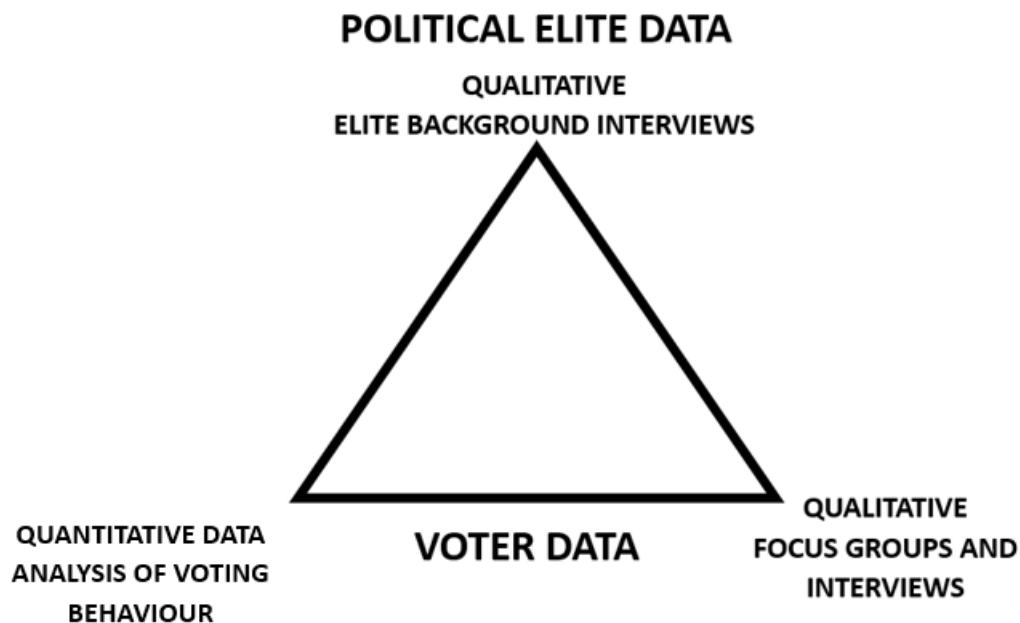


Figure 3.3 illustrates how this thesis centralises the problem of the sex gap in constitutional attitudes and shapes the methodology around it to create a fuller understanding of the puzzle and answer the research questions posed.

This research approach was largely from a bottom-up approach, centring voters' experiences and perspectives. First, I conducted refreshed sex-oriented quantitative data analysis of existing voting behaviour survey data from 1999-2021 across multiple surveys. This analysis offered a thorough understanding of the patterns of constitutional attitudes in Scotland over time. I paid close attention to the sex gap and how the sex variable interacted with support for constitutional change accounting for statistical significance. This quantitative data analysis of voter data is part of the bottom-up approach as it analyses voter perspectives through quantitative methods. This analysis answers the first research question, in particular, by addressing how women's political preferences concerning constitutional change have been expressed through their voting behaviour. Through the collation of secondary voting behaviour data, how women's constitutional attitudes have changed over time is also presented and analysed which provides answers for the second research question this thesis poses. This secondary data analysis also points to significant background

characteristics explored in qualitative analysis, such as the significance of age, national identity, birthplace, class and party membership.

Then, I designed and administered the Scottish Voting Behaviour survey (SVB) (n=1214). This survey was designed to access voters willing to participate in qualitative voter focus groups and interviews. The survey was not intended to gain a representative understanding of Scottish voting behaviour but to provide background to participants' voting behaviours should they wish to participate in qualitative research.

Then, participants from the SVB who indicated their interest in further research were contacted to participate in qualitative semi-structured focus groups or individual interviews. I amassed qualitative voter data from ten focus groups and approximately 80 voter interviews with voters who were supportive and unsupportive of constitutional change in Scotland as well as those who were undecided. Research questions are predominantly answered using focus groups as the segmentation of voters into groups and gendered subgroups produced thick data regarding *which* women and men differed in their voting behaviours, *to what* extent, and *why*.

Through a problem-driven mixed-method approach, the puzzle of the sex gap in constitutional attitudes was centralised, and the power relations relevant to the puzzle were considered through elite contextual interviews. I conducted semi-structured elite background interviews (n=23) to contextualise the independence campaigns in Scotland and investigate how critical actors and elites shaped their campaigns to target certain voting groups. These campaign actor interviews offer insights from a top-down approach to understand the sex gaps in constitutional attitudes. I investigated how pro- and anti-independence actors central to the campaigns perceived the sex gap in support of constitutional change and how they reacted in their campaigns. Reactions to the sex gap included shaping messaging or targeting specific groups. The interviews with campaign actors also fill a gap in existing Scottish literature as they offer critical insights into the gendered ways the *Yes* and *No* campaigns perceived and targeted certain voter identities.

The views of the elites interviewed were accepted as their account of events related to the Scottish independence referendum as opposed to substantive facts (for more, see Childs and Withey, 2006). As such, interviews with campaign actors as a method carry important limitations. Data gathered from elite background interviews are 'based on self-reported claims that – by their nature – do not permit careful examination of the actual veracity of these claims' (Childs and Krook, 2006, p. 23; for more, see Lovenduski and Norris, 2003). Instead, my campaign actor interviews offer insights regarding how individual campaign actors viewed voter identities, how they perceived campaign messaging was shaped and to whom, and how they believed voters were targeted in gendered ways.

Elite background interviews offer critical insight into related power structures and inequalities regarding constitutional change processes in Scotland, but the interviews' explanatory abilities regarding voters only reach so far. This further justifies the need for voter interviews to establish a multi-perspective understanding of how voter constitutional attitudes were shaped. As Mahoney and Goertz (2006) argue, the goal of qualitative work is to reveal individual's perceptions and discourse and therefore to explain outcomes of individual cases.

This thesis makes methodological and empirical contributions to the sex gap puzzle in Scotland as it offers new data relevant to the puzzle and a refreshed approach to understanding the puzzle from a fuller perspective. The methodological model outlined previously investigates power structures within Scottish society by analysing how powerful elites influence politics and voters. Feminist research utilising qualitative methods to investigate the perceptions and experiences of those in marginalised groups is largely missing in Scottish voting behaviour research. The feminist sub-group analysis of voter data acknowledges the heterogeneity of voters and, therefore, illuminates findings which contribute to scholarly understanding of the explanatory powers behind the sex gaps in support of constitutional change. Thus, to better understand what influences gender sub-groups of voters' support for independence, this thesis applied a mixed-method approach to supplement existing knowledge on the sex gaps in constitutional attitudes. The following section will go into further detail regarding each method, outlining how each method was approached and what it entailed.

### 3.4 Methods

#### **3.4.1 Simple Descriptive Statistics with Secondary Data Analysis**

To acknowledge the scope of the sex gap in constitutional attitudes, I analysed existing voting behaviour data on constitutional attitudes in Scotland. I paid particular attention to the sex variable and how it interacted with support for constitutional change over approximately three decades and across various surveys. The period measured was in the lead-up to, during and after the Scottish independence referendum of 2014. Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics from the following large-scale Scottish voting behaviour surveys: the Scottish Referendum Study 1997 (DevoRef), the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 1999-2019 (SSA),<sup>17</sup> the Scottish Election Study

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<sup>17</sup> The SSA did not run in 2008 so this data is missing.

*1999-2021 (SES)*, the *Scottish Referendum Study 2014 (SRS)*, and the *Risk and Constitutional Attitudes Survey 2014 (RCA)*.

Campbell (2006) stated that when feminist researchers investigate sex gaps using secondary quantitative data,<sup>18</sup> it is critical to avoid data dredging, which leads to ‘the discovery of spurious sex or gender effects without any basis from which to infer their significance’ (p. 10). To prevent this, I conducted simple descriptive statistics using crosstabulations of bivariate and multivariate models. After isolating the sex and support for constitutional attitudes variables, I checked for statistical significance by measuring the p-value of the relationship using Fisher’s (1992) model to indicate whether there was substantial evidence against the null hypothesis.

Analysis of the results from the surveys provided only a description of patterns existing over time as opposed to providing explanations for the cause of the sex gap and was therefore limited. For example, data from the surveys was vast, but detailed information regarding the background characteristics of a participant was not always available. Qualitative analyses of voters using focus groups and interviews supplemented this secondary data analysis, as they offered insight into motivating and influential factors on constitutional attitudes expressed in vote choice as the voters conceived them. Additionally, as I did not design the surveys or the research related to the corresponding surveys, accounting for researcher bias and positionality was out of my control. I was therefore unsure whether the researchers concerned with the initial survey design accounted for the subtle nature of gender effects. The findings from this analysis are presented in Chapter five.

### **3.4.2 Online Survey: The Scottish Voting Behaviour survey (SVB)**

I developed a large-scale quantitative data survey, the SVB, to gather background information on participant voter behaviour to access participants to partake in qualitative research. I titled, designed, distributed, and analysed the survey. Although quantitative, the survey was not intended to provide generalisable findings on the Scottish voter population, and the sample was nonprobable. However, I used the data to inform the design of the focus groups and interviews, i.e., the interview schedule, the voter groups and subgroups. The SVB survey was the first stage of

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<sup>18</sup> Data from surveys they did not design

my primary data collection. Therefore, a feminist approach to developing, distributing, and analysing the survey was critical as this shaped the qualitative study.

The SVB intended to gain an understanding of constitutional attitudes expressed through vote choice by analysing voters as individuals and within gendered groups and subgroups to improve understanding of voter heterogeneity and avoid making essentialist claims. The survey skeleton is provided in the appendices of this thesis. The SVB had ten parent questions, combining open-ended and closed-ended questions (e.g., multiple choice, Likert scale and free-text). While closed-ended questions present participants with preformulated answers, open-ended questions allow participants to provide their unique answers. Closed-ended questions can keep the responses relevant, organised and focused but lack subjective understandings that feminist research needs to understand and centre how people experience power in society. I included both to minimise error effects in data collection and offer participants agency to express their perspectives and experiences. I aimed to collect rich heterogenous data which illuminated the potential diversity of participants in qualitative study.

Participants not interested in further qualitative inquiry were not linked to their anonymous survey data. Participants interested in focus groups or interviews were aware that the provided telephone number or email associated with their survey responses would be associated with them. Ethical considerations and consent details were outlined at the beginning of the survey in a signed consent form and an information sheet which are located in the appendix of this thesis. All methodological elements of this thesis (e.g., survey, information sheets, consent forms and schedules) were approved in university ethical review processes.

The SVB offered a new dataset that asked respondents about their views on constitutional change while documenting participants' gender identity, ethnicity, location, birthplace, national identity and age. Most questions branched into follow-up questions and were dependent on the prior answer. Participants were asked if they voted in the independence referendum of 2014 (closed-ended) and, if so, how they voted (closed-ended) and why (open-ended). Then, the survey asked participants how they would vote if there were another independence referendum (closed-ended) and why (open-ended), followed by a Likert scale asking how supportive of Scottish independence they were (1-10). Open-ended questions prompted participants to discuss their constitutional attitudes in their own words. While I did not code these responses, a participant's free-text responses were used to form qualitative interview and focus group schedules. Free-text responses

also informed subgroup analysis and placement<sup>19</sup>. Lastly, the survey prompted respondents for details regarding social demographics.

All questions on the survey were optional except for two items: the permission of consent and the gender identity question. As the research questions in this thesis were particularly interested in the interaction between a voter's gender identity and support for independence, knowing the participant's gender identity was crucial. While other data was necessary, a survey with all required questions instead of optional questions could deter participants from participating. In feminist research design, participants have agency regarding how their data is used and optional questions, along with other ethical measures, offer participant control (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007). Participants identified their gender identity with the option to select the following answers: man, woman, non-binary, and not listed (where participants could type in a response).

The distribution of the SVB survey varied as time progressed. The SVB survey version 1 was first piloted through Twitter and Facebook distribution. The call for participants asked for those who fit two criteria: that they resided in Scotland and were eligible to vote in Scotland. I aimed to conduct face-to-face interviews and focus groups, so initially, it was important for participants to live in Scotland for ease of access. In the second survey distribution, the eligibility criteria were only that the participant was eligible to vote in Scotland. Between the first and second distribution of the survey, the COVID-19 pandemic began. Therefore, I did not need participants within Scotland since all interviews were conducted remotely.

After the survey was piloted and minor errors were ameliorated, the survey was distributed predominantly through social media and Facebook groups relevant to Scotland. The possibility of selection bias was mitigated through random and general sampling. However, it became apparent in my data collection that more 'Yes' voters were taking the SVB than 'No' voters, at a high margin. While this could be construed that there were more Yes voters at the time in Scotland than No voters, public opinion polls showed that political preferences towards Scottish independence were near parity. Sampling then moved to nonprobability sampling to gain more access to No voters.

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<sup>19</sup> Some qualitative participants asked if I could remind them of their SVB free-text responses to refresh their memory in focus groups and interviews. The time frame between the survey and qualitative data collection was approximately three to four months. This was particularly the case in phone interviews than focus groups. Participants could then build upon their SVB free-text responses or outline how their views had changed. Overall, views rarely changed in drastic ways.

To attract more 'No' voters to answer the survey, I re-opened the survey in a 'second wave' to intentionally recruit No voters in various anti-independence Facebook groups and other Scottish Facebook groups with a more general subject (travel, picture sharing groups). The second wave was successful in attracting more No voters. The total overall number of survey responses was (n=) 1214. After gaining 850 respondents from the SVB (version 1), approximately 350 respondents stated they were willing to participate in focus group discussions about their views on Scottish independence. SVB (version 2) gained approximately 364 responses, with 186 respondents willing to be contacted for further qualitative research.

### **Voter Groups**

After each survey closed, I separated the SVB survey respondents into groups, seen in the Table 3.1, based on their support for independence. Then, I divided participants based on their gender identity responses. All data were anonymised, and participants were given a unique participant number. The only respondents contacted were those who consented to participate in further data collection. Data from participants not interested in participating in further research was stored separately and not analysed. Table 3.1 outlines how respondents were separated into voter groups based on gender and constitutional preferences.

TABLE 3.1: RESPONDENT GENDER GROUPS BASED ON CONSTITUTIONAL PREFERENCE

Group Name	Group Description
<i>Yes Women</i>	Women who would vote 'Yes' in support of Scottish independence in a future independence referendum
<i>Yes Men</i>	Men who would vote 'Yes' in support of Scottish independence in a future independence referendum
<i>Yes Non-Binary</i> <sup>20</sup>	People who identify as non-binary who would vote 'Yes' in support of Scottish independence in a future independence referendum
<i>No Women</i>	Women who would vote 'No' against Scottish independence if there were another referendum
<i>No Men</i>	Men who would vote 'No' against Scottish independence if there were another referendum
<i>Undecided Women</i>	Women who responded that they were undecided about Scottish independence and unsure how they would vote if there were another referendum
<i>Undecided Men</i>	Men who responded they were undecided about Scottish independence and unsure how they would vote if there were another referendum
<i>Switchers Yes to No</i> <sup>21</sup>	People who voted 'Yes' in the 2014 independence referendum who would vote 'No' against Scottish independence in a future referendum
<i>Switchers No to Yes</i>	People who voted 'No' in the 2014 independence referendum who would vote 'Yes' against Scottish independence in a future referendum

The preliminary groups in Table 3.1 were used to section voters by gender identity and vote choice into groups for qualitative methods. Voters were later placed into subgroups based on their SVB responses regarding their subjective experiences and background characteristics. Qualitative data analysis will be discussed in the following sections.

### 3.4.3 Qualitative Methods

This thesis employed qualitative methods to understand or explain the *how* and *why* of the sex gap in constitutional attitudes puzzle to answer the research questions this thesis poses. Qualitative work allows the researcher to enter 'the lives of those being researched briefly and to generate knowledge by observing, asking questions and analysing data' (Jacoby, 2006, p. 153). Qualitative methods allow political scientists to understand a puzzle from the affected individual's perspective

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<sup>20</sup> The non-binary respondent in my qualitative study was a *Yes* voter.

<sup>21</sup> There was a small quantity of *Switcher* voters on both *Yes* and *No* sides. Yet, not entirely enough to separate the groups based on gender. These participants, although few, offered new insight into factors which changed their constitutional attitudes from 2014 to 2020 yet, due to the study size, no meaningful subgroup trends were found.

through thick description. Thick description derives from personal experiences and reflections from a particular political context (Vromen, 2017). Qualitative research seeks in-depth knowledge of the puzzle or research topic; therefore, generalisability is not the goal. Mahoney and Goertz (2006) state that the ‘core goal of qualitative research is the explanation of outcomes in individual cases’ (p. 3). To understand the ‘causes-of-effects’ of a puzzle, qualitative analysts start ‘with cases and their outcomes’ and then move ‘backward toward the causes’ (Mahoney and Goertz, 2006, p. 4). This approach can be paralleled to the feminist problem-driven approach described in the previous sections in that when the issue is centred, the methods are designed around the problem.

In this section, the thesis’ qualitative data have been grouped under the umbrella of qualitative methods. In the following section, I distinguish between the two qualitative methods used: interviews (elite and voter) and focus groups (voter only) and justify their place in this thesis to answer the research questions. Then, in the last section I develop how I analysed the data collected from these methods.

### **Elite Background Interviews**

Elite background interviews were employed to gain essential insights into the power structures of the pro- and anti-independence campaigns at the time of the 2014 independence referendum. Understanding how the pro- and anti-independence campaigns targeted gendered groups and subgroups of voters was required to answer the research question of which women were more or less supportive of constitutional change. Further, interviews with elites with decision-making power regarding the campaigns presented opportunities to understand both *how* the voters were targeted and *why*, illuminating elite perspectives on gender groups and subgroups in Scottish society.

I created two maps of actors from the 2014 independence referendum campaigns. The anti-independence map contained actors relevant to the *No* or Better Together side. The pro-independence map followed the same structure but with actors from the *Yes* or Yes Scotland side. The maps were created to aid in the purposive selection of elite participants from either side of the independence campaigns<sup>22</sup>. The maps included campaign managers and strategists as campaign actors were instrumental to campaign strategy and messaging. The maps also included political

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<sup>22</sup> These hierarchical maps are not included in the appendixes in order to protect the anonymity of participants in lieu of ethical agreements made.

elites, such as party leaders or those featuring prominently in messaging and televised debates. Board members for either campaign were also included on the map. Actors on the map were selected based on ‘what they might know to help fill in the pieces of [the] puzzle or [to] confirm the proper alignment of pieces already in place’ (Abernach and Rockman, 2002, p. 673).

Critical actors were all contacted through email using a template outlining the thesis, the information sheet, and a required consent form (all of which are located in the appendix). The interview participant breakdown is outlined in Table 3.2 to illustrate the number of actors interviewed and their campaign affiliations.

TABLE 3.2: ELITE BACKGROUND INTERVIEW NUMBERS AND COMPOSITION

Campaign	Number of participants
Better Together (Anti-Independence)	13
Yes Scotland (Pro-Independence)	9
Think-Tank Commentator	1
<b>Total Actors</b>	<b>23</b>

The interview schedule for elite background interviews was semi-structured and all followed the same broad structure. Questions were broadly framed around campaign strategy and their involvement in campaigns to avoid leading participants to discussions that were not natural or ‘organically’ brought forth by themselves. Broadly, the questions posed to participants in each interview were the same and customised based on the ‘side’ of the debate/movement they were on. Yet, the duration of interviews greatly varied with some lasting 20 minutes and some lasting 70 minutes. At times, it was difficult to elicit a response from all actors from my map as many were occupied with duties in other positions and responding to the global coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, meeting actors face-to-face was impossible, and all actors were interviewed virtually.

### **Voter Focus Groups**

Briefly outlined in the previous sections, focus groups were organised based on the background characteristic data and open-ended data collected from the SVB survey I administered. Focus groups with gendered subgroups of voters provided deeper contextual insight from a bottom-up approach into how voter constitutional attitudes were shaped and to what extent this was expressed in their voting behaviour.

From a feminist standpoint, focus groups allow researchers to access a ‘detailed set of data about perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and impressions of group members in members’ own words’ (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990, p. 140). As described earlier, feminist research centres the participant as the expert. Focus groups allow members to express their thoughts with other

individuals, creating an idea or experience-sharing environment. Focus groups also encourage participants to 'speak about their lived experiences' with others, instead of having preconceived notions set upon them (Settles et al., 2008, p. 456). Feminist researchers such as Wilkinson (1999) find that focus group settings inspire rich opportunities for 'meaning-making', which is 'the construction of meaning and the elaboration of identities through interaction' (p.230).

Concerning this thesis, focus groups are a method which offers the opportunity to investigate further where gendered similarities and differences converge with other characterising aspects of a voter's identity. I hypothesised that a focus group environment would encourage participants with similar constitutional attitudes to share their experiences in a collective space with like-minded individuals. Focus groups provided a space for shared belief systems regarding constitutional attitudes, allowing other participants to agree with, disagree with, or build upon. Although these group dynamics have low external validity as they are not naturally occurring, they have high internal validity and give insights into holistic conversations regarding first-hand experiences and political perspectives (Holbrook and Jackson, 1996, pp. 136-7). However, personal and political perspectives can be sensitive and may inspire enthusiastic discussions, so focus group design was essential to mitigate power imbalances and conflict amongst participants.

Mixed method research allows the researcher to enhance the validity of both their qualitative and quantitative studies. By applying mixed methods, the project's synergy can be improved through triangulation (Leckenby and Hesse-Biber, 2013, p. 283). Internal validity and external validity are components which are used in research to describe an assessment of quality (Griffin and Museus, 2011b, p. 17). Internal validity is often used in quantitative research highlighting measurement accuracy *within* the population analysed. In qualitative analysis, internal validity is measured typically through credibility and asks whether there is an 'accurate representation of participant reality' (Griffin and Museus, 2011b, p. 17).

Similar to internal validity, external validity is a measurement of the assessment of the quality of the data collected (Griffin and Museus, 2011b, p. 17). In quantitative work, external validity is the generalizability of the data collected to external populations. In qualitative work, external validity is not typically measured as there is no need for generalizability to other populations. As qualitative methods centre the experience of the subject, external experiences are not championed as an important node of data quality. Rather, qualitative work can question the transferability of the data by asking whether the researcher can infer that the results from the study can be transferred to other contexts (Griffin and Museus, 2011b, p. 17).

As outlined in Chapter 2, gendered power hierarchies are often sustained in external societal environments. Focus groups created with a feminist approach can elicit the breaking down of power hierarchies and barriers in a controlled internal research environment. The researcher guides conversation between the participants to attitudes and experiences of interest to the researcher and the interactions that naturally occur from speaking of said experiences (Morgan and Spanish, 1984, p. 259; Wilkinson, 1998; Montell, 1999, p. 48; Wilkinson, 2008; Esim, 2011). Feminist researchers also found that when researchers eliminate hierarchical structures in focus group composition, 'people can feel relatively empowered and supported in a group situation, surrounded by their peers' and 'are more likely to share experiences and feelings in the presence of people whom they perceive to be like themselves in some way' (Farquhar and Das, 1999, p. 47). Esim (2011) also stated that power hierarchies could be reduced in focus group interviews as, depending on the structure of the interview schedule, the subjects have a voice to bring out issues of importance to them.

Feminist researchers investigating UK sex gaps, such as Campbell (2006), used focus groups to tease out contextual findings regarding voter attitudes and behaviour. Alongside secondary quantitative data analysis of British Election Study data, Campbell (2006) conducted focus groups to 'identify factors that were not measured in the [voting behaviour] surveys but were perhaps driving the differences apparent in quantitative data' (2006, p. 129). Childs and Webb used focus groups to understand better Conservative women party members in the UK (2012). In a portion of their analysis, Childs and Webb (2012) compared sex differences across party member attitudes and found 'subtle sex differences' across the groups (p. 93-4). They stated that they designed focus groups around party member characteristics such as 'sex, age, ethnicity, constituency and level of activism', stating that the sex quota they put in place was crucial due to their interest in gender differences (p. 240). By dividing participants by these background characteristics, they created subgroups to track whether participant perceptions and attitudes changed across subgroup environments based on participant characteristics. Although the data was not representative, they stated that subgroups provided illustrative insights into their research questions, which helped to inform and shape their hypothesis, which they tested in the quantitative aspects of their research design. In both Campbell's (2006) and Childs and Webb's (2012) work, feminist researchers utilised focus group settings to gain contextual and illustrative insights on subgroup behaviour and gendered attitudes.

In relation to this thesis, to ensure participant comfort and reduce hierarchical structures in focus group composition, I conducted semi-structured mini-focus or small groups. In terms of the small

group composition, participants were grouped into small groups by their similar background characteristics, thus creating subgroups. These small groups are outlined in Table 3.3. Concerning this thesis' research questions, focus group discussions allowed further investigation into various intersectional perspectives through sub-group analysis and the decision-making process behind voting behaviour. This analysis offered key findings into *which* women and men differed and *why*, was an instrumental method of this work. By comparing discussions and motivations described by each group through open thematic coding, focus group discussions facilitated the understanding of *to what extent* and *in what ways* differences and similarities existed between gendered sub-groups.

Small groups were derived from four to seven participants instead of six to ten participants, typical of traditional focus groups. Small groups can be more comfortable as they offer intimacy and increase the likelihood of 'conscious raising' as participants are less likely to wait to express their thoughts (Montell, 1999; for more, see Krueger, 2014, p. 82). Therefore, participants were placed in groups with participants with the same vote choice and gender as them, and then into subgroups based on other similarities where possible (e.g., age, national identity, and thematic similarities found in their open-ended SVB survey responses). Focus group discussions were both mixed and single-gender. Single-gender groups (men only, women only) were required as previous research has shown that same-sex groups are needed to compare gendered patterns. To control for gendered experiences, I conducted two mixed-gender small groups. A breakdown of the composition of the ten focus groups conducted is provided in Table 3.3.

TABLE 3.3: MINI FOCUS GROUP COMPOSITION BASED ON GENDER, VOTE CHOICE AND AGE

Focus Group Number	Label	# of Participants	Vote Choice and Gender	Age (Years)
1	FG1 (Red) Pilot	3	<i>Yes Women</i>	40-59
2	FG2 (Orange)	4	<i>Yes Women</i>	60-70
3	FG3 (Green)	2 <sup>23</sup>	<i>Yes Women</i>	50-69
4	FG4 (Blue)	5	<i>Yes Women</i>	30-69
5	FG5 (Dark Green)	4	<i>Yes Men</i>	20-59
6	FG6 (Purple)	4	<i>Yes Women</i>	40-59
7	FG7CMix (Pink)	4	<i>Yes Women and Men</i>	All
8	FG8CMix (Teal)	2 <sup>24</sup>	<i>Yes Women and Men</i>	All
9	FC9 (Salmon)	4	<i>Yes Men</i>	20-69
10	FC10 (Lavender)	4	<i>No Women</i>	40-70+
<b>Total</b>	<b>10 Groups</b>	<b>36 Participants</b>	<b>5 Yes Women 2 Yes Men 2 Yes Mixed 1 No Women</b>	

Focus group discussions were ninety minutes in duration, and with fewer participants, each participant had the opportunity and space to speak. Small groups also make it easier for a researcher to recruit five to six participants with commonalities than ten to twelve people with commonalities (Krueger, 2014, p. 82). It is a concern that, as a method, mini-focus groups are at a disadvantage because they limit the number, range, and variety of experiences as the group is smaller than that of standard-sized focus groups. However, scholars have argued that mini-focus groups offer many advantages, such as the smaller number of individuals limiting the amount of power hierarchies felt within a group through age, gender, class and income (Esim, 2011). Esim (2011) found that while feminist methodology cannot eliminate all power hierarchies in research, focus group interviews can reduce them in research when participants are placed in groups by their social commonalities.

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<sup>23</sup> Two participants in this group were having technical difficulties which is why this focus group had so few participants. Learning from this experience, I contacted participants more often to remind them of the time and date of the virtual mini focus groups to ameliorate further difficulties.

<sup>24</sup> While it was signposted to participants that this would be a mixed group, a woman participant decided not to take part in the virtual mini focus groups due to a man being a participant in the group.

In the preliminary stages of research design development, I intended to organise qualitative methods around the central belt of Scotland to access the most diverse range of participants possible, given the financial (self-funded) and time (part-time working) limitations I faced. In the case of voter focus groups, I presumed that I would sometimes need to meet with people for semi-structured interviews to dig deeper into their responses if they did not wish to participate in a group discussion. Yet, COVID-19 impacted this research because face-to-face data collection was impossible, so methodological adaptations were made. I shifted all qualitative methods for this thesis to be conducted virtually or by telephone. All focus groups (n=10) were virtual, and almost all interviews<sup>25</sup> (n=111)<sup>26</sup> were conducted either by telephone or by an online meeting.

Although initially difficult to orchestrate, virtual focus groups offered convenience to data collection at an unprecedented time as many people were adjusting to online communication for the first time. There is limited research on feminist approaches to virtual focus groups, but I was guided by blending existing literature regarding feminist approaches to focus group discussions (Wilkinson, 1998; Montell, 1999; Pini, 2002; Campbell, 2006; Childs and Webb, 2012) and research that conducted virtual focus groups (Belzile and Öberg, 2012; Barbour and Morgan, 2017).

Virtual focus groups offered much more innovation than I initially expected in terms of accessibility to data. Participants were able to participate in the comfort of their own spaces in ways they were able to. This was a significant benefit in terms of feminist approaches to feminist data collection, as those with accessibility issues, caretaking responsibilities, busy schedules, or with anxieties regarding sharing subjective experiences had more agency in their research participation. An existing study finds that in virtual focus group discussions, participants have more control over how they participate, making them feel more at ease and without fear of judgement or discomfort (Clarke and Braun, 2019). From an intersectional lens, Clarke and Braun suggest that these aspects of virtual qualitative data collection can aid in recruiting a participant study that is beyond the norm of 'white, middle-class, able-bodied, straight participants' as virtual research spaces can breakdown hierarchical barriers so 'people might choose to participate who otherwise would not have (2019, p. 20).

I organised the focus groups with '*Yes Men/Women*' respondents first to refine the focus group interview schedule and then move forward with the lower populated categorical groups (*No* voters,

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<sup>25</sup> Both voters and elite background interviews

<sup>26</sup> One interview was in-person, and one was hand-written from responses to the interview schedule.

*Undecided* voters, *Switcher* voters) to ensure that the focus group discussion schedule was concise, well-formatted and relevant to the research questions of this thesis. Focus group participants were aware of their shared characteristics, as stated in an email sent to participants before the focus group. If participants were grouped with others with differing constitutional preferences, the discussion would not be robust and would instead become a debate. This would not be conducive to gathering data relevant to research questions. The small gender sub-group, therefore, created a 'safe space' social environment with the aim being that participants would be socially stimulated by their commonalities in voting against or for independence and then build their conversation from the shared 'perceptions and ideas of each other' (Brown, 2000, p. 5).

Semi-structured focus group questions were then posed, encouraging participants to discuss what influenced their constitutional preferences (focus group interview schedule in appendix). At the beginning of the focus group, participants were asked to describe or state the main influences shaping their constitutional attitudes. From this point, participants understood the motivations of their peers, and the conversation flowed easily. Participants were asked to reflect on their previous and current constitutional choices and how they may have changed over time. If their views towards constitutional change in Scotland had not changed, they were asked to reflect on this. Focus group participants were also asked to posit how they would vote in the event of another independence referendum. Participants were encouraged to build from each other's experiences and were often asked if they agreed or disagreed with each other. All voter focus groups were recorded, transcribed, anonymised, analysed using thematic analysis, and then open-coded in NVivo.<sup>27</sup>

Ultimately, focus group environments offered insight into holistic discussions between individuals that one-on-one interviews did not. Further, subgroup analysis of the focus groups illuminated voters' heterogeneity and untangled essentialist understandings of gendered voting groups based on attitudinal differences. When reviewing the data collected, it was evident that the virtual focus group offered a collaborative environment based on participants' constitutional attitudes. Meanings were negotiated between participants and researchers alike. Through social interaction, even virtually, identities in these groups could be elaborated. In this way, virtual focus groups

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<sup>27</sup> All ten focus group recordings were outsourced for transcribing. All personal information was removed from the recordings before outsourcing to transcription companies. All ethical parameters were followed and considered. The transcription of focus groups was fully funded by the University of Edinburgh's Research Support Fund and supported by the University of Edinburgh's School of Social and Political Science.

facilitated the analysis of gender subgroup similarities and differences in constitutional attitudes to be analysed and compared, thus explicitly answering the second and third research questions the thesis poses. Gender subgroup analysis of voters' constitutional attitudes offered answers to this thesis' second and third research questions. Focus group and interview discussions outlined which women and men are similar and differ in their constitutional preferences. Data analysis of qualitative findings also offered explanations for why men and women shared similarities and differences in their constitutional attitudes. Through interviews and focus groups, I was also able to dig deeper into the significance of factors previously identified in related research, such as risk and national identity, in shaping constitutional attitudes. This data is presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

### **Voter Interviews**

Once selection bias was mitigated for the SVB survey I created, 'No' voters were just as inclined to take the survey and respond to free-text responses as 'Yes' voters. However, 'No' voters were highly likely to request to speak in one-to-one interviews with me instead of in focus groups. This position was maintained even after assurances were made that they would be in a focus group with like-minded individuals. This pattern became increasingly evident after 'No' participants were contacted to fill out a poll to schedule a time that worked for all participants within their gender sub-group for a focus group discussion. As stated, focus groups were the primary qualitative method for the thesis to answer this thesis' research questions. Yet, due to the COVID-19 pandemic alongside the pattern amongst No participants, it was evident that a further shift in method was needed. Considering the uncertain times this research was conducted, I decided to utilise semi-structured telephone and video interviews to access the most extensive data pool possible, considering time and financial constraints.

Similar to focus groups, interviews offer an in-depth analysis of a participant's experiences. From a feminist lens, interviews can uncover 'the *subjugated knowledge* of the diversity of women's realities' and explore the lives of marginalised groups through their perspectives (Hesse-Biber, 2013, p. 184, emphasis added). However, interviews differ from focus groups in that interviews focus on one participant's experiences instead of many. As the researcher and the participant are the only two present during data collection, the singular participant takes the researcher's full attention. Due to the intimacy that in-depth interviews create between the researcher and the participant, feminist researchers are mindful of the 'researcher-researched relationship' and, therefore, the 'power and authority imbued in the researcher's role' (Hesse-Biber, 2013, p. 189). Therefore, to be mindful of the power structures between myself and the participant, I practised reflexivity throughout the

qualitative interview process, staying mindful of my positionality. I aimed to place myself and the participant on similar planes while considering our differences.

The interview schedule was semi-structured and based on the virtual focus group schedule. Similar to the focus group discussions, the semi-structured interview schedule only guided discussions instead of determining them. The questions posed to participants in each interview were the same and were customised based on voting choice, just as focus group discussions. Questions predominantly asked participants what shaped their constitutional attitudes and inquired about their voting history as described in their SVB survey responses. At the end of qualitative data collection, I interviewed 80 voters who could not participate in virtual focus group discussions or did not want to be in a group environment. The duration of these interviews was anywhere between 20 minutes to 60 minutes. Again, all followed the same interview schedule and duration was dependent on how much respondents had to say.

In-depth interview data when compounded with focus group data offered a deep contextual understanding of voters' lived experiences when analysed broadly in gendered and within-gender subgroups. Focus groups facilitated information collection from subgroups of gendered voters in a short time (approximately 90 minutes). In-depth interviews were built from survey responses collected from the SVB and added context to their constitutional attitudes. Both qualitative methods filled a gap in existing knowledge on sex, gender and constitutional attitudes and findings are presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

The breakdown of participants from qualitative data collection based on method (interviews or focus groups), gender and vote choice per gender subgroup are provided in tables for illustrative purposes in the appendices (Appendix F). Overall, data were collected from 116 Scottish voters. There were 56 women, 59 men and one non-binary participant. Regarding vote choice, there were 49 *Yes*, 49 *No*, and 18 *Undecided* voter participants. Seven participants, amongst *Yes* and *No* voters, changed their constitutional attitudes between the 2014 independence referendum and the time of data collection. All qualitative data were recorded, transcribed, anonymised, analysed using thematic analysis, and then open-coded in NVivo.

### **3.4.4 Qualitative Method Analysis**

Qualitative methods such as focus groups and interviews allow respondents to describe their lived experiences in their own words. Through their experiences, researchers can understand what shapes their political attitudes and behaviours. Childs (2002) argues that in-depth qualitative data analysis allows the respondent to 'demonstrate their reasoning and to elaborate on aspects of the

topic that they consider important' (p.176). Childs' (2002) argument is supported by Manheim et al. (2012), who argue that although what respondents say should not be treated as factual data, researchers should '*treat the fact that they said it as data*' (p.303: emphasis by author). For scholars to understand political behaviour, researchers must understand 'what people believe or claim to be true' as important as 'to know what is true' (Manheim et al., 2012, p. 303).

All interviews and focus groups were recorded, transcribed, anonymised, analysed using thematic analysis, and then open-coded in NVivo. The implementation of theme analysis of qualitative data is based on the concept that themes or codes emerge from transcripts holistically, which makes 'it possible to explore the resonance of themes' between and across qualitative data (Vromen, 2017, p. 247). Thematic categorisations from quotes emerged and were coded, analysed, and theoretically explored using a feminist research approach that explores power relations. I also analysed thematic findings considering previously identified variables significant to shaping gendered voter constitutional attitudes such as risk, national identity and age. This 'back and forth' of data exploration of thematic analysis is linked to grounded theory, where 'data collection and data analysis are conducted concurrently alongside theoretical sampling and other techniques' (Ezzy, 2002, p. 87). Grounded theory research is rooted in its data and observation analysis and argues that data should not be influenced by theory but instead develop deductively (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This thesis is not primarily established in grounded theory as I take a feminist theoretical approach to explore the interaction of sex, gender, constitutional change, and power in Scotland. However, I adopt a thematic analysis to identify common themes in voter and critical actor data inductively post-data collection instead of deductively.

Thematic categories thus emerged during open-coding data analysis (Glaser, 1978). Open coding generates an 'emergent set of [thematic] categories and their properties' (Glaser, 1978, p. 56). The process of open-coding interviews and focus group data can 'lead to new ways of understanding as new ideas are put together, or participants' interpretations are seen in a new light' (Ezzy, 2002, p. 90; for more, see Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Thematic analysis using open coding allowed me to engage with voter and critical actor narratives inductively to understand how and in what ways women and men's experiences of power in Scottish society influenced their constitutional attitudes and subsequent vote choice.

### 3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined and justified this thesis' theoretical and methodological approach to answer the research questions posed. I employed a feminist multi-method problem-driven

approach to investigating the relationship between sex, gender, and support for constitutional change. The chapter presented how feminist theory centres on societal power relations and marginalised experiences to understand inequalities. I justified the research's feminist approach by highlighting the relationship between power, gender and constitutions. Constitutions are power maps (Duchacek, 1968) and govern how power is distributed in society. As constitutions are inherently patriarchal (Irving, 2017; Vickers, 2017), a feminist lens is needed to untangle how constitutions empower and disempower certain identities and investigate how power inequalities can shape gendered differences in constitutional attitudes.

The chapter then defined and justified the problem-driven methodological approach the thesis takes to answer the puzzle of *which* women and men differ in their constitutional attitudes, *to what extent*, and *why*. In centring the puzzle, I detailed how a top-down approach using elite political data and a bottom-up approach utilising voter data was necessary to determine the relationship between power, gender, constitutional attitudes, and voting behaviour. Then, the chapter outlined the multiple methods used to address the puzzle detailing the quantitative and qualitative methods: secondary quantitative data analysis, elite background interviews, survey research, focus groups and interviews. The following chapter provides an in-depth contextual tracing and analysis of key developments in Scotland's constitutional change and futures, focusing on the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. In the following chapter, empirical findings from elite background interviews highlight the dynamic relationship between elites, campaigns, voters, and gendered attitudes.

## Chapter 4: Should Scotland be an Independent Country?

### 4.1 Introduction

Political campaigns are vital in shaping individual and aggregate voting behaviour (Denver, 1994; Holbrook, 1996; Pattie et al., 2011; Jacobson, 2015; Farrell and Schmitt-Beck, 2003). Campaigns comprise many mechanisms: political parties, individual actors, campaign teams, boards, strategists, marketing teams, movements, and citizens. Together, these parts produce a whole structure serving as a competitor in a political contest. Campaigns work to shape and influence political attitudes, belief systems, perceptions and behaviour. Analysis of campaigns largely revolves around *whether* campaigns fail or succeed in affecting behaviour, *how*, and *why*.

Much of this political science research concerns US presidential campaigns (Holbrook, 1996; Sigelman and Buell Jr., 2004; Campbell, 2008; Conway III et al., 2012), but ample research has been conducted in the UK examining varying elements of British political campaigns (Denver, 1994; Kavanagh, 1996; Ward and Gibson, 1998; Childs, 2004a; 2004b; Dean, 2010; Rosenbaum, 2016; Ward, 2017). In Scotland, research has focused on devolved parliament elections (Bennie et al., 1997; Brown et al., 1998; Johns et al., 2010; Carman et al., 2014), party campaigns (Marcella et al., 2004; Baxter and Marcella, 2014; Bennie, 2017; Mitchell et al., 2017) and changes to the electoral system (Clark and Bennie, 2008a; 2008b). The case of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum spurred recent work analysing elements of the campaigns for or against independence (Bennie, 2014; Mitchell, 2016a; Dekvalla, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2017; della Porta et al., 2017; Beasley and Kaarbo, 2018; McAngus and Rummery, 2018; Bennie et al., 2021).

As the main objective of a campaign is to win, how campaigns aim to influence and target voters is crucial. Existing research on independence campaigns highlights the importance of campaign actors, political parties and groups within the campaigns in terms of their power to influence voters and shape constitutional futures (Dekvalla, 2016; della Porta et al., 2017; Beasley and Kaarbo, 2018; Bennie et al., 2021). Feminist political science research finds that campaigns target voters in ways that are often gendered and based on hierarchal gendered power relations (Childs, 2005; Campbell and Lovenduski, 2005; Wring et al., 2007; Harmer and Wring, 2013; Campbell, 2016; Campbell and Childs, 2015a; 2015b). As previously highlighted in Chapters 2 and 3, Campbell (2016) argued that to understand gender and voting behaviour, scholars must consider both the reactions of political actors to gender gaps as well as sociological factors which shift gendered attitudes (p. 595). Yet, a gap in the literature exists in research examining how the Scottish independence campaigns were gendered and targeted voters in gendered ways.

This contextual chapter presents empirical findings from my top-down approach, filling the outlined gap. The data in this chapter provides contextual insights related to the second and third research questions that ask *which* men and women differ in their constitutional attitudes and *why*. Although empirical findings do not explicitly answer the research questions, they provide perspectives from those in power who have decision-making capabilities to influence the campaigns. This chapter demonstrates that campaign actor perspectives on voter identities are important as campaigns and voter constitutional attitudes were arguably both influenced and shaped by campaign actors' perspectives on gendered voter identities.

I conducted qualitative elite background interviews with campaign actors from both sides of the independence campaigns: Yes Scotland (pro-independence campaign) and Better Together<sup>28</sup> (anti-independence campaign), to frame the campaigns and investigate related gendered power relations. This chapter is organised based on key themes found through open coding of the elite background interviews. The thematic analysis of campaign actor perspectives and narratives offered critical insights regarding how elites viewed gendered voting groups, gendered power relations and power distribution in society. Ultimately, findings illuminate that both sides of the opposing independence campaigns viewed voters in gendered ways and targeted them as such, utilising gendered messaging and message carriers.

## 4.2 The Scottish independence referendum of 2014: a timeline

### **4.2.1 'How did we get here?'**

The question of Scottish independence has been present in Scottish politics for decades, but the degree of its salience has ebbed and flowed over time. The success of the independence movement is linked with the Scottish National Party (SNP), a political party advocating for Scottish self-governance and national sovereignty since the 1960s (Brand, 1978). However, independence became the SNP's 'rallying cry' much later than its inception (Mitchell et al. 2012, p. 20). Initially seen as a fringe party, the SNP remained in the margins of Scottish politics for its first forty years. Various actors and initiatives of the SNP played critical roles in bringing the party and, thus, Scottish self-governance to the foreground of Scottish politics. The SNP built the case for

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<sup>28</sup> The anti-independence campaign had a re-brand in early June 2014 where in which the formal name of the campaign, 'Better Together' began to use the name 'No Thanks' in campaign publicity (BBC News, 2014). The rebrand was predominantly due to the nature of the referendum question which asked voters to answer a yes/no question. This thesis will refer to the anti-independence campaign as Better Together.

independence over time in 'pragmatic and gradualist' ways, often downplaying the question of Scottish independence itself (Bennie and McAngus 2020, p. 284).

The 'It's Scotland's Oil' campaign, run by the SNP in the 1970s, was credited for helping the SNP 'burst onto the political scene in the early 1970s' (McCrone, 2005, p. 68). When oil and gas were discovered in the North Sea, the SNP argued that the oil and gas were national resources belonging to Scotland instead of jurisdictionally owned and belonging to the UK (Mechlin, 2015). With this distinction, Scottish nationalists could frame Scotland as an independent oil-rich nation and depict a future of economic prosperity for Scotland (Mitchell, 1996b). Ultimately, the 'It's Scotland's Oil' campaign illuminated the benefits of self-governance as voters began considering how the interests of Scotland diverged from the interests of the UK government (Johns and Mitchell, 2016). This campaign is relevant as it encompassed an important gendered dimension which can be seen paralleled in SNP campaign history. The campaign focused on the new heavily male-dominated oil industry, but the key figure was Margo MacDonald, a female SNP politician. Although the strategists behind the campaign were largely Donald Bain and Gordon Wilson, the real impact of the campaign came in the 1973 by-election where MacDonald won Govan's seat. MacDonald championed the issue of Scotland's oil and gas throughout the late 1970s while linking it to socio-economic issues with broader implications for Scotland. MacDonald was one of many influential female candidates for the SNP, as was another female SNP candidate, Winnie Ewing, who was described as 'the face of Scottish nationalism in the late 1960s' (Mitchell et al., 2009, p. 1).

Ewing and MacDonald were not alone as influential women leading the movement for Scottish self-governance, as the SNP had several high-profile women in its leadership (Mitchell et al., 2009, p. 1). In the 1970s, Tom Dalyell, a prominent Labour politician, stated that the creation of a Scottish parliament was linked to sentimentality and emotion (1977, p. 224). Therefore, he remarked that the SNP was the 'woman's party' as the SNP supported the creation of a Scottish parliament (Dalyell, 1977, p. 224; for more, see Mitchell et al., 2009, p. 2). Dalyell stated that he believed women were 'more emotional about their politics than men'; therefore, the SNP's desire for a Scottish parliament was entwined with feminine emotion (Dalyell, 1977, p. 224). Yet, at the same time, the party historically garnered more male support than female (Mitchell et al., 2009; Mackay and Kenny, 2009; Johns et al., 2011; Bale et al., 2005). This imbalance is unusual compared to other parties in Britain, which aggregately garner similar levels of support (Miller, 1981; Campbell, 2006).

Brand (1978) followed the SNP's timeline towards independence and found two internal arguments for the party: the firm belief in the right of self-governance and the need for a more

responsive self-fulfilling government as opposed to Westminster (pp. 8-18). Following the failure of the 1979 devolution referendum, the SNP turned its back on devolution as they saw it as a trap designed to block Scottish independence and, therefore, a block to its values of Scottish self-governance and national sovereignty. With internal factionalism rippling through the SNP in 1979, the party banned internal factions at the 1982 SNP conference. The SNP's goal of self-governance hardened after 1979 for a period. Prior to devolution, the Labour party dominated Scottish politics (Keating and Bleiman, 1979). Scholars argue that the end of Labour's hold on Scottish politics occurred in 1999 once the additional member system (AMS) was adopted in Scotland (Bennie and Clark, 2007, p. 137). In the 1999 Scottish Parliament elections, the SNP emerged from the fringes (Brand et al., 1994, p. 617; Levy, 1990) and became the Labour-Liberal Democrat Executive's opposition (Bennie and Clark, 2007, p. 138). When devolution occurred and the Scottish Parliament originated, the SNP began to make serious gains in 2007 and 2011 (Johns and Mitchell, 2016). Johns and Mitchell (2016) analysed the SNP's timeline since October 1974 and found that its success had long been in scope due to its influence in shifting constitutional attitudes in Scotland in terms of how Scotland should be governed and by whom.

#### **4.2.2 Calling the Referendum**

After organisational and leadership changes to the party, the SNP under Alex Salmond very narrowly pulled ahead of Labour by winning 46 seats at Holyrood in 2007. According to SES 2007 and 2011 data, there was little support for independence during the 2007 and 2011 SNP gains. SES data indicated that support for Scottish independence was 25-27 per cent (SES, 2011). This figure evidenced that while the SNP won the 2007 Scottish Parliament election, its success was not due to its commitment to Scottish independence alone (Curtice, 2009; McCrone, 2009; Johns and Mitchell, 2016). Rather, Johns and Mitchell (2016) argue that the SNP's support for independence indicated to voters that the SNP put Scotland first and, thereby, was a pro-Scottish party. Therefore, the SNP's independence position provided a strong voting base and indirectly influenced voter support. By 2009, the agreement that independence was the priority was widespread throughout the SNP, with all else of secondary concern (Mitchell et al., 2009, p. 75).

The SNP became the largest party in the Scottish Parliament and a minority government. The Scottish Government under the SNP launched the 'National Conversation' in 2007, the Scottish Government's public initiative to discuss further changes to Scottish devolution such as 'devolution max' and independence. The SNP succeeded in re-election in 2011 and secured a majority in the Scottish Parliament. While Holyrood arguably did not have the legal competence to hold a constitutional referendum, Scotland's right to self-determination and governance was

acknowledged by the UK government (Keating, 2009; Tickell, 2016), although this was a disputed area. Nevertheless, the UK government desired input on when and how a referendum would occur. After the publication of the Scottish Government's 'Your Scotland, Your Referendum' and the UK government's publication of 'Scotland's Constitutional Future', it was evident that a political agreement between the two would be necessary as opposed to a legal agreement. Signed in October 2012, the Edinburgh Agreement detailed when the referendum would occur, who could vote, and the nature of the question posed to the electorate<sup>29</sup> (Dardanelli and Mitchell, 2014; Mitchell, 2016a; Tickell, 2016). The referendum was to follow the regulations outlined in the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA). The legitimacy of the independence referendum was confirmed upon the success of the Edinburgh Agreement, as it showed both governments were in consensus on the conditions outlined (Mitchell, 2016a).

In March 2013, a date for the independence referendum was set. On 18 September 2014, the Scottish electorate would be asked, 'Should Scotland be an independent country?' and prompted to choose 'Yes' or 'No'. Either result would have immense constitutional consequences.

#### 4.3 The Campaigns: Yes Scotland versus Better Together (2011-2014)

As the referendum question required a yes/no answer, the PERA regulations required each side of the debate to have a designated lead organisation. The anti-independence or unionist campaign, Better Together, consisted of the Conservative Party, the Labour Party, and the Liberal Democrat Party. The pro-independence campaign, Yes Scotland, consisted of the SNP and the Scottish Greens, who enlisted the help of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP).<sup>30</sup> From the outset of the campaign, it was clear that political parties and the actors within the parties were to play a critical role in the campaigns. PERA regulations outlined that the 'official' campaign period of the referendum would take place from 30 May to 18 September 2014. Each side of the campaign was allotted £1.5 million to spend on their respective campaigns.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the battle for Scotland began.

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<sup>29</sup> The Edinburgh Agreement outlined that the referendum would be held before the end of 2014, the Electoral Commission would provide advice on the nature of the question, and that the vote would be extended to young adults aged 16 and 17 years old (Tierney, 2013; Tickell, 2016; McHarg, 2016).

<sup>30</sup> Distinct from political parties, other prominent groups worked alongside the Yes Scotland campaign including Common Weal, National Collection, the Radical Independence Campaign (RIC) and Women for Independence (WFI) (Bennie et al., 2020). Lynch (2017) found that although these groups were concentrated in the central belt, a community was created that was organised and had an informal feel.

<sup>31</sup> While the opposing campaigns each included actors from political parties, the parties themselves were also designated campaign bodies and permitted to spend money along with other individuals and organisations. The

The following sections will present empirical findings from semi-structured campaign actor interviews, moving from the broad to the specific. I first outline the broad structure of the campaigns and reference general themes and characteristics. I present the importance of the beliefs and perceptions of the campaign actors as their belief systems influenced the campaigns and, in turn, likely shaped voters' constitutional attitudes. Then, I evaluate the gendered dimensions of the campaigns, considering gendered power relations between actors and network groups, actor knowledge of the sex gap in constitutional attitudes, gendered perceptions of voters, and the gendered nature of the campaigns.

### 4.3.1 Campaign Themes

The respective campaigns shared the same goal of influencing voter attitudes. However, due to the binary nature of the referendum question, themes used in campaign messaging and debates differed across the campaigns.

#### Yes Scotland

Findings from actor interviews demonstrate that the Yes Scotland campaign was primarily centred around social justice, with the phrase 'Hope over fear' often used amongst *Yes* groups. In an interview with Yes Scotland's campaign strategist, he outlined the primary thematic aspects of the pro-independence campaign.

One was in terms of economic prosperity. Two was in terms of social justice, you know, a less unequal society. And the third aspect of it was a democratic argument around, 'Let us make sure that Scotland gets governments which reflect the political composition of the people here, and you don't end up [with a] government that we didn't vote for, and which doesn't align with us politically. So, we started rolling out in sequence those three arguments.'<sup>32</sup>

Interviews with other *Yes* campaign actors were consistent with this quote in outlining what was crucial for the *Yes* campaign. Key themes emerge related to the economy, equality, democracy, representation, and power in the quote. The actor describes a difference between the political composition of people in Scotland versus the rest of the UK. He suggests Scottish voters experience a democratic deficit and alludes to negative feelings towards the government in

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European Commission (EC) set limits on spending, but the totals were largely the same for *Yes* and *No* but varied in distribution to reflect party imbalances existing at the time. Due to this, the SNP was able to spend more money than other parties as it was the only major pro-independence party. The Scottish Greens, for example, were a minor party and did not have the funds to spend.

<sup>32</sup> Elite Background Interview (EBI) 19 - Yes Scotland, campaign director, male

Westminster. The benefits of independence evoke wealth, a fairer society, and improved democratic representation.

### **Better Together**

A Better Together campaign actor outlined campaign messaging goals, and themes such as economy, power and democracy emerged.

We were so determined not to be thrown off our strategy that the arguments that we made were [...] very instrumental. So, it was [...] about economic insecurity, it was about the things that you'd lose in terms of, you know, currency, financial security, funding of public services, jobs, trade, things like that. And that was powerful. And that was what the voters cared about. (We) said to people, 'you can have some of what you like from nationalism and distinctiveness. But [...] you can keep what you like about being part of the union, the financial security and the security that comes from being part of something bigger.'<sup>33</sup>

The benefits of staying in the union support existing securities, such as possessing the same currency, economic stability, and a larger pot to help support public services. The *No* campaign's core theme was security; no novel changes would exist, and the status quo would remain the same. A prominent *No* politician compared the two sides:

We bang(ed) home a message about currency, the Bank of England, the lender of last resort [...] they never promised that Scotland would be socially more progressive or fairer. I mean, [the *No* campaign] just didn't go there. [...] Almost everything they said was about banging home an economic message.'<sup>34</sup>

As the politician actor stated, Yes Scotland made more promises regarding a more equal and fairer society in an independent Scotland. Excerpts from the white paper entitled 'Scotland's Future' (2013) highlighted this focus, with messages stating that Scotland would be 'healthier', 'more educated', 'equal', and 'more prosperous' (pp. 3-541). Themes from the campaigns have been well-established in research and are important to consider during voting behaviour analysis since campaign themes are created with the voter in mind. Yet, an in-depth analysis examining how voters responded to these themes in gendered ways has not been analysed and will be explored more in chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis. By integrating the previously outlined themes, campaign

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<sup>33</sup> EBI 11 - Better Together, campaign director, male

<sup>34</sup> EBI 6 - Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

strategies were employed to reach voters and influence voting behaviour. Empirical data highlighted the importance of critical actors in shaping these strategies.

#### 4.3.2 Campaign Strategies: Beliefs and Myths (2011-2012)

Actor interviews pointed to differences and similarities in how the respective campaigns approached their strategies. Broadly, approaches to the campaign strategies were distinct, sharing similarities only in general campaign structure with teams, boards, and political parties. When actors described campaign approaches, insights were offered regarding how power was structured within the campaigns and where power was held.

##### Yes Scotland

A campaign actor in the Yes Scotland campaign team<sup>35</sup> reflected on their early hopes for the campaign, stating the campaign would ‘be about what people were saying to each other in their communities’. He expanded on this topic and described how the Yes Scotland team moved away from using terms such as ‘activists’ and ‘activist groups’ and instead operationalised terms such as ‘volunteers’ and ‘campaign communities’ to describe their supporters. This interesting finding sheds light on how actors wanted the *Yes* campaign to be framed to voters as a community-based movement instead of political activism. He described the campaign vision of Yes Scotland:

I talked a bit to the SNP about the kind of campaign I thought [Yes Scotland] should be, which [was] community-based, very localised. I said I thought it should be a campaign unlike anything Scotland had seen before and should [...] have proximity to people. [...] We always thought of ourselves not as a political campaign but as a movement. And that was where we thought we could appeal to people [...] We always saw it as a community, grassroots movement.

This quote displays the SNP’s power regarding the *Yes* campaign’s strategy. This quote illustrates the power relations between the Yes Scotland campaign team and the SNP. The Yes Scotland campaign team consulted with the SNP to gain approval to make campaign decisions. The actor illustrates how the *Yes* campaign strategised to appeal to voters. Further interviews with actors highlighted this analysis of power relations within the *Yes* movement regarding strategy and funds. One actor stated that Yes Scotland was ‘set up by the SNP, for the SNP, with the SNP, it was very much their entity’<sup>36</sup>. Other *Yes* actors stated that much of the money spent by Yes Scotland came

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<sup>35</sup> EBI 19 - Yes Scotland, campaign director, male

<sup>36</sup> EBI 20 - Yes Scotland, board member and *Yes* politician, male

from SNP sources, both directly and indirectly.<sup>37</sup> This finding is supported by existing literature stating that Yes Scotland local groups were set up by the SNP and run by local SNP activists in the first instance and, in time, attracted other supporters (Bennie et al., 2020, p. 1187). Interviews with campaign actors and elites from either side illustrated that Yes Scotland was an SNP-devised strategy and, ultimately, the SNP held the power regarding campaign influence.

Themes regarding grassroots mobilisation and community also emerge in the previous quote. Another *Yes* actor stated that the Yes Scotland campaign felt grassroots, while ‘the Better Together campaign felt institutional’, and the two campaigns were distinct due to the ‘proliferation of local and sectoral *Yes* campaign groups’.<sup>38</sup> Although Yes Scotland’s campaign would be known by some for its grassroots organisation (Adamson and Lynch, 2014), the claim that Yes Scotland was purely a grassroots movement is complex. Interviews with Yes Scotland actors exemplify that the Yes Scotland campaign was highly sophisticated in data gathering and employed professional marketing teams.<sup>39</sup> Actors describe that local groups were mobilising to support independence but that most of this grassroots mobilisation depended on the SNP-made campaign strategy. Yet, findings support that regardless of whether the campaign was grassroots, there was consensus that the *Yes* campaign should appear or be perceived as a grassroots movement.

As described in Chapter 3, the belief systems of campaign actors and voters are crucial influences on political perceptions and political behaviour. Sometimes, these beliefs are contingent, complex, contradictory and centre around political myths. Mythmaking is common in Scottish politics regarding Scotland’s history, culture and Scottish identity (Hassan, 2014; Mooney and Scott, 2016; Engström, 2016; della Porta, 2017, p. 44; Engström, 2019; Engström, 2020). The emergence of Scottish political myth during data collection was unexpected but evident in actor and voter interviews in shaping constitutional attitudes. This thesis operationalises Flood’s (2002) definition of ‘political myth’ as a form of political-ideological discourse cast as a political story. Political myth aims to give a ‘true account of a set of past, present, or predicted political events’ and is ‘accepted as valid in its essentials by a social group’ (Flood, 2002, p. 44). Scholars find that Scottish political myths often lack substantive evidence but are politically potent in shaping beliefs, perceptions and attitudes amongst Scottish political actors, elites and voters alike (Mooney and Scott, 2016; Engström, 2016, 2019,2020). The abundance of political myths in qualitative data collection

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<sup>37</sup> EBI 18, EBI 15, EBI 16, EBI 21

<sup>38</sup> EBI 20 - Yes Scotland, board member and *Yes* politician, male

<sup>39</sup> EBI 15, EBI 17, EBI 21 – all Yes Scotland, all male

uncovered in data analysis illuminates the importance of perception and belief systems to how constitutional attitudes are shaped and thus reflected in voting behaviour. The belief that the *Yes* campaign was predominantly grassroots was believed by voters and actors alike and had roots in Scottish political myths.

### **Better Together**

Early in the analysis, I discovered that political myths about the campaign strategy extended beyond the grassroots nature of the *Yes* Scotland campaign.<sup>40</sup> Better Together actors believed mythmaking was central to the *Yes* campaign and constrained *Yes* campaign messaging. A Better Together politician stated that the ‘only limit of the *Yes* campaign was their imagination’ because it did not need to be rooted in reality as the very nature of constitutional change ‘could change everything as we know it’.<sup>41</sup> The actor stated that the Better Together side was ‘constrained by arithmetic’ to prove that Scotland would not be better off as an independent country and deal with ‘facts’ instead of ‘hope’.<sup>42</sup> Another actor from Better Together stated their campaign was less emotional and more a ‘factually-based negative campaign’,<sup>43</sup> while another stated that the core job of the Better Together campaign was to ‘present facts to people that were often depressing’.<sup>44</sup> The belief that the respective campaigns were ‘a war between positivity and negativity’ was present in actor<sup>45</sup> and voter interviews and reflected findings in previous campaign studies (McAnulla and Crines, 2017; Pedersen et al., 2014).

Data analysis of actor perspectives indicated that *Yes* actors were more likely to make positive statements about their campaign, while *No* actors were more likely to make negative statements about their campaign. For example, one female campaign actor involved in the *No* campaign stated that the environment in the lead-up to the referendum across both sides was ‘hostile’ and not a ‘joyous civic event’ as it was ‘deeply divisive’.<sup>46</sup> She stated that she and the other women in the *No* campaign would get ‘targeted badly’ online and that ‘it (the campaign trail) didn’t feel very civic or very inclusive’.<sup>47</sup> Other female actors involved in the *No* campaigns expressed similar negative

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<sup>40</sup> Political myth was entrenched in both sides of the debate but were especially present in voter beliefs. This will be discussed more in Chapters 6 and 7 which present voter findings.

<sup>41</sup> EBI 5 - Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

<sup>42</sup> EBI 5 - Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

<sup>43</sup> EBI 7 – Better Together, board of directors, female

<sup>44</sup> EBI 10 - Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

<sup>45</sup> EBI 14 - Better Together, board member, female

<sup>46</sup> EBI 10 - Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

<sup>47</sup> EBI 10 - Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

feelings about the campaigns,<sup>48</sup> raising questions regarding the gendered nature of the campaign structures and organisations.

### 4.3.3 Campaign Structure and Gender

As stated, campaign strategy is concerned with influencing voter political behaviour and is also shaped by voter behaviour. As the campaigns were either for or against independence, these campaigns held power in shaping constitutional attitudes and futures. As described in Chapter 3, feminist theoretical approaches to political science argue that political and institutional structures are inherently gendered due to patriarchal societal norms. Because of this, political structures such as campaigns and constitutions are both sites where societal gendered power relations can be studied. This section picks up where the last left off by applying a feminist lens to the structure of the independence campaigns, analysing how power was gendered and distributed in the respective *Yes* and *No* campaigns.

#### Yes Scotland

Actors in decision-making positions in both campaigns were predominantly male. A Women for Independence (WFI) member, a pro-independence women's movement organisation, reflected on the gender imbalance in the Yes Scotland and Better Together teams.

I believe that most of the discussions from both the *Yes* and the *No* side didn't really care about them (women). Those debates, you know, that were between some political person on either side, with two boys talking about currency, neither one of them cared about those women. And that was crystal clear.<sup>49</sup>

A descriptive analysis of the campaign teams and interviews supported this analysis. Both campaigns had two male leaders: Blair McDougall (Better Together) and Blair Jenkins (Yes Scotland).<sup>50</sup> A female SNP marketing strategist stated that 'the tone of some of what the emergent pro-Indy groups, Yes Scotland outwith the SNP, as well as within the SNP were pretty male dominated'.<sup>51</sup> This participant reflected that although the Yes Scotland board was deemed

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<sup>48</sup> EBI 7, EBI 14, EBI 5, EBI 8

<sup>49</sup> EBI 16 – WFI leader, female

<sup>50</sup> Blair McDougall was the chief campaign strategist of Better Together and Blair Jenkins was the chief executive of Yes Scotland. The chief campaign strategist for Yes Scotland was Stephen Noon, also male.

<sup>51</sup> EBI 22 - SNP marketing strategist and WFI member, female

‘impeccably’ gender-balanced,<sup>52</sup> men dominated the campaign strategy team.<sup>53</sup> Another *Yes* participant stated that ‘the staff hired by Yes Scotland were – well, there was a big gender imbalance in terms of the number of men and the number of women.’<sup>54</sup>

### **Better Together**

This gender imbalance was also mirrored in the gender makeup of powerful actors who were leading the Better Together campaign. Discussions with actors suggested how the gender imbalance in positions of power impacted the respective campaigns.

Better Together was very male-dominated, though. So almost all of the staff in the Better Together campaign and the senior staff in the Better Together campaign were men. The one exception was the head of events, Kate Watson. So again, she was in a role which I guess you could view as quite gendered. She wasn’t the head of policy. She wasn’t the head of press. She was head of events. So [the team was] very young, very male, which definitely led to mistakes around things like you’ll have seen in the cereal video. That monologue from the woman talking about the economy in her kitchen, where she is presented as just not being that bright, and therefore she must be on (the *No*) side.<sup>55</sup>

In the course of [the Better Together] campaign, I was one of the lone female voices shouting at them (the campaign strategy team), patiently, of course [*laughs*]. I don’t know if you saw, but there was an awful advert with a woman eating cereal [researcher affirms to be aware of advert]. Men produced it. [...] So, it was entirely a kind of, you know, in-the-head exercise rather than an emotional one. Anybody with an ounce of emotion that was a woman would have stopped those going out.<sup>56</sup>

The Better Together actor refers to a well-known advert titled *The woman who made up her mind* that featured a woman, often called ‘the Cereal Woman.’ In the advert, the Cereal Woman is alone in her kitchen and speaks to the camera, confiding her feelings of uncertainty towards Scottish independence. The Cereal Woman discussed her family, children, and husband in the advert. The Cereal Woman stated that her husband frequently asks her whether she has decided how she will vote in the referendum. The Cereal Woman confides that she told her husband it was too early to discuss politics and that he should eat cereal. Yet, in this quiet moment, after the children are at

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<sup>52</sup> EBI 11 – Better Together, campaign director, male

<sup>53</sup> EBI 22 - SNP marketing strategist and WFI member, female; EBI 18 - Yes Scotland, board member and member of WFI, female; EBI 6 - Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

<sup>54</sup> EBI 19 - Yes Scotland, campaign director, male

<sup>55</sup> EBI 6 - Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

<sup>56</sup> EBI 10 – Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

school and her husband is at work, she begins to review whether an independent Scotland would keep the same currency. She questions whether Scottish oil can pay for her children's education or her parents' pension. She stresses the permanency of independence and worries about her children's and grandchildren's futures. At the end of the advert, she decides to vote against Scottish independence as it is a gamble, and she does not want to gamble her children's future (BetterTogetherUK, 2014).

The advert provides evidence that the Better Together campaign targeted undecided women. The advert also illuminates how they aimed to connect with undecided women and what they wanted undecided women to retain about the referendum. There are many themes to unpack in this aired advert which are gendered and relate to hierarchical power structures in society. Firstly, the Cereal Woman stresses the importance of her children's constitutional futures. The fictional Cereal Woman based her decision on her children and was only pressured to decide through her husband's insistence. In the advert, it is evident that her husband is voting *Yes*, and he is doing so because he believes it is what is 'best for Scotland' (BetterTogetherUK, 2014). Normative gendered power relations between a husband and wife are palpable, with the husband being the breadwinner of the family and she a stay-at-home mother. In the case of the advert, the husband is more interested in the independence referendum than the Cereal Woman. This advert leans into the substantial claims in literature which state that women are less interested in politics than men. The Cereal Woman highlights her feelings of political uncertainty and harnesses her fear of risk to conclude that she should vote against independence. In this media framing, the *No* campaign leans into women's aversion to risk and prioritisation of family to influence constitutional attitudes. The advert was met with mixed responses but was well-known amongst actors and voters in my data collection and a prominent gendered feature of the independence campaigns (Law, 2015; McAngus and Rummery, 2018).

In the previous actor quote, the Better Together female actor reflects on how male campaign members developed the campaign strategy around the advert without much input from the women in the campaign. She stated that the advert is 'awful'<sup>57</sup>, but her analysis suggests that she believes women work more emotionally, whereas the men in the campaign were working with their heads. She reflected on her experience as a woman on the team and stated that the women in the campaign worked hard to ensure 'women were a feature' but said that the men in the campaign

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<sup>57</sup> EBI 10 – Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

were focused elsewhere<sup>58</sup>. She stated, ‘unless it is literally in your DNA, it’s not the thing you think about [...] a lot of them were spending their time with academics, all male.’<sup>59</sup> This quote suggests that the male-dominated campaign teams were also forming relationships in networks beyond the formal organisations of the campaign that were also predominantly male. Another female *No* actor stated that the Better Together campaign consisted of ‘a lot of men with quite big egos who were always wanting to have the last word’.<sup>60</sup> Another female *No* actor stated, ‘They were all guys; it was a whole bunch of men that sat down and thought that the cereal video was a good idea’.<sup>61</sup>

These findings regarding the gender imbalance on the boards are important as they highlight how the campaigns were shaped by gendered understandings of voters from the top down regarding voter identities. Actors in powerful positions were typically men and responsible for developing a strategy for influencing and targeting voters. Male campaign strategists said the advert’s script was written based on responses from focus group discussions with women. The gendered analysis of the production of the media advert raises key questions regarding how the campaigns collected information regarding voter attitudes. If actors were creating media for gendered voting groups based on voter data, they collected independently, understanding how and in what ways this data was collected and gendered is relevant.

#### 4.3.4 Campaign Voter Data Collection

Data collected about voter identities contribute to how campaigns perceive and target voters. Further, analysing how campaign actors’ practices and interpretations were gendered is crucial to understanding the sex gap in constitutional attitudes since these perceptions shaped the campaigns.

#### Yes Scotland

Yes Scotland groups emerged across Scotland, initially populated predominantly by SNP party members. They soon incorporated other members of the pro-independence campaign (‘non-SNP supporters, Scottish Socialists, Scottish Greens, some nonaligned to any political party’<sup>62</sup>). A *Yes* board member reflected on the organisation of the Yes Scotland campaign in local areas and how data regarding the electorate was collected. He stated that the local groups were difficult to direct,

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<sup>58</sup> EBI 10 – Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

<sup>59</sup> EBI 10 – Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

<sup>60</sup> EBI 14 - Better Together, board member, female

<sup>61</sup> EBI 6 - Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

<sup>62</sup> EBI 15 - Yes Scotland, campaign team, male

stating ‘so, the Yes Scotland movement and campaign for those two years was both attractively and frustratingly uncontrollable’.<sup>63</sup> Interviews with the *Yes* campaign team and board of directors indicated that data was collected by Yes Scotland ‘volunteers’ through door-knocking, who then plugged the collected information into a ‘Yesmo’ database. Interviews also confirmed that the SNP was funding the collection of voter preferences and attitude data gauging the support for independence since 2007. When asked how support for constitutional change was measured in data collected by the pro-independence side, a local team organiser and campaigner<sup>64</sup> outlined the procedures.

It was this one to ten scale. One being [...] not into independence at all through to ten being 100 % committed to independence. So, we used that as a very broad mechanism for identifying levels of support. And I mean, Yes Scotland’s campaign through lack of money [...] was basic in terms of its use of information [...] the SNP, they wouldn’t let any information out [...] So, we concentrated on [voters who stated they were] four to seven [on the scale] as the people we wanted to speak to.

A Yes Scotland local campaigner<sup>65</sup> stated that, in their view, they had two years to persuade undecided voters to support independence and that the first year of campaigning was a ‘slow burn’ predominantly focused on the spread of information about independence and the referendum. Another Yes Scotland member supported this<sup>66</sup> while adding that it was ‘always’ more women were undecided, whereas younger men were more likely to say they would ‘definitely do one thing or the other’. He went on to state that the wealthier the voter was, the more likely they were to say their decision regarding the referendum was ‘out of mind’, but that ‘the poorer were far more likely to decide quicker’.<sup>67</sup>

Key themes emerge regarding power, gender and subgroups from these quotes. Firstly, the *Yes* local campaigner stated that the local *Yes* campaigns did not utilise the data they collected regarding voter behaviour and rather, the SNP held voter data collected by the *Yes* groups. Again, there is evidence of a power hierarchy within the *Yes* campaign, which perhaps contradicts the mythical grassroots persona the *Yes* campaign portrayed. While communities were working ‘from below’ (della Porta, 2017) in local areas, the *Yes* movement’s power structure was organised with the SNP

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<sup>63</sup> EBI 21 - Yes Scotland board member, pro-independence party leader, male

<sup>64</sup> EBI 17 - Yes Scotland, local *Yes* group organiser and SNP campaigner, male

<sup>65</sup> EBI 19 - Yes Scotland, campaign director, male

<sup>66</sup> EBI 15 - Yes Scotland, campaign team, male

<sup>67</sup> EBI 15 - Yes Scotland, campaign team, male

at the top of the power chain, with men predominantly at the top of these power structures. The latter actor further supports that a scale was used to define undecided voters, which were largely women.

Furthermore, this actor expands on his campaign experiences, stating that there were disparities among participants in other identity groups regarding income levels, age, and geography. Here, we see how subgroup analysis is crucial to how constitutional attitudes were perceived by those collecting data regarding voter identities. Although some of these actors were working ‘from below’ or at the bottom of the power chain, their interpretations of the voters flowed up towards the top.

### **Better Together**

The Better Together and Yes Scotland campaigns used similar methods of targeting the electorate. Both campaigns collected qualitative and quantitative data from voters on their constitutional attitudes at the doorstep and through large-scale surveys and focus groups. They then used the data to inform campaign decisions and canvassing strategies. A prominent politician from the ‘No’ side stated that ‘the overarching Better Together polling was consistent and stratified the same way throughout the campaign’.<sup>68</sup> This statement was confirmed by a Better Together campaign strategist, who stated that Better Together used a sample of two thousand participants to measure voter attitudes throughout the campaigns. He described the scales used to measure support<sup>69</sup> which showed similarities to the scales used by the *Yes* canvassers.

So, our (Better Together) modelling had people position themselves on a scale of 1 to 100, where zero was very likely to vote for independence, and 100 was very likely to vote to stay in the UK. And then we tried to dig deeper into that [...] when we did, we found more going on beneath the surface.<sup>70</sup>

Both sides were particularly interested in targeting undecided voters. In the initial stages of the campaign (2011-2013), data gathered by both sides confirmed that minimal shifts occurred in constitutional attitudes for *Yes* and *No* voters,<sup>71</sup> and therefore their focus drew to those in the middle. In this quote, the actor describes how door-to-door canvassing drew complex data that

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<sup>68</sup> EBI 6 – Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

<sup>69</sup> EBI 11 – Better Together, campaign director, male

<sup>70</sup> EBI 11 – Better Together, campaign director, male

<sup>71</sup> EBI 11 – Better Together, campaign director, male; EBI 19 – Yes Scotland, campaign director, male; EBI 11 – Better Together, campaign director, male; EBI 15 – Yes Scotland, campaign team, male

required further investigation. I probed the actor, and he began to outline how and to what extent the Better Together campaign began to analyse voters through subgroups. When probed, Yes Scotland also indicated they targeted voter subgroups in gendered ways. Better Together, specifically, divided the electorate in gendered ways, often creating hypothetical vignettes for voting groups depending on the perceived milieu of their social characteristics. The following sections outline how voters were segmented and targeted by both campaigns.

#### 4.4 Targeting Voters

Data from elite background interviews added context to existing knowledge regarding *which* men and women were targeted, *why* and *how*. Interviews with campaign actors revealed two reasons for targeting gendered voting groups. Firstly, actors within the campaigns were aware of the well-documented sex gap in constitutional attitudes in Scotland, evidenced in voting behaviour surveys and accompanying media frames. Additionally, as campaigns conducted their own primary research, the sex gaps persisted in campaign research on both sides.

##### **4.4.1 Knowledge of the Sex Gaps**

The question of how political elites interpret sex gaps in constitutional attitudes is under-researched and crucial to answering this thesis's third research question, which asks *which* women and men differed in their constitutional attitudes. Since campaign actor perspectives and beliefs on voter identities shaped the independence campaigns and voting behaviour shapes campaigns, exploring which voter identities were of significance to the campaigns is crucial. Across all 23 elite background interviews, every actor was aware of the sex gap in support of constitutional attitudes more generally and for the SNP specifically. Interview sources stated that targeting voters based on sex was the dominant method of voter targeting. Participants stated that other background characteristics were also considered in voter targeting, yet not to the same degree as sex. The following quotes outline campaign actor perspectives and beliefs concerning the sex gap as well as perceptions about male and female voters.

The gender issue was so significant that everybody thought about it [...] So you know, there was that gender<sup>72</sup> gap that we know about women when you look at, you know, big constitutional change. What do they consider? What are their issues

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<sup>72</sup> As described in earlier chapters, the sex gap in constitutional attitudes was referred to as the 'gender' gap as sex and gender are commonly conflated both outside and inside academic communities.

and such like? And, of course, the nationalists realised that, too and did a huge amount of effective work engaging with them.<sup>73</sup>

Forty per cent of people were definitely going to vote *No*. Thirty per cent of people were definitely going to vote *Yes*. Thirty per cent of people were up for grabs; we needed to get a third of them to get over the line. [...] And the gender advantage we had amongst women contributed very significantly towards that 40 per cent.<sup>74</sup>

It was very clear then, in the very first bit of polling that we had on the *No* side, we had a, you know, a predominance of female support, which we consider to be exceptionally valuable because women were also influential in terms of their partners, and their children, and their parents.<sup>75</sup>

In terms of the gender gap, I think I was aware for a long time before [the referendum]. Certainly, in terms of support for the SNP, I think there probably was a gender gap of long-standing, which is, in some ways, quite ironic because the SNP has a history and tradition of very strong and formidable women.<sup>76</sup>

These quotes highlight a range of elite perspectives on the sex gap and primarily indicate the significance of the sex gap; one quote, in particular, features normative understandings of gender based on societal norms. For example, one actor deems women as highly influential voters due to their influence over their family members, such as their partners, parents and children. This actor taps into themes relating to women's role as caretakers but highlights their influence on those they care for. In the last quote, the actor highlights the irony of the SNP being less popular amongst women, although the party has featured prominent female politicians. This statement suggests the actor believes women are more likely to support women politicians, a well-studied concept in research (Newman, 1996; Dolan, 1998; Campbell and Heath, 2017).

Critically, as outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, related academic research on the sex gap focuses on why the pro-independence side has been less popular amongst female voters (Johns et al., 2011; Ormston, 2013a; 2013b; Curtice, 2014; Henderson, 2015). Interviews with campaign actors highlighted that women's opposition to independence was also a key point in campaign research. Yet, the converse is also important in answering the research questions; the puzzle requires understanding why independence is popular amongst male voters.

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<sup>73</sup> EBI 8 – Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

<sup>74</sup> EBI 3 – Better Together, board member and *No* politician, male

<sup>75</sup> EBI 4 – Better Together, board member and *No* politician, male

<sup>76</sup> EBI 22 – SNP marketing strategist and WFI member, female

The polling showed that women were less likely to shift to the SNP politically than men. So, when the SNP was, now this is pre-referendum, there was a sense that men were more likely to be attracted to the whole language around the nation and flag and all the rest of it. I think women were more sceptical [...] if women are managing family budgets and looking after children, the risk thing would probably be big for them.<sup>77</sup>

The actor posits the sex gap in constitutional attitudes and considers SNP support. Again, we see traditional beliefs regarding gendered political behaviour used to explain the sex gaps. The actor associated masculinity with patriotism and nationhood. This quote alludes to the belief that men are more likely to have a strong affinity to their Scottish identity, whereas women are less likely to have such an attitude due to their concern for caretaking and managing family finances. We see the emergence of a key theme in existing literature and gender gap literature more broadly: women's propensity to be risk-averse, which is a key component of gendered messaging. These quotes, however, illustrate how Yes Scotland and Better Together understood their advantages and disadvantages with either sex early in the campaigns. Yet, when probed further, it became clear that campaigns went beyond segmenting gendered voting groups in binary measures of only men and women. Rather, the respective campaigns dug further with their polling and found differences between and within gendered voting groups.

#### **4.4.2 Gendered Messaging for Gender Groups and Subgroups**

The knowledge of a sex gap will mobilise electoral campaigns to target gendered groups and subgroups in gendered ways (Campbell, 2016). Campaign actor interviews demonstrate the data-gathering sophistication of both campaigns and how the campaigns were shaped around gendered voting groups and subgroups based on evidence from their independent campaign research. Both the pro-independence and anti-independence sides consciously targeted women as a voting bloc and different subgroups of women voters using risk messaging, economic uncertainty (Better Together), and opportunities for change and equality (Yes Scotland, Women for Independence).

##### **Yes Scotland and Women for Independence**

I found that Yes Scotland campaign actors had highly gendered perceptions regarding women as voters, which linked to normative gendered understandings of women in society. Yes Scotland campaign actors' perceptions indicated that women were targeted both as a monolithic voting bloc

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<sup>77</sup> EBI 5 – Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

but also in gendered subgroups of different women. The following quotes highlight an analysis of women voters as a voting bloc from Yes Scotland's predominantly male campaign strategy team. Themes related to gender difference theory, such as ethics of care (Gilligan, 1982) and stereotypes regarding motherhood, children's futures, caretaking, family, and risk-aversion, emerge.

People who thought of society as a whole [as opposed to distinct, separate parts] were more inclined to be *Yes* supporters. [...] There is a close corollary between the attitudes of young women looking after their kids, all the women looking after their mum and dad, teachers, nurses, etc. [...] That was a good opening for the *Yes* movement to try and appeal to women, working-class women in particular, that independence coincided with their inner desires, visions, and ambitions for the way the world should be.<sup>78</sup>

We quickly found that we had to make the campaign very female-focused. That is in terms of imagery in terms of language and, certainly, stereotypes, but we were constantly trying to simplify it so that people could see themselves within our work. So, it was about what was best for the future. It was about what was best for the family, [...] they were unwilling to take a risk on behalf of the people they cared about. And so therefore, the campaign had to show that the people they cared about wanted this to happen.<sup>79</sup>

There were various reasons given for [the sex gap] in terms of risk aversion in women. So, as you know, research shows how gendered parenting is, how risk-averse you tend to be with your girls rather than your boys and all the other reasons possibly. But there was this general understanding that women are more canny, more concerned, [...] they're not sure of the risk, they want to be more certain before... all of these things. And there's lots of evidence behind it about gender differences that kind of fit with that.<sup>80</sup>

Analysis of these quotes highlights the gendered ways Yes Scotland campaign leaders understood women as voters and shaped their campaign around their understanding of gender attitudes. Male Yes Scotland members were most likely to lean into gendered understandings of women as voters who were typically risk-averse due to their position in society as carers. A female Yes Scotland board member stated that 'the fact that we were not getting to women' was brought up at almost every Yes Scotland board meeting.<sup>81</sup> Further, she stated that the *Yes* campaign was not reaching

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<sup>78</sup> EBI 21 - Yes Scotland board member, pro-independence party leader, male

<sup>79</sup> EBI 15 - Yes Scotland, campaign team, male

<sup>80</sup> EBI 17 - Yes Scotland, local *Yes* group organiser and SNP campaigner, male

<sup>81</sup> EBI 18 - Yes Scotland, board member and member of WFI, female

ordinary women, working-class women and women in vulnerable backgrounds. Specifically, she stated that the Yes Scotland team were ‘aware [they] were not getting to the ordinary women with a longer road to travel’.<sup>82</sup>

In Scotland, particularly, working-class women or certain women who had never paid, as they call it here, the Big Stamp, the big insurance stamp – [had] always been in jobs that didn't give them financial freedom and independence. [...] How could you imagine it for a country? Men, whether they agreed with it or not, have experienced independence for huge swathes of their lives; even if they're manual workers working in a shipyard, there's a level of independence about 'I'm going for a pint'. And 'I'm doing this!' Or 'I'm doing that!'. Women at that point, I don't think (they did in 2014), although we (women) have it more so now (in 2020). That was a big gap for us (Yes Scotland).<sup>83</sup>

In this quote, the actor highlights gender power hierarchies in society and links support for independence to personal independence. The actor touches on women's power, subjugation, and the gendered power order in society, with men at the top of the gender hierarchy. She argues that women oppressed in Scottish society are less likely to envisage an independent Scotland because they do not have full independence in their own lives. Even working-class men, she argued, experience independence in their lives. The actor alludes to themes that previously emerged regarding financial security, stability and uncertainty. The quote indicates that the sex gap in support for independence made campaign actors aware not only of gender groups of voters, such as women but gender subgroups of voters, such as working-class and vulnerable women. It supports the claim that the campaigns aimed to attract these gender subgroups, although some considered their attempts unsuccessful.

Another member of Yes Scotland reflected on the link between uncertain constitutional futures, class and gender.<sup>84</sup> He described a moment at an event where a young mother stood up to express her concerns for an independent Scotland and how it impacted him emotionally.

She said, 'I'd love to vote yes (for independence)'. She said, 'but I'm on benefits [...], and I've got a job for the first time in my life, and I'm a single parent now with three kids'. And she said, '[...] I work only 15 hours a week. And I'm dead proud of myself because I've got a job, and I'm contributing'. And she said, 'But on a Thursday night,

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<sup>82</sup> EBI 18 – Yes Scotland, board member and member of WFI, female

<sup>83</sup> EBI 18 – Yes Scotland, board member and member of WFI, female

<sup>84</sup> EBI 19 - Yes Scotland, campaign director, male

I wish I could go to a food bank because we've got no food. I can't feed my kids'.  
And she said, 'I'm terrified I'll lose that (with Scottish independence).'<sup>85</sup>

The actor reflexively stated that the pro-independence campaign did not illustrate to the young mother how better her life would be in an independent Scotland. At this point, the actor stated, they realised that the pro-independence campaign needed answers for women from similar backgrounds. Another Yes Scotland board member reflected on the impact of independence on working-class women, stating that 'the absolute brunt of the move for independence was going to fall on these women's shoulders.'<sup>86</sup> Gendered understandings of working-class women in Scotland are palpable with actors in the pro-independence campaigns in these quotes, as key themes such as power and societal inequalities are linked with gender. Ultimately, some actors from the Yes Scotland campaign stated they felt that they could have done better to appeal to women in vulnerable backgrounds.

Yes Scotland actors,<sup>87,88</sup> however, stated that another pro-independence group, Women for Independence (WFI), was more successful at mobilising working-class women voters in local communities. The relationship between WFI and Yes Scotland is complex, but interviews evidenced that WFI was distinct from Yes Scotland and acted independently. Yet, findings from the research indicated that information was shared between them as some members of WFI were also major and minor actors within the SNP and Yes Scotland.

The origins of WFI began in early 2012 when a group of founding women met to discuss how to bring a gender element to the pro-independence campaigns to reach women who were unsure or opposed to independence.<sup>89</sup> One actor stated that WFI had two aims regarding the referendum campaigns. The first was to 'talk to as many women as possible in environments that allowed their voices to be heard'. The second aim was to 'help women have a voice and see a path to being engaged if that's what they wanted and to be treated respectfully whether they voted *Yes*, *No* or had no intention of voting.'<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> EBI 19 - Yes Scotland, campaign director, male

<sup>86</sup> EBI 18 - Yes Scotland, board member and member of WFI, female

<sup>87</sup> EBI 18 - Yes Scotland, board member and member of WFI, female

<sup>88</sup> EBI 22 - SNP marketing strategist and WFI member, female

<sup>89</sup> EBI 16 - WFI leader, female

<sup>90</sup> EBI 16 - WFI leader, female

Interviews with WFI actors<sup>91</sup> indicated that, broadly, WFI members had a ‘clear idea’ of how they were distinct from most of the other pro-independence groups and from ‘all of the *No* movements.’<sup>92</sup> WFI had an alternative approach for targeting specific subgroups of women identified as undecided voters. One WFI actor stated they believed that WFI ‘changed many unknowns to *Yes*’ due to the environments they produced, which avoided ‘people shouting at each other’ and were ‘women only.’<sup>93</sup> From these interview excerpts, there are a few things to note, such as a shift in strategy related to gendered power dynamics, valuing women’s experiences, and creating spaces where women voters are comfortable sharing their experiences. For example, the same WFI actor described equality, power, and democracy.

WFI often talked about the fact that independence was necessary to solve the problems of women’s and children’s inequality [...], but it was not sufficient to solve all these issues. We tried to focus on the importance of democracy [...] people should have the power to make decisions about their own lives [...] in an independent Scotland, we would have more control over the decisions that affect us.<sup>94</sup>

Another WFI actor<sup>95</sup> stated that women aged 25 to 40 with children were of particular interest to the pro-independence side. She expanded, describing WFI’s awareness of sex gaps but touched on a range of gender subgroups highlighting intersecting identity variables such as gender, age, sexuality and parenthood.

By the time the Yes Scotland campaign was going on, it was clear that there was a gender gap in all age groups. But I think, as I recall, particularly at the time, women aged 25 to 40 with children (were undecided). [Also] if you looked at heterosexual couples, it was often the case that the male in that couple was voting *Yes* and the woman was *No*, maybe moving to undecided. And amongst the over 65, where it was a majority for *No*, there was a significant gender gap there, too. So, we thought that having coffee mornings, you know, wee gatherings where women could come along, where there was childcare, where we will have a dialogue, and not, you know, not speeches, but very much organic two-way communication (would be beneficial).<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> EBI 16; EBI 16; EBI 22

<sup>92</sup> EBI 16 – WFI leader, female

<sup>93</sup> EBI 16 – WFI leader, female

<sup>94</sup> EBI 16 – WFI leader, female

<sup>95</sup> EBI 22 - SNP marketing strategist and WFI member, female

<sup>96</sup> EBI 22 - SNP marketing strategist and WFI member, female

This quote exemplifies how campaign actors analyse intersecting voter identities and attitudes. This analysis is important as it indicates *which* women and men were being identified, why and how. For example, this particular actor described how campaign materials were created to influence gendered voter subgroups that the pro-independence campaign had difficulty reaching.<sup>97</sup> She stated that in late summer of 2014, two WFI and SNP members created a leaflet aimed at older women, framed around issues they believed older women in Scotland were ‘proud of [such as] the development of the welfare state, the NHS, decent pensions’.<sup>98</sup> The leaflet aimed to say that ‘all that was fantastic and we (the *Yes* campaign) value what you’ve done, and we stand on your shoulders, and we think only with independence can we secure that legacy and go further.’<sup>99</sup> These reflections are important as they describe efforts and messages shaped around gender subgroups to influence voters by multiple political bodies, organisations and movement organisations related to the *Yes* campaign: WFI, the SNP, and Yes Scotland.

These findings also tap into wider issues around how women’s movements organise to access and influence women’s voting behaviour. These findings link to arguments in related literature which state that during the independence referendum, WFI had the ability as a women’s movement to ‘mobilise collective identity and sustain challenging discourses’ (McAngus and Rummery, 2018, p. 154). In their analysis of the independence campaign, McAngus and Rummery (2018) argued that WFI was a social movement organisation (SMO) and contributed to ‘the aims of a wider movement of women’s liberation and gender equality’ (2018, p. 150). They also found that WFI bridged the gap between the pro-independence movement and the women’s movement in Scotland as they made a case for Scottish independence through arguments highlighting patriarchal power structures in society (McAngus and Rummery, 2018, p. 165). Similarly, Alonso (2018) found that WFI and other women’s movements in Scotland engaged in the referendum in ‘remarkable ways’ by showing interest in women’s constitutional concerns (pp. 468-476). My findings and findings in existing literature illustrate the influence and significance of WFI in shaping women’s constitutional attitudes both during the campaigns and after.

Yes Scotland’s campaign strategist stated that Yes Scotland made parallel efforts to get older voters on its side.<sup>100</sup> To do this, Yes Scotland actors stated that they targeted older populations through

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<sup>97</sup> EBI 22 - SNP marketing strategist and WFI member, female

<sup>98</sup> EBI 22 - SNP marketing strategist and WFI member, female

<sup>99</sup> EBI 22 - SNP marketing strategist and WFI member, female

<sup>100</sup> EBI 19 - Yes Scotland, campaign director, male

their children and grandchildren by centring the futures of younger generations in their campaign messaging and how younger people would benefit in an independent Scotland.<sup>101</sup> A prominent *Yes* politician explained that the *Yes* campaign focused on mobilising younger voters partly as a reaction to the generation gap and the gender generational gap that supported independence.<sup>102</sup> He stated that the mobilisation of younger voters proved more effective than trying to ‘shift the balance’ of the generation gap by targeting older voters as older voters. Instead, they targeted older voters as grandparents and parents through family connections. As previously stated, older women were particularly less inclined to support independence. *Yes Scotland* appealed to older women through their children and grandchildren’s constitutional futures. *Yes Scotland* campaign actors also stated that they asked young independence supporters to speak to the older people in their lives such as their grandparents. This type of targeting is gendered as it links with normative gendered understandings of older women as mothers, grandmothers and caretakers in society, particularly with Gilligan’s (1982) ethics of care model.

Due to the sex gap in support for independence, it is clear that the campaigns had a vested interest in appealing to women voters. *Yes Scotland* and WFI used different approaches to target women voters. Findings suggest that due to the gender imbalance on the *Yes Scotland* campaign strategy team, understandings of women as voters were often normative and leaned into traditional gender stereotypes regarding risk, family and care. WFI interviews focused more on themes regarding power, equality, and democracy. These findings are interesting as we see how different pro-independence groups diverged from their understandings of women as voters and leaned into various belief systems regarding what women want from society. Both *Yes Scotland* and WFI acknowledged voter heterogeneity of women voters, considering women as mothers, older women and working-class women. The pro-independence actors in my research showed little interest in targeting male voters or targeting men as men<sup>103</sup>, which contrasts with the anti-independence campaign.

### **Better Together**

As stated, the *Better Together* campaign also collected a wealth of data on voter constitutional attitudes. *Better Together* members and prominent ‘*No*’ politicians described features of their

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<sup>101</sup> EBI 19 - *Yes Scotland*, campaign director, male

<sup>102</sup> EBI 20 - *Yes Scotland*, board member and *Yes* politician, male

<sup>103</sup> In pro-independence interviews, there were 57 items coded for ‘Targeting Voters’ under the sub-code of ‘Women as voters’. Comparatively, there were eight items coded for the sub-code of ‘Men as voters’.

Populus polling data, indicating a spread of five to six voting groups. These identity descriptors were used from the campaign's onset in 2012 to the day of the vote in September 2014. These voting groups acted as a guide throughout the independence campaign and were strictly adhered to by Better Together as they depicted which voters to target.<sup>104</sup>

A prominent female politician representing the *No* side described how the voter data was roughly segmented into five groups based on voter support for Scottish independence.<sup>105</sup> Voters were seen as heterogeneous and further segmented into subgroups using intersectional variables related to their identities, such as national identity, location, party identification, age, investment portfolios, and political and ideological beliefs.

You had the ultra-unionists, sort of Queen and country, who believed in Britain and would never change their mind. You had the ultra-nationalists like your Braveheart freedom fighters type characterisation. And then the next bloc in were the people who were socially left-wing but economically quite conservative, who were voting No, [typically] in their 40s, who would maybe vote Labour but also valued their economic security and their pension, their mortgage, they like to go on holidays, want to own their property, all that sort of stuff. Then you had what we called civic nationalists. So, people who weren't bought into blood and soil nationalism wanted Scotland not to be run by Tories. And these groups were largely locked down [by Yes Scotland]. That left 400,000 people in the middle, who were largely under 40. They were university educated, they lived in cities like Edinburgh and Glasgow, in particular, who were centre-left in their politics, but could be persuaded to vote No, and saw the message about the economy.<sup>106</sup>

In this quote, the actor describes the groups using clear descriptors; obvious themes surface, such as nationalism, unionism, economic security, and identity. The actor also describes where the campaign envisions the voters to align in their partisanship and ideological standpoints politically. Concern for the economic welfare of Scotland was a central theme of the anti-independence campaigns, so they highlighted the benefit of sticking with the status quo and the fear of uncertainty. There is no mention of sex or gender. Another Better Together actor, a male campaign strategist,<sup>107</sup> confirmed the groups described by the previous actor but added gendered elements.

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<sup>104</sup> EBI 11 - Better Together, campaign director, male  
EBI 4 - Better Together, board member and *No* politician, male  
EBI 6 - Better Together, *No* politician, female  
<sup>105</sup> EBI 6 - Better Together, *No* Politician, Female  
<sup>106</sup> EBI 6 - Better Together, *No* Politician, Female  
<sup>107</sup> EBI 11 - Better Together, campaign director, male

He confirmed that the two groups comprised ultra-unionists and ultra-nationalists with firm ideological positions. Yet, he stated these groups were ‘very male on either side’.<sup>108</sup> Then, moving inward, he stated that those in the civic nationalists and socially left-wing but economically conservative were ‘firmly male groups’,<sup>109</sup> although less male than the ultra-nationalists and unionists. He expanded his analysis of voter groups and stated that those in the middle were grouped into two (six groups as opposed to the previous actor’s five) groups: the comfortable pragmatists and the unconnected security seekers, which were seen to be predominantly comprised of female voters. Voters in these groups were uncertain about their constitutional attitudes and, therefore, undecided in their vote choice. This actor stated that they focused largely on these two groups since those within the other two, largely male groups were unlikely to change their minds. In studying the women within these groups, gender subgroup analysis was conducted by the campaigns.

The Better Together campaign believed that those within the comfortable pragmatists and unconnected security seekers were likely women who worked in public services<sup>110</sup> that were ‘relatively not fantastically paid public servants’ and were ‘a lot of nurses or physiotherapists.’ As outlined in previous chapters, this campaign director was tapping into the understanding that it is often women, as opposed to men, who are more likely to work in care professions and the public sector (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Adams, 2004; Blackburn and Jarman, 2006; Adams, 2010; Connell, 2020; Kabeer et al., 2021). He stated that they estimated many of these women were underpaid and undervalued in Scottish society due to their roles as carers and public servants. This actor’s perspective reflects wider gendered horizontal segregation patterns in the workforce (Blackburn and Jarman, 2006). In Scotland, women comprise the most significant majority in the ‘Public Administration and Defence’ and the ‘Health and Social Work’ sectors, with 41,000 more women employed than men (Scottish Government, 2019, p. 22). As of 2019, almost half of Scotland’s women work in ‘Public Administration and Defence’, ‘Education and Health’, and ‘Social Work’ sectors. Further, women in Scotland are less likely than men to be secure employees, and women are more likely to be part-time employees (Scottish Government, 2019, p. 18).

A director of the campaign strategy for Better Together stated that women were concerned with the ‘public finance aspect of independence’ because it ‘spilt into their interests’ regarding their

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<sup>108</sup> EBI 11 - Better Together, campaign director, male

<sup>109</sup> EBI 11 - Better Together, campaign director, male

<sup>110</sup> EBI 11 - Better Together, campaign director, male

careers and finances.<sup>111</sup> With the uncertainty of independence putting into question the Scottish economy, Better Together intentionally amplified the risk that precarious women would experience in the event of constitutional change due to the precarity and uncertainty of independence.<sup>112</sup> These women in precarious situations were targeted intentionally through specific messaging related to risk, job insecurity, finances, and the funding of public services.

We were determined not to be thrown off our strategy. It was about economic insecurity; it was about the things you'd lose in terms of, you know, currency, financial security, funding of public services, jobs, trade, things like that. And that was powerful. And that was what the voters in the middle, particularly women, cared about. The aim was to try and find people who were public sector workers, more likely to have a young family, less likely to be very wealthy or very, very poor.<sup>113</sup>

This quote highlights the intentional targeting of women who were working in specific jobs but also who were mothers. Women who were mothers were susceptible to risk messaging, especially regarding their children's futures. When Better Together actors spoke to women about their aspirations for their children, they found that women became more invested in Better Together's campaign objective. One actor stated that women 'particularly with young children' were identifying with messages regarding 'security and risk'.<sup>114</sup> Another *No* actor from the UK Government linked mothers to risk and security messages, stating that utilising these themes in messaging was successful for the Better Together campaign.

We were aware in developing the messages that female voters would be susceptible to the risk arguments; they would be concerned about what all this meant for them and their families. And whilst we had to be very careful with the messaging, it focused on their uncertainty about what might seem like a leap in the dark. These feelings were going to be important at the final reckoning.<sup>115</sup>

Risk messaging was amplified to influence these gendered subgroups of female voters to frame independence as a 'leap in the dark' and a risk to their families, finances, jobs, and lives. Risk messaging was also exemplified in another campaign strategy which targeted women as caretakers when *No* politicians campaigned in supermarkets.

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<sup>111</sup> EBI 11 - Better Together, campaign director, male

<sup>112</sup> EBI 11 - Better Together, campaign director, male

<sup>113</sup> EBI 11 - Better Together, campaign director, male

<sup>114</sup> EBI 5 - Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

<sup>115</sup> EBI 9 - UK government adviser 2012-2014, male

I remember standing outside the supermarket with two baskets of shopping with the same items [...] there was one basket of shopping from Scotland and one from Ireland. The two baskets compared the prices of ASDA in Ireland to those of ASDA in Scotland. And, of course, being part of the union costs less in distribution terms, in terms of pricing of goods [...] So, there was a concentrated effort in doing that, and that messaging worked well for women as it did for some of the men, but women were the bigger voter pool we could target.<sup>116</sup>

Again, this quote illustrates the gendered targeting of women voters based on normative understandings of women's role in society. In this particular quote, we see how Better Together targeted women in supermarkets as they envisaged this is where women were likely to be. They also strategised that the rise of grocery prices would influence women's constitutional attitudes suggesting they believed women's political behaviours would be shifted based on the rise of household items and food. Again, gendered targeting of voters relates to normative gendered power relations in society regarding the expectations of women in work, care, role in the household, and care-work. Themes from this quote also parallel with themes found in Yes Scotland interviews, where actors stated women were more likely to manage household finances<sup>117</sup> and were *canier*<sup>118</sup> than men in matters of the home.

The actor in this quote concluded her reflection by stating that this supermarket targeting worked for some men, although she does not outline which men. Another Better Together actor stated that the campaign spent 'more time on focus groups and research on trying to understand women than men.'<sup>119</sup> While interviews indicated that a majority of campaign strategy was focused on targeting women groups and subgroups of voters, some interviews outlined how and in what ways voting groups and subgroups of men were targeted. This finding contrasts with Yes Scotland interviews as there was little to no mention of if and how the pro-independence campaign targeted men. Better Together interviews indicated that efforts were made to target male voters, specifically middle-class and working-class men.<sup>120</sup> For example, a UK Government adviser specified that the *No* side tried to appeal to middle-class men using thematic messaging centring patriotism and national pride.<sup>121</sup> This actor stated patriotism and national pride messaging were used to combat

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<sup>116</sup> EBI 10 - Better Together, prominent *No* politician, female

<sup>117</sup> EBI 21 - Yes Scotland board member, pro-independence party leader, male; EBI 15 - Yes Scotland, campaign team, male; EBI 16 - WFI leader, female; EBI 18 - Yes Scotland, board member and member of WFI, female

<sup>118</sup> EBI 17 - Yes Scotland, local *Yes* group organiser and SNP campaigner, male

<sup>119</sup> EBI 11 - Better Together, campaign director, male

<sup>120</sup> Working class men were targeted by specific message *carriers* which will be discussed in the following section.

<sup>121</sup> EBI 9 - UK government adviser 2012-2014, male

the 'Braveheart' nationalist messaging from the Yes Scotland side, as the *No* side believed the nationalist messaging was particularly appealing to middle-class men.<sup>122</sup>

We (the UK government) had to make sure that the messages we were developing were couched in terms of, 'If you vote *No*, that is a patriotic thing to do.' We didn't want it to be seen as 'if you voted against independence, you weren't voting against Scotland and all that Scotland could do'.<sup>123</sup>

These findings also point to *how* men in gender subgroups were targeted. As understood by the UK Government, if messaging created by the *No* side questioned the capabilities of Scotland as a nation, supporting the *No* side would be perceived unfavourably as unpatriotic. There is a connection made between masculinity and patriotism in this understanding. It was not overtly evident why middle-class men were believed to be susceptible to Braveheart messaging as opposed to men in other classes. But it was evident why the *No* side believed men would be more susceptible to nationalist messaging than women. The Better Together board member stated that men were targeted as men intentionally because the board was 'aware that female support for the union, while broad, wasn't particularly deep' and that their support was due to 'risk-aversion' instead of feeling loyal to the union.<sup>124</sup> He brings in the age variable and expands further stating that women under fifty 'for example, had a commitment to voting *No*, but not because of an emotional affinity with the union, whereas women over fifty did.'<sup>125</sup> This actor suggests that young women are less likely to feel an affinity towards the union due to their age and gender. He alludes that men of all ages will likely be drawn to patriotic beliefs, unionism or nationalism.

These quotes suggest interesting findings. First, the anti-independence campaign believed women were unlikely to be attracted to patriotic and nationalist messaging because they were women. This belief ties into normative gendered perspectives that women are not as affiliated with their national identity as men are. Existing research has debunked this belief (Johns et al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2021). The second finding is that older women are more likely to have an affinity with the union based on their experiences. This belief was shared by both Better Together and Yes Scotland. A Yes Scotland board member recalls that 'for women, the big vote that we lost (was)

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<sup>122</sup> EBI 9 - UK government adviser 2012-2014, male

<sup>123</sup> EBI 9 - UK government adviser 2012-2014, male

<sup>124</sup> EBI 3 – Better Together, board member and *No* politician, male

<sup>125</sup> EBI 3 – Better Together, board member and *No* politician, male

women (aged) between 50 to 75'.<sup>126</sup> She stated that data indicated older women believed the pro-independence side was 'pulling apart' the union, a crucial aspect of British history.<sup>127</sup>

They're the daughters of men, the sisters of men who fought in the war, right? Who still believed in Britain and believed that being British mattered [...] we found that independence made these women question whether they died for nothing? Did they fight for nothing? (...) Would the war mean less every day in a new country?<sup>128</sup>

Themes appear in this quote linking wartime sentiments with gender, family, patriotism, national identity and war. The actor alludes to male relatives that potentially fought in the war and died which can be highly emotive and therefore influential to vote choice. The women identified in this quote represent a specific subgroup of women not only by age but in national identity, lived experiences, and beliefs.

Campaigns and the actors working within them divided women and men into gender subgroups based on voter data, political myths, belief systems and other societal vignettes. Campaign messaging was built from these belief systems and sex gap data to attract and influence voters in gendered ways. Data also highlighted that campaigns used not only specific messaging to target gender subgroups but also specific carriers. These findings are important, as they illustrate how campaigns are structured based on their perceptions and research data of heterogeneous gendered voting groups.

#### **4.4.3 Gendered Message Carriers**

Both campaigns also targeted gendered groups using specific message carriers who tested well with men and women voters distinctly.

##### **Yes Scotland**

Yes Scotland interviewees stated that 'significant efforts' were made through message carriers, especially making a clear distinction between the message and the message carriers.<sup>129</sup> A prominent male *Yes* politician stated that Yes Scotland and leaders in the SNP strategically placed politicians who tested better in focus groups with women to the foreground of the independence debates.

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<sup>126</sup> EBI 18 – Yes Scotland, board member and member of WFI, female

<sup>127</sup> EBI 18 – Yes Scotland, board member and member of WFI, female

<sup>128</sup> EBI 18 – Yes Scotland, board member and member of WFI, female

<sup>129</sup> EBI 20 – Yes Scotland, board member and *Yes* politician, male; EBI 19 - Yes Scotland, campaign director, male

They (the SNP) very clearly made conscious decisions to foreground Nicola Sturgeon. And I suspect that was about saying, ‘The gender gap exists, and we need to do something about it,’ rather than, ‘The gender gap exists; let’s make all the men vote.’ There was no sense in trying to accept that gender gap and work with it; there was much more of a desire to try to address it, understand why it was there, and find ways to overcome it.<sup>130</sup>

Previous research has argued that the SNP made ‘strenuous efforts’ to enhance their appeal to women voters following survey evidence indicating an existing sex gap following the 1999 elections (Johns et al., 2011, p. 583). Johns and colleagues (2011), in their SES study of the election combined with the party membership study, found that the SNP emphasised policy concerns that were thought to address women’s priorities, such as health and education. The researchers also found that senior SNP women such as Sturgeon and Fiona Hyslop were given more prominent roles in the party (Johns et al., 2011, p. 584). In his interview, the participant from the previous quote<sup>131</sup> stated that the SNP were also concerned that women did not like First Minister Alex Salmond as a politician. At the time, this perception was much connected to myth-making revolving around the SNP’s ‘woman problem’, and actors believed that Salmond was the root of the sex gap in support of independence.<sup>132</sup> In the same study, Johns et al. (2011) concluded that rather than Salmond losing support from women for the SNP as the figurehead, Salmond ‘won support from men’ and that ‘differences in leadership evaluations are a by-product and not a cause of the gender gap’ (p. 588).

While research has questioned the role Salmond had to play in the sex gap in constitutional attitudes, a majority of campaign actors and elites retrospectively believed that Salmond’s ‘Marmite’<sup>133</sup> effect on voters affected the sex gap; men were drawn to independence because of him, and women were repelled from independence because of him. What was certain for those involved in Yes Scotland and voters alike was that Nicola Sturgeon was a less divisive figurehead compared to Salmond and a keen orator and debater that, in focus groups, women preferred over Salmond. Therefore, Sturgeon was foregrounded in political debates, and her ministerial duties were reduced to allow this. Yet, actor interviews also stressed that Sturgeon was the figurehead of

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<sup>130</sup> EBI 20 - Yes Scotland, board member and *Yes* politician, male

<sup>131</sup> EBI 20 - Yes Scotland, board member and *Yes* politician, male

<sup>132</sup> EBI 19 - Yes Scotland, campaign director, male

<sup>133</sup> EBI 22 - SNP marketing strategist and WFI member, female

Yes Scotland debates until the summer of 2014, yet, in the lead-up to the vote in September, Salmond took centre-stage in debates against Better Together's Alistair Darling.<sup>134</sup>

### **Better Together**

Similar to the *Yes* side, Better Together worked with message carriers and found that Scottish Conservative politician Ruth Davidson polled well with female voters, as did Scottish Labour politician Kezia Dugdale.<sup>135</sup> Multiple Better Together board members and strategists stated that Davidson and Dugdale, at the time, were positioned centre stage in *No* campaigns because people grew 'bored' of seeing the 'same male politicians over and over again'.<sup>136</sup> One *No* politician stated that Ruth Davidson 'particularly appealed to working-class men and women. And women could identify with her and thought she was a very smart person who spoke on their behalf.'<sup>137</sup> This actor stated that because Davidson was perceived to be from a working-class background, she was identified as a clear message carrier to reach working-class women and men for the *No* side.

According to a Better Together board member, working-class men were a 'key target' and were targeted aggressively because of their 'preponderance to go to the other side'.<sup>138</sup> Another Better Together actor supported this statement and explained how the *No* side accounted for this conceptualisation of working-class male voters.

Working-class men aged about 30 to 45 years old used to have job security, or their fathers had job security. But at the time of the Scottish independence referendum, they didn't have the job security that [their] fathers had [and they] thought perhaps life wouldn't be as bad if they had more responsibilities themselves in an independent Scotland.<sup>139</sup>

Once again, we see voters separated into gender subgroups. In this case, a campaign actor describes a vignette of middle-aged working-class men who desire job security due to their experiences with their fathers. Within this vignette, there is much to unpack relating to family, masculinity, job precarity and constitutional futures. To reach this gender subgroup, a UK government adviser detailed that the *No* side used certain message carriers to target working-class men. He stated that

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<sup>134</sup> EBI 20 – Yes Scotland, board member and *Yes* politician, male; EBI 19 - Yes Scotland, campaign director, male

<sup>135</sup> EBI 14 – Better Together, board member, female

EBI 4 - Better Together, board member and *No* politician, male

EBI 11 - Better Together, campaign director, male

<sup>136</sup> EBI 11 - Better Together, campaign director, male

<sup>137</sup> EBI 4 - Better Together, board member and *No* politician, male

<sup>138</sup> EBI 9 - UK government adviser 2012-2014, male

<sup>139</sup> EBI 14 - Better Together, board member, female

men such as ‘Jim Murphy, John Reid, two former Labour cabinet ministers’<sup>140</sup> were used because they were ‘well-kenned (known) faces.’ He stated that these men were used as message carriers because they would appeal to working-class men voters as they were familiar to men in working-class areas and believed to be trusted.<sup>141</sup> Another actor from the *No* side evidenced the intentional selection of a message carrier to appeal to male voters.<sup>142</sup>

The other person that worked was George Galloway [...] He had a kind of tour of working-class areas, and, you know, former mining, industrial parts of Scotland (...) And to be honest, it was predominantly men [that] came to those events. So it was absolutely within the sweet spot that we (Better Together) were looking for. [...] And he was able to deliver things in appropriate sound bites that were meaningful to them, rather than maybe some of the more Project Fear stuff,<sup>143</sup> but, you know, it meant something to these men.<sup>144</sup>

The actor in this group believes George Galloway was more effective with working-class men as they could relate to Galloway more than the negative risk messaging centred within *No* campaign messaging. Much of the data suggested the risk messaging was predominantly aimed towards female voters, so relatable message carriers such as Galloway were perhaps used to target men specifically. In this interview, the actor describes that the men in the audience began to perk up when listening to a message carrier such as Galloway, and he felt they were connecting. While some *No* actors stated that Davidson did connect with working-class voters, it is evident that there was a belief that male message carriers would connect best with male voters.

Thus far, this section has outlined the myriad of gendered ways that the campaigns targeted voters. Yet, what is evident is that the independence campaigns were highly gendered and arguably predominantly centred around attracting gendered voting groups in order to win. The respective campaigns used different people, themes, locations, forms of media, and approaches to connect

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<sup>140</sup> EBI 9 - UK government adviser 2012-2014, male

<sup>141</sup> EBI 9 - UK government adviser 2012-2014, male

<sup>142</sup> EBI 4 - Better Together, board member and *No* politician, male

<sup>143</sup> The participant alludes to the Project Fear, a term used to describe the Better Together campaign coined by Rob Shorthouse, Director of Communications for Better Together. Initially the term was a joke made at a Scottish Conservatives party conference in the summer of 2013. The name Project Fear alluded to sentiments that the anti-independence was too negative and fostered fearmongering. A UK government advisor from the *No* side stated that the *No* side tried ‘very much’ to be positive and to state all the benefits Scotland would get (EBI 9). However, this actor stated that when the press began to report on these benefits it was presented as negative and stated ‘that’s where Project Fear came from. And it wasn’t helped by, you know, some comments within the Better Together campaign that actually used that terminology’ (EBI 9).

<sup>144</sup> EBI 4 - Better Together, board member and *No* politician, male

with gendered subgroups. The following empirical chapters will explore whether these messages effectively reached their intended audience and present qualitative voter data.

#### 4.5 September 2014 – the result

The Scottish electorate rejected Yes Scotland's vision of an independent Scotland on 19 September 2014 by approximately ten percentage points. The referendum vote was considered historic regarding political engagement and voting behaviour for many reasons. The independence referendum saw Scottish voter engagement at a remarkable turnout of 84.6 % (The Electoral Commission, 2014, p. 1). This was especially remarkable because referendum election turnouts are typically low. Registration to vote was also remarkably high; this alone was notable as the total electorate was higher than before. This increase, in turn, made the overall proportion of voters all the more notable.

Data analysis of the referendum vote elicited critical insights into Scotland's voter demographics and constitutional attitudes. The analysis found that voters who claimed out-of-work benefits were more likely to support independence, and those born outside Scotland were more likely to vote against independence (Ayres, 2014). People 65 and older and more affluent people were also unlikely to vote for independence (Curtice, 2014). Women were less likely than men to vote for independence by a small margin (Curtice, 2014; Ashcroft, 2014; YouGov, 2014a; 2014b). Analysis of the final vote again highlights the importance of voter heterogeneity with respect to constitutional attitudes. Yet, these figures do not indicate which subgroups of women and men differed in their constitutional preferences nor the reasons for such differences.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

Evidence from the Scottish case illustrates how those in decision-making positions in the respective independence campaigns targeted voters in gendered ways. Voters were targeted in broad groups as women and men voters and gendered subgroups based on aspects of their identity such as class, age, occupation, national identity, and parental status. These identity points can intersect with gender to amplify different gendered societal experiences. Campaign strategies responded to the sex gap in support of constitutional attitudes by using gendered messaging and gendered message carriers to attract certain voting groups. Campaigns developed campaign strategies which were gendered to target specific gendered voting groups and subgroups. These strategies were based on primary and secondary quantitative voting behaviour data. Campaign strategies were also shaped by campaign actors' subjective and often normative understandings of gendered identities. This analysis indicates how gendered voter identities shape campaigns but also

how campaign actors can shape campaigns based on their gendered understandings of voter identities.

The development of messaging and message carriers interplayed with gender power relations within the campaigns. Therefore, campaign teams influence voter attitudes and materialise constitutional futures for voters. As the campaign teams were largely male, the messaging illustrating potential constitutional futures to women voters often relied on gender stereotypes of women as voters as opposed to the gendered experiences of women in political society. These findings also parallel arguments made by feminist constitutionalists (Vickers, 2017), which argue that if constitutions are constructed predominantly by men, they are inherently masculinised. Findings illustrated that although the campaign boards were gender-balanced, those with decision-making capabilities on campaign teams were largely male. Female campaign actors from both sides reflected on the dominance of men in the campaigns and stated that, at the time, this was a concern due to the sex gap in support of independence.

Chapter 5 collates findings from Scottish voting behaviour studies related to the sex gaps in constitutional attitudes. I conduct secondary quantitative data analysis to answer the first research question, which asks in what ways and to what extent women's political preferences are expressed in constitutional change as expressed through their voting behaviour. I provide a chronological timeline of data through various Scottish voting behaviour surveys, which builds upon this chapter's insights regarding what was known regarding the sex gaps at the time of the 2014 independence referendum. I outline the extent of the sex gaps and point to potential pathways of gender subgroup exploration by pulling out other statistically significant background characteristics to constitutional attitudes.

## Chapter 5: Mind the gap? The Voters in Numbers

### *Secondary Quantitative Analysis and Simple Descriptive Statistics*

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing quantitative data on Scottish constitutional attitudes from voting behaviour studies and other quantitative research. I use simple descriptive statistics to collate the findings of all data from Scottish voting behaviour studies that measure constitutional attitudes. These data include the Scottish Referendum Survey of 1997 (DevoRef), the Scottish Election Study (SES), the Scottish Referendum Study of 2014 (SRS), the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSA), and the Risks and Constitutional Attitudes Survey (RCA). This chapter evaluates what is currently understood regarding sex gaps in Scottish constitutional attitudes through a feminist lens. I critically assess existing data and findings, focusing on patterns over time relating to the sex gap in support of constitutional change, highlighting when a distinction or conflation is made between sex and gender. I also analyse trends in the data relating to power structures and inequalities. I point to overall patterns in statistical significance while distinguishing within and across sex and gender subgroups to avoid flattening sex and gender variables.

The analysis points to differences in constitutional attitudes between male and female voters over time and other intersecting identities such as class, age and national identity. Findings illustrate that a sex gap has persisted over time in support of constitutional change in Scotland, with men more likely to support independence than women. While recent studies have shown this gap is narrowing (SES, 2021), a persistent sex gap remains beyond pro-independence or anti-independence. Historically, female respondents are more likely to be undecided about independence than male respondents. While there is an agreement on the existence of differences, this raises questions regarding why this is, a question I turn to in Chapters 6 and 7.

#### 5.2 Analysing Existing Data

Large-scale voting behaviour studies have long been employed to understand Scottish voting behaviour and offer much data on voting trends. These studies' findings lay the foundation for this research as they illustrate the sex gap in constitutional attitudes and suggest a relationship between sex and support for independence. Findings in these studies initially sparked scholarly interest in the sex gap in support of constitutional change and have prompted investigation of the gaps in politics with independence referendums (Léger and Léger, 1995; Johns et al., 2011; Ormston, 2013a; 2013b; Henderson et al., 2015). Elite background interviews in the previous

chapter found that critical actors related to the campaigns also referenced existing academic research on the sex gaps in constitutional attitudes in Scotland to inform campaign strategy.

The purpose of conducting secondary quantitative data analysis through simple descriptive statistics is often to ‘facilitate the description and summarisation of data’ existing in research (Cooksey, 2020, p. 61). The datasets from these studies are widely available for analysis on the UK Data Service website and often on their respective study websites, such as the SES website. I accessed these datasets, which span approximately fifty years, through the UK Data Service website and conducted secondary quantitative analysis on the datasets. Table 5.1 outlines the large-scale voting behaviour studies selected for analysis, the dataset’s time scale, and the data type.

TABLE 5.1: VOTING BEHAVIOUR STUDIES ANALYSED

Name of Survey	Abbreviation	Years Conducted	Years Analysed	Organising Body	Type of Data
The Scottish Referendum Survey	DevoRef <sup>145</sup>	1997	1997	Independent ESRC-funded academic study	Self-completion, mail-in questionnaire survey, one-panel, n=2335
The Scottish Election Study	SES	1979 <sup>146</sup> , 1992 <sup>147</sup> , 1997-2021	1999-2021	Independent ESRC-funded academic study	Self-completion web-based survey, simple random sample, and purposive selection/case studies (e.g., SES, 2011, n=2046). Two-wave panel survey fielded online before and after the election (e.g., SES, 2021, n=4000).
The Scottish Social Attitudes Survey	SSA	1999-2007 and 2009-2019	1999-2007 and 2009-2019 <sup>148</sup>	ScotCen Social Research	Face-to-face (FTF) interview, self-completion, multi-stage stratified random sample (e.g., SSA, 2016).
The Scottish Referendum Study	SRS	2014	2014	Affiliated with the SES	Web-based interview, multi-stage stratified random sample, three waves (e.g., SRS, 2014, n=3000).
Risk and Constitutional Attitudes Survey	RCA <sup>149</sup>	2014	2014	ESRC Scottish Centre on Constitutional Change	For both pre-and post-referendum waves: web-based interviews, multi-stage stratified random samples (e.g., RCA, 2014, n=2064).

Refreshed analysis of quantitative data provides an opportunity for new insights and critical perspectives. Campbell argues that when sex and gender variables are conflated in voting

<sup>145</sup> This abbreviation for the Scottish Referendum Study of 1997 will be used to avoid conflation with the Scottish Referendum Survey of 2014 (SRS) which measured constitutional attitudes specifically on independence as opposed to preferences predominantly concerning Scottish devolution.

<sup>146</sup> Miller and Brand, 1981.

<sup>147</sup> Mitchell and Brand, 1994 – administered as an add-on study to the BES 1992.

<sup>148</sup> Data from SSA is accessible on UK Data Service from 1999-2016 for statistical analysis, and data from more recent years is accessible through published reports.

<sup>149</sup> This abbreviation was created for the purpose of this thesis and unlike the other survey abbreviations, it is not widely used.

behaviour analysis, 'subtle and complex gender effects that influence behaviour and outcomes' are overlooked (Campbell, 2006, p. 132). When other background characteristics which shape a voter's identity are considered, such as age, class, race and national identity, how gender interacts with constitutional preferences can also be observed. In much existing research investigating the sex gap, statistical significance is measured using the relationship between constitutional preference questions and the sex variable. When voting behaviour datasets are analysed using single variate models, without the sex/gender distinction, essentialist understandings regarding voters are produced and contribute to normative understandings of men and women as voters. When multivariate models are used, patterns emerge as other sociodemographic factors intersecting with sex can be analysed, and a fuller picture of voter identities is shaped. Campbell stated that it is only when sex gap researchers appreciate 'the full complexity of the relationship between background characteristics, such as sex or gender, and vote that conclusions about their explanatory power [concerning voting behaviour] can be explained' (Campbell, 2006, p. 132). Bartle (2005) argues that secondary analysis of existing data and then focus groups can be administered to improve understanding of voter heterogeneity.

The following sections will illustrate findings from related studies and identify the different theoretical and methodological approaches utilised to investigate the sex gaps in constitutional attitudes. Using a feminist lens to investigate constitutional preferences with other gendered variables relating to societal inequalities (such as race, income, and class) illustrates that beyond the sex gaps are groups of voters with different nuanced constitutional preferences based on their experiences within society requiring further qualitative observation.

### **5.2.1 The Scottish Referendum Survey (1997)**

The Scottish Referendum Survey of 1997 (DevoRef) was conducted to gauge electoral opinion on the Scottish devolution referendum held on 11 September 1997. Participants were randomly selected from the electoral register and asked to complete a mail-in questionnaire (Denver et al., 1998). Data from this survey is relevant to this thesis as it measures constitutional attitudes regarding devolution but also asks questions relating to independence and women's representation in the Scottish Parliament. Chapters 2 and 3 outlined how constitutional futures offer opportunities for those left out of constitution-making to participate in power redistribution in forming new or revised constitutions. Understanding sex attitudes regarding gendered power redistribution in society, therefore, provides some insights into the relationships between sex, gendered power structures, and constitutional preferences pre-devolution.

In reference to the sex/gender distinction, the DevoRef study does not conflate sex with gender and only utilises a sex variable with male and female codes. The DevoRef study presents a range of relevant findings regarding constitutional preferences in 1997 with statistical significance. Significant relationships were found amongst the sex, age and class variables when measured with the constitutional preference question (all  $p < .001$ ). The variate relationships are presented in the Table 5.2 with unweighted data as this is the data that was publicly accessible for secondary analysis.

TABLE 5.2: SCOTTISH CONSTITUTIONAL PREFERENCES IN 1997 WITH SEX, CLASS, AGE

		CONSTITUTIONAL PREFERENCES (%)			TOTAL
		SCOTLAND SHOULD BE AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY	SCOTLAND SHOULD HAVE ITS OWN PARLIAMENT	WE SHOULD STICK WITH WHAT WE HAVE (STATUS QUO)	
<b>SEX</b> $R = <.001$	MALE	29.8	51.2	19.0	100
	FEMALE	19.7	60.2	20.1	100
<b>CLASS</b> $R = <.001$	WORKING	26.9	60.4	12.7	100
	MIDDLE	14.5	48.4	37	100
	NEITHER	26.2	52.6	21.2	100
<b>AGE</b> $R = <.001$	18-24	45.8	43.1	11.1	100
	25-34	34.5	52.9	12.5	100
	35-44	24.5	58.3	17.2	100
	45-54	25.7	57.3	17	100
	55-64	24.0	53.1	22.9	100
	65+	16.1	57.5	26.4	100

*Source: The Scottish Referendum Survey of 1997 (Denver, Mitchell, Bochel and Pattie, 1998)*

Weighting in surveys describes the additional weight added to participant demographic characteristics to ‘help correct for differences in nonresponse across different types of people’ (Dillman et al., 2014, p. 58). By weighting survey data, the researcher ensures that the survey sample is representative of the chosen population. Dillman et al. (2014) state that poststratification weighting can ‘introduce additional variation in the final weighted estimates’, which can be considered when calculating the sampling error. The loss of precision postsratification weighting can, therefore, increase the sampling error (Dillman et al., 2014, p. 58).

The aforementioned data illustrates that male respondents were more likely to believe Scotland should be an independent country by a margin of nearly ten per cent. In Denver et al.’s (1998) found that female respondents were more likely than male voters to believe Scotland should have its own parliament by nearly ten per cent. This finding suggests that the ten per cent of male respondents missing from support for the Scottish Parliament were within the respondent group which supported Scottish independence. This finding illustrates a sex gap in constitutional

preferences in 1997 by a considerable margin between support for devolution and independence. Due to the nature of the survey sample, male and female participants self-assessed themselves into class groups at equal rates; therefore, multivariate models investigating sex and class are null. Analysis of sex and age variables show no statistical significance as the sex gap in support was present across all age groups. Denver et al. (1998) found that female respondents were slightly less likely to support the creation of the Scottish Parliament than male respondents after weighting the data, which is not illustrated in the previously illustrated data. When analysing the data, there was no significant relationship between sex and national identity ( $p=.059$ ), class ( $p=1.81$ ) or education ( $p=.473$ ). Pattie et al. (1991) stated that historically, voting behaviour studies had indicated that women were more conservative in their political choices than men. Therefore, Pattie et al. (1991) posited that women would be more likely to oppose independence (p. 312).

A relevant data point to this collection is whether the electorate believed men and women should be represented equally in the new Scottish Parliament. As with constitutional preferences, statistically significant relationships were found concerning class ( $p<.001$ ) and sex ( $p<.001$ ), with female respondents and those in the working class more likely to support the equal representation of women in the Parliament (50:50). The relationships are presented in Table 5.3 with unweighted data as this is the data that was publicly accessible for secondary analysis.

TABLE 5.3: SCOTTISH EQUAL REPRESENTATION PREFERENCES 1997 WITH SEX, CLASS

		STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN TO ENSURE THAT THERE ARE EQUAL NUMBERS OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE PARLIAMENT (%)			TOTAL
		AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	
<b>SEX</b>	MALE	41.5	21.1	37.4	100
	FEMALE	53.0	22.6	24.4	100
<b>CLASS</b>	WORKING	53.2	22.5	24.4	100
	MIDDLE	38	20.9	41.2	100
	NEITHER	43.7	21.4	34.9	100

*Source: The Scottish Referendum Survey of 1997 (Denver, Mitchell, Bochel and Pattie, 1998)*

This dataset and the consecutive analysis offer interesting insights regarding constitutional attitudes and voter identities. In the data illustrated in Table 5.3, female respondents were more likely than men to believe steps should be taken to ensure equal numbers of men and women in the new Scottish Parliament by a margin of 11.5 per cent. Female and male respondents were near equally likely to be uncertain regarding equal representation, yet male respondents were more likely than female respondents to disagree with the statement at 13 per cent. There was statistical significance when analysing the relationship between equal representation to class, with working-class voters much more likely than middle-class voters to believe in equal representation of men and women in the new Parliament.

This dataset supports the theoretical argument that in times of constitutional restructuring, those underrepresented in positions of power, such as those in minority groups, are likely to envisage new constitutional futures with equal opportunities. This finding supports the arguments made by feminist constitutionalists outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, as it indicates that both women and the working-class were more likely to desire equal representation between men and women in the case of political power redistribution in the Scottish government. While this data is not necessarily representative, the refreshed analysis offers insights into the relationship between constitutional preferences and sex, class, age, and how respondents imagined constitutional futures and power-restructuring pre-devolution.

### **5.2.2 Scottish Election Study**

Scottish Election Study (SES) researchers state that the study explores whether and how citizens vote, the voting process and what factors shape voting behaviour (Scottish Election Study, 2020). Further, the SES examines ‘whether previous models of voting behaviour in devolved elections are still able to account for partisan preferences after the referendum’ (Scottish Election Study, 2020). This study is an extension of the British Election Study and is Scotland’s longest-running voting behaviour study; therefore, it offers crucial data relevant to this thesis’ research questions. While the SES primarily inquires about voting behaviour in elections instead of referendums, constitutional questions are often featured and central to the survey questionnaire.

I collated relevant data from 2007 to the 2021 SES in the following tables to better understand constitutional preference patterns. SES data from 2007 to 2016 indicated a sex gap of statistical significance in constitutional attitudes, with male voters more likely to support independence than female voters by significant margins. SES surveys before 2021 often use gender as a proxy for sex with no distinction.

TABLE 5.4: SCOTTISH ELECTION STUDY: MOST SUPPORTIVE OF INDEPENDENCE

SES Year	2007	2011	2016 <sup>150</sup>	2021
Question (v)	v=post_q162 <sup>151</sup>	v=w2_co4 <sup>152</sup>	v=w2referendumrecall <sup>153</sup>	v=w1uk10 (wave 1) <sup>154</sup> , v=w2uk10 (wave 2) <sup>155</sup>
Sex	Male	Male	Male	Males <sup>156</sup> (wave 1) Males <sup>157</sup> (wave 2)
Sex and Age	-	Males 55-69	Males 55-65	Males 60-69
Age Band (years)	46-65	- <sup>158</sup> <sup>159</sup>	25-49	60-69 <sup>160</sup> (both waves)
Region	Glasgow	-	-	-
Class	Working	Working	NA <sup>161</sup>	-
Party ID	SNP	SNP	SNP, Greens	SNP (both waves)
Income	-	- <sup>162</sup>	Prefer not to say	Prefer not to say. (both waves)
Religion	-	Roman Catholic	-	Roman Catholic (both waves)
National Identity	Scottish	Scottish, not British	Scottish, not British	NA <sup>163</sup>
Ethnic Background <sup>164</sup>	-	Mixed	Other Ethnic Group, Black African	Mixed (White and Asian), Irish (both waves)

<sup>150</sup> The 2016 SES had two waves. I analysed the collated SESPANEL dataset which combined both the pre-and-post wave datasets.

<sup>151</sup> ‘How would you vote if there was an independence referendum?’

<sup>152</sup> ‘If there were a referendum offering the following three options, how would you vote?’

Answering: ‘Make Scotland an independent state within the European Union,’ as opposed to ‘Keep the Scottish Parliament with its existing powers’, ‘Give the Scottish Parliament power over all domestic matters including taxes and spending (with the UK Parliament retaining...’, ‘Would not vote’ and ‘Don’t know’.

<sup>153</sup> ‘Thinking about the referendum on Scottish Independence in September 2014, how did you vote?’

<sup>154</sup> Wave 1 of the 2021 SES was conducted before the 2021 Holyrood election.

<sup>155</sup> Wave 2 of the 2021 SES was conducted after the 2021 Holyrood election.

<sup>156</sup> The relationship between the two variables, [genderID] and [uk10], indicated statistical significance (<.001) but the gap between men and women’s support for independence was one per cent; suggesting the sex gap was closing.

<sup>157</sup> In the second wave of the 2021 SES, males were more likely than females to say they supported independence by a margin of 2.4 per cent.

<sup>158</sup> - = no statistical significance.

<sup>159</sup> A majority of respondents from all age groups favoured the choice to ‘Give the Scottish Parliament power over all domestic matters including taxes and spending’.

<sup>160</sup> I banded the age variable in this dataset and grouped them as follows: 16-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, 80-89, 90-99.

<sup>161</sup> NA = not available or data not found.

<sup>162</sup> A majority of respondents selected ‘Prefer not to say’.

<sup>163</sup> The 2021 SES used sliding scales for voters to identify themselves on a scale of 1-10 across a range of identities: British, Scottish, European; respondents could be a variety of each.

<sup>164</sup> A predominance of survey respondents are white in Scottish voting behaviour surveys, but some interesting differences are present amongst non-white respondents that require further exploration.

TABLE 5.5: SCOTTISH ELECTION STUDY: MOST UNSUPPORTIVE OF INDEPENDENCE

SES Year	2007	2011	2016	2021
Question (v)	v=post_q162	v=w2_co4	v=w2referendumrecall	v=w1uk10 (wave 1) v= w2uk10 (wave 2)
Sex	Female	Female	Female	Males <sup>165</sup> (both waves)
Sex and Age	-	Females 25-39	Females over 65	Females in their 60s
Age Band (years)	76+ and Under 25	60 + (NS in age)	65+	60-69 (both waves)
Region	Edinburgh <sup>166</sup>	-	-	-
Class	Middle	Can't choose	NA	-
Party ID	Labour, Conservative	Labour, Conservative	Conservative	Scottish Conservative and Unionist, Labour  (both waves)
Income	NA	NA	Prefer not to say	Prefer not to say. (both waves)
Religion	-	Presbyterian, Church of Scotland	Church of England	Presbyterian/Church of Scotland (both waves)
National Identity	British and Scottish	British not Scottish <sup>167</sup>	More British than Scottish	NA
Ethnic Background	Asian of Chinese Descent	Asian of Indian Origin	Pakistani and Indian	Chinese (both waves)

In 2007, male and female respondents were almost equally as likely to oppose independence, with a margin of difference of only one per cent. Overall, the majority of survey respondents stated they would vote against independence and stick with the status quo. However, when analysing those who supported independence, male respondents were more likely than female respondents to support independence at a margin of nearly 12 per cent. Approximately 20 per cent of all female respondents stated that they did not know how they would vote, compared to 7.5 per cent of male respondents. The relationship between sex and support for independence was statistically significant ( $p=.001$ ). In terms of the sex/gender distinction, the 2007 SES did not make a distinction between sex and gender and used gender as a proxy for sex in its variable coding.

<sup>165</sup> In both the first and second wave of the 2021 SES, men were more likely than women to say they were against Scottish independence by a margin of 4.5 per cent.

<sup>166</sup> More likely to 'keep arrangements the same' and not support Scottish Independence.

<sup>167</sup> Answered 'Would not vote' instead of 'Keep the Scottish Parliament with its existing powers', or 'Give the Scottish Parliament power over all domestic matters including taxes and spending'.

Contextually, the 2007 SES data were collected after the 2007 general election, in which the SNP formed a minority government in the Scottish Parliament. In 2011, trends were largely the same, although age proved less significant to constitutional attitudes than in previous years.

Looking at the relationship between the sex variable and constitutional attitudes in SES data broadly (without subgroup analysis), a statistically significant relationship between sex and constitutional attitudes is seen across all data. This gap is consistent and expected. Yet, some interesting findings emerged when conducting subgroup analysis. For example, in SES 2007 and 2016 data, age was statistically significant to support Scottish independence. Yet, in SES 2011 data, respondents 60 years and older were less supportive than other age bands, but this difference was not statistically significant. In my secondary quantitative analysis of SES 2011 data, I found no statistical significance in SES 2011 data between age and support for independence alone. Yet, when analysing multivariate relationships in 2011 SES data, female participants aged 25 to 39 were particularly unsupportive of independence compared to other gender and age subgroups. The statistical significance between sex, support for independence and age was only found when controlling for sex, age and support for independence together.

The significance is a notable finding as it contrasts with Norris' (1996; 1999a) finding of a gender-generation gap amongst British female voters in which older women are typically more conservative in their vote choices. While Norris' gender-generational gap theory is typically applied to general elections, if applied to the constitutional question, one would argue that older women would typically be most likely against Scottish independence. Thus, through subgroup analysis of voting groups, answers to the question regarding *which* women materialise, although questions regarding *why* remain. Without qualitative inquiry, it is unclear why women of this age group were more likely to be against Scottish independence in this particular political context.

Post-referendum, , male participants were more likely to say they supported independence in 2014 by a small margin (SES, 2016). Female participants were more likely to vote against independence at a margin of 3.3 per cent more than male participants. Female participants were also more likely than male participants to say they 'couldn't remember' or 'did not vote' about their 2014 independence vote at a margin of roughly two per cent. In SES 2016 data, there was no statistical significance between the sex variable and whether the participant believed a second independence referendum should be held and when. Male and female participants were equally likely (at 11.8 per cent) to respond that there should be another referendum on independence within the next five

years. Still, most respondents felt there should never be a second independence referendum or there should not be a second referendum within the next five years.<sup>168</sup>

The 2016 SES data shows a statistically significant sex gap in constitutional attitudes to the independence and EU referendum. This data is important as it indicates the similar constitutional attitudes to the sex variable aggregately at that time. Contextually, the EU referendum was imminent during the 2016 SES study. Male participants were more likely to feel that the EU referendum would influence the SNP's decision to hold another second independence 'a great deal'. At the same time, female respondents said that the EU referendum would affect the possibility 'a fair amount'.

When looking at the relationship between sex, gender and constitutional attitudes in SES 2016 data, female participants over 65 were found to be the most unsupportive of independence with statistical significance. The 2016 SES indicates that young people were more supportive of independence, and a shift can be seen from the 45 to 65 range and in the 25 to 40 range. SES 2016 data also indicated a shift in the relationship between partisanship and constitutional attitudes. Participants supporting the Conservative party were most likely to be unsupportive of independence, whereas previous years saw Labour voters as the most unsupportive. This margin was statistically significant. When sex, party ID and constitutional attitudes were controlled, female Labour voters were most unsupportive of independence. These findings are significant as they show a significant relationship between party ID, sex and constitutional attitudes.

In 2021, SES researchers established a data distinction between sex and gender with two variables measuring various aspects of a voter's identity. The sex variable asked respondents, 'What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate' (Henderson et al., 2021), with male and female options. The gender variable asked respondents to 'describe their gender identity' with man, woman, nonbinary or another gender non-conforming identity, and 'prefer not to say' option (Henderson et al., 2021). When comparing the relationship between both sex and gender variables to support independence, both relationships were statistically significant in both waves ( $r < .001$ ). The data from waves 1 and waves 2 are provided in Table 5.6.

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<sup>168</sup>  $v=w2indyrefwwhen$  and  $v=w2indyrefwpoll$

TABLE 5.6: SES 2021 SEX, GENDER AND CONSTITUTIONAL PREFERENCES: VARIABLE ANALYSIS

		Should Scotland be an Independent Country?							
		Wave 1 (%)				Wave 2 (%)			
		Yes	No	Wouldn't vote	Don't know	Yes	No	Wouldn't vote	Don't know
<b>Sex</b>	<b>Male</b>	40.2	51.1	2	6.6	41	51.3	2.3	5.4
	<b>Female</b>	39.4	46	2.8	11.9	38.9	46.4	2.9	11.8
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Man</b>	41.7	49.3	2	7	40.9	51.4	2.3	5.4
	<b>Woman</b>	40.7	45.3	2.8	11.2	38.5	46.9	3.1	11.5
	<b>Nonbinary*</b> 169	78.3 <sup>170</sup>	10.9 <sup>171</sup>	4.3 <sup>172</sup>	6.5	73.5	11.8	2.9	11.8
	<b>Prefer not to say</b>	45.2 <sup>173</sup>	25.8	3.2	25.8	47.6	33.3	0.0	19

Analysis of the unweighted data indicates both a sex gap and a gender gap in support for constitutional change, with female and women voters slightly less likely to support Scottish independence. Again, we see the persistent gap in feeling undecided towards Scottish independence in both SES sex and gender variables.

Additionally, the data in Table 5.6 indicate that when sex and gender are separated in voting behaviour studies, more precise understandings of voter gender identity can be gained, synonymous with previously mentioned arguments in feminist quantitative literature (Tripp and Hughes, 2018; Bittner and Goodyear-Grant, 2017). Because the SES 2021 acknowledged both sex and the spectrum of gender identities, a broader range of gendered voting experiences could be analysed. For example, the overall percentage values of non-binary or gender non-conforming respondents are approximately two per cent of the total survey respondents. Yet, these findings are still part of the significant relationship between gender and support for constitutional change and account for gendered constitutional attitudes, although at a smaller margin or small-N value. For example, between waves 1 and 2, a few non-binary voters shifted in their constitutional attitudes. This shift raises questions regarding what interaction may have occurred between waves 1 and 2 for non-binary voters which would have influenced their constitutional attitudes. These

<sup>169</sup> \*Or other non-gender conforming gender identity.

<sup>170</sup> This percentage of respondents totalled two per cent of overall SES 2021 respondents.

<sup>171</sup> This percentage of respondents totalled .2 per cent of overall SES 2021 respondents.

<sup>172</sup> This percentage of respondents totalled 1.9 per cent of overall SES 2021 respondents.

<sup>173</sup> Percentages within the 'Prefer not to say' column amounted to <1 per cent of overall SES 2021 respondents.

questions require qualitative analysis to draw explanatory conclusions, but the inclusion of the sex/gender distinction in SES data roots further research investigating sex and gender differences in Scottish political preferences. Yet, political scientists who hope to understand or control the relationship between gender and constitutional attitudes must go beyond only studying sex and gender measurements and disaggregate their data amongst many axes at a time using other background identities characteristics such as race, class, and sexuality to understand the variations which exist amongst women and men (Tripp and Hughes, 2018).

In my secondary analysis of quantitative SES data, I investigated for variations amongst sex, gender, race and constitutional attitudes. In SES data, diverse groups of non-white voters were less supportive of independence than others. When analysing the relationship between race and constitutional attitudes, I found that in 2011 and 2016, respondents of Pakistani and Indian descent were less supportive of independence than other non-white groups in Scotland. In 2007 and 2021, voters who identified as Chinese were less supportive. Yet, a common trend regarding support for independence was that mixed race SES respondents were more likely to be supportive. When conducting a multivariate model between sex, race and support for independence, the numbers were too small to garner statistical significance. Yet, this relationship is interesting, and much remains unknown regarding race and support for independence, and further, the relationship between sex, race and constitutional attitudes more broadly. Tripp and Hughes (2018) find that survey researchers who want to ‘take seriously the multiplicity of individuals’ identities’ when investigating voting behaviour patterns often face ‘small-N problems’ where sample observations are too small to be meaningful or statistically significant (p. 247). However, Tripp and Hughes (2018) stress that many scholars persist in their intersectional analysis to capture the complexities between and amongst men and women in their voting patterns and have often turned to qualitative methods to delve deeper into intersectional identities (p. 248).

### **5.2.3 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey**

The Scottish Social Attitudes (SSA) survey is a social attitudes survey rather than a voting behaviour study. The SSA has been conducted since 1999 and is administered by ScotCen Social Research. The SSA is included in my analysis as the SSA, specifically Ormston’s (2013a; 2013b; 2014) sex gap analysis, is often referenced in related research to the sex gaps in constitutional preferences.

The following tables present collated SSA data from 1999 to 2016, except for 2008, as the SSA was not conducted that year. Other researchers have analysed the SSA data over the years, and I

have considered their analysis with my own. I have critically analysed Schneider's (2014) and Mullen's (2014) secondary quantitative analysis of the 1999-2012 SSA datasets as they analyse the interaction of sociodemographic factors in the SSA with constitutional preferences. I also evaluated Ormston's (2013a; 2013b) secondary quantitative analysis of the interaction between sex and constitutional preferences using the 2013 SSA dataset.

I conducted independent secondary quantitative data analysis in SSA years 2014, 2015 and 2016. In the 2014, 2015 and 2016 SSA datasets, I found that the relationship between sex and support for independence was statistically significant. The way questions regarding constitutional preferences were worded differed over the datasets. The changes in the question structure reflected wide changes and developments regarding the salience of Scottish independence. For example, in 2013 and 2014, the SSA asked respondents how they intended to vote in the 2014 independence referendum. In the 2015 SSA, respondents were asked how they voted in the 2014 referendum. In 2016, the SSA asked respondents how they would vote in the event of a second referendum.

TABLE 5.7: SCOTTISH SOCIAL ATTITUDES SURVEY: MOST SUPPORTIVE OF INDEPENDENCE

SSA Year	1999-2012 <sup>174</sup>	2013	2014	2015	2016
Question (v)	Varied	V=RefVote	v=RefVote	v=ActRefV	v=RefVote16
Sex (rsex)	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male
Age Band (years) and Gender Age Band, if given	16-25 25-34	Males 45-54	18-29 30-44	Males 65+ (12.4 per cent) Females 45-54 (11.4 per cent)	Male 18-24 Female 18-24
Region	Glasgow <sup>175</sup> , Dundee, West Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire, Inverclyde	NA	NA	North Lanarkshire, Glasgow City, Highlands	NA
Party ID	SNP	SNP	SNP	SNP	SNP
Income	Lower Income	NS	NS	£14,300 - £26,000	Up to £14,300
Highest Level Education	Without A- Levels	No qualification	With Highers Non-graduate Men Those with No Qualifications	NA	NA
Religion	Non- Believers/No Religion	No Religion	No Religion	NS	No Religion and Roman Catholic
National Identity	Scottish Not British	Scottish Not British	More Scottish than British Equally Scottish and British (Male)	Scottish Not British	Scottish Not British
Ethnic Background	NA	NS	BME persons of African and Indian Origin	BAME Analysis: Mixed Origin	BAME Analysis: Asian of Other Origin & Mixed

<sup>174</sup> With the exception of 2008 as the study did not run this year.

<sup>175</sup> Largest area of support

TABLE 5.8: SCOTTISH SOCIAL ATTITUDES SURVEY: MOST UNSUPPORTIVE OF INDEPENDENCE

SSA Year	1999-2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Question (v)	Varying (rsex)	V=RefVote	v=RefVote	v=ActRefV	v=RefVote16
Sex (rsex)	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age Band (years) and Gender Age Band, if given	Older 65+	Female 65+	65+ <sup>176</sup> 60-64	Male 65+ Female 65+	Male 65+ Female 65+
Region	The Orkney Islands, Scottish Borders, Dumfries, Galloway, Shetland Islands	NA	NA	Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Perth and Kinross, South Ayrshire	NA
Party ID	Labour	Labour	Labour	Labour	Conservative
Income	Higher Income Group	NS	NS	Over £44,200	£26,000-£44,200
Highest Level Education	University graduates	Degree/Postgrad	Higher Qualifications/First Degree Non-graduate Women	NS	NA
Religion	Church of Scotland, Protestant	No Religion	Protestant	NS	Church of Scotland
National Identity	British not Scottish or More British than Scottish <sup>177</sup>	Equally Scottish and British	More British than Scottish, High level of Britishness	Equally Scottish and British	British not Scottish
Ethnic Background	Not included in the analysis	NS	BAME Analysis: respondents of Pakistani Origin	BAME Analysis: Black of African Origin and Other (Write-In)	BAME Analysis: Asian of Indian Origin, Asian of Pakistani Origin and Asian of Chinese Origin

As in the SES, the sex gap in constitutional preferences is consistent throughout all SSA data. Respondents who are most supportive of independence are predominantly male, lower income, feel more Scottish than British and are supportive of the SNP. Respondents who were unsupportive of independence were predominantly female, older than 65, and those earning a higher income. Across all years, male respondents were more likely than females to vote for independence, with statistical significance throughout ( $p < .001$ ). This sex gap in support for independence does not imply that most male respondents support independence over being

<sup>176</sup> Men older than 65+ were nearly half as likely to support Scottish independence than men aged 18-29. This gender generational gap is larger than the gender generational gap between women.

<sup>177</sup> In 2012, the SSA reported that national identity was not the causal mechanism in the difference in support for independence between men and women (Kenny, 2014).

against independence. Instead, the sex gap indicates that male respondents are more likely to support Scottish independence than female respondents. For example, in 2013, approximately 43.9 per cent of all respondents stated they would vote *No* in the referendum, 20.2 per cent stated that they would vote *Yes*, 32.2 per cent stated they had not decided yet, 3.1 per cent stated that they would not vote, and .1 per cent stated that they did not know. Yet, amongst those that were supportive of independence, male respondents were more likely than female respondents to support independence at a margin of eight per cent. Regarding those voting *No*, female respondents were more likely than male respondents to state they were against independence at a 9.8 per cent margin. These patterns are similar throughout SSA data, with the sex gap margins narrowing and expanding only slightly across time.

Ormston (2013b) utilises 2013 SSA data (pre-referendum data) to shape her often-cited analysis of the ‘gender’ gap in support of independence in Scotland. Ormston does not distinguish between sex and gender in her analysis of SSA data. I analysed all SSA datasets from 1999-2016 and found that sex was used exclusively in their derived variable documentation and analysis until 2010. In 2010, SSA researchers banded sex and age variables but coded the variables as ‘age grouped within gender’ (SSA, 2010). Yet, there is no conflation between sex and gender in SSA respondent-facing materials, and gender identity measurement is not present in any SSA data. Options for respondent sex are male, female, do not know or a refusal to answer. In Ormston’s (2013b) analysis of the sex gap in support of Scottish independence, she uses sex as a proxy for gender and utilises the variables interchangeably. As the SSA exclusively use the sex variable and Ormston (2013a; 2013b) only analyses the sex variable in isolation as opposed to in conjunction with other background characteristics, her gender gap analysis is only an analysis of the relationship between sex and constitutional preferences as opposed to an analysis of gender and constitutional preferences.

As outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, feminist voting behaviour researchers such as Campbell (2006) and Lovenduski (2005) state that looking at sex in isolation from other variables in a dataset and declaring a ‘gender’ gap can lead to essentialist claims regarding men and women as voters. For example, Ormston (2013b) uses gender difference theory to explain the SSA results, stating that the ‘gender’ gap could be caused by a difference in women’s priorities, a lack of focus on gender inequality from the *Yes* campaign, or Alex Salmond’s ‘relatively lower standing among women’ (p. 7). Ormston (2013b) stated that there is no evidence that women feel less Scottish than men, nor are women more likely to have negative expectations of the consequences of independence. Concluding, she stated that women are not more afraid of independence but rather are ‘more realistic and pragmatic’ in their constitutional attitudes, due to the ‘numerous uncertainties of the

current debates' (2013b, p. 7). What is lacking from this analysis of SSA data, as across similar analyses, is that we do not know *which* women feel this way. Again, gender is operationalised in feminist voting behaviour analysis as a term which captures 'the relationship of the sex variable to a social context' (Campbell, 2006, p. 68). Further, the conclusions drawn regarding men and women are based on sex differences instead of gender differences. Therefore, women from distinct groups and social contexts may not all share the same constitutional priorities, and deeper contextual understanding is missing in this type of conflated analysis. Ormston's (2013b) analysis offers the one-size-fits-all approach in quantitative analysis of sex gaps that Campbell (2006) and Lovenduski (2005) warn against, as causal investigations of the sex gap can only go so far. In her preliminary analysis of SSA 2013 data, Ormston (2013b) calls for further quantitative and qualitative research, arguably taking a bottom-up approach, 'starting with men and women's accounts of how they see the independence debates to ensure that academics and policymakers are not missing obvious explanations for the gender gap' (p. 7). Her analysis 'raises as many questions as its answers', arguably partly due to the lack of heterogeneous analysis of voter groups (p. 8). However, her secondary analysis of the SSA dataset provides essential insight into sex differences in constitutional attitudes pre-referendum and amplifies the need for further research into women's constitutional attitudes.

In terms of subgroup analysis of voters, I ran a chi-square analysis on all datasets to investigate the relationship between the sex, age and support for independence variables, and found a significant relationship across all SSA years. For example, in SSA 2015 data, a shift occurred in age, sex, and support for independence in which male respondents aged 65 years and above and female respondents aged 45 to 54 years were more likely to support independence than others in their respective sex and age group. However, by 2016, the relationship between sex, age and support for independence reverted to years prior, with support for independence coming from younger and male respondents. In the years before and after 2015, SSA data indicated that predominantly young people aged 16 to 25 were more likely to support independence. As in SES data, small shifts in the multivariate relationship between sex, age and support for independence were found in differing years (in 2011's SES), and questions regarding why this shift occurred are raised. As described in Chapters 2 and 3, sex gaps in voting behaviour are context-specific to the election and the voter subgroup. The quantitative analysis offered illustrative patterns, but *why* questions remain, which further support Ormston's (2013b) calls for qualitative analysis.

Another pattern in SES data I found was that respondents with fewer educational qualifications were more likely to support independence. This pattern in education and qualification was seen in

the years leading up to the independence referendum with statistical significance. Regarding income level, a pattern can also be seen in SSA post-referendum data, with those with less income being more supportive of independence. Regarding other voter subgroup analysis findings, SSA respondents from a lower income bracket were generally more willing to support independence in all datasets.

In my analysis of the relationship between ethnicity and constitutional attitudes, the relationship between ethnicity and support of independence is not significant in most SSA data. Data samples of non-white voters are minuscule (in 2015 SSA, 98 per cent of respondents were white), but these data points are marginally reflective of the Scottish population. Considering the period of data collection, approximately four per cent of the Scottish population belonged to non-white ethnic groups (Scotland's Census, 2011). Between 2001 and 2011, the Asian population in Scotland doubled, with a majority of non-white Scottish citizens being Pakistani (50,000 people), Chinese (34,000) and Indian (33,000) (Scotland's Census, 2011). Yet, some interesting patterns emerge, with all five Black of African origin respondents stating that Scotland should stay within the UK with its own Parliament (SSA, 2015). Although these numbers are small, further contextual investigation of the interaction between race and constitutional preferences in Scotland would be beneficial as Scotland's BAME population grows, utilising an intersectional lens.

#### **5.2.4 Data from 2014: The 2014 Scottish Referendum Study and Illustrative Polls**

Affiliated with the SES, the Scottish Referendum Study of 2014 (SRS) conducted an internet panel survey to 'explore how individuals reach voting decisions and whether these processes differ from those in elections at the UK level' (Henderson et al., 2019). The SRS was conducted in three waves: before, during and after the 2014 referendum. The SRS was 'one of the largest ever surveys of Scottish voters at any election or referendum', and focused on the 'impact of the [independence] campaign itself and how campaign engagement might interact with the timing of vote decisions, or knowledge of and perceived uncertainty about different constitutional options' (Henderson et al., 2019). The SRS provides comprehensive and layered insight regarding how voters felt about constitutional change in Scotland before, during and after the referendum in 2014

Three sub-datasets of the 2014 SRS are presented alongside relevant sociodemographic background characteristics with statistical significance. The 2014 SRS was conducted in three waves: one pre-referendum and two post-referendum. I analysed waves 1 (pre-referendum wave) and 3 (post-referendum wave 2). Wave 2 of the SRS 2014 was a top-up module attached to the third wave of a British Election Study Internet Panel, and 'not all respondents in Scotland were

provided with the full set of questions for both studies’, and the sample is divided into three groups (BESIP & SRS, SRS, BESIP only) (Henderson et al., 2015). I chose to omit this data to avoid inconsistencies within the data, as pre-and post-waves were sufficient to analyse constitutional attitudes in 2014.

TABLE 5.9: SCOTTISH REFERENDUM STUDY 2014: MOST SUPPORTIVE OF INDEPENDENCE

Study	SRS	
<b>Study Year and Wave</b>	2014 Wave 1 <sup>178</sup>	2014 Wave 3 <sup>179</sup>
<b>Question (v)</b>	ScotReferendumIntentW1	ScotReferendumVoteW3
<b>Sex</b>	Male	Male
<b>Age Band (years)</b>	40-59 Males 40-59	40-59 Males 25-39 Males 40-59
<b>Birthplace</b>	Scotland	Scotland
<b>Class</b>	NA	NA
<b>Party ID</b>	SNP	SNP
<b>Income</b>	Under £5,000 -£14,999	Under £5,000 -£14,999
<b>Religion<sup>180</sup></b>	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic
<b>National Identity</b>	Scottish not British, More Scottish than British	Scottish not British, More Scottish than British
<b>Ethnic Background</b>	White British, Any other white background	White British, Any other white background

<sup>178</sup> Pre-referendum wave, conducted 22/08/2014 – 20/09/2014, n=4,849.

<sup>179</sup> Post-referendum wave 2 (wave 3), conducted 29/09/2015=14/10/2015, n=2610.

<sup>180</sup> Most respondents stated they did not have a religion. However, I did find statistical significance in the relationship between religion and support for independence. Demographic patterns shown are religions beyond ‘None’ to illustrate patterns.

TABLE 5.10:SCOTTISH REFERENDUM STUDY 2014: MOST UNSUPPORTIVE OF INDEPENDENCE

Study	SRS	
<b>Study Year and Wave</b>	2014 Wave 1 <sup>181</sup>	2014 Wave 3 <sup>182</sup>
<b>Question (v)</b>	ScotReferendumIntentW1	ScotReferendumVoteW3
<b>Sex</b>	Female	Female
<b>Age Band (years)</b>	60 + Males 60+ and Females 40-59	60+ Females 25-39 Females 60+
<b>Birthplace</b>	Scotland and Born elsewhere in the UK	Scotland and England
<b>Class</b>	NA	NA
<b>Party ID</b>	Labour	Labour
<b>Income</b>	£40,000-£44,999 £70,000=£99,999	£15,000-£19,999 £40,000-£44,999 £70,000=£99,999
<b>Religion</b>	Church of England/Anglican/Episcopal	Church of England/Anglican/Episcopal
<b>National Identity</b>	Equally Scottish and British	Equally Scottish and British
<b>Ethnic Background</b>	White British	White British

The SRS 2014 makes no distinction between sex and gender. The SRS dataset uses sex and gender interchangeably with the binary sex variable (male and female options only) labelled as *gender* in the dataset. Due to the binary nature of the variable and the male/female codes, in my analysis of the relationship in SRS data, I refer to the variable as the sex variable. I found that the relationship between the sex variable and support for independence was statistically significant in both waves of SRS data analysed. Analysis of wave 1 SRS responses (pre-referendum) demonstrated a sex gap between male and female respondents in support of independence with a 7.2 per cent margin.

<sup>181</sup> Pre-referendum wave, conducted 22/08/2014 – 20/09/2014, n=4,849.

<sup>182</sup> Post-referendum wave 2 (wave 3), conducted 29/09/2015=14/10/2015, n=2610.

Female respondents were more likely than male respondents to be unsupportive of independence at a 4.2 per cent margin. Female respondents were more likely to say they did not know how they would vote in the independence referendum at a margin of 3.3 per cent.

Analysis of other constitutional variables in wave 1 relating to vote choice also provided interesting findings related to sex differences. The relationship between the sex variable and the period in which voters made their voting decision ( $v=refchoicetimeW1$ ) was also statistically significant ( $p<.001$ ). Most female and male respondents stated that they knew 'how they would vote all along' (Henderson et al., 2015). Yet, there was a sex gap between male and female respondents within this response with males at a margin of 4.7 per cent higher than females. Further, female respondents stated they were more likely, by a small margin, than male respondents to state they made their choices within months or weeks of the referendum (approximately one or two per cent). These sex gaps in wave 1 SRS data are interesting as they provide further context regarding voters' expected vote choice, how sure they were about this vote choice and when they made it. There was a statistically significant sex gap across all these relationships, which is of academic interest as these gaps raise questions about *why*.

Regarding subgroup analysis, when comparing age, sex and voting intention in the SRS 2014 dataset, the relationship between the variables was statistically significant across both waves. However, *which* voters were less or more likely to be more supportive based on sex and age band shifted between the two waves. Generally, younger and middle-aged male respondents were more likely to support independence, whereas women across various bands were less supportive. The shifts from waves 1 and waves 3, again, raise questions regarding what causes these gaps to emerge.

Another interesting shift was found in the post-referendum data (wave 3, post-referendum wave 2). As stated, female respondents were still more likely than male respondents to be unsupportive of Scottish independence. In this survey wave, however, respondents were asked to reflect on their referendum votes. Female respondents stated that they voted *No* in the 2014 independence referendum at a margin of approximately three per cent. This figure, when compared to wave 1, shrunk. My data analysis suggests that more male respondents moved from *Yes* to *No* between waves 1 and 3, and more female respondents moved from undecided to voting *No*. Again, the relationship between sex and vote choice in the referendum remained statistically significant in wave 3 but altered slightly, with  $p=.022$ . Respondents who stated they 'didn't vote' or couldn't remember how they voted were minimal.

Yet, to offer a broader picture of 2014 data, I also analysed data from three other 2014 datasets: the Smith Commission Survey (SCS) alongside two popular opinion polls from the year of the

referendum. The two polls analysed are the Lord Ashcroft Poll (n=2000) and a YouGov poll. The Lord Ashcroft Poll was conducted by telephone interview on the day of the independence vote and the days after (18th and 19th September 2014). The YouGov poll (2014b) was conducted before the day of the referendum and was published in 'The Times' and 'The Sun' on the morning of the vote (18 September 2014). The results from this data analysis are in the following tables.

TABLE 5.11: MOST SUPPORTIVE IN OTHER 2014 DATA

Study	SCS <sup>183</sup>		YouGov	Ashcroft
Study Year	2014		2014	2014
Question (v)	q_18 <sup>184</sup>	q_18b <sup>185</sup>	'How will you vote?'	'How did you vote?' <sup>186</sup>
Sex	<sub>-187</sub>	Male	Men	Male
Age Band (years)	25-40	25-40	25-29	25-34, 16-17
Birthplace	Scotland	Scotland	Scotland	Scotland
Class	NA	NA	Working Class	NA
Party ID	SNP	SNP	NA	SNP
Income	£10,001- £15,000	£25,001-£30,000	Less Affluent	NA
Highest Level Education	-	-	NA	NA
Religion	-	-	Not belonging to a religion	Christian and None
National Identity	Scottish, not British	Scottish, not British	NA	NA
Ethnic Background <sup>188</sup>	-	-	NA	Mixed

<sup>183</sup> The SCS asked respondents in England, Wales, and Scotland their devolution preferences in 2014. The Scottish data is analysed and presented here.

<sup>184</sup> 'And how did you vote in the independence referendum?'

<sup>185</sup> 'And how would you vote if there was a referendum on independence tomorrow?'

<sup>186</sup> 'How did you vote in the referendum? Did you vote YES for Scotland to become an independent country, or NO for Scotland to remain part of the United Kingdom?'

<sup>187</sup> The relationship showed no statistical significance ( $r = .286$ ).

<sup>188</sup> A large majority of respondents in these surveys are white. As in other analysis, I carved out non-white ethnicities to illustrate statistically significant patterns amongst non-white voters.

TABLE 5.12: MOST OPPOSED IN OTHER 2014 DATA

<b>Study</b>	<b>SCS</b>		<b>YouGov</b>	<b>Ashcroft</b>
<b>Study Year</b>	2014		2014	2014
<b>Question (v)</b>	q_18	q_18b	'How will you vote?'	'How did you vote?'
<b>Sex</b>	-	Female	Women	Female
<b>Age Band (years)</b>	41-55	41-55	60+	65+
<b>Birthplace</b>	Scotland (33.9%) England (10%)	Scotland (27.5%), England (9.5%)	People born outside of the UK	Not born in Scotland
<b>Class</b>	NA	NA	Middle	NA
<b>Party ID</b>	Labour (18.3%) Conservative (15.5%)	Labour (15.9%) Conservative (15.2%)	NA	Conservative
<b>Income</b>	£20,001- £25,000	£20,001- £25,000	Higher Income	NA
<b>Highest Level Education</b>	-	-	NA	NA
<b>Religion</b>	-	-	Not belonging to a religion	Christian (Protestant)
<b>National Identity</b>	Equally Scottish and British	Equally Scottish, Not British	NA	NA
<b>Ethnic Background</b>	-	-	NA	Asian

As described in Chapter 4, both academic and private voting behaviour studies and polls informed the campaign strategies and were influential to the trajectory of the campaigns. Campaigns reacted to studies and polls and shaped how they targeted voter identities based on study and poll results. Therefore, quantitative data, both polls and studies, are important to contextualise voter experiences and attitudes in the political context of the independence referendum. The included polls also illustrate similarities and differences compared to SRS 2014 data. SRS data is similar to SCS data regarding age and sex patterns in constitutional attitudes. An interesting finding, however, is that SCS data did not illustrate a statistically significant relationship between sex and support for independence in the pre-vote wave.

Regarding data analysis of sample size, the SRS potentially had higher external validity than the SCS, depending on the weights used in the data. Additionally, unlike the SRS, the SCS (both pre- and post-waves) found respondents aged 25-40 to be more likely to support independence in the pre-referendum wave. However, this difference could be explained by the higher percentage of respondents aged 40-59 who took the SRS compared to the SCS.

Findings in Table 5.12 mirror findings in other data sources regarding the sex gap in constitutional attitudes. Findings firmly evidence the presence of a longstanding and persistent sex gap in

constitutional attitudes between *Yes* and *No* voting. As outlined in all previous chapters, a sex gap also persists amongst undecided voters. The following section will focus on this gap in all relevant data presented in this chapter and feature new data points. The following section will also illustrate why this sex gap in feeling (un)decided is significant to understanding sex, gender and constitutional attitudes.

### **5.2.5 Undecided Voters - Voting Behaviour Study Data Collated**

In Table 5.13, I collated secondary quantitative data analysis regarding which respondents were most likely to be unsure or undecided about their constitutional preferences. Across all voting behaviour studies analysed, female respondents were more likely than male respondents to be undecided.<sup>189</sup> As discussed in the previous section, SES 2021 is the only dataset which differentiated between sex and gender, and both females (sex) and women (gender identity) were most likely to be undecided. Statistical significance was also found when sex and age were banded together to support independence, except for SES 2007 and RCA, where the raw data was unavailable.

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<sup>189</sup> For the purposes of this research, I operationalise 'Undecided' respondents as respondents who select any of the following descriptors: 'Don't know', 'Not decided yet', 'Undecided', or 'Not sure' when asked about their support for Scottish independence.

TABLE 5.13: MOST LIKELY TO BE UNDECIDED TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE IN SELECTED STUDIES

Survey <sup>190</sup>	SES	SES	SSA	SSA	SRS	SSA	RCA <sup>191</sup>	SES <sup>192</sup>
Study Year	2007	2011	2012	2013	2014	2014	2014	2021
Sex	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Gender								Women <sup>193</sup>
Age Band	26-35	40-59	40-64	65+	40-59	35-44	16-34	30-39
Sex & Age Band	-	Female 40-59	Female 45-54	Female 65+	Female 40-59	Female 34-44	NA	Female 30-39
Location	-	NA	-	NA	NA	-	-	NA
Party ID	Labour	Labour	Labour	Labour	Labour	Labour	Labour	None <sup>194</sup>
Highest Level Education	Degree	Highers	Standard Gd/GCSE	None	University or CNAA	Degree/HE	Secondary School	University or CNAA

The patterns in the Table 5.13 mirror beliefs shared by campaign actors, which were presented in the previous chapter. Better Together actors, in particular, described women voters as more likely to be undecided and, therefore, as a group, women were important to target in the 2014 campaign. The data from Table 5.13 does not suggest that, as a majority, female respondents are undecided in their constitutional attitudes. Rather, the data in Table 5.13 suggests that when compared with male respondents, female respondents were more likely to be undecided in their constitutional preferences by a statistically significant margin. For example, a key takeaway from SSA 2013 was that female respondents were likelier to respond that they had ‘Not decided yet’ than male respondents at a 7.6 per cent margin. Overall, 19.9 per cent of female respondents stated they had not decided yet, compared to 12.3 per cent of undecided male respondents.

To further untangle the relationship between sex and undecided constitutional attitudes, I analysed other data points. For example, when analysing SSA 2013, data showed that female respondents were less likely to state, ‘they already [knew] enough about the referendum’ when compared to

<sup>190</sup> The phrasing of each question varied depending on the study selected and details are in corresponding survey tables.

<sup>191</sup> I did not have access to the raw data of this dataset. Analysis is included only from research undertaken by Henderson et al. (2015) in their report of the data.

<sup>192</sup> Waves 1 and 2 merged in analysis.

<sup>193</sup> SES 2021 is the only dataset to make a distinction between sex and gender identity. Females (sex) and women (gender) are more likely than males (sex) and other gender categories (men, non-binary) voters to feel undecided about their constitutional preferences.

<sup>194</sup> Respondents who stated they were not affiliated with a political party were more likely to be unsure regarding independence.

male respondents, and were more likely to respond that they thought the independence referendum was complicated.<sup>195</sup> Female respondents who stated they would vote *No* and those who were undecided were most likely to say they ‘Agreed’<sup>196</sup> with the statement. Male respondents who stated they were voting *No* were most likely to ‘Disagree’ with the statement. SSA 2013 data suggests that undecided and *No* female respondents believed the independence debate was complicated. While a positive relationship between believing the campaign was complicated and not voting *Yes* could be made, without further probing it is difficult to discern whether the complexity of the campaign was the most influential factor in shaping *No* and undecided constitutional attitudes.

Comparatively, in SES 2021 data, women respondents were more likely than men to state that they belonged to ‘neither’ side of the independence campaigns (*Yes* or *No*). This measurement offers a nuanced insight into gendered constitutional attitudes by including voter affiliation to ‘sides’ of the *Yes* and *No* campaigns. The question does not explicitly mention the word ‘campaign’ but asks respondents to affiliate with a side. As outlined in Chapter 2, in a referendum opposing campaigns represent either side of the yes or no question being posed to the electorate (Holbrook, 1996; Farrell and Schmitt-Beck, 2003; Jacobson, 2015). A significant relationship is illustrated in the SES 2021 data as it suggests that women are less likely than men to see themselves as part of a side or within a *Yes* or *No* camp. Yet, it is difficult to discern whether women are less likely to feel affiliated with a side because they are more likely to be uncertain of their vote, or whether other factors are at play. The relationship between gender and sides is made more complex when we consider what type and level of political participation is needed for a voter to feel affiliated with a side and whether this feeling can be measured objectively. How and to what extent a voter feels affiliated with a particular side of a campaign and whether this is influential in voting choice is complex and arguably highly subjective. Again, without further probing regarding perspectives on the campaigns, level of engagement with either side, and the impact of this on vote choice, the relationship between gender, side affiliation, and vote choice is difficult to measure.

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<sup>195</sup> ‘The independence debate is so complicated; I cannot make sense of it.’ Do you agree or disagree? (Q424)

<sup>196</sup> On a scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree or Don’t know.

Further, the SES 2021 asked respondents to pick between six constitutional futures,<sup>197</sup> and women (rgender) were most likely to state they ‘don’t know’ and not pick a constitutional future at a margin of 2.7 per cent compared to men. All non-binary persons chose a potential constitutional future. A sex gap was also found when investigating the relationship between this question and respondent sex (rsex). The sex and gender gaps found are statistically significant and illustrate indecision between many constitutional futures as opposed to only the yes or no option (for or against independence). Again, this SES 2021 question indicates a positive relationship between sex, gender and constitutional attitudes in Scottish voting behaviour, yet the causal factors remain unclear.

Moving to other data points, Table 5.13 introduces a new dataset in the RCA study. The RCA was conducted in 2014 and gathered data with a pre-and-post-referendum design in two waves. The survey’s aim focused on risk and its relationship to constitutional attitudes. Risk attitudes, risk aversion and uncertainty aversion are often offered as a causal explanation for the sex gaps in constitutional attitudes, as evidenced in Chapter 2. The survey focused on uncertainty and indecision and asked respondents questions such as, ‘How do levels of general tolerance for risk or attitudes to uncertainty influence constitutional preferences?’, ‘Which risks do potential voters associate with independence or Scotland remaining in the UK?’, ‘Does the risk ‘messenger’ matter more than the risk ‘message?’’, ‘Are certain messengers more credible than others?’, and ‘How important are risk calculations as determinants of vote choice?’ (Henderson et al., 2014, p. 1).

The RCA study is unique because it measured the relationship between risk and support for constitutional change. Neither raw nor cleaned data from this survey was available, but analysis suggests sex is used as a proxy for gender, utilising only man and woman options. In Henderson et al.’s (2015) analysis of RCA data, they found that women in their sample showed elevated levels of risk aversion and were 18 per cent more likely than men to feel uncertain about Scottish independence. Aggregately, women in their sample were twice as likely to say they were undecided than men. Comparatively, 43 per cent of men supported independence compared to only 33 per cent of women in their sample. In seeking to explain the gap, Henderson et al. (2014) concluded that the sex gap was ‘related to non-response and the fact that women [were] less likely to describe

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<sup>197</sup> Options: 1) Scotland should become independent, separate from the UK and the EU.  
2) Scotland should become independent, separate from the UK but part of the EU.  
3) Scotland should remain part of the UK, with its own elected parliament which has some taxation powers.  
4) Scotland should remain part of the UK, with its own elected parliament which has no taxation powers.  
5) Scotland should remain part of the UK without an elected parliament.  
6) Don’t know.

themselves as certain to vote or certain to back a particular constitutional option' (p. 5). Henderson et al. (2014) found that female respondents were likelier to say, 'I don't know' than 'No'. Critically, while patterns indicate that female respondents are more likely to be undecided, it is unclear why or to what extent.

RCA researchers Henderson et al. (2015), however, offered findings to explain the sex gap in undecided constitutional attitudes. They found a statistically significant gap in their data regarding how men and women sourced their political knowledge (Henderson et al., 2015). According to the dataset, sources of information that women respondents were less interested in compared to men respondents were radio and newspapers. Women in their sample stated they were more likely to seek information from their family and friends than from the media, government, or official campaigns (Henderson et al., 2015). This finding is gendered because women are normatively understood to discuss politics within their relationships through emotional connections (Shields, 2002; Connell, 2006; Morton et al., 2016; Kittilson, 2016; Kam et al., 2017; Redondo, 2017). This finding can be essentialising as women are often seen to be more emotionally driven, as opposed to the belief that men are more information-driven in their political beliefs, often notable in the head versus heart debates (Shields, 2002; Connell, 2006; Kam et al., 2017; Redondo, 2017). This finding also raises questions regarding women's access to media consumption resources such as the radio and newspapers. Due to women's role in society as primary caretakers and other socioeconomic factors, not all women have equal access to consume media in the same ways. Again, questions also emerge regarding *which* women source their political knowledge from personal relationships and how influential these conversations are compared to their media intake.

These findings and Henderson et al.'s (2015) consecutive conclusions are significant, especially when considered in light of Chapter 4's findings in which campaign actors believed women to be more undecided due to factors relating to risk, family and relationships. Yet, these interpretations of women voters also can be essentialising. If RCA data is representative of the electorate, the surface-level analysis will imply that female voters would be less likely to seek information from official campaigns. In analysing these data points of political knowledge, women respondents were more likely to have sourced information from the Yes Scotland campaign than the Better Together campaign (by a 12 per cent margin). Yet, RCA findings imply that women rely on face-to-face activities with those in their close circles and communities to gain political knowledge, and these discussions would arguably be more effective in influencing vote choice.

In contrast, however, these findings can offer an alternative argument for scholars and campaign strategists; for example, more community and face-to-face initiatives should be championed over

traditional strategy forms such as media advertisement and televised debates. A counterargument could also be that the Better Together campaign relied heavily on traditional forms of campaign strategy and, in the end, won with the support of female voters. Yet, without in-depth qualitative analysis of voter attitudes and preferences, it is difficult to tell where, how and why certain campaign data points were more accessed than others and how influential they were in shaping vote choice.

### 5.3 Patterns from the Data

A wide range of implications can be drawn about Scottish voting behaviour pre-and post-independence referendum. Due to the accessibility of historical Scottish voting behaviour data, this chapter largely answers the first research question that the thesis posed, which asks in what way and to what extent women's constitutional attitudes were expressed through voting behaviour and how this has changed over time. We see that a sex gap in voting behaviour has long persisted in support of constitutional change since the late 1990s and across various studies. Additionally, as illustrated in the previous section, patterns emerge when variables are compared, suggesting a relationship between other variables and gendered constitutional attitudes. These findings offer pathways for qualitative exploration to answer this thesis' second and third questions, which ask *which* women are more likely to oppose independence and *why*.

I summarise subgroup patterns in tandem with the sex variable from the data in the following section. However, I ultimately argue that these conclusions can only take scholars so far in understanding the explanatory powers of the sex gaps, gender differences, and constitutional attitudes.

#### **5.3.1 Age, Sex and Constitutional Attitudes**

The relationship between respondent age and support for independence was statistically significant in nearly all SSA surveys from 1999 (Schneider, 2014). According to the SRS 2014, respondents in age bands 16-49 were more likely to vote *Yes* for independence than those in age bands 50-70+ who were more likely to vote *No* (Henderson et al., 2014). Researchers analysing SSA data, however, found that amongst the younger age groups sex differences were balanced with respect to support for independence (Schneider, 2014). My secondary data analysis of SES 2007 data indicates those in 'older' age bands were more likely to support a '*No*' vote, specifically those 76 years and older. It was also evident in SES 2007 that those under 25 were more likely to vote '*No*', as were women aged 25-39 in SES 2011. However, a general theme reported in extensive data voting behaviour surveys and polls was that participants in more mature age groups were more

likely to respond that they had voted ‘No’ against Scottish independence (SRS 2014; SSA 1999-2012; SSA 2014; SSA 2014). According to SSA data, this finding supports a generational gap and, in some surveys, a gender-generation gap (Norris, 1999a) in constitutional attitudes in Scotland.

That said, many datasets measuring constitutional attitudes make no distinction between sex and gender. Therefore, further analysis is needed to untangle how age interacts with sex in gendered ways and in lieu of constitutional attitudes. For example, Henderson et al. (2014) found a variation in support across age groups but reported that ‘these differences were smaller than those reported for gender’ (p.5). Henderson et al. (2014) also stated that ‘the elderly and (to a lesser extent) the youngest respondents in the RCA tended to show less support for independence than the rest of the population’ (Henderson et al., 2014, p. 5). This data was confirmed by Liñeira and Henderson (2019) again, who found that female respondents who were elderly were more likely to see independence as a risk than younger or male respondents. Again, it is not clear whether these respondents are more opposed to independence because of their sex, age, or through other factors.

Schneider (2014) stated that the sex/age gap found in support for independence could be explained by women’s propensity to live longer than men and make up over half of the population of the affected age band (65+). While the sex/age gap could be explained by women’s longer life expectancy, these conclusions cannot be drawn confidently without in-depth contextual analyses of the most significant influential factors amongst women and men within these age bands. Scotland’s population census in 2011 confirmed that Scotland had an ageing population, so arguably, more respondents from mature age groups could saturate survey respondents.

### **5.3.2 Class, Sex and Constitutional Attitudes**

In bringing different datasets together to analyse subgroups, patterns regarding how marginalised groups experience constitutional change come to the forefront. Concurrent with data from the SRS data analysed by Henderson et al. (2014), I found a significant relationship between class and support for independence through secondary quantitative data analysis of SES 2007 and 2011 data. Respondents who stated they were working class were likelier to vote ‘Yes’ in support of Scottish Independence in SES 2007, SES 2011, and SRS 2014 datasets, and both Ashcroft and YouGov polls. When analysing existing data before the 2014 independence referendum, I found that

respondents identifying as ‘middle class’<sup>198</sup> or belonging to ‘neither class’<sup>199</sup> were likelier than other self-assessed classes to state they were opposed to independence. Quantitative data from before the independence referendum in 2014 supports data found in campaign actor interviews, which suggest that campaigns were aware that working-class voters were a key voting group to access.

Henderson et al. (2015), however, made an important contribution regarding how scholars study voters’ social class in survey data. They analysed Brexit voting data and found that respondents in Scotland and Wales were more likely to claim they are working class when, objectively, they are not (Henderson et al., 2015, p. 1513). They stated that when measuring class, income served as a more useful tool than self-ID to distinguish working-class people. In previous election studies, data has indicated that lower-income earners who have completed lower levels of education have been more supportive of independence (Henderson et al., 2015). However, what it means to be working-class in contemporary society is highly complex and debated within political science scholarship (Bartle, 1998; Evans, 1999; Andersen and Heath, 2002; Achterberg and Houtman, 2006; Payne, 2013; Savage et al., 2013; Ruben et al., 2014). In Scotland, voting behaviour analyses have long investigated the relationship between class and voting behaviour through a variety of methodologies and measurements (Pattie et al., 1991; Brand et al., 1993; Johnston et al., 1993; Heath et al., 1997; Bennie et al., 1997; Fielding, 1998; Hearn, 2002). Therefore, distinguishing between those most vulnerable in society due to limited financial resources and those that self-ID as the working class is equally challenging (Rubin et al., 2014).

Chapters 2 and 3 highlighted the connection made in existing literature between those who are most vulnerable in society and their desire to influence constitutional futures. Campaign actor interviews in Chapter 4 also illustrated that campaign actors from either side targeted voters they believed had more to gain from Scottish independence, such as working-class voters. In the analysis of RCA, the most significant differences in support for independence emerge from income, with those in the higher-income group showing less indecision in support for independence and lower-income quartiles supporting independence at higher levels (Henderson et al., 2014). In SES 2021 data, respondents who identified as not belonging to a class and working class were equally likely to indicate they were a ‘10’, on a scale of 1 to 10 in support for independence with a 10 being total support for independence. This measurement was at a margin

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<sup>198</sup> SES 2007, SES 2011, SRS 2014.

<sup>199</sup> BES 2017 (v=b9).

of .01 per cent with a total of approximately 31 per cent. Yet, compared to those in other classes, those that self-identified as working class were more likely than those that identified in other categories to select one on a scale out of ten, indicating they believed that the Scottish Parliament should be abolished (13.6 per cent). The relationship between class and support for Scottish independence proved statistically significant ( $p=.002$ ) in SES 2021 data. This data indicates that recently, those that identify as working class are not necessarily as likely to vote for independence. Still, those who identified as working class were more likely to identify as Scottish and not British.

Regarding sex, class and support for independence, data from SES 2021 showed that male respondents were more likely than female respondents to identify as working class at a margin of 2.5 per cent. Nearly half of all respondents (approximately 40-43 per cent) of all survey respondents stated that they were working class. Using subgroup analysis, sex and gender proved statistically significant within the SES 2021 data. Female respondents were more likely than male respondents to say they were not part of any class by approximately five per cent. Thirty-three per cent of female respondents stated they did not belong to any particular class. In a multivariate analysis of sex, class and support for constitutional change, working-class females were twice as likely to state they 'didn't know' how they felt about Scotland being an independent country. This sex gap narrowed when analysing the middle class, with middle-class females only marginally (one to two per cent) more likely than middle-class males to say they 'didn't know'. Working-class females were approximately one per cent less likely to say Scotland should be independent than working-class males. The respective relationships between sex and constitutional preferences, as well as class and constitutional preference, are significant. Yet, it is difficult to discern whether sex and class interact to influence constitutional preferences through quantitative data alone. Data suggests a relationship exists across contexts and datasets, but conclusive evidence is difficult to discern due to questions regarding external validity.

### **5.3.3 Party ID, Issues and Sex**

As expected, survey respondents across all voting behaviour studies who reported themselves as supporters of the SNP were likelier to vote in support of Scottish independence.<sup>200</sup> Based on existing data, those who were party members or felt most affiliated with the SNP during the 2014 referendum were more likely to turn out to vote overall. Beyond SNP trends, data also showed a

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<sup>200</sup> SSA 2014, SSA 2009-2012, SSA 2014, SES 2007, SES 2011, SCS 2014.

significant relationship between respondents who aligned themselves to the Labour Party as most likely to be unsupportive of Scottish independence in years prior to 2021.<sup>201</sup> Also, across most voting behaviour studies, Labour-supporting respondents were more likely to be undecided than other respondents.<sup>202</sup> Conservative Party supporters were more decisively unsupportive of Scottish independence. These trends align with data from Chapter 4's campaign actor interviews and shared understandings of party policy concerning independence. The Scottish Labour Party, for example, struggled with finding consistent messaging, and their 'challenge was to break any potential link between supporting independence and voting SNP' (Mitchell, 2015, p. 93). Efforts were made, for example, by Jim Murphy, who announced to Labour supporters that Labour would be 'open to *Yes* supporters', but other messaging from the leader suggested that 'voting SNP would lead to a second referendum' (Mitchell, 2015, p. 94). Yet, single variable analysis of party ID and support for independence does not shed light on how constitutional preferences and attitudes are shaped, nor does it offer explanations for the sex and gender gaps in support of constitutional change.

Regarding sex and party ID, scholars previously found a narrow sex gap between male and female supporters amongst SNP members (Johns et al., 2011, p. 587-8). When searching for explanations for the sex gap, researchers analysed other quantitative data points. In the SES 2007, researchers found that female respondents placed the SNP at the same centre-point of the right-left wing political ideology scale used, which the authors argued belied 'any suggestion that women were turned off the SNP because of their more left-wing stance on fiscal policy' (Johns et al., 2011, p. 587-8). Here, we see researchers utilising gender difference theory to explain the sex gaps, suggesting women are more conservative than men. Yet, when researchers controlled for issue priorities, the sex gap in support for the SNP widened by 6.6 points, suggesting that female respondents felt more negatively about the SNP's perceived priorities. In SES 2007 data, female respondents found education and health to be top priorities, which were not considered top SNP priorities to voters (Johns et al., 2011, p. 588). However, even when issue priorities were controlled for sex, female voters were still found to be less supportive of the SNP (Johns et al., 2011). Recent data from the SES 2021 also reveals that the SNP's party membership gap has closed, with respondent data indicating that female membership to the SNP surpasses that of male members. Again, explanations for this gap are limited, as respondents have not been further probed.

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<sup>201</sup> SSA 2014, SSA 2009-2012, SES 2007, SES 2011, SCS 2014.

<sup>202</sup> SSA 2014, SSA 2009-2012, SES 2007, SES 2011, SCS 2014.

Turning to patterns found in the Labour Party, women and the Scottish Labour Party have had a long history (Mackay, 2003), and in 2003 women made up 42 per cent of Scottish Labour Party members. In 2017, however, it was reported that 38 per cent of Labour Party members were women, with a four per cent decrease. Existing scholarship has found that over the years, Scottish Labour worked to improve women's representation in the party using affirmative action measures such as quotas, zipping and all-women shortlists (AWS) (Kenny and Mackay, 2014). Yet, these findings prompt questions for further inquiry about whether female Labour Party supporters were more likely to be undecided on Scottish independence due to their party ID, sex or age. That said, when sex and party ID variables are examined along with support for constitutional change, we can see a statistically significant relationship through multivariate analysis with older, female, Labour-supporting respondents. These findings suggest that all three of these variables could work in tandem to influence their vote for constitutional change, yet it is unclear to what extent other influencing factors were present, whether their party ID influenced their constitutional attitudes, in what ways, and why.

### **5.3.4 National Identity and Sex**

Existing scholarship finds that national identity is a crucial mobiliser for support for the SNP (Brand et al., 1994; Paterson, 2006). Most data shows that SNP supporters are more likely to feel Scottish, not British, and more likely to support independence. As evidenced in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, national identity carries strong gendered themes in Scottish society. As Chapters 2, 3 and 4 have highlighted, campaign actors in my interviews, as well as the media and academic scholarship have linked 'Braveheart' masculinity to the independence debates in Scotland (Merrick et al., 2014; Renison, 2013; Sharp, 1998; Spracklen, 2016; Pennamen, 1990). The characterisation of *Yes* supporters as Braveheart types relies on traditional masculine versus feminine tropes, which depict men as more patriotic and prone to nationalism than women. Yet, research has debunked the significance of the relationship between sex, national identity and constitutional preferences.

In previous research on Scottish voting behaviour, scholars have identified that national identity can be an 'insufficient guide' to understanding constitutional preferences (Mitchell, 2015, p.93). For example, SES data in 2007 showed that female respondents were more likely than male respondents to claim they were 'Scottish, not British' at a five per cent margin. With their analysis of 2007 SES data, Johns et al. (2011) concluded that the SNP's appeal to male voters must carry other bases than national identity, as the SNP, in theory, should have attracted more female voters at the time. When Johns et al. (2012) controlled for national identity and support for the SNP, the sex gap widened 'noticeably to 11.8 points' (p. 587).

Further, in recent data, the SES 2021 indicated that female respondents were more likely than male respondents to rate themselves as a 'ten' on a one to ten scale regarding how Scottish they felt by a 7.6 per cent margin. The relationship between feeling Scottish and sex was statistically significant ( $p=.000$ ). Regarding the relationship between national identity and voting for independence in the 2021 SES, the more Scottish someone felt, the more likely they were to vote for independence. Concurrently, the more British someone felt, the more likely they were to feel that the Scottish Parliament should be abolished. Both variable relationships were statistically significant ( $p=.000$ ). When running a multivariate analysis of SES 2021 data, female respondents who identified as Scottish were more likely to support Scottish independence than male respondents by a small margin.

Ultimately, national identity is highly personal and often fluid, depending on various social and political factors (Gillis, 1996; Howe, 1998; Pattie et al., 1999; Kiely et al., 2005; Henderson and McEwen, 2006; Bond, 2006; Rosie, 2014; Miller, 2016; Henderson et al., 2021). The narrowing of the sex gap in support for independence found in SES 2021 data cannot directly be linked to differences in national identity. Yet, the gendered aspects of the Scottish independence movement may have shifted since 2014 with the strengthening of pro-independence women's groups such as WFI (McAngus and Rummery, 2018). What can be understood from this analysis is that, ultimately, supporting the SNP, supporting Scottish independence, and feeling Scottish cannot be conflated. Rather, as with the other relationships, if explanatory conclusions are to be drawn, lived experiences and perspectives of voters regarding their constitutional attitudes must be explored.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented secondary quantitative data analysis to consider patterns in existing studies related to sex, gender, constitutional attitudes and other sociodemographic variables. The data presented in this chapter reflects what is currently understood regarding voting behaviour in Scotland and constitutional attitudes. Findings from the aforementioned studies regarding the relationship between indecision and sex indicate a statistically significant relationship in correspondence with constitutional preferences. Although results can be essentialising in using all-women statements, they depict a consistent pattern in constitutional attitudes across time and contexts. The wealth of data on the sex gap across surveys and time highlights the relevance and significance of understanding sex gaps in constitutional attitudes in the field of political science. This analysis predominantly answers the first research question, which asks to what extent a sex gap in constitutional attitudes exists in Scotland and how this is expressed through voting behaviour.

This chapter has also highlighted other identity characteristics which could be significant to constitutional attitudes when intersected with gender and has opened pathways for further gender subgroup analysis. For example, broad patterns indicate significant relationships amongst sex and sex and age in particular. Most survey data indicated that older Labour women were likely to oppose independence. Other subgroup patterns from survey data indicate that younger women were more likely to feel indecisive regarding their vote choice. Conversely, middle-aged male respondents have historically been more supportive of independence than older male respondents.

These subgroup trends in constitutional attitudes found in survey data offer an introductory understanding of the complexity of voter attitudes and constitutional preferences as it acknowledges voter heterogeneity through various groups and subgroups. The analysis also marks where sex and gender have been conflated and distinct. Secondary quantitative data analysis from previous surveys has illustrated a more precise image of who is more likely to support independence and who is not in a broader sense. However, further inquiry is required to investigate *which* types of voters and *why*, which are the second and third research questions posed by this thesis.

The refreshed SES analysis is important because it shows that while statistically significant patterns are evident when looking at groups broadly, more complex relationships related to constitutional attitudes in Scotland need to be explored. Due to the limited scope of quantitative data in conjunction with diverse voter identities, much remains unknown regarding a range of variables such as sex, race, class, gender identity and constitutional preferences, which require further investigation. As discussed in Chapter 3, further qualitative inquiry is required to add scholarly meaning to numbers to understand the deeper complex relationships between sex, gender differences and voting behaviour. Further, linking to theoretical arguments made in Chapter 3, constitutional change offers opportunities for those often left out of power and arguably more likely to desire a shift from the status quo (Lindsay, 1991; Bell and Mackay, 2012). Therefore, the relationship between power, constitutional change, constitutional preferences and those in marginalised groups requires deeper analysis to uncover *why* certain subgroups of voters are more or less supportive of constitutional change in Scotland.

## Chapter 6: Contesting Constitutional Futures

### *Yes and No Qualitative Voter Data*

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents empirical data from voter focus groups and interviews using *Yes* and *No* voter data. The chapter first outlines *Yes* and *No* voter demographics of my qualitative study to contextualise the data and offers illustrative frequency tables. Then, I briefly outline what voters were asked and voting history data. The chapter then evaluates broad similarities and differences found in data amongst *Yes* and *No* voters. It continues to focus on gender subgroup differences, pulling out key themes relating to identity, economic fears, power, and risk. I centred voters' personal and lived experiences in my analysis to capture what influences and shapes voters' constitutional attitudes. Following my feminist problem-driven approach, this chapter presents voter perspectives from the bottom up, adding new dimensions to Chapter 5's secondary quantitative data analysis.

The chapter identifies broad patterns across constitutional preferences when voters were segmented by vote choice. For example, *Yes* voters were united in that they believed Scots to be different from other regional identities in the UK, while *No* voters were unified in their belief that all Britons are similar. I also found that while *No* voters weighed the risk of independence, *Yes* voters weighed the risk of staying in the union. Patterns emerged amongst subgroups outlining similarities and differences across and within gender groups and subgroups of voters. However, findings indicated that gendered voting groups were highly complex and varied greatly. This finding contributes to the argument that voters are heterogeneous in their constitutional attitudes both within and outwith gender voting blocs. Therefore, analysis which digs deeper into intersecting aspects of a voter's identity can offer a more nuanced understanding regarding the interaction between gender and vote choice. For example, the analysis indicated that the constitutional attitudes of *No Women* older than 50 years of age were influenced by their negative feelings towards nationalist parties and nationalism.

Further findings suggested that *Yes Women* of all ages with a Scottish national identity were attracted to independence because they believed societal power redistribution would narrow societal inequalities for women. This finding potentially provides additional weight to arguments around the relationship between gender equality and constitutional change made in previous literature

(Lindsay, 1991; Bell and Mackay, 2013). From a feminist lens, this thesis offers critical insights regarding women's experiences of power within society, and some data analyses suggested that *No* voters were more likely to feel secure within their place in society, particularly men. In other subgroup analysis findings, younger *Yes Men* were more likely to express uncertainty regarding their constitutional attitudes than other subgroups of *Yes* voters. Nevertheless, younger *Yes Men* were more likely to express that they would be more willing to take the leap of faith or the risk that independence posed compared to older *Yes Men*.

This chapter provides further evidence of the value of focus groups and interviews in that they facilitate in-depth analysis of gendered voting preferences in voters' own words (cf. Campbell, 2006; Sanders, 2023). Focus group conversations provided 'thick' and thematically rich data, offering a fertile environment for voters to build from each other's ideas and perspectives. The chapter illustrates how qualitative methods can untangle broad group and subgroup similarities and differences that have been difficult to access through only quantitative analysis. Additionally, when all intersecting aspects of a voter's identity are considered, deeper understandings are developed regarding voter heterogeneity, voter belief systems, and constitutional attitudes.

## 6.2 *Yes* and *No* Voter Study Demographics

*Yes* voters (n=49) voted for independence in the 2014 referendum and would do so again in the event of another referendum (*Yes/Yes*). *No* voters (n=49) were classified similarly, except with both votes being against independence (*No/No*).<sup>203</sup> A small pool of voters within the *Yes* and *No* voting groups were *Switcher* voters or voters who shifted their constitutional attitudes during data collection (e.g., voters who voted *Yes* in 2014 but would vote *No* in the event of another referendum, or vice versa). These participants were both part of broad *Yes* and *No* voter groups and within *Switcher* subgroups: *Yes to No* voters and *No to Yes* voters. The *Switcher* study was particularly small, and subgroup analysis of *Switcher* voters did not elicit findings sufficiently notable to draw meaningful conclusions. *Switcher* data will be analysed throughout this chapter along with *Yes* and *No* voters due to the low participant size. Yet, although the study size is small, it reveals individual's perceptions and discourses which are meaningful to qualitative analysis.

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<sup>203</sup> There was also a study of voters interviewed who felt undecided about their constitutional attitudes (n=18). Most of these voters voted in the 2014 independence referendum but some abstained or were unable to vote. These voters were categorised as *Undecided* voters and the data and findings from these interviews are presented in the next chapter.

The following tables illustrate how *Yes* and *No* participants were grouped by vote choice and gender. The tables also illustrate the methods used to collect the data (either by a focus group or individual interview).

TABLE 6.1: YES PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN (N=49)

Gender	Focus Group Participants	Interview Participants	Total
Men	12	13	25
Women	21	2	23
Non-Binary	0	1	1
<b>Total Yes Participants</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>49</b>

TABLE 6.2: NO PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN (N=49)

Gender	Focus Group Participants	Interview Participants	Total
Men	0	27	27
Women	4	18	22
Non-Binary	0	0	0
<b>Total No Participants</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>49</b>

TABLE 6.3: SWITCHER PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN (N=7 OUT OF 97 YES AND NO TOTAL)

Switcher Group	Gender	Number of Participants
<b>Yes to No</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>2</b>
Yes to No	Women	1
Yes to No	Men	1
<b>No to Yes</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>5</b>
No to Yes	Women	2
No to Yes	Men	2
No to Yes	Non-binary	1
<b>Total Switcher Voters</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>7</b>

Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 illustrate that *Yes* and *No* voting groups were balanced across vote choice and gender. There was a non-binary qualitative participant present in my *Yes* voter group sample, and they were also a part of the *No to Yes Switcher* subgroup.<sup>204</sup> The existence of a non-binary

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<sup>204</sup> Approximately 1.3 per cent of my survey respondents (n=1214) stated their gender identity was non-binary. Eleven non-binary survey respondents voted for independence in 2014, three voted against independence and two did not answer. In terms of how they would vote in the event of another referendum, 14 non-binary participants said they would vote for Scottish independence, one non-binary participant said they would be against independence and one

research respondent in my small study further reinforces arguments made in Chapters 2, 3 and 5 regarding the need to distinguish between sex and gender identity in voting behaviour research, particularly research investigating sex and gender gaps.<sup>205</sup>

As described in Chapter 3, *No* voters were more difficult to engage in focus group discussions and preferred one-to-one interviews. This difficulty was due to personal preference and challenges from the coronavirus pandemic. The gender and vote-choice breakdown of focus groups can be seen in Table 6.4, with ten focus groups administered in total.

TABLE 6.4: FOCUS GROUP COMPOSITION (N=10)

Focus Group Gender	Number of Participants	Focus Group Gender	Number of Participants
Yes All Women	5	No All Women	1
Yes All Men	2	No All Men	0
Yes Mixed	2	No Mixed	0
<b>Total Yes Focus Groups</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total No Focus Groups</b>	<b>1</b>

To measure participants' constitutional attitudes, participants were asked to rank their support for independence on a scale from one to ten in the SVB survey,<sup>206</sup> with one being 'not supportive at all' and ten being 'very supportive'. Approximately 86 per cent of *Yes* participants stated that they were a ten in their support for independence. The remaining 14 per cent of *Yes* voters who ranked their support for independence between seven and nine were largely men, with an outlier of one woman. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 outlined how both existing literature (Henderson et al., 2015) and campaign actors often characterised women voters as being less certain, but in my study, *Yes Men* were more likely to state they were less certain than *Yes Women*. Approximately 87 per cent of *No* voters ranked their support for independence at a one, with 13 per cent ranking themselves either a two or three. Again, following the same pattern as my *Yes* sample, all those who indicated their support for independence as being above a one in support were *No Men* with an outlier of one *No Women*. This descriptive data is not meant to be representative of the Scottish electorate, but rather

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non-binary participant said they were undecided about how they would vote. There was no missing data from non-binary participants, therefore all data is present in that particular sample of participants.

<sup>205</sup> All but two non-binary participants in my data were supportive of independence and within my total sample (survey data) three non-binary participants were *Yes to No Switchers*.

<sup>206</sup> As outlined in Chapter 3, the SVB was the Scottish Voting Behaviour survey I administered to collect participants for qualitative research (n=1214).

is illustrative of the pattern of constitutional attitudes in my study, with *Yes* and *No Men* more likely to be less certain about their constitutional preferences than *Yes* and *No Women*. However, these voters were still considered definitively *Yes* or *No* voters. Only participants who marked themselves on a scale of four to six were classified as *Undecided* in my voting groups. *Undecided* voter data will be presented and analysed in the next chapter.

A majority of participants from both *Yes* and *No* groups were born in Scotland (78 per cent). Twelve *Yes* voters and nine *No* voters were born outside Scotland (out of approximately 50 participants in each group). Six *No* voters were born in England, and two were born in Northern Ireland. Eight *Yes* voters were born in England, two within the EU, and two outside the EU. While birthplace is not explicitly an identifier for a voter's constitutional attitudes, research has argued it can offer deeper insight into voter's experiences, as birthplace can influence culture, political views and national identity (Kiely et al., 2005a, 2005b; Henderson, 2007; Mitchell et al., 2012; Rosie, 2014; Bond, 2015; Keating, 2015).

Chapter 5's secondary quantitative data analysis pointed to several starting points for sub-group analysis. For example, survey data and research indicated a meaningful relationship between two socio-demographic variables and constitutional preferences: sex and age (Henderson et al., 2015; Liñeira and Henderson, 2015; Henderson et al., 2022, pp. 84-8). In the 2021 SES data, a significant relationship was found between gender and constitutional preferences, and sex and constitutional preferences. As the SVB asked for the participant's gender identity (as opposed to their sex), I initially sub-grouped my respondents based on gender and vote choice. Then, I grouped voters, where possible, by age. Then, subgroups were further divided by national identity and similarities in the SVB's free-text response regarding influential factors for vote choice. For example, if a respondent specifically mentioned in their SVB responses that they were 'frustrated with Westminster' or 'concerned with sectarianism', I tried to place them in a group with others who expressed similar feelings in their SVB free-text survey responses. This grouping helped facilitate conversations as participants shared similarities in constitutional attitudes.

This section has outlined the demographics of my participants and how I grouped voters. The next section will briefly outline what voters were asked, their broad voting history, and details regarding themes of frequency and measurement.

### 6.3 *Yes* and *No* Interview Format and Voting History

All *Yes* and *No* participants were asked the same broad questions according to a semi-structured schedule based on vote choice to conduct a fair test of differences between gendered groups.<sup>207</sup> Key influencing themes were counted and measured by frequency. Dominant themes from gender groups and subgroups will be mentioned in the following sections.

The themes presented in the following sections are expressed in the participant's own words following arguments presented by Manheim et al. (2012) that focus group data should be presented through 'carefully selected quotations' to illustrate an accurate summary of the discussions to conclude (p. 323). Interview data is presented similarly, and the distinction between method types is made within the footnotes. The importance of themes was measured by the frequency at which the theme appeared in the transcripts. Then, contextual meanings were analysed to confirm correct coding.

*Yes* participants were asked to reflect on the following in their semi-structured focus groups or interview:

1. What were the main reasons for your support of independence in 2014?
2. What has motivated or influenced you to remain supportive of independence?
3. Are you supportive of another independence referendum? Why or why not?

At the time of data collection, 90 per cent of *Yes* participants in my qualitative study (n=44) voted in favour of Scottish independence in 2014 and would do so again in the event of another referendum.<sup>208</sup> Therefore, a majority of *Yes* voters in my study maintained the belief that Scotland should be an independent country from the date of the referendum in 2014 until data collection in 2020. In *Yes Women* groups, the most popular themes had over 30 references and were mentioned in all focus groups. In *Yes Men* groups, the most popular themes had over 30 references, were mentioned in all-male focus groups, and were mentioned in at least 80 per cent of interviews.

*No* participants were asked to reflect on the following in their semi-structured focus groups or interview:

1. What were the main reasons you voted against independence in 2014?

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<sup>207</sup> Focus group and interview schedules are included in the appendix.

<sup>208</sup> The remaining five *Yes* participants were *No to Yes Switcher* participants who switched their vote from *No* to *Yes*.

2. What has motivated or influenced you the most to remain unsupportive of independence?
3. Are you supportive of another independence referendum? Why or why not?

At the time of data collection, 96 per cent of *No* participants in my qualitative study (n=46) voted against Scottish independence in 2014 and would vote against it in the event of another referendum.<sup>209</sup> In *No Women* groups, the most popular themes had nearly 30 references and were mentioned in at least 80 per cent of all interviews and the focus group. In *No Men* interviews, the most popular themes had over 45 references and were mentioned in at least 80 per cent of interviews. As a group, *No Women* voters were more likely than other groups to discuss one influential factor at length within interviews and their one focus group, instead of having many different thematically coded topics.

The following section will outline thematic findings from qualitative interviews regarding voters' constitutional preferences. I move from the broad to the specific by briefly outlining general findings across *Yes* and *No* groups, adding to existing knowledge on voter preferences from a feminist lens. Then, the majority of the chapter will focus on subgroup findings highlighting patterns in constitutional attitudes across (e.g., *Yes Men/Yes Women*, *No Men/No Women*) and within gender voter subgroups (e.g., older *No Women*/younger *Yes Men*).

The following sections indicate *which* gender voting groups and subgroups differed in their constitutional preferences, *why*, and *to what extent*.

#### 6.4 *Yes* and *No* Voter group findings: same or different?

Scholars have written expansively on why Scottish voters voted either *Yes* or *No* in the 2014 referendum (Curtice, 2013; Curtice, 2015; Mitchell, 2015; Morisi, 2016; Fieldhouse and Prosser, 2018; Bennie et al., 2021; Liñeira and Henderson, 2021; Henderson et al., 2022). Briefly, my research findings support findings in related literature and point to two key factors significant to vote choice (outwith gender analysis and subgroups): 1) a voter's national identity, and 2) how voters weighed financial and economic costs and benefits. Voters with a strong Scottish national identity were more likely to vote *Yes*. Voters concerned about financial and economic costs were

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<sup>209</sup> There were only two voters who switched from *Yes* to *No* in my qualitative data collection, one man and one woman.

more likely to vote *No*.<sup>210</sup> When considered contextually, I argue that these two factors are highly gendered and require analysis from a feminist lens.

### 6.4.1 Identity

All respondents were required to select a national identity in the SVB.<sup>211</sup> Most *Yes* voters identified as ‘Scottish’ (88 per cent). Although the SVB survey was not intended to be a representative sample with high external validity, the data offers high internal validity and offers ‘thin’ contextual understanding of a participant’s identity and voting history. As discussed in Chapter 5, the relationship between gender and feeling Scottish was found to be statistically significant in SES 2021 data ( $p=.0000$ ). Illustratively, in the most recent SES 2021, women were more likely to identify as Scottish than men (a ten on a scale from one to ten) by a large margin of 7.6 per cent. Therefore, the relationship between gender, identity and constitutional attitudes required deeper investigation through gender group and subgroup analysis.

Yet, in my qualitative interviews or discussions, not all *Yes* voters spoke about their national identity as important to them or a key factor in shaping their constitutional attitudes. *Yes Men* and *Women* were near equally likely to mention their identity as an influence on their constitutional attitudes, with *Yes Men* making 13 and *Yes Women* making 15 references to their unique identity.<sup>212</sup> Also, in qualitative data analysis, I found that *Yes Men* and *Yes Women* had similar views on Scottish national identity and what it meant to them to be Scottish. However, a notable finding emerged regarding how *Yes* and *No* voters conceptualised national identity, and subgroup analysis elicited interesting findings regarding how *No Women* viewed national identity and nationalism more broadly. This finding will be explored in the following section.

#### 6.4.1.1 *Yes* and *No* Voter Differences: Identity

Comparatively, *Yes* voters were likelier to believe that Scottish people differed from the rest of the UK, whereas *No* voters asserted that Britons were all the same. *Yes* voters felt Scotland had more diverse cultural, political, and ideological values than the rest of the UK. This finding has been

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<sup>210</sup> However, as in existing research, there were some outliers as there were some participants who felt Scottish but were against independence. There were also voters who were concerned about the financial viability of Scottish independence but felt potential opportunities in an independent Scotland were worth the leap. However, these participants were in the minority.

<sup>211</sup> The SVB survey schedule is located in the appendix.

<sup>212</sup> In terms of open coding analysis, when a participant discussed their identity, this was distinct from discussing the identity of Scots broadly/in a stereotypical way. E.g., ‘Scottish people are different’ versus ‘I am Scottish, not British...’ therefore, ‘I vote for Scottish independence’.

well-noted in existing research (Henderson et al., 2022, p. 35; for more, see Henderson, 2017 or Henderson and McEwen, 2005). For example, a *Yes Woman* stated that she supported independence due to the ‘historical factor [...] I think we are a separate country, and we have our own history and our identity. [...] I’ve always inherently felt Scottish, not British. It’s always been in my psyche’.<sup>213</sup> A *Yes Man* stated that he believed Scotland was ‘very different from England politically’,<sup>214</sup> and cited Brexit as evidence. Another *Yes Woman* stated that Scottish people had different values compared to the rest of the UK,<sup>215</sup> while another *Yes Woman* stated there was a ‘huge cultural gap between being English and being Scottish’.<sup>216</sup> Other *Yes* participants shared these sentiments.<sup>217</sup>

In scholarship, research on whether Scotland is more progressive than the rest of the UK presents a mixed picture (Henderson and McEwen, 2005; Bond, 2006; Mitchell, 2015; Rummery, 2016). Regarding policy, findings illustrate that Scotland is distinctive in its policy approach with free prescriptions, free undergraduate college tuition and innovations in domestic abuse policy (Wheatley et al., 2014; Rummery, 2016; McCabe, 2021). Yet, scholars equally argue that this policy distinctiveness is often overstated and has notable omissions relating to social justice and equality measures (Bond, 2006; Rummery, 2016; O’Hagan, 2016; Mooney and Scott, 2016; McCabe, 2021). My interview data does not explicitly address a divergence in policy preferences but rather a difference in values and social beliefs. This finding raises questions regarding differing social attitudes between *Yes* and *No* voters.

Henderson and McEwen (2005) explored the differences in social values and beliefs between Scottish and British national identities and noted a divergence in the 1980s. They found that the collective dimension of British nationhood in the Thatcher years was reconstructed with an emphasis on ‘self-reliance, thrift, enterprise, and personal responsibility’ (Henderson and McEwen, 2005, p. 184; for more, see Mitchell, 1990, pp. 128-129). These values were the lifeblood of Thatcherism, and Henderson and McEwen (2005) found that opposition parties such as the SNP

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<sup>213</sup> Participant 89 (*Yes Woman*, ten support for independence, 50-59 years, born in Scotland) in Focus Group (FG) six-mixed gender group, all white, all Scottish national identity (NI) all ages (20-69 years)

<sup>214</sup> Participant in FG 9 – all *Yes Men*, all born in Scotland, all Scottish NI, a variety of ages and a range of seven to ten support for independence.

<sup>215</sup> Participant in FG 4 – all *Yes Women*, all white, all Scottish NI, a variety of ages and a range of seven to ten support for independence.

<sup>216</sup> Participant in FG 2 – all *Yes Women*, all ten support for independence, 60-70 years, all white, all Scottish NI

<sup>217</sup> *Yes Man* in FG5, *Yes Man* Participant 10, Participant 45 (*Switcher*, *No* to *Yes*, Non-binary voter, white, 30-39 years, born in England, *No* NI).

and Labour strategically ‘nurtured and articulated’ values which were collectivist and opposed Tory values to establish that Scottishness was distinct (yet also within) Britishness (p. 184). Collectivist values, which centred on a ‘belief in social justice and egalitarianism’, became the cornerstone of what it meant to be Scottish and greatly diverged from Thatcher’s collective British identity. Thus, the capacity to feel both British and Scottish became undermined, fuelled the decline of the Conservative vote and increased demand for Scottish self-governance (Henderson and McEwen 2005, p. 184). The collectivist values Henderson and McEwen (2005) outline can be seen within the beliefs of *Yes* voters regarding the differences between Scottish people and ‘the rest of the UK’ (p. 184).<sup>218</sup>

Henderson and McEwen’s (2005) analysis offers explanations for the differences between *Yes* and *No* voters in my study regarding their beliefs of sameness and the difference between British and Scottish identities. For *Yes* voters, Scottishness was framed as distinct from Britishness, as social responsibility was championed over self-reliance and personal responsibility. For *No* voters, Scotland remaining within Britain represented national cohesion and British unity. *No* voters largely believed that those living in the UK were similar and united as Britons, with only minor regional differences. For most of my *No* Voters, being Scottish and being British were mutually exclusive as Britishness rested at the heart of Scottishness; being Scottish was also to be British. A majority of *No* Voters doubted Scotland’s difference from the rest of the UK and believed it was a myth fuelled by Scottish nationalists and the SNP to cause division. For example, a *No Woman* considered her identity and stated:

I do feel like a lot of that rhetoric comes from the SNP, and it does insinuate that there’s a difference between the people that live in Scotland and the rest of the UK. And there’s not. All the people who live on these islands are connected, and they’re not dissimilar from one another.<sup>219</sup>

Another *No Woman*<sup>220</sup> believed Scottish nationalist rhetoric fuelled the belief that Scots are different from the rest of those in the UK:

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<sup>218</sup> In interviews, *Yes* voters were unanimous in their belief that Scottish people were different. Yet, clear definitions regarding from whom were often unclear or conflated. For example, English people were often adjoined with British people. It was sometimes indistinct whether ‘the rest of the UK’ answers also referred to Northern Irish or Welsh people. Yet, largely, ‘English’, ‘British’ and ‘the rest of the UK’ were one and the same in interviews and meant to signify ‘the other’. Further probing would have been ideal to get into the specifics of difference and would be crucial to future qualitative research investigating the UK’s regional identities and constitutional attitudes.

<sup>219</sup> Participant 68 (*No Woman*, one support for independence, 20-29 years, British NI, white)

<sup>220</sup> Participant 16 (*No Woman*, one support for independence, 50-59 years, born in Scotland, white, British NI)

We are not a separate country at all; that's a myth that's promulgated by the Scottish nationalists [...] We're also a small island; we all speak the same language and share the same culture [...] British people are British people. Scottish nationalists like to think they are always apart, but they are not any different from the people in the rest of Britain.

The word 'myth' emerges in this quote and circulates back to findings in Chapter 4 regarding the importance of Scottish political and historical myth in shaping voters' belief systems. Again, we see the *Yes* myth or belief that Scots are more progressive than the rest of the UK. For example, one *Yes Woman* stated that 'with the English, you're looking backwards, they're looking at all this British Empire and Britain rule the waves sort of thing [...] I think Scottish people are being more realistic and realising that those days are gone'.<sup>221</sup> These sentiments were echoed by other *Yes* participants regardless of subgroup differences, and often. *Yes* supporters believed that Scotland was more politically and culturally progressive than the rest of the UK, distinguishing Scottish identity from British identity. This difference, in turn, influenced their constitutional attitudes supporting Scottish independence. This belief is significant to *Yes* voters whether Scotland is, in reality, more progressive or not. When studying voter attitudes and preferences, understanding what they believe to be true is important, as stated in Chapter 3, as belief systems influence political behaviours.

The sameness and difference finding is also critical when analysed with a feminist lens. The finding prompts questions regarding which voters are more likely to feel that all Britons are the same, versus which voters are likely to feel that Scottish people are different. Feelings of difference are often related to equality or experiencing inequalities. Feminist and post-colonial research which analyses the feeling of differences and othering finds that those othered from society are often those with marginalised identities, such as low-income earners, women of colour, and migrants (Said, 1985; Frankenburg, 1993; Lorde, 2001). Yet research regarding feelings of difference and othering concerning regional national identities finds that Scottish and British national identities are highly complex and shaped by various socio-demographic factors.

Research indicates that Scottish national identity is typically defined by birthplace, ancestry, and location (McCrone, 2001; McCrone, 2002; Bond, 2006; Bond, 2015). Related research finds that *Yes* voters do not feel a sense of belonging to the UK as a whole, but this difference in identity

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<sup>221</sup> Participant in FG 2 – all *Yes Women*, all ten support for independence, 60-70 years, all white, all Scottish NI

can be self-imposed or externally imposed (McCrone, 2011; Bond, 2006). This means that a *Yes* voter with a Scottish national identity may feel that their identity differs from the rest of the UK based on positive and negative experiences. For example, a citizen's Scottish identity may be shaped by their sense of belonging to Scotland (self-imposed/positive) as opposed to feeling rejected from the British identity (externally imposed/negative) (for more, see McCrone, 2011; Bond, 2006). My findings and existing research raise questions regarding how positive or negative experiences with Scottish identity shape constitutional attitudes. When analysing my data, there were instances in which voters stated that positive and negative elements of the constitutional debate shaped their identity. Related findings from my subgroup analysis of this data will be presented in the following section.

#### **6.4.1.2 *No Women*, Scottish National Identity and Nationalism**

Johns et al. (2011) found that female voters were less inclined than men to support and join the Scottish National Party (SNP). Johns et al. (2011) speculated that the difference in support could be due to a difference in national identity, as national identity is 'often constructed and expressed in typically masculine contexts' (p. 586) such as militarism (Mayer, 2012; Enloe, 2014) and sports (Cronin and Mayall, 1998). However, Johns et al. (2011) found that women were less inclined to support and join the SNP because they were less supportive of independence overall. Yet, Johns et al. (2011) were not the only researchers to posit a link between masculinity and national identity in the context of Scottish constitutional debates (for more, see Abrams, 2006, pp. 17-42). As presented in Chapter 4, campaign actor interviews also made the connection, and some elements of the independence campaigns were shaped by the belief that male voters would see supporting independence as the patriotic option. Yet, in my data analysis, I did not find evidence that women felt a distinct difference in their national identity from men, as is evidenced in existing research (Johns et al., 2011; SES, 2021). I did, however, find evidence that certain types of women voters were repelled by nationalism and features of the Scottish nationalist movement more broadly.

#### *Anti-Nationalism and Security*

Interview and focus group schedules<sup>222</sup> asked voters what influenced them most to vote for or against independence. *No Women* were much more likely than the *No Men* to say that the primary influencer shaping their constitutional attitudes was their inherent belief that nationalism was

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<sup>222</sup> Located in the appendices.

negative, or explicitly stating that they were ‘anti-nationalist’. Table 6.5 is a comparative table showing the frequency at which anti-nationalist statements were made between *No Women* and *No Men*.

TABLE 6.5: ANTI-NATIONALIST FREQUENCY TABLE COMPARING NO GENDER GROUPS

Subgroup	Main Influencers for Constitutional Attitudes	Frequency Referenced
<i>No Women</i>	Anti-Nationalist statements or rhetoric	25
<i>No Men</i>	Anti-Nationalist statements or rhetoric	7

Participant 56, a *No Woman*<sup>223</sup> stated that nationalism was a ‘pretty evil concept’ and explained:

I've always been a very political person since I was young. [...] I have never, ever believed in Scottish nationalism. [We've learned through] historical reading and research that nationalism is not a good thing in general. That's how I feel, and I know that's how lots and lots of people feel.

When assessing similarities between women who explicitly stated they were ‘anti-nationalist’, all were 40 years and above, with a majority aged 60-69 years. Upon contextual analysis of transcripts, when women identified as anti-nationalist, they were against the forming a distinct Scottish identity as they believed it caused division. Specifically, older *No Women* were against the brand of Scottish nationalism they believed to be created by the SNP and the *Yes* movement. Participant 21 described this:

I'm against small, nationalistic bubbles [...] I don't believe in small countries. I think they become very inward-looking. I think there's a nasty, nationalistic tone to the Scottish independence campaign. And I think we all have a fairly good idea of what nationalism can lead to [*pointed statement*].<sup>224</sup>

How *No Women* of this generation spoke about Scottish nationalism suggests they believed Scottish nationalism was a threat to state and citizen security. Coding from *No Women* transcripts indicated a relationship between Scottish nationalism, security and war-related imagery with words such as ‘opposition’, ‘defeat’, and ‘unity’. For example, a *No Woman*, participant 55,<sup>225</sup> specified that Scottish nationalism needed to be defeated and that ‘the opposition parties in Scotland must unite’,

<sup>223</sup> Participant 58 - *No Woman*, one support for independence, 60-69 years, born in Scotland, white British NI.

<sup>224</sup> Participant 21 - *No Woman*, one support for independence, 60-69 years, born in Scotland, white, British NI.

<sup>225</sup> *No Woman*, one support for independence, 60-69 years, born in Scotland, white, British NI.

and that ‘we cannot defeat nationalism without a unified opposition’. Participant 55 believed that nationalism needed to be quelled and alluded to the unified ‘we’ against a proposed threat to national security: nationalism. Another older *No Woman* held comparable beliefs, stating nationalism was ‘very dangerous’ and should be avoided for ‘the safety of the people of Scotland’.<sup>226</sup>

Participant 21 made a pointed statement in her interview in the previous quote, alluding to World War II (WWII). Initially, Participant 21’s views could be deemed as extreme. Still, eight other older *No Women* made similar references coded at the following nodes: ‘SNP Ties with Hitler’, ‘Nazism’, ‘WWII’, and ‘Hitler’.

### *Nazism and World War II*

*No Women* aged 60, in particular, linked the threat of Scottish nationalism to the rise of the SNP<sup>227</sup> and felt the SNP’s version of Scottish nationalism reminded them of German nationalism in the 1930s and early 1940s. A majority of *No Women* in older age groups believed that the SNP’s rise was paralleled with the rise of Nazism (eight out of nine).

For instance, a *No Woman* participant in FG10<sup>228</sup> shared that she felt she was not ‘allowed to have a different opinion’ which was against the opinion of the SNP. I asked her to elaborate on this belief, and she stated, ‘Scotland reminds me of Germany [...] look at the one-party state. Nothing good comes out of there’. Comparably, another *Yes Woman*, Participant 100, stated she ‘could not get inside the mind of a nationalist’ and likened the nationalist mindset to ‘Nazis in the 1930s and the second world war’.<sup>229</sup> Participant 64 stated that the SNP was ‘about nothing but separation, and dictatorship and Nazism’. I asked her to elaborate on her beliefs, and she stated that the SNP only cared about independence:

They only care about getting independence; they don’t care if Scotland is bankrupt, the people are poor, they are worse off [...] They are divisive. They are full of hatred. They are racist if you’re not supporting the SNP, and what they stand for is hatred [...] it’s just horrible. It’s awful. And I don’t want to be any part of that.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Participant 18 - *No Woman*, one support for independence, 50-59 years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI.

<sup>227</sup> Analysis of all voting groups illustrated that the SNP, the Scottish nationalist movement, and the *Yes* movement were all intrinsically linked. At times, *No* voters made little distinction between the three and, instead, the groups meshed together to represent the *Yes* side.

<sup>228</sup> *No Woman*, one support for independence, 60-69 years, born in Scotland, white British NI.

<sup>229</sup> Participant 100 - *No Woman*, one support for independence, 60-69 years, born in Scotland, white, British NI.

<sup>230</sup> Participant 64 – *No Woman*, one support for independence, 60-69 years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI.

Many perceptions of SNP's parallels with Nazism showed evidence of belief systems formed by political myths. In the previous quote, we see the theme of state security emerge with the participant's belief that the SNP inspires Scottish nationalism, which is a threat to the state of Scotland. This relationship, combined with historical and political myth, is highlighted in the following quotes by other *No Women* participants.<sup>231</sup>

The SNP was formed in the second World War under the influence of Hitler's party [...] The guy that set up the SNP went to Germany in discussion with Hitler and his right-hand men to see how they could help Scotland get independence and become independent?<sup>232</sup>

In the 1930s, [the SNP] were Nazi sympathisers, and after Donaldson, their leader during the Second World War, he actually intended on inviting Hitler to invade England through Scotland, and he was considered so dangerous that he was interned throughout the war. And I can't forgive the Scottish National Party for that'.<sup>233</sup>

The accuracy of these perceptions is less important than the strength at which these are believed. For example, in the first quote, Participant 111 inaccurately believed the SNP was founded during WWII when it was instead formed before WWII. In the second quote, Participant 58 believed Donaldson was the leader of the SNP when he was not (he became the chair of the SNP only in 1960). Although these beliefs are inaccurate, they shape participant belief systems and constitutional attitudes, which is a notable finding. As these inaccuracies in belief systems regarding the SNP share similarities, there is the suggestion that these beliefs shape political myths for the anti-independence/*No* side. These beliefs were a genuine influential factor for older *No Women*, and these historical misperceptions influenced their voting behaviour. Therefore, we see the importance of historical misperceptions in shaping voter belief systems and constitutional attitudes.

Additionally, within the subgroup of older *No Women*, those that were 70+ were likely to state that they were influenced to vote against Scottish independence due to the collective war efforts of Britons during WWII to defeat Nazism. Yet, unlike the previous quotes, these discussions

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<sup>231</sup> Participant 16 - *No Woman*, one support for independence, 70+ years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI.

<sup>232</sup> Participant 111 in FG10 - *No Woman*, one support for independence, 70+, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI.

<sup>233</sup> Participant 58 - *No Woman*, one support for independence, 60-69 years, born in Scotland, white, British NI.

concentrated on unity instead of comparisons between Scottish nationalism and Nazism. This theme is exemplified by Participant 16<sup>234</sup> and supported by others in her age group:<sup>235</sup>

This wee island, the United Kingdom, took on the might of Nazi Germany when all Europe had fallen, and we were in that war for two years before the Americans joined us [...] Everybody fought together in it. [...] I think people should be more aware of that when they vote to leave the union.

Women aged more than 70 (*No Women*) would have only been young children during WWII. Yet, 70+ *No Women* were influenced by their perceptions of the past due to their age and potential proximity to those who lived during WWII or fought in the war. These findings link with the findings from campaign actor interviews presented in Chapter 4, where a *Yes* campaign actor and WFI member stated they were finding it difficult to persuade women in this age group to vote against the union due to the impact of WWII on their personal histories. These histories and lived experiences shaped their opinions on British identity and, therefore, their constitutional attitudes and vote choice.

### *English Identities*

I found other perceptions regarding identities in *No Women* data analysis. Beyond any other voting group, *No Women* were more troubled regarding the anti-English narrative, which they believed was fuelled by the SNP and the *Yes* movement. This, in turn, shaped their constitutional attitudes and deterred them from supporting Scottish independence. Contextually, only two *No Women* were born in England, but many had family or friend connections across the UK. Therefore, birthplace was not an influential factor in this perception. Concerning national identity, all *No Women* who stated they were concerned about anti-English rhetoric also identified as having a British national identity. Table 6.6 presents the frequency of implicit and explicit statements regarding anti-English sentiments found in qualitative data analysis when comparing *No Women* and *No Men* qualitative data.

TABLE 6.6: ANTI-ENGLISH FREQUENCY TABLE COMPARING NO WOMEN AND NO MEN

<b>Subgroup</b>	<b>Main Influencers for Constitutional Attitudes</b>	<b>Frequency Referenced</b>
<i>No Women</i>	Anti-English statements or rhetoric (explicit statements)	22
<i>No Men</i>	Anti-English statements or rhetoric (explicit statements)	6

<sup>234</sup> *No Woman*, one support for independence, 70+ years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI.

<sup>235</sup> Participant 111 in FG10 - *No Woman*, one support for independence, 70+, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI. Participant 63 - *No Woman*, one support for independence, 70 +, born in England, white, British NI.

In Table 6.6, we can see a distinct difference between frequencies, with *No Women* markedly more likely to express ‘concern regarding anti-English statements and narratives’ than *No Men* as an influential factor shaping their constitutional attitudes. This finding does not imply that *Yes* voters or *No Men* did not discuss English identity or people, but rather that concern regarding anti-English sentiment was a key influencer for *No Women* in their constitutional attitudes. Contextual analysis of the node illustrated that concern for anti-English narratives was linked with their concern regarding social cohesion in Scotland and the UK more broadly. For example, Participant 113<sup>236</sup> stated that she had ‘always been anti-independence’ but was now ‘more unsupportive of independence’ due to the ‘racist comments that have been made and now seem acceptable about the English’. Other *No Women* agreed:

There’s an awful lot of anti-English comments being made [...] I just feel like it’s getting quite nasty living here [in Scotland] at the moment [...]. So, I can’t ever see myself voting for independence, and that’s it in a nutshell [...] I feel like I’m being pushed out. And I don’t understand where it’s coming from.<sup>237</sup>

Especially the anti-English racism. I get really cross about that. [...] I think that is racial incitement. I am British as well as Scottish. I’ve always been proud to be Scottish until this independence stuff [...] Well, I’m sorry, I’m taking my stance. I want to [be] British and Scottish and vote for the union.<sup>238</sup>

The independence referendum happened, and I saw a lot of very anti-English behaviour [...] what I would class as xenophobic. I’m not associating with people who are very anti-English... [There was] a lot of anti-English rhetoric in person, on TV and social media, especially [...] I think that sort of shaped, certainly, how I feel about independence and the identity of being British.<sup>239</sup>

*No Women* were deterred from associating with the SNP and the *Yes* movement because they believed anti-English rhetoric caused social division and wished to distance themselves from it. These findings are distinct from hypotheses which posit that women have a difference in national identity. Rather, my findings suggest that *No Women*, specifically those who are older, are broadly

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<sup>236</sup> *No Woman*, one support for independence, 50-59 years, born in Scotland, British NI.

<sup>237</sup> Participant 114 - *No Woman*, one support for independence, 60-69 years, born in England, white, British NI.

<sup>238</sup> Participant 118 - *No Woman*, one support for independence, 60-69 years, born in Scotland, white, British NI.

<sup>239</sup> Participant 68 - *No Woman*, 20-29 years, one support for independence, born in Scotland, white, British NI.

more likely to be against nationalism, nationalist ideology and nationalist movements for the following reasons:

- They feel a connection to the union due to the unification of nations in World War II (particularly *No Women* 70+);
- They believe that the SNP has parallels or was (is) in some way linked to the Nazi Party and fascism (particularly *No Women* 50+);
- They are against or concerned by anti-English rhetoric, which they believe to be encouraged by the *Yes* movement and the SNP (*No Women* of all age groups with a British identity).

These findings illustrate how gender, vote choice, age and national identity intersect to impact constitutional attitudes. Yet, these background characteristics are also shaped by the lived experiences of voters. I found that often, these experiences were influenced by their family history, age, and/or national identity, which shaped their constitutional beliefs. Yet, these beliefs were often complex, contradictory, and contingent on the political context.

#### **6.4.2 Economic Fears**

Economic fears link closely with the broader *No* theme of concern for financial futures. Concern for financial futures, as a theme, was present for nearly all 49 *No* participants of all gender groups and subgroups. The ‘financial futures’ code was applied when participants stated they had questions or were concerned regarding the future of Scotland’s finances. Statements were coded under ‘economic fears’ when worry, fear and anxiety were coupled with explicit statements about the economy or Scotland’s economic future. This contrasts with the code of ‘Finances or financial futures’ if a participant stated they were worried about their personal or Scotland’s finances; this was coded as ‘financial futures’ as there is no explicit mention of the economy.

Effectively, as a broad group, *No Women*’s economic and financial fears were lower in frequency measurement when compared to other groups and subgroups, as other factors were more influential to their constitutional attitudes. Overall, concern for the economy and financial futures was identified as *No Women*’s eleventh most influential factor in frequency analysis. This does not suggest that *No Women* did not have concerns regarding the Scottish economy, but rather that other factors were more significant (as outlined in the previous section).

In gender subgroup analysis, however, a pattern of difference emerged. *No Men* above 50+ were particularly likely to discuss concern for the Scottish economy. When expressing these concerns,

many were likely to discuss how a poor economic future would negatively impact their family. For example, Participant 54<sup>240</sup> stated that his ‘main motivating factor (for voting *No*) [was] economic’. He went on to clarify:

And as far as I’m concerned, I’m 67. What happens in 20 years’ time is of little importance to me. And I can say that it might sound selfish, but I’ve got two sons, I’ve got a grandson [...] I don’t think it’s in their economic interest either to have independence in the foreseeable future. But if things change, if they can make an economic argument, then I would certainly look at it, and I would reconsider. But until that happens, I’m afraid I would not consider changing my vote.

Upon closer contextual analysis, a correlation can be drawn between *No Men* above 50 years (age) and the likelihood of child-caring responsibilities. Theoretically, the older a man is, the greater the likelihood of him being a father, uncle, grandfather, or godfather. There were other *No Men* who were 50+ years of age that linked their family’s future with uncertain or negative economic futures. Participant 23<sup>241</sup> stated that he struggled to see how Scotland would recover from the ‘economic fallout’ of separating from the UK. He stated he was influenced to vote against independence because he was worried about the futures of his nephews and nieces:

I worry for them, that independence will create a really massive financial burden or struggle for them [...] every way that I look at it, from an economic perspective, I really struggle to... there are too many ifs and buts, for me, on the side of independence.<sup>242</sup>

Another 50+ *No Man*, Participant 62,<sup>243</sup> stated he ‘didn’t buy’ any financial arguments for independence and when asked why, he stated that ‘even an SNP economist said there would be ten years of austerity if we went independent’. He said, ‘For me and my kids, that is the last thing I want for them [...] if you’re going to make huge changes that are going to affect, particularly, your grandchildren’s lives, you need to do a very convincing job’. Other interviews with men in this subgroup indicated a positive relationship between concern for children’s futures and concern for the economy in voting against independence.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> *No Man*, one support for independence, 60-69 years, white, born in Scotland, Scottish NI.

<sup>241</sup> *No Man*, one support for independence, 50-59 years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI.

<sup>242</sup> *No Man* one support for independence, 60-69 years, white, born in Scotland, Scottish NI.

<sup>243</sup> *No Man*, one support for independence, 60-69 years, born in Canada, white, other NI.

<sup>244</sup> Participant 50 - *No Man*, one support for independence, 70+ years, born in England, white, British NI. Participant 25 - *No Man*, one support for independence, 50-59 years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish and British NI.

These findings are important as we see a connection between concern for children's welfare and economic futures. Again, while this does not mean that *No Women* were less interested in children's welfare, it was that the relationship between economic futures coupled with children's welfare was significant amongst older *No Men* voters.

From a feminist lens, this is interesting, as women are typically characterised to vote in the interest of children, whereas men are not. As prefaced in previous chapters (2, 3, 4), socially, men are considered more likely to use their rationality than their emotions to make decisions, whereas women are typified to be more emotional and act 'from the heart' (Shields, 2002). These traditional beliefs regarding gender stereotypes can also be coupled with Gilligan's (1982) ethics of care theory to understand better the relationship between gender, care, and voting behaviour.

In her critique of Kohlberg's (1971)<sup>245</sup> theory of moral development, Gilligan (1982) stated that men's and women's ethical orientations of care differ because their beliefs regarding the interference in the lives of others differ. Gilligan (1982) argued that these gender differences in moral reasoning were rooted in the societal differences between men and women, arguing that men were more likely to believe in individual rights and believe that interference in the rights of others is a moral violation. Gilligan went on to suggest that women are more likely to believe that the *lack* of interference in the lives of others is a greater violation; stating that women are conditioned by society to believe that the failure to care for another when they need help is ethically wrong. Gilligan (1982) argues that this belief stems from women's role in society as primary caretakers and mothers.

Gilligan's (1982) ethics of care theory has been used to explain the differences in how men and women vote. For example, political issues such as education and health are seen as issues which traditionally appeal to female voters as these issues are likely to appeal to women as mothers. Contrastingly, economic and financial concerns are typically seen as issues which appeal to male voters, as men are characterised as societal breadwinners. Yet, feminist care scholars such as Lachance Adams (2015) and Ruddick (1989) caution against denying men's ability to nurture and care in feminist care ethics. These theoretical arguments explain *No Men's* 50+ years of age

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<sup>245</sup> Gilligan (1982) critiques Kohlberg's theory of moral development (1971), wherein which Kohlberg illustrates how and to what level moral reasoning is achieved. Kohlberg (1971) argued that more men reached the stage of moral reasoning than women, as men were focused more on justice.

connection between concerns for economic futures due to their concern for the constitutional futures of children.

For example, Ruddick stated that *any* thinking about children through frames of care is ‘maternal thinking’ (1989, p. 346). According to Ruddick (1989), maternal thinking prioritises preserving children’s lives through ‘love, nurturance and training’ in care perspectives (p. 17), and the ‘maternal’ in maternal thinking is not linked to sex. Therefore, Ruddick (1989) argued that men also can do maternal thinking. Ruddick (1989) argued that although maternal thinking has been associated with ‘womanly thinking’, men can also think maternally as they can work and care for others.<sup>246</sup> Ruddick’s (1989) analysis offers a potential explanation for the patterns found in my empirical evidence with the subgroup of 50+ *No Men*. Ruddick (1989) argues that it is only due to the societal construction of femininity and masculinity that women are more conditioned for maternal thinking. Ruddick’s (1989) argument contrasts with traditional gender stereotypes, which frame women as more nurturing than men due to a biological difference and a continuation of nature. When 50+ *No Men* are voting against uncertain constitutional futures due to economic concerns, they were doing so out of concern and care for the future of the children in their lives.

These subgroup findings challenge normative understandings regarding men as voters, which were exhibited in campaign actor interviews but also offer important findings regarding subgroups such as *No Men* voters who have had child-caring responsibilities. When linking a *No Man* voter’s identity, his proximity to caring for children and his constitutional attitudes, a more nuanced picture emerges, which contrasts with traditional gender stereotypes which essentialise men and women voters. It is only through qualitative contextual gender subgroup analysis which considers voting choice and age that the impact of care emerges as an influential factor amongst *No Men* aged 50+ in my study. Tronto (1993) argues that caring is not only a character trait but rather ‘the concern of living, active humans’ engaged in everyday living, and therefore care is a ‘practice and disposition’ (p. 137). To only see women as carers and voters who care primarily for children’s welfare perpetuates norms that hinder political understandings of women and men as heterogeneous voting blocs. Other *Yes* and *No* voter research findings also indicated shifts away from societal gendered roles.

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<sup>246</sup> Ruddick was careful to make a distinction between being maternal and being a biological woman or mother (1989, p. 346). She stated that she does not ‘underwrite the still current, false, and pernicious identification of womanhood with biological or adoptive mothering of particular children in families’ (p. 346). Ruddick also considers how race, class and other background identities intersect to create diverse ways of maternal thinking (1989, p. 134).

### 6.4.3 Power

'Power' as a theme had a high-frequency count in the *Yes* group transcripts. Data analysis illuminated that *Yes* voters were influenced to vote for Scottish independence as it promised increased power. Yet, *Yes Men* and *Women* discussed power transfer and opportunities for power differently in my subgroup analysis. Gender differences emerged between *Yes Men* and *Women* regarding *what* kind of power voters desired, *where* it would be distributed and *how*. This will be explored in this section using a feminist lens.

#### ***Yes Women*, Women's Empowerment and Feminism**

Analysis of *Yes Women* transcripts illuminated themes distinct to *Yes Women* as they were discussed more frequently and had more significance than *Yes Men* (with over 20 frequency references). *Yes Women* were most influenced to support independence because they believed women's equality would improve in an independent Scotland and women would have more power within social and political society. I used open coding to analyse focus group and interview transcripts and found that themes implicitly related to feminism (e.g. 'the patriarchy', 'gender inequality', 'women's empowerment') emerged in all *Yes Women* groups regardless of age, national identity and location. Upon deeper contextual analysis of transcripts, these themes were largely present in statements given by women when asked what most influenced them to support constitutional change.

Feminism or feminist thought was explicitly mentioned only six times by *Yes Women*, as illustrated in the frequency table, Table 6.7. However, *Yes Women* explicitly mentioned feminism more than other *Yes/No* gender groups.<sup>247</sup> Table 6.7 illustrates that men's transcripts did not refer to feminism. *No Women* transcripts contained one mention of feminism. However, when implicit themes related to feminism are explored, the frequency increases. Implicit frequency statements can be seen in the table related predominantly in the *Yes Women* groups and then subsequently in *Yes Men* groups.

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<sup>247</sup> I only had one non-binary participant and therefore thematic frequencies were not possible to measure. However, this participant was a *Switcher No to Yes* voter and exhibited some important influential factors which provide avenues for future research.

TABLE 6.7 IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT FEMINIST THEMES ACROSS YES AND NO GROUPS

Group	Main Influencers for Constitutional Attitudes	Frequency Referenced
<i>Yes Women</i>	Power	18
	Power > Self-Empowerment	7
	Patriarchy	9
	Womanhood (Being a Woman)	4
	Feminism (explicit)	6
	Inequality (broadly)	11
	Inequality > Gender Inequality	14
	Women's Suffrage	4
	Women as Leaders (positive)	8
Group	Codes	Frequency Referenced
<i>No Women</i>	Power	2
	Power > Self-Empowerment	0
	Patriarchy	0
	Womanhood (Being a Woman)	4
	Feminism (explicit)	1
	Inequality (broadly)	7
	Inequality > Gender Inequality	0
	Women's Suffrage	1
Rights and Freedoms being taken away by the SNP	0	
Group	Codes	Frequency Referenced
<i>No Men</i>	Power	0
	Power > Self-Empowerment	0
	Patriarchy	0
	Womanhood (Being a Woman)	0
	Feminism (explicit)	0
	Inequality (broadly)	2
	Inequality > Positive Discrimination	1
	Rights and Freedoms being taken away by the SNP	8
Group	Codes	Frequency Referenced
<i>Yes Men</i>	Power	5
	Power > Self-Empowerment	0
	Patriarchy	0
	Womanhood (Being a Woman)	0
	Feminism (explicit)	0
	Inequality (broadly)	9
	Women as Leaders (positive)	8
	LGBTQ+ Rights	2

*Yes Women* were broadly concerned with how power was distributed within Scottish society at various levels. *Yes Women* were particularly concerned with gender inequality and empowerment. Women's empowerment is a concept which carries many meanings and is complex, depending on the context. Women's empowerment has been defined as 'the process of challenging existing power relations and gaining greater control over the sources of power' (Batilwala, 1994, p. 129). Yet, some feminist critique has stated that women's empowerment has developed from signifying the emancipation of women and instead towards a neo-liberal concept 'foisted on women'

predominantly in the Global South as salvation that is ‘individualist and instrumental’ to a neo-liberalist agenda (Cornwall and Ayidoho, 2010, p. 145). In the context of my thesis, *Yes Women* operationalised women’s empowerment in two key frames: how women feel empowered in society broadly as women, and how women feel empowered personally in their day-to-day lives as political subjects.

Considering the first frame, *Yes Women* were influenced to vote for independence because they believed women’s lives would be improved in Scotland on a broader scale. Contextual analysis depicts that *Yes Women* believed that Scottish independence would offer women more power and control in constitutional decision-making. For example, Participant 83<sup>248</sup> saw Scottish independence as a way to gain power in UK’s patriarchal society:

When you grow up in the UK, you’re used to not having any power [...] I think partly as a Scottish person but also partly as a woman as well [because of] the way that things are in society - in a patriarchal society. But see when it was the referendum, there was a sense of, ‘Do you know what? This might happen!’ That felt good! It’s part of a wider picture of like powerlessness or the feeling of powerlessness and politics. Especially Westminster politics, and especially now, with all these, you know, willie-waggin’ people down there. You know, it all seems so male, it seems so removed, it seems like there is no place for women in it.

This quote and other similar data point to feminist understandings of power for women amongst *Yes Women* voters more broadly. Another *Yes Woman* in an all-woman focus group,<sup>249</sup> Participant 84,<sup>250</sup> stated that she was ‘empowered by the future of independence’ and believed the *Yes* movement needed to ‘sell the idea of being empowered’ to attract more women.

This finding coincides with arguments made in existing research presented in Chapters 2 and 3. There has been a wealth of feminist research investigating the gendered aspects of how power is distributed in Scottish political society (Levy, 1992; Lindsay, 1991; Mackay, 2001; Kenny, 2007; Mackay and Kenny, 2007; Kenny and Mackay, 2011; Bell and Mackay, 2012; Kenny and Verge, 2013a; 2013b; Kenny and Mackay, 2014). Scholars have found that constitutional change in Scotland affords opportunities for women to be at the political decision-making table and make their stamp on new or reframed constitutions (Lindsay, 1991; Bell and Mackay, 2012). This

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<sup>248</sup> *Yes Woman*, ten support for independence, born in EU/EEA, 50-59 years, white, Scottish NI.

<sup>249</sup> All *Yes Women*, all ten support for independence, 40-59 years, all white, a variety of NI.

<sup>250</sup> *Yes Woman*, ten support for independence, 50-59 years, white, born in England, British NI.

argument was evidenced in the successful involvement of women's organisations in the Scottish devolution debates (Breitenbach, 2006). *Yes Women* were influenced to vote for independence because they desired more opportunities to influence how power was distributed in Scottish society and to whom – women.

In Participant 83's<sup>251</sup> focus group, an important interaction occurred when she spoke about her experiences:

There is an importance to women's involvement in [the *Yes* movement] and the different political perspectives women have compared to men [...] It is that sense of empowerment, daring to have a voice and speak your mind [...] and not being used to that. We've been told, 'That's just stupid, shut up Jock', you know? I do conflate the two; I do put them together: being a woman in the patriarchy and the kind of Scottish-

[interrupts] To being subservient.  
Participant 87<sup>252</sup>

Yes, exactly that!  
Participant 79<sup>253</sup>

This interaction occurred in the pilot focus group, and all three *Yes Women* members (aged 40-59 years, all white, all Scottish NI) agreed that the intersection of their gender identity and national identity contributed to feelings of powerlessness in society compared to men. Participant 83's belief that women bring a different perspective to the movement through their lived experiences taps into feminist thought, discussed in Chapter 3, which argues that women have distinct experiences based on their involvement in the hierarchical gender order (Connell, 1990, 2013). Further, the described interaction depicts how women build from each other's experiences and affirm that they feel subservient in society as women, as Scots, and effectively, as Scottish women. Amongst the *Yes Women* participants, it was evident that a perspective regarding Scottish women's place in UK society was largely shared.

In reference to the second conceptualisation of women's empowerment, women's personal empowerment, I found that *Yes Women* supported independence because it made them feel personally empowered to be a part of the movement. I coded this feeling as 'women's personal

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<sup>251</sup> *Yes Woman*, ten support for independence, born in EU/EEA, 50-59 years, white, Scottish NI.

<sup>252</sup> *Yes Woman*, ten support for independence, 40-59 years, born in Scotland, white Scottish NI.

<sup>253</sup> *Yes Woman*, 50-59 years, ten support for independence, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI.

empowerment' to indicate how women felt personally as individuals instead of as women broadly. For example, Participant 87<sup>254</sup> stated that joining the *Yes* movement made her feel as if she was 'taking a positive stand' and had a 'sense of responsibility' to society. She stated that being part of the *Yes* movement and supporting independence made her feel powerful on a 'personal level' but also sent others a 'really powerful message'. Here, we see a connection between *Yes Women's* personal empowerment and political engagement as a political behaviour (Kittilson, 2016).

Hernes (1987) argued that as political subjects, women become empowered through the political and social institutionalisation of gender equality. Hernes (1987) was predominantly interested in Scandinavian models of women's empowerment but found that the success of women's equality in Scandinavia was due to the interaction between the mobilisation of women from the bottom-up (citizens) and the inclusion of women from the top-down (the state and state actors). Existing research in Scotland (Bell and Mackay, 2012; Lindsay, 1991) and my thesis findings indicate that *Yes Women* desire a change in Scotland in terms of improved gender equality and that they see Scottish independence as the vehicle to provide that. For example, when asked what her main motivator to support independence was, Participant 13<sup>255</sup> echoed statements regarding the relationship between her desire for improved women's equality and an independent Scotland:

My main motivation in any of my politics throughout the decades has been the same; I'm a feminist. And that is the most important motivation for me. I didn't start supporting Scottish independence – well, I didn't decide how to vote in the 2014 independence referendum until 2014 [...] Purely because, as a woman, I didn't want to vote *Yes*. I didn't like the idea of independence because I didn't trust Scottish men, and that's it boldly. I felt there would be a lot of potentially regressive legislation on abortion rights, for example.

Here, Participant 13 explicitly stated that her reasons for voting for independence were because she was a feminist. She also stated that she was reluctant to join the pro-independence camp because of how male-dominated the *Yes* movement was. Later in her interview, she outlined how during 2014, she grew to believe that the Scottish Government would be more progressive than the Westminster Government in its policies for abortion and other issues which disproportionately affect women. Participant 13's interview showcases how voters can perceive power redistribution in times of constitutional change to benefit those marginalised in society. In Participant 13's case,

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<sup>254</sup> *Yes Woman*, 40-49 years, ten support for independence, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI.

<sup>255</sup> *Yes Woman*, 70+ years, ten support for independence, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI.

she weighs which government is more likely to support policies such as abortion rights in Scotland, with a particular focus on feminism and equality. In her view, the SNP seemed more progressive towards a policy which promoted women's equality than the Westminster Government. This is how her constitutional attitudes were shaped and thus expressed through her vote in the 2014 referendum. She also stated that she would still vote *Yes* in the event of a second referendum for the same reasons.

It was clear from my data analysis that *Yes Women* believed Scotland would become a better place for women in the event of Scottish independence. However, research has been critical of the Scottish Government's commitment to gender equality. O'Hagan (2016) investigated these commitments by analysing Scottish Government policy documents pre- and post-independence referendum. O'Hagan (2016) found that while women's political empowerment became more visible during the independence debates, women's voices and presence within these debates did not result in 'the institutional engagement and commitment to gender analysis necessary to advance gender equality policy' (p. 666). Still, in *Yes* focus groups and interviews with *Yes Women*, women believed gender equality would improve in an independent Scotland. These feelings highly influenced their constitutional attitudes expressed through their voting behaviour. Crucially, however, I found that *Yes Men* were also concerned with power distribution in alternative ways to *Yes Women's* desires for power redistribution.

### ***Yes Men* and 'Local' versus London**

*Yes Men* were influenced to vote for independence by the prospect of transferring power from London, or 'the South', back to Scotland. As Chapters 2 and 5 outlined, existing research indicates that supporters of the SNP have typically been male (Bennie and Russell, 2012; Johns et al., 2011) and more likely to be older than younger (Mitchell et al., 2009, p. 58). McCrone and Paterson (2002) found that in 2000, those most likely to support independence were the working class, men, and the young (p. 61). Therefore, while much research investigates why women are less inclined to support independence, understanding the reverse: why men, younger people, and the working class are more inclined to support independence is also important. In my gender subgroup analysis of *Yes Men* voters, particularly younger *Yes Men* (18-39 years), differences were found regarding how and where power should be distributed.

I conducted two small all-men focus groups and thirteen individual *Yes Men* telephone interviews. I found that younger *Yes Men's* constitutional attitudes were shaped by their desire to have political power closer to Scotland as opposed to 'down South' or in London/at Westminster. Key themes

which emerged in this subgroup were power distribution, representation, democracy and governance. Younger *Yes Men* felt that by centralising power in Scotland as opposed to Westminster in London, Scotland would benefit in a range of arenas. This suggested that the younger *Yes Men* were influenced to vote for independence because they viewed Scotland as more disempowered than it should be.

TABLE 6.8: INCREASED LOCAL POWER COMPARING YES VOTERS BY GENDER

Subgroup	Main Influencers for Constitutional Attitudes	Frequency Referenced
<i>Yes Women</i>	Increased 'local' power	1
<i>Yes Men</i>	Increased 'local' power	15

TABLE 6.9: DECREASED POWER IN LONDON OR LONDON-CENTRISM COMPARING YES VOTERS BY GENDER

Subgroup	Main Influencers for Constitutional Attitudes	Frequency Referenced
<i>Yes Women</i>	Decreased power in London or London-centric concerns	3
<i>Yes Men</i>	Decreased power in London or London-centric concerns	12

Tables 6.8 and 6.9 illustrate the frequency differences between *Yes Men* and *Yes Women*, with *Yes Men* markedly more likely to be concerned with more 'local' power in Scotland and less power in London/at Westminster. When transcripts were contextually analysed, it was evident that *Yes Men* used the word 'local' to describe their aspirations for what power redistribution would look like in an independent Scotland. For example, Participant 6<sup>256</sup> stated that Scottish independence would allow the local government to invest more heavily in urban regeneration, such as in Glasgow. If Scotland stays in its current situation', he said, 'I don't think that would happen as there is so much focus down South'. It was unclear, at times, whether younger *Yes Men* were referring to local government as meaning at a constituent or regional level or a Scottish level more broadly. Yet, when subgroup differences were analysed by age across all relevant references, younger *Yes Men* believed independence would bring a power transfer from London/Westminster and towards Scotland overall. This is exemplified in the following quotes:

There are issues out of local control here that I don't ever see the central government [Westminster] doing anything about [...] I'd like to see a lot more accountability

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<sup>256</sup> *Yes Man*, 18-19 years, ten support for independence, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI.

when it comes to our [Scotland] local governments and politicians.  
- Participant 7<sup>257</sup>

You can make things better by having more power locally. Scottish independence would provide total power to local governance [...] The practical delivery of good outcomes and sensible government for Scotland by the Scottish Parliament has convinced me that. - Participant 3<sup>258</sup>

What works well for London doesn't always work well here (in Scotland) [...] The economy up here, then, is dependent on the Scottish Government to help us [as opposed to the central Westminster Government]. If we are already dependent on the Scottish Government, why not just be an independent nation, make our own decisions, and not have to try and get finances from the London government to try to do something that we can do locally? - Participant 108<sup>259</sup> in FG9<sup>260</sup>

Analysis of how power is envisaged by younger *Yes Men* compared to *Yes Women* is notable, as *Yes Women's* interest in power redistribution centres around equality to women through gender equality measures and personal empowerment. However, younger *Yes Men* were concerned with power inequalities experienced between Scotland and London/Westminster. This finding suggests a relationship between the identity variables of age, gender, location and perceptions regarding how political power should be distributed in the UK.

Historically, older voters more likely to vote against independence than younger voters (Crowther et al., 2018; Mullen, 2014). Yet, younger voters' support for independence did not always translate into voters for the SNP. The SNP's popularity with young voters has varied over time depending on the context, yet research finds that the *Yes* movement did garner the support of younger voters (Breeze et al., 2015; Sanghera et al., 2018; Eichhorn, 2014; Batchelor et al., 2017). A qualitative study with younger *Yes* voters found that younger people living in marginalised communities were a voting subgroup most likely to vote for independence (Breeze et al., 2015). In their analysis, Breeze et al. (2015) found that younger *Yes* people in Scotland were 'concerned with inequalities in [their] local areas, in Scotland, the rest of the UK, and in the rest of the world' and therefore, their views were not cohesive to a 'singular nationalist narrative' (Breeze et al., 2015, p. 429). Rather than younger *Yes* supporters supporting Scottish independence because they supported Scottish nationalism, Breeze et al. (2015) found that younger *Yes* supporters were broadly concerned with

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<sup>257</sup> *Yes Man*, 19 years, ten support for independence, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI.

<sup>258</sup> *Yes Man*, 30-39 years, ten support for independence, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI.

<sup>259</sup> *Yes Man*, 30-39 years, ten support for independence, born in Scotland, Asian, Scottish NI.

<sup>260</sup> All *Yes Men*, a variety of support for independence, a variety of ages, all born in Scotland, Scottish NI.

power inequalities at various levels, indicating younger *Yes* voters' heterogeneity. Younger *Yes* voters' were interested in Scottish independence, but not necessarily the SNP's brand of independence. For example, pro-independence organisations such as the National Collective (NC) gained much support from young people during the 2014 referendum (Engström, 2018).

Some aspects of Breeze et al.'s (2015) findings are echoed in my research, where younger *Yes Men* were concerned about the growth of 'local' areas in Scotland. However, Breeze et al. (2015) did not investigate sex or gender differences, although their pool of respondents was predominantly male by a small majority. From my analysis, it was unclear whether younger *Yes Men* who desired more local control or power were from marginalised or working-class communities. However, postcode analysis from SVB data indicated they were near equally distributed across Glasgow and Edinburgh, with a few outliers.<sup>261</sup>

Upon deeper analysis, emotion was tied to younger *Yes Men*'s prioritisation of a more localised government (both locally and Scottish). For example, a younger *Yes Man*, Participant 11, stated, 'I would feel much happier if all decisions that affect my life were made in Scotland as opposed to down in London'.<sup>262</sup> Another younger *Yes Man*, Participant 14,<sup>263</sup> stated that he had difficulty taking the UK government-wide decisions 'on the chin' as he felt that voting systems were disproportionately representative of London voters:

Say if Scotland were independent, and I voted for something out of 5 million [people], [and] it didn't even come close to passing what I wanted. I would be able to take it on the chin and be like, 'Well, you know what? The country I live in – [with emphasis] the country I live in has spoken'. Whereas right now, it's like, 'I don't even have a say in anything because of the power of people down South in London?' Which is a bit disheartening for me.

In these quotes, participants state they are 'disheartened' and 'unhappy' due to their perception of unequal power distribution between Scotland and London and would prefer to see power-making happen in Scotland. These quotes tap into broader *Yes* themes of a desire for self-governance and self-determination, along with the belief that there is a democratic deficit between Scotland and

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<sup>261</sup> Outliers included one younger *Yes Man* in the Scottish Borders and another younger *Yes Man* living in South Lanarkshire.

<sup>262</sup> 20-29 years, white, nine support for independence, born in Scotland, Scottish NI.

<sup>263</sup> *Yes Man*, 20-29 years, nine support for independence, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI.

the rest of the UK. Yet, as a subgroup, younger *Yes Men* voter transcripts had high frequencies of the words 'local' and 'London' compared to other subgroups.

These findings suggest a gendered difference amongst *Yes* voters regarding who or what is disempowered. As stated, the differences between *Yes Men* and *Yes Women* were *where* and *to whom* power should be redistributed in an independent Scotland. Interview data suggested that *Yes Women* felt that both themselves (as women) and women more generally were disempowered. Younger *Yes Men* did not express personal disempowerment or concerns for gender inequality, but rather saw Scotland, the state, as disempowered. This suggests that younger *Yes Men* were more focused on the nation as disempowered than feeling disempowered as individuals or even as men. Further, data analysis indicates that *Yes Men* (all subgroups) were not particularly interested in gender inequalities in society (as illustrated in Table 6.7). Again, as stated in the previous section, societal gender inequalities will be disproportionately felt by women as opposed to men in a variety of areas such as work, labour, care, representation, and education (Pratto et al., 1997; Pettit and Hook, 2009; Hesse-Biber, 2013; Fenstermaker and West, 2002; Brandt and Henry, 2012).

As stated, there are limitations related to my study size, and representative conclusions cannot be drawn. There were fewer younger *Yes Women* in my analysis than younger *Yes Men* (11 to 4). Without a larger pool of younger *Yes Women* voters, it is difficult to make definitive conclusions regarding the role gender plays in the relationship between age, gender, and *Yes* voters in their views on power distribution. Although the research study did not lend itself to high external validity, it did allow for a deeper contextual analysis of the factors influencing the constitutional attitudes of younger *Yes Men*, which had not yet been explored from a gendered lens.

The desire for improved self-governance and self-determination were key influencers in shaping *Yes* constitutional attitudes (without gender subgroup analysis). Therefore, the emergence of these is unsurprising. A voter's identity, gender, and age have been influential factors explored in existing research, but these factors have largely been explored alone (e.g., how older people vote, how women vote, and how those with a Scottish national identity vote). However, the heterogeneous gender subgroup analysis illustrated how and in what ways identity variables such as age, gender, and national identity intersect to influence how voters conceptualise power. Differences between *Yes Women* and younger *Yes Men* in their reimagining of power distribution in an independent Scotland offer a notable contribution to understanding how a voter's identity shapes constitutional attitudes. Gendered perceptions regarding *who* (e.g., women) or *what* (e.g., the state) is disempowered offer critical insights regarding gendered constitutional attitudes amongst *Yes* voters. Yet, risk has been noted in existing literature as the dominant factor which shapes gendered

voting differences in support of constitutional change. The significance of risk in my study to gendered attitudes is discussed in the following section.

#### **6.4.4 The Importance of Risk**

As discussed in Chapter 2, some researchers have argued that risk-averse voters are more likely to oppose independence and support the status quo (Liñeira and Henderson, 2021; Henderson et al., 2015). For example, Liñeira and Henderson (2021) examined voting behaviour data on attitudes towards constitutional change in Scotland and found that risk attitudes directly affected vote choice and contributed to status quo bias. Liñeira and Henderson (2021) found that variables such as age, gender, education, and income positively correlated with their findings that older voters, women, those in lower income brackets, and those with lower educational attainment were particularly risk averse. Due to findings from their analysis, Liñeira and Henderson (2021) and Henderson et al. (2015) suggest that women are more likely to oppose independence than men because women are typically more risk-averse than men.

Due to the significance of risk-aversion in related research, I asked all participants (*Yes*, *No*, *Undecided* and *Switcher* voters) whether they believed independence was a risk and counted negative and positive statements. Then, I asked participants if they believed they were risk-averse. In data analysis, I analysed participants' negative and positive statements contextually within transcripts and looked for patterns amongst broad voting groups, gender groups, and gender subgroups. As expected, *Yes* voters were much less likely to see independence as a risk. Unsurprisingly, *No* voters were more likely to agree that independence was risky. In my *Yes* analysis, I found that risk also worked the other way: the perceived risk of further Tory rule and staying in the union was a risk that was influential to *Yes* voters' constitutional attitudes. Participants in all groups were asked only if they believed independence was a risk. I did not ask participants whether staying in the union was risky. Therefore, any discussion regarding the risk of staying in the union was unprompted and occurred organically in conversations. Often, research focuses on the risk of independence as opposed to the risk of being in the union because independence is a shift from the status quo and therefore, a change in the status quo is typically observed to be riskier than the status quo itself. Yet, for *Yes* voters, the union posed the bigger risk. In this frame, many *Yes* voters described independence as an opportunity or a leap of faith for positive change. The outlook of a 'leap of faith' and 'seizing the day' was a particularly influential theme amongst younger men voters but was also found in other subgroups of *Yes* voters. This pattern can be seen through the following illustrative quotes.

I don't know what is going to happen. But I have the persuasion that sometimes you need to take the risk or a leap of faith because I'm not happy with what's going on right now, south of the border, what we are included in [...] I'm willing to take a risk for a figurative pay-out [...] I vote for independence because I think it's a safer, better, more prosperous future for myself and my future children. – *Yes Man*, Participant 14<sup>264</sup>

I'm jealous of (younger participant in the focus group) and people his age. They are at the beginning of something empowering. It is not a risk but rather an opportunity to be part of something bigger. – *Yes Woman*, Participant 95<sup>265</sup> from FG7<sup>266</sup>

I think people who say independence is totally risk-free are either idiots or lying, as we are restarting a new country. There's going to be a lot of change. But I still think that staying in the union is a bigger risk.- *Yes Man*, Participant 7<sup>267</sup>

These quotes illustrate how *Yes* voters from various backgrounds perceive risk and its relation to independence. We see the emergence of the *Yes Woman* theme of 'empowerment' from a *Yes Woman* voter. We also see what could be described as 'maternal thinking' or an 'ethics of care' approach from a younger *Yes Man* voter, Participant 14, in considering future generations. Participant 14 also alludes to London/the Westminster Government, tying into *Yes Man* themes regarding power localisation in Scotland. Lastly, a younger *Yes Man*, Participant 7, explicitly considers the alternative risk, staying within the union, as larger when compared to leaving it.

Regarding gender differences and risk, *Yes* voters from both gender groups were equally likely to say they did not believe independence was a risk. There were no major *Yes* gender subgroup differences in *Yes* voters' conceptualisation of the risks of independence. When asked whether they saw independence as a risk, *No Men* and *No Women* also confirmed the risk of independence in equal measures. Only a few *No Men* and *No Women* stated they were risk-averse when asked if they were risk-averse. My qualitative study was small; again, representative conclusions cannot be drawn concerning whether women are more risk-averse than men. Instead, what could be investigated was how they perceived risk concerning Scottish independence, and whether there were any similarities or differences between their group answers.

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<sup>264</sup> *Yes Man*, 20-29 years, nine support for independence, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI.

<sup>265</sup> *Yes Woman*, 60-69 years, ten support for independence, born in Scotland, Scottish NI.

<sup>266</sup> *Yes* mixed gender, a variety of ages, all born in Scotland, all ten support for independence, all Scottish NI.

<sup>267</sup> *Yes Man*, 19 years, ten support for independence, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI.

For example, one *No Man*, Participant 19,<sup>268</sup> stated that there was ‘undoubtedly a risk’ involved in making ‘huge changes in Scotland’, such as independence. He stated that one would be ‘sacrificing a lot of what we already have to make those changes, and I don’t think it’s worth that risk’. When asked if he was risk-averse, he said he was economically risk-averse. Similarly, when asked if he was risk-averse, another *No Man*, Participant 70,<sup>269</sup> stated that independence was an elevated risk unlike typical risks faced daily, such as ‘going for a new job’ or ‘putting on a bet’. He<sup>270</sup> clarified why independence was different, ‘There are no policies, so, of course, it is a substantial risk. There are no defined or clearly outlined policies of how the country could survive if it were independent’. Both *No Men* pondered constitutional futures using terms such as ‘sacrifice’ and ‘survive’ but speak about the collective ‘we’ and Scotland as a country.

Similar to Participant 19,<sup>271</sup> *No Woman* Participant 61<sup>272</sup> stated that she too was economically risk-averse and outlined her perceptions of risk:

I think, economically, I’m quite risk averse, in that, while personally, I’m really reasonably well paid and very comfortable, and I’m not immediately exposed to major financial disaster myself, [...] I do a lot of work with people who are in debt and who have financial problems. I could see exactly where this could, for a lot of people who are right on the line all the time barely staying solvent, be disastrous for them.

In this quote, we see Participant 61 weighing her financial situation compared to others she believes have more to lose than her. Another *No Woman*, Participant 68,<sup>273</sup> stated that too many questions were left unanswered in the 2014 referendum, ‘especially on the economic front’. She<sup>274</sup> stated that she was unwilling ‘to risk my mortgage, pension, or children’s future’. We see Participant 68<sup>275</sup> using care to think about her children’s future, but Participant 68 also uses care to conceptualise the risk independence poses beyond her family and those she works with. Again, we see how *No* voters conceptualised risk beyond themselves and their relationships, but also the collective risk to those in Scotland. Again, these findings juxtapose with perceptions of *No* voter social values presented in Chapter 4 in campaign actor interviews, as well as in this chapter in *Yes*

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<sup>268</sup> *No Man*, three support for independence, 20-29 years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI.

<sup>269</sup> *No Man*, one support for independence, 50-59 years, born in Scotland, white, British NI.

<sup>270</sup> *No Man*, one support for independence, 50-59 years, born in Scotland, white, British NI.

<sup>271</sup> *No Man*, three support for independence, 20-29 years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI.

<sup>272</sup> *No Woman*, one support for independence, 40-49 years, born in Scotland, white, British NI.

<sup>273</sup> *No Woman*, one support for independence, 20-29 years, born in Scotland, white, British NI.

<sup>274</sup> *No Woman*, one support for independence, 20-29 years, born in Scotland, white, British NI.

<sup>275</sup> *No Woman*, one support for independence, 20-29 years, born in Scotland, white, British NI.

voter interviews. Typically, *No* voters are characterised as being predominantly concerned with the self, and *Yes* voters are concerned with social welfare and egalitarianism issues. Yet, *No* voter data indicates how *No* voters think collectively regarding the risk independence poses to Scottish society.

Although not representative, this analysis offers a deeper understanding of how *Yes* and *No* voters in Scotland measure risk in the constitutional debate. *No* voters see independence as the risk, whereas *Yes* voters see staying in the union as the risk. Yet, *Yes* and *No* voters were thinking collectively about the risks to Scottish society. I found no significant difference between the influence of risk on constitutional attitudes for *No Women* and *Men* across groups, nor was risk a dominant influencing factor. Rather, influential factors for *No Women*, especially those older women, centred around identity and political belief systems, whereas *No Men*, especially those who were middle-aged, were shaped by economic fears. I also found no significant difference between *Yes Women* and *Men* regarding how they measured or perceived risk. Voters measured their relationship with risk using different scenarios and their subjective understanding of risk. Ultimately, across all groups, other influential factors posed more significance to the shaping of constitutional attitudes than risk.

## 6.5 Conclusion

Much of the related research investigating the sex gaps in support of Scottish independence has relied on gender difference theory to offer causal explanations of the sex gap, such as risk aversion and patriotism. For example, female voters have been classified as conservative and cautious, whereas male voters have been classified as economically rational or patriotic. Yet, evidence in this chapter illustrates that these explanations are oversimplified and largely rest upon traditional gender norms perpetuated in a patriarchal society. These gendered understandings of women and men as homogenous voting blocs not only contribute to the essentialising of men and women as voters, but struggle to offer a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the sex and gender gaps in support for constitutional change.

This chapter's data analysis offers a blueprint regarding how gender differences in voting behaviour can be explored through a heterogeneous lens. These differences are based on various elements of a voter's identity, such as age, gender, national identity, vote choice, and lived experiences. For example, findings indicate that *Yes* voters conceptualise power distribution in gendered ways within gender groups and subgroups. *Yes* voters desired more power, but *what* kind of power, *where* it was to be distributed and *how* differed based on gender subgroup. These

differences suggest that the different ways men and women experience gendered power hierarchies in society influence gendered constitutional attitudes.

In *No* groups, gender differences were drawn across subgroups such as gender, age and national identity that subverted traditional understandings of men and women voters. For example, *No Women* voters did not express that risk was the most influential factor shaping their vote choice. Rather, a majority of older *No Women* were highly influenced to oppose Scottish independence due to their anti-nationalist beliefs based on their age and lived proximity to WWII. Middle-aged *No Men* were concerned with economic and financial futures. Yet, these risks were often tied in with concern for children and young people. Again, these findings challenge essentialist understandings of men and women as voting blocs and indicate how different identity variables can influence and shape constitutional attitudes.

Through qualitative analysis of voter experiences and perspectives, these subjective experiences can be drawn out and examined under a gendered lens. Using a feminist analysis of gender differences, how and to what extent societal gendered inequalities and norms influence constitutional attitudes can also be explored. Findings indicate that gendered conceptualisations of power, care experiences, and perceptions of identity are significant in shaping constitutional attitudes. The following chapter builds upon this chapter's insights regarding gender similarities and differences in constitutional attitudes, focusing on *Undecided* voters. As stated in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, women are often characterised as indecisive and risk-averse voters. These characterisations have often been used to explain the sex gap in undecided voters (discussed in Chapters 1, 2, 4 and 5) between men and women in support of constitutional change. Yet, the next chapter explores and offers challenges regarding how *Undecided* voter constitutional attitudes are shaped and how they are gendered.

## Chapter 7: Choice, Change and Constitutional Attitudes

### *Undecided Qualitative Voter Data*

#### 7.1 Introduction

As outlined in Chapters 1, 4 and 5, female voters are more likely than male voters to feel undecided about Scottish independence. In Scotland, recent voting behaviour studies reported that the sex gap in support for constitutional change was narrowing (SES, 2021; SES, 2016). However, as discussed in Chapter 5, the gap between female and male voters who are undecided persists (SES, 2021). Elite background interviews in Chapter 4 indicated that critical campaign actors believed women were more undecided than men and targeted them accordingly, through gendered messaging and female message carriers.

In this chapter, I present findings from *Undecided* gender group and subgroup interviews, analysing trends among voters who stated they were undecided about their constitutional preferences at the time of data collection. *Undecided* voters were predominantly voters who had been certain about their vote in the 2014 independence vote but, since then, had become more uncertain in their constitutional attitudes. In a similar structure to the previous chapter, I pull out key influential factors found in transcripts and measure them through frequency counting of thematic codes derived from open coding. I then analyse the themes through a gendered lens, paying particular attention to differences within and across groups.

This chapter will first present *Undecided* voter analysis to answer the thesis' questions of *whether* women's constitutional preferences differ from men, *which* women, and *why*? While there were some differences between *Undecided Men* and *Women*, Brexit largely influenced the constitutional attitudes for my *Undecided* participants. As in *Yes* voter data, I found conceptualisations of power and power distribution significant to *Undecided* voters. *Undecided Women* were concerned with devolution and devolved powers, whereas *Undecided Men* were particularly influenced by their perceptions of wealth inequalities, with an interest in taxation.

Thematic patterns were evident, yet how and in what ways these concerns impacted constitutional attitudes were highly subjective to the voter. Findings in this chapter illustrate the heterogeneity of women and men voters and the need for deeper contextual analysis using qualitative inquiry.

#### 7.2 *Undecided* Voter Study Demographics, Interview Format and Voting History

*Undecided* voters in my study were categorised based on their Scottish Voting Behaviour (SVB) survey responses. The third question of the SVB asked participants to rank their support for Scottish independence on a Likert scale from one to ten. The number ‘five’ was the middle of the scale, and below the value was the label ‘Undecided.’ From my survey sample, 8.7 per cent of respondents (approximately 80 out of 1214 total survey respondents) stated they were a ‘five’ on the scale. However, participants who selected either four, five or six were considered *Undecided* voters.

*Undecided* voters were then redirected to another question unique for *Undecided* respondents, which asked them, ‘How undecided about Scottish independence are you?’ Participants could place their responses on a one to five Likert scale, with one being ‘Very undecided’ and five being ‘Close to making a decision’. If a participant selected three on the scale, this represented ‘Somewhat undecided’. None of the *Undecided* voters indicated they were at a five, close to deciding. Approximately half of all *Undecided* voters in my survey sample (50.6 per cent) stated they were a ‘three, somewhat undecided’. Twenty per cent of *Undecided* voters listed that they were a four, and the rest of the *Undecided* voters were evenly split between one and two. Then, after measuring their support on the *Undecided* scale, survey participants were asked why they were undecided and given a free-text box to type their responses, just as *Yes* and *No* voters were asked to expand on what influenced their support for independence.

In terms of gender differences present in the survey sample, 3.87 per cent of my total survey respondents were *Undecided Women*, and 2.39 per cent were *Undecided Men*. While the SVB survey was not meant to be representative of the Scottish electorate, it offered a contextual understanding of the voting behaviour trends of the 1214 respondents in my survey sample. It also provided background information for qualitative data collection, voter grouping and subgrouping.

All *Undecided* voters were contacted for interviews, and I explained that I wanted to understand what caused or influenced them to feel undecided about Scottish independence. In the interviews, I asked *Undecided* voters questions unique to *Undecided* voting groups and, therefore, different from questions posed to *Yes* and *No* voters. *Undecided* voters were asked the following:

1. What are the main reasons behind your undecided view of Scottish independence?
2. What do you think could bring you closer to deciding on how you feel about Scottish independence?
3. How would you vote in the event of another independence referendum?
  - a. Follow up: Do you feel closer to any side right now? Why is that?

As illustrated by the SVB results, some respondents were uncertain about their constitutional attitudes but were leaning to vote one way or another in the event of another referendum. Therefore, feeling undecided about Scottish independence and unsure how they would vote in the event of another Scottish independence referendum were two different measurement forms. For example, a voter could believe that Scotland should be independent (constitutional attitude) yet vote against Scottish independence, depending on the context of the referendum<sup>276</sup> (vote choice). Qualitative data offered a deeper insight into the distinction between the two (constitutional attitudes and vote choice), as *Undecided* respondents could describe how they weighed their constitutional options in detail.

I interviewed a total of 18 *Undecided* voters. *Undecided* voters were less willing to be in focus groups than *No* voters, and most expressed wanting a more private space to discuss their views. There were no gender differences between *Undecided Men* and *Women* in this respect. I interviewed seven *Undecided Men* and 11 *Undecided Women*. In terms of age, the gender and age subgroup breakdown of *Undecided* voters is presented in the following table.

TABLE 7.1: UNDECIDED PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER AND AGE (N= 18)

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Men</b>	20-39 (Younger)	4
	40-59 (Middle Aged)	0
	60-70+ (Older)	3
<b>Total Men</b>		<b>7</b>
<b>Women</b>	20-39 (Younger)	7
	40-59 (Middle Aged)	2
	60-70+ (Older)	2
<b>Total Women</b>		<b>11</b>
<b>Total Undecided Overall</b>		<b>18</b>

Table 7.1 illustrates the small number of *Undecided* voters who were interviewed. However, the table also depicts the age and gender spread of my participants and the small majority of younger

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<sup>276</sup> For example, some participants stated they believed in Scottish independence but did not support the SNP's take on what an independent Scotland would look like. Or, some participants stated they were supportive of Scottish independence but it would need to be at the right time.

voters (20-39 years) in this voter group. Although more women than men were studied in my qualitative data collection, this signifies that only a small majority of women responded to my request for further data collection. This small majority of women cannot be inferred as representative of the Scottish voter population, and meaningful statements regarding age cannot be stated in a study of this size.

When analysing free-text and quantitative data responses, *Undecided* voters could be further split into subgroups based on how or whether they voted in 2014 and their reasons for feeling undecided. Analysing *Undecided* voters simply by gender or age separately would not be sufficient to understand the complexity of their constitutional attitudes. For example, two *Undecided Women* abstained from voting: one could not vote as she did not live in the country, yet another chose not to vote in 2014 because she felt too uncertain to vote. Table 7.2 depicts voting history in the previous referendum, illustrating that a majority of *Undecided* voters did vote in the 2014 election, and a majority voted against independence.

TABLE 7.2: UNDECIDED PARTICIPANTS BY VOTING BEHAVIOUR HISTORY (N= 18)

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b><i>Undecided Men</i></b>	Voted <i>Yes</i> in 2014	8
	Voted <i>No</i> in 2014	4
	Abstained from voting	0
	Could not vote	1
<b><i>Undecided Women</i></b>	Voted <i>Yes</i> in 2014	2
	Voted <i>No</i> in 2014	6
	Abstained from voting	2
	Could not vote	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>18</b>

Yet, *Undecided* voters’ constitutional preferences between 2014 and 2020 (the time of survey data collection) changed, which required further exploration. In interviews, patterns amongst and across gendered voting groups emerged, indicating similarities and trends in constitutional attitudes.

### 7.3 *Undecided* Voter Findings

In my analysis of *Undecided* voter data, Scotland’s departure from the European Union (EU) due to Brexit and concerns for the Scottish economy (coded as ‘Economic concerns’) were the most

popular factors influencing *Undecided* voter constitutional attitudes. Brexit and concerns for the economy were the most influential factors, with no major gender differences found in gender groups, as only minor differences emerged when the codes were counted by frequency from the transcripts. Due to the study size, these differences were minimal and considered insignificant. The frequency of each factor is presented in the Table 7.3 by participant gender.

TABLE 7.3: INFLUENTIAL FACTORS FOR UNDECIDED VOTERS BROADLY

Influential Factor	Gender Group	Total References
<b>Brexit</b>	<i>Undecided Men</i>	18
	<i>Undecided Women</i>	20
	<b>Total References</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Economic Concerns</b>	<i>Undecided Men</i>	16
	<i>Undecided Women</i>	12
	<b>Total References</b>	<b>28</b>

In the next section, I broadly explore both themes and address subgroup trends in gendered subgroups.

### 7.3.1 *Undecided* Voters and the Effects of Brexit

For my *Undecided* participants, Brexit was significant. This trend aligned with broader trends in Scotland at the time of data collection as the UK's departure from the EU prompted voters to consider constitutional change in the UK (Curtice and Montagu, 2020). Regarding the data collection timeline and the British political climate, the SVB survey was distributed in December 2019, and interviews with *Undecided* voters commenced in May 2020. During this time, the coronavirus pandemic only challenged Brexit's significance in British politics. This was evidenced in *Undecided* interviews such as in Participant 26's<sup>277</sup> interview:

When the first [Scottish independence referendum] happened, I was quite strictly a *No* voter. But in the years since, I have moved a little bit more to undecided [...]  
The arguments for the democratic case for independence, I think, are very strong.  
And I think it has gotten stronger. Scotland's on a different political path to the UK

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<sup>277</sup> Participant 26 - *Undecided Man*, 20-29, born in Scotland, white, Scottish and British NI, four on a scale of one to five regarding how close he was to making a decision - closer to a *No* vote.

at wide, and Brexit shows that. [...] But [Brexit] also shows the difficulties of actually doing it (Scotland becoming independent.).

Participant 26 was a young *Undecided Man*, and in his interview, he described that the difficulties faced with Brexit challenged his constitutional attitudes. He felt that Scotland was politically different from the rest of the UK (a *Yes* voter theme). Yet, after witnessing the difficulties Brexit posed to Scotland, he was sceptical of the practicalities and feasibility of independence.

*Undecided* voters could also be further segmented into subgroups of Remainers (those who voted to remain in the EU) and Leavers (those who voted to leave the EU) in the context of the EU referendum. When analysing *Undecided* gender group transcripts, I found that all *Undecided Men* stated they were Remainers (n=7), and nearly all *Undecided Men* said they would vote for independence if it meant Scotland would re-join the EU (n=6 out of 7). Nearly all *Undecided Women* said they were Remainers (n=9 out of 11), and nearly all *Undecided Women* said they would vote for independence if it meant Scotland would re-join the EU (n=8 out of 11).

Opinion polls conducted during data collection (Spring 2020) indicated a shift in increased support for Scottish independence following the UK leaving the EU (YouGov, 2023).<sup>278</sup> However, these reactions tempered over time, and scholars argue that the significance of Brexit to Scottish constitutional attitudes has been overstated (Johns and Mitchell, 2016; Curtice and Montagu, 2020; Johns, 2021). Yet, research conducted closer to the time of my data collection by Curtice and Montagu (2020) stated that Brexit initially had ‘little discernible impact’ on the level of support for Scottish independence but found that Brexit increased support in Scotland for leaving the UK at the time (p. 2). This finding in existing research could explain the significance of Brexit to my *Undecided* voters, as my data offers a snapshot of the political context at the time of data collection.

As argued by Campbell (2006), voting behaviour is highly contingent upon the political context and can be volatile. Brexit’s influence in shaping *Undecided* constitutional attitudes in my study suggested some similarities can be drawn between *Undecided* and *Yes* voters. Brexit is linked with *Yes* voter constitutional attitudes in terms of feelings of powerlessness, the democratic deficit, a desire for self-governance and a difference in identity. During data collection, Brexit influenced

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<sup>278</sup> It should be noted this analysis represents broad trends and is not comprehensive. In 2014, there were *Yes* voters who supported Brexit and indeed some who moved to oppose independence.

Remainer voters (EU referendum 2016), who also voted *No* in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, to reconsider Scotland's constitutional options.

For example, Participant 41<sup>279</sup> was an *Undecided Woman* who voted against independence in 2014. When asked why she opposed independence, Participant 41<sup>280</sup> stated that she felt strongly about Scotland's place in the union and believed the UK was 'stronger together'. She stated that messaging from Better Together, which 'focused on unity', aligned with her constitutional attitudes and impacted her vote choice as she thought independence was 'too risky'. Yet, when asked what changed regarding her constitutional attitudes, she said Brexit and the economy:

I am still undecided. Brexit is still a major issue. [For me to vote *Yes*,] I think we'd need to have really clear guidelines and communication with the European Union on their position on Scotland joining the EU. So, the two main issues for me are the economy and Brexit. [...] I'm more swaying now towards independence [...] I have woken up every morning after an election and felt disappointed since the independence referendum. I think that is showing that there is a difference between my view, the people's views in Scotland, and other places in the UK.

Participant 41's views were representative of other *Undecided* voters in my study, as we see a mixture of *Yes* and *No* themes presented in Chapter 6. For example, Participant 41 taps into *Yes* themes in their quote, such as feeling a democratic deficit between Scotland and the rest of the UK. She also depicts a feeling of 'difference' between Scotland's and other views in the UK. Brexit has highlighted these differences; therefore, as an EU-Remainer who also believes in the union of Britain, she was leaning towards independence. Yet, *No* themes were present in her transcript, such as her economic concerns. She explained that, ultimately, she was 'a believer in unions' and that this belief in unity influenced her constitutional attitudes.

Again, although my study was small, the presence of both *Yes* and *No* themes in *Undecided* data offers an explanation for conflicting constitutional attitudes on Scottish independence. *No* voters predominantly believed in the cohesion and unity of citizens and governments *within* the UK. *Undecided* voters were generally voters who were shaken in their attitudes towards Scottish

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<sup>279</sup> Participant 41 – *Undecided Woman*, 20-29 years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI, Voted *No* in 2014, 5 Very Undecided

<sup>280</sup> Participant 41 – *Undecided Woman*, 20-29 years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI, Voted *No* in 2014, 5 Very Undecided

independence by Brexit, as they largely held strong beliefs regarding social and political unity broadly.

For example, Participant 42,<sup>281</sup> an *Undecided Woman*, stated she felt as if the ‘the global community [was] getting smaller and smaller...saying No to the EU? No to the United Kingdom? – it doesn’t feel right’. Although a global community seemed ‘utopic’, it resonated with her. Similarly, Participant 28,<sup>282</sup> an *Undecided Man*, said, ‘I’ve always believed that we were much better if we work together as nations rather than separating as nations; I think that there is strength in unity’. In both interviews with Participant 42 and Participant 28, themes emerge regarding *Undecided* beliefs in ‘unity’ and ‘working together’ to shape constitutional attitudes.

Participant 33,<sup>283</sup> an older *Undecided Man*, shared similar views, explaining that staying in the EU and the UK ‘seem[ed] like the right thing to do, to try and work with people close by you and cooperate [...] it seems to achieve so much considering that when I was born, it was just seven years after a massive war (World War II)wrecked the continent’. Once more, in a quote from Participant 33,<sup>284</sup> we see *No* themes regarding World War II, which were integral for older *No Women*, in shaping constitutional attitudes. Again, Participant 33 outlines how his constitutional attitudes are shaped by unity and history (both personal and political). Largely, *Undecided* voters believed in unions, unity, cohesion and ‘working together’ regardless of identity factors such as age, gender, birthplace and national identity. If a voter had these beliefs, the likelihood of them being an *Undecided* voter, a Remainer (EU) and a *No* (Scottish Independence) voter was high.

Some patterns emerged in gendered voting subgroups, such as younger voters, regarding the significance of Brexit in shaping their constitutional attitudes towards Scottish independence. I investigated voter identity factors such as age and gender in my study to analyse the impact of Brexit on attitudes toward independence. In both the SVB survey and qualitative interview study, *Undecided* respondents were most likely to be within age brackets 20-29 years or 30-39 years and were conceptualised as younger voters.

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<sup>281</sup> Participant 42 – *Undecided Woman*, 30-39 years, born outside EU/EEA, white, Canadian NI, Could not vote in 2014, three Somewhat Undecided.

<sup>282</sup> Participant 28 – *Undecided Man*, 30-39 years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI, Voted *No* in 2014.

<sup>283</sup> Participant 43 – *Undecided Man*, 60-69 years, born in England, white, British NI, Voted *No* in 2014, three Somewhat Undecided.

<sup>284</sup> Participant 43 – *Undecided Man*, 60-69 years, born in England, white, British NI, Voted *No* in 2014, three Somewhat Undecided.

Regarding gender subgroups, I found that all young *Undecided Women* were EU Remainers and shared similar views regarding Brexit and what the EU represented. While this subgroup was very small (n=4), patterns across respondent interviews suggested many similarities. All younger *Undecided Women* voted against Scottish independence in 2014 and voted to Remain in the EU. As described in the previous sections, this was typical of *Undecided* voters. Yet, from contextual interview transcript analysis, my small subgroup of younger *Undecided Women* explicitly stated in their separate interviews that they believed the EU represented progressive attitudes, open-mindedness, communitarian ideals, equality, and global harmony.

For example, Participant 43<sup>285</sup> was a young *Undecided Woman* who voted against Scottish independence in 2014. Participant 43<sup>286</sup> stated that she wanted to stay within the EU because she believed leaving it represented ‘closed-mindedness, and I don’t think we gain anything by turning our back on Europe’. Another younger *Undecided Woman*<sup>287</sup> stated Brexit was ‘an absolute defeat for progressive ideas and a defeat for ideas of equality, harmony and fair trade’. Similarly, another younger *Undecided Woman*<sup>288</sup> stated that it ‘seemed that a lot of the world problems needed cooperation on a global scale [...] it is sensible to stick with systems that allow freedom of movement and for us all to be European and working together’. I probed these participants and asked them what policies they deemed progressive. Responses included policies promoting ‘women’s equality and more money into education’,<sup>289</sup> ‘climate change’,<sup>290</sup> and ‘freedom of movement’.<sup>291</sup>

Younger *Undecided Women* believed the EU represented progressive ideals that brought people together instead of apart. Scholars have long studied if and to what extent the EU is a progressive international actor (Simon, 1996; Rees, 1998; Levy, 1999). In terms of gender equality, many scholars find that the EU is an important equality actor and has made great strides in gender equality policy (Kantola, 2010; Ahrens, 2018; Sanders and Flavell, 2023). In terms of the impact of

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<sup>285</sup> Participant 43 – *Undecided Woman*, 30-39 years, born in England, white, British NI, Voted *No* in 2014, five Very Undecided.

<sup>286</sup> Participant 43 – *Undecided Woman*, 30-39 years, born in England, white, British NI, Voted *No* in 2014, five Very Undecided.

<sup>287</sup> Participant 74 – *Undecided Woman* 20-29 years, born in England, white, British NI, three Somewhat Undecided.

<sup>288</sup> Participant 34 – *Undecided Woman*, 30-39 years, born in Scotland, white Scottish and British NI, Voted *No* in 2014, five Very Undecided.

<sup>289</sup> Participant 41 – *Undecided Woman*, 20-29 years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI, Voted *No* in 2014, five Very Undecided.

<sup>290</sup> Participant 34 – *Undecided Woman*, 30-39 years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish and British NI, Voted *No* in 2014, five Very Undecided.

<sup>291</sup> Participant 74 – *Undecided Woman* 20-29 years, born in England, white, British NI, three Somewhat Undecided.

Brexit on equality policy in the UK, Sanders and Flavell (2023) found that Brexit initiated a shift away from consensual gender-equality policymaking and towards a ‘masculinised Westminster Model, which marginalised women from decision-making fora’ (p. 1). Haastrup et al. (2019) found that Brexit processes, such as the Withdrawal Agreement, often ‘ignored gender or [had] taken it for granted’ (p. 68). However, whether the EU is an international actor which champions progressive ideals or not is less significant to this thesis’ puzzle; what is significant is that younger *Undecided Women* believed that the relationship between the EU and progressive ideals such as equality, free-movement, and climate change were significant to shaping their constitutional attitudes on both Brexit and Scottish independence. In existing research, Fowler (2022) investigated subgroup sex gaps in support of Brexit and found that educated young women believed the EU benefited their lives. However, Fowler (2022) found no sex gap in support of Brexit aggregately. Only through subgroup analysis could these differences in constitutional attitudes be teased out.

These trends in my young *Undecided Women* subgroup are similar to findings presented in the last chapter regarding *Yes* and *No* voters, which noted the importance of social values, belief systems, and political perceptions in shaping constitutional attitudes in gendered ways. For example, in existing research on subgroups and Brexit constitutional attitudes, Fowler (2022) also found a sex gap between young men’s and women’s attitudes toward Brexit. Fowler found education (2022) to be a significant predictor in the Euroscepticism gap between young men and women, with educated young women being less Eurosceptic than educated young men. However, Fowler (2022) also found that this gap in Eurosceptic perceptions and support for Brexit was linked to broader differences in young men’s and women’s social values and beliefs. Findings from Fowler’s (2022) research parallel with findings from this thesis, which suggest that gendered differences in social values within and across subgroups impacted constitutional attitudes. Yet, these findings also provide insight into the intersecting factors of a voter’s identity, which can interplay with constitutional attitudes. Fowler’s (2022) work illuminates the need for multi-variate analysis when analysing gendered constitutional attitudes such as the intersection between gender, age and education. Yet, findings from my analysis of younger *Undecided women* indicate that further feminist and contextual analysis of constitutional attitudes is also required to understand how these attitudes are shaped and what role gender plays in these attitudes.

My findings do not suggest that all younger *Undecided Women* in Scotland wanted to stay in the EU because they believed the EU embodied progressive ideals. Rather, my research offers insights into *why* younger *Undecided Women* were invested in staying within the EU and how this influenced their

constitutional attitudes towards Scottish independence. Again, through gender subgrouping of age, gender and vote choice, patterns emerge which offer answers to this thesis' research question asking *which* women. Thus, in-depth contextual analyses regarding how political contexts such as Brexit shape and influence constitutional attitudes offer a more complex understanding of the sex and gender gaps.

In terms of other prominent *Undecided* themes, Table 7.3 outlined influential factors shared across *Undecided* participants, with the first being the effects of 'Brexit' (discussed previously) and the second as 'economic concerns'. Although different codes, these two themes were often intertwined in *Undecided* interviews. Further, themes of risk and uncertainty emerged when discussing economic concerns regarding how *Undecided* voters perceived independence as an economic risk due to Brexit procedures and negotiations. For example, Participant 27,<sup>292</sup> an *Undecided Man* who voted for independence in 2014, reflected on the shift in his constitutional attitudes since the first independence referendum:

I thought that Scotland had the infrastructure and economy that could stand alone and actually prosper as an independent country [...] the questions that were still tricky... (the ones) I wasn't fully convinced over were primarily to do with currency, how debt would be split between the rest of the UK and Scotland and trade within the UK. There were a lot of unanswered questions. And, actually, since 2014, I don't think any of them have really been answered. And, if anything, the example of Brexit has probably made me slightly more weary of voting *Yes* again [...] I think it is the instability that the referendum could cause. It's still the economic impact.

This quote represents other *Undecided* voter perspectives and how Brexit, the economy, and support for independence were intertwined. Upon thematic analysis, it was clear that *No* voter and *Undecided* voters were concerned with the economic viability of Scottish independence. Yet, unlike *No* voters, *Undecided* voters expressed a willingness to consider how Scottish independence would pan out economically. For example, most *Undecided* voters wanted a clearer or more 'concrete plan'<sup>293</sup> that outlined how Scotland would financially and economically move forward as an independent country.

Regarding gender differences and economic risk, I only found minor gender differences when analysing economic concerns as a code in my *Undecided* groups (a difference in frequency of two

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<sup>292</sup> Participant 27- *Undecided Man*, 20-29 years, born in Scotland, Scottish NI, four Close to making a decision.

<sup>293</sup> Participants 29, 27, 26, 28, 31, 38, 40, 34, 41, 43, 74.

references between *Undecided Men* and *Undecided Women*). This small difference does not suggest the lack of a relationship between gender and economic risk but rather suggests that my size of *Undecided* voters was too small to make meaningful conclusions regarding gender differences. Gender group differences which proved significant in my small study, will be outlined in the following sections.

### 7.3.2 *Undecided Women* and Devolved Powers

When conducting qualitative data analysis, open-coding and frequency measurement indicated that *Undecided Women* (n=11) of all ages and national identities were more likely than *Undecided Men* to state that their indecision towards Scottish independence was shaped, in part, by their views on Scottish devolution. Table 7.4 depicts the frequency differences between *Undecided Men and Women* in interviews.

TABLE 7.4: FREQUENCY TABLE OF DEVOLUTION OR DEVOLVED POWERS IN UNDECIDED PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER

Gender	Theme	Frequency Counted
<i>Undecided Men</i>	Devolution or Devolved Powers	2
<i>Undecided Women</i>	Devolution or Devolved Powers	17

When analysing transcripts, *Undecided Women* of all ages were more likely than *Undecided Men* to question whether Scotland’s devolved powers were being utilised to their full potential. *Undecided Women* broadly believed that the Scottish Government should succeed first in its devolved arenas<sup>294</sup> before Scottish independence should be considered. This perspective was exemplified by Participant 35,<sup>295</sup> an *Undecided Woman* who abstained from voting in 2014:

We’ve (Scotland) got so much that needs to be done [in Scotland] and leaving [the union] isn’t going to make it any...It’s going to make it easier in the long run for us to write laws about the things we want to write laws about. But we also already have devolution and could do so much more with that. We should be making things better

<sup>294</sup> Matters devolved to Scotland include agriculture, forestry, fisheries, consumer advocacy and advice, economic development, education and training, elections to Scottish government and local government, the environment, fire services, freedom of information, health and social services, housing, justice matters, policing, local government, planning, sport, arts, tourism as well as some aspects of transport, taxation, equality legislation, energy and benefits (Scottish Government, 2023).

<sup>295</sup> Participant 35 – *Undecided Woman*, 20-29 years, born in Scotland, white, British NI, one Very Undecided.

as they are here rather than leaving. That's one of the main things that holds me back from outrightly being like, 'Yes, I support Scottish independence'.

Participant 35 outlines how she weighs her constitutional attitudes and envisages how power is distributed and utilised now in Scotland and how it could be in an independent Scotland. She highlighted that while an independent Scotland could exercise more control over legislative powers, the Scottish Government had more work to do in realising its devolved powers to its full potential. This finding is notable as it parallels *Yes* findings regarding power redistribution's significance. *Yes* voters were influenced to vote for independence because they desired political power redistribution. *Yes Women*, in particular, were concerned with women's empowerment through improved gender-equality measures, while *Yes Men* were concerned with the disempowerment of the state itself. *Undecided Women* also were concerned with constitutional power arrangements but were not convinced that independence was necessary to improve Scotland, and rather believed Scotland should 'work with what they've got'.<sup>296</sup> For example, Participant 74, an older *Undecided Woman*, echoed this perspective, stating, 'The SNP have not made enough changes using devolved power to make you want them in charge of the country'. She expanded:

Ideally, I'd like to see more devolved powers in Scotland, and every region in the UK should have more devolved powers. That's where I sit at the moment. [...] I'm definitely swaying towards keeping the union with the hope of more devolved powers'.

We can see in this quote that Participant 74's desire for more power in Scotland as well as other regions. These attitudes echo *Yes* themes presented in the last chapter regarding Scotland having more power as a state. The perspective of the disempowerment of the state was largely a *Yes Man* theme but indicated parallels between voter constitutional attitudes. Other *Undecided Women* shared Participant 74's views regarding the SNP. For example, Participant 43<sup>297</sup> stated that she was 'irritated' during the 2014 independence referendum, as those supporting independence, such as the SNP, had 'so many complaints [that] were in purview about things that were already within

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<sup>296</sup> Participant 29 – *Undecided Woman*, 30-39 years, white, born in England, British NI, two Very Undecided, voted *No* in IndyRef14.

<sup>297</sup> Participant 43 – *Undecided Woman*, 30-39 years, born in England, white, British NI, five Very Undecided, voted *No* in 2014.

their [the Scottish government's] control through devolution [...] the whole idea was 'Well, you have devolution still, so you've already got a lot of power to do what you want!'

Participant 74 and Participant 43's views regarding constitutional power in Scotland are critical regarding whether current power configurations are utilised effectively. *Yes* voters, broadly, believed that independence would provide Scotland with the constitutional power it needed to effectively govern and improve the lives of citizens. Yet, *Undecided Women* were not convinced that a reconfiguration of power would improve Scotland and, rather, believed constitutional power distribution should stay the same.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I outlined how the women's movement was integral to Scottish devolution (Breitenbach, 1990; Lindsay, 1991; Brown, 1998; Banaszak et al., 2003; Mackay, 2006; Mackay, 2008; Celis et al., 2013; Mackay, 2016; Kenny and Mackay, 2020). Mackay (2008) found that activists within Scotland's women's movement 'mobilised around their feminist and gender identities [...] to voice their aspirations and insert their gendered claims for inclusion into the constitutional reform process' (p.3). Participant 32,<sup>298</sup> for example, explained how she shifted from a *Yes Woman* voter in 2014 to an *Undecided Woman* in 2020. She stated she had been involved in the women's movement in the 1990s during Scottish devolution. She shared her frustrations with the Scottish Parliament regarding its operationalisation of devolved power, stating that the SNP-controlled Scottish Parliament had 'a lot of trust, but they are throwing it away [...] Everything that they have got the powers to do, now, they're not taking on'. I clarified whether she meant utilising devolved powers, and she said, 'Yeah, they just are not doing it – they don't seem very involved in social justice stuff that we (her peers) hoped for'.

While representative claims cannot be made of those in her gender subgroup, connections can be drawn between arguments previously made in Chapter 3 regarding how constitutional change can propose opportunities for power redistribution in constitutional power maps (Duchacek, 1968; Duchacek, 1973). Participant 32's<sup>299</sup> constitutional preferences had shifted from *Yes* to *Undecided* due to her perception of how the Scottish Government exercised newly acquired devolved powers post-devolution. Her interview offers insight into how constitutional attitudes can shift when actors question the state's abilities to exercise newfound power. Conversely, however, one

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<sup>298</sup> Participant 32 - *Undecided Woman*, 60-69 years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI, four Close to making a decision, Voted *Yes* in IndyRef14.

<sup>299</sup> Participant 32 - *Undecided Woman*, 60-69 years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI, four Close to making a decision, Voted *Yes* in IndyRef14.

*Undecided Woman*, Participant 34,<sup>300</sup> was an outlier from the majority of other *Undecided Women*, as she stated that devolution had shifted her attitudes from *No* in 2014 to *Undecided* and, at the time of data collection, was leaning more towards *Yes*:

In 2014, I didn't think it was necessary to all of a sudden have independence. I felt it was more posturing than what we (Scotland) actually needed to be safe and secure as a country. I thought there were quite a lot of devolved powers which Scotland already had, and I felt it [independence] just wasn't necessary [...] But then the creation of the Scottish Parliament was a defining point [...] it made me think that Scottish affairs could be dealt with within Scotland [...] I suppose just as time has gone on, I've seen more and more [the] possibility that Scotland could run its own affairs, as opposed to back then [2014] when devolution was still so new. Back then, I was happier with the Westminster Government, whereas now that is no longer the case.

Although Participant 34's<sup>301</sup> perspective is the outlier, this quote shows how her perception of how the Scottish Government wielded power influenced her constitutional attitudes from *No* to *Undecided*. Although she was in the minority, she felt the Scottish Government was capable of 'running its own affairs', and this, along with her frustration for the central government (Westminster), has encouraged her to reconsider her constitutional attitudes. Feeling frustration towards Westminster was also a *Yes* theme, and again, we see how *Yes* and *No* themes intermingle within *Undecided* constitutional attitudes.

Interviews with *Undecided Women* illustrate how voters' perceptions regarding the success or failure of a government's ability to exercise and distribute power can influence constitutional attitudes. Additionally, the emergence of the theme of power is notable and supports arguments made in Chapters 3 and 6 regarding the importance of power to gender and constitutional attitudes. In most cases, *Undecided Women* felt that the Scottish Government should work with its powers to improve Scotland as a state. Largely, *Undecided Women* believed that for Scotland to succeed as an independent nation, it first needed to succeed as a nation within the UK with the powers it had. Other themes presented in Chapter 6 also emerged in my analysis of *Undecided Men* as a gender group and are analysed in the following section.

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<sup>300</sup> Participant 34 – *Undecided Woman*, 30-39 years, born in Scotland, white Scottish and British NI, Voted *No* in 2014, five Very Undecided.

<sup>301</sup> Participant 34 – *Undecided Woman*, 30-39 years, born in Scotland, white Scottish and British NI, Voted *No* in 2014, five Very Undecided.

### 7.3.3 *Undecided Men* and Taxation

*Undecided Men* respondents were more likely than *Undecided Women* to say that tax or higher taxation influenced their constitutional attitudes. This is not to say that *Undecided Women* did not discuss taxes, but rather that they did not state that higher taxation influenced their indecision in constitutional preferences. Table 7.5 offers a frequency count comparison of the ‘high taxation’ concern theme evidenced in *Undecided Women* and *Men* transcripts.

TABLE 7.5: FREQUENCY TABLE OF HIGHER TAXATION REFERENCES IN UNDECIDED PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER

Gender	Theme	Frequency Counted
<i>Undecided Men</i>	Higher Taxation Concerns	13
<i>Undecided Women</i>	Higher Taxation Concerns	3

In interviews, the imminence of higher taxation in an independent Scotland influenced the constitutional attitudes of five of the seven *Undecided Men*. Similar to devolution amongst *Undecided Women*, the perception of taxes in an independent Scotland from either a positive or a negative perspective swayed *Undecided Men*’s constitutional attitudes, depending on their perceptions of society. *Undecided Men*’s negative perspective on higher taxation in an independent Scotland centred around economic and financial hardship concerns. As presented in my last chapter, economic and financial concerns were significant to middle-aged *No Men*. Yet, this negative perspective on higher taxation centred around concern for younger generations and their financial futures. *Undecided Men* shared the concern of high taxation as *No Men*, but with less emphasis on concern for younger generations.

Conversely, the positive perspective on higher taxation seen in *Undecided Men*’s transcripts alluded to a difference in social values, as they believed higher taxation in an independent Scotland could lead to a fairer and more equal society in terms of the economy, wealth equality, and class. This positive perspective on higher taxation links with themes relating to societal power distribution and equality found in *Yes* voter transcripts. Again, we see how a difference in social values can shape constitutional attitudes.

Beginning with data coinciding with the negative perspective, some *Undecided Men* who mentioned the code ‘taxes’ were concerned about increased taxation. In these interviews, *Undecided Men* believed higher taxation could cause or contribute to Scotland’s financial or economic ruin. This

perspective, as well as its impact on *Undecided Men's* constitutional attitudes, are showcased in the following quotes:

That's the fundamental block I have in totally switching towards *Yes* [...] I struggle to see exactly how moving away and becoming independent and Scotland's becoming a national economy without a lot of higher taxation; I'm not sure how we would survive in the first several years. – Participant 26<sup>302</sup>

In the current situation, you can see the strength of being part of a larger country, where you've got the full support of Westminster taxes and Scottish taxes all coming together to support the entire country. [...] If we became independent, we would lose that financial support. This [is what] makes me unsure about independence. – Participant 27<sup>303</sup>

What we got [in 2014] was, 'Everything's going to be easy. We'll set up a new state in 19 months, costing 200 million. We're going to tax less, we're going to spend more, and we're going to set up a national fund.' It didn't stack up then, and it still doesn't stack up now. So, they need to give us some honesty [for me] to change my mind [...] The finances don't make sense, but I'd like to see Scotland become more self-sufficient. – Participant 31<sup>304</sup>

In this quote, we see how *Undecided Men* conceptualised the link between independence, higher taxation, and economic threat. Participants allude to themes which were particularly impactful to *No Women*, such as security and survival. Yet in *Undecided Men* groups, these themes, were more centred around economic security and survival as opposed to feelings of national safety and security. These conceptualisations of constitutional futures illuminate the link between economic security and constitutional change for *Undecided Men*. Concerns for the economy was also a theme found in *No Men* analysis. Yet, for *Undecided Men*, concern for forthcoming generations and the link to economic security was less present than *No Men* data. Rather, *Undecided Men* were particularly concerned with the knock-on effects of higher taxation and conceptualising what this meant for Scotland as a state. Participants make little discussion regarding personal finances. Rather, *Undecided Men* use terms such as 'we,' referring to Scotland broadly. Again, we see how another *Man* subgroup is concerned about Scotland, similar to the *Yes Men* concern for Scotland's disempowerment. Largely, *Undecided Men* were concerned with taxes, but whether they viewed higher taxation as a benefit or a cost to independence shifted their constitutional attitudes. This

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<sup>302</sup> 20-29 years, white, born in Scotland, Scottish and British, Voted *No* in IndyRef14.

<sup>303</sup> 20-29 years, white, born in Scotland, Scottish NI) who voted *Yes* in 2014.

<sup>304</sup> Participant 31 - 60-69 years, born in England, white, British NI, voted *No* in 2014.

finding raises questions, again, regarding the link between gender, particularly men, constitutional attitudes and concern for the economy and finances.

In existing voting behaviour analysis, the relationship between gender and tax as a political issue has been researched. As outlined in previous chapters, gender stereotypes regarding men and women contribute to expectations of men and women as political actors due to societal gendered norms. Typically, issues related to social welfare, such as education and health, are associated with women due to their position in society as caretakers and mothers. Women typically hold the role of primary carers, which could influence their political economic views in various ways. Due to their caretaking responsibilities, women may be more likely to be altruistic and, therefore, more left-leaning regarding economic taxation (Gilligan, 1982; Ruddick, 1982; Ruddick, 1989; Schlozman et al., 1995). Or women may be more likely to support higher taxation as they are more likely to benefit from public services due to their caretaking responsibilities, lower incomes, or propensity to work part-time (Shorrocks, 2021). All of these factors (job status, income, parenthood) can intersect to influence attitudes towards taxation. Men, in comparison, are often characterised as being interested in economic and security issues (Alvarez and McCaffery, 2000). This characterisation of men as voters links with societal perceptions of men as society's providers and protectors. Theoretically, as outlined in Chapter 6, men are more likely to have higher incomes than women and, consequently are likely to be taxed more. Therefore, increased taxes could impact men's finances more. For example, in her quantitative analysis of gender and tax cuts in the UK, Shorrocks (2021) found that men were more likely to support political parties that support lower taxation and the state playing a smaller role in their financial matters. In Campbell and Childs' (2015b) subgroup analysis of sex differences in Tory party members, Tory women were more likely to favour increasing public services and spending, whereas Tory men were more likely to favour cutting taxes (p. 630).

Yet, Gidengil (2007) argued that there would be men who prioritise strengthening public and social services over reducing taxes and women who hope to cut taxes no matter the social implications to welfare (p. 816). Therefore, Gidengil (2007) stressed the need for voting behaviour to move 'beyond the gender gap to understand the differences that exist *among* women' (Gidengil, 2007, p.817; emphasis added). As discussed previously, *Undecided Men* did not always perceive the concept of raised taxes negatively. Another portion of *Undecided Men* saw Scottish independence as an opportunity to level the playing field of tax inequalities and tackle elitism within the government.

This perspective is exemplified by Participant 28,<sup>305</sup> who stated that ‘inequalities are a serious issue for us in Scotland. If you take the Westminster parliament, particularly the Tory party, you look at the number of those representing us (the UK) who do not contribute in terms of the taxes they should be due .... [not to mention] the interest?’ He stated, ‘I don’t think you have that kind of equality in the UK that we could have in Scotland’. Another *Undecided Man*, Participant 39,<sup>306</sup> echoed Participant 28’s sentiments:

I feel that both in 2014 and now, [my vote] has been more an expression of my dissatisfaction with Britain as it exists, rather than a strong belief that Scotland needs to be an independent country [...] The Conservatives have, once again, seized control of the narrative. This would point to me supporting *Yes*, again. [...] It’s one rule for them (the Conservatives), and another rule for us, and it’s complete hypocrisy. The hypocrisy of not paying your taxes but then cutting benefits. It’s mind-boggling to me, and double standards apply. The people most powerful and wealthy in our country can get away with things, but those that are most vulnerable, like me... if I didn’t pay my taxes, I would go to jail.

Participant 39 weighed his constitutional attitudes in the quote based on his perception of wealth inequality in society. This participant connected taxation and elitism to societal inequalities regarding power distribution between citizens and elites. He felt Tory leaders embodied societal wealth inequality in power with their tax avoidance and, in his interview, considered Scottish independence as an opportunity for power redistribution to reduce inequalities. The quote also illuminates themes such as the accountability of powerholders such as elites and government institutions. Participant 39 also highlights tax avoidance's criminality and expressed inequalities between citizens and elites. In his view, if Scotland was an independent country, the aforementioned issues could be ameliorated as there would potentially be increased transparency and ‘those with power could be held to account’.<sup>307</sup>

Again, as in *Yes* interviews, we see how desires for power redistribution in society shape constitutional attitudes and frustration with Tory rule. Further, the most recent quote links with the *Yes Man* voter theme of concern for the disempowerment of the state. Similarly, themes are drawn out within and across gendered voting groups and subgroups. Both devolution and taxes proved crucial to *Undecided Women* and *Men* in diverse ways, substantiating the need for deeper

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<sup>305</sup> Participant 28 - 30-39 years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI, Voted *Yes* in 2014.

<sup>306</sup> Participant 39 – 60-69 years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI, voted *Yes* in 2014.

<sup>307</sup> Participant 39 – 60-69 years, born in Scotland, white, Scottish NI, voted *No* in 2014.

contextual investigation. Upon deeper investigation, we find that perspectives on these issues vary within voting groups such as *Undecided Men* and *Women* but link across voting groups to *Yes and No* voters within gender groups and across them.

Again, as with *Yes and No* voter groups, findings from *Undecided* groups both subvert and reinforce normative gender stereotypes regarding men and women as voters if considered broadly. For example, *Undecided Men*'s economic concerns regarding taxes link with normative understandings regarding men and tax, thus reinforcing gender voter stereotypes. Yet, upon deeper analysis, some *Undecided Men* were particularly concerned with social and wealth inequalities between powerful elites and those most vulnerable within society. This subverts gender voter stereotypes which typically characterise men to be less concerned with social welfare and inequalities, as outlined in Chapter 3, 5 and 6. In terms of further subversion of gendered voting stereotypes, the following section links back to data outlined in chapters 1, 2, 4 and 5 concerning the relationship between gender, risk and constitutional attitudes.

#### **7.3.4. Risk**

Existing research has explored whether women voters are more undecided in their constitutional attitudes due to risk aversion (Henderson et al., 2015). Five *Undecided Women* and five *Undecided Men* directly referenced 'risk' and 'risks' when discussing their attitudes towards constitutional change. For *Undecided Men*, this was a majority of their sample; for *Undecided Women*, this was approximately half of their sample. It is difficult to measure whether there is a correlation between gender and risk with a small qualitative study. However, qualitative interviews offer critical subjective insights regarding how participants related their perceptions of risk to independence. As shown in previous chapters, interviews with voters also allowed them to discuss how and in what ways they perceived themselves to be risk-averse. For example, *Undecided Man*, Participant 27<sup>308</sup> stated that he was 'not risk-averse', as he was recently self-employed and started his own whisky distillery business, both of which he believed were 'big risks'. He reflected on this experience and stated that this shift in his life changed his perspective on his constitutional attitudes:

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<sup>308</sup> Participant 27 – *Undecided Man*, 20-29 years, white, born in Scotland, Scottish NI, four on a scale of one to five - closer to a *Yes* vote, voted *Yes* in IndyRef14.

Now that you have to really stand on your own two feet, you cannot rely on other people paying your wages. And it makes you slightly more aware of the economic implications of political decisions that people make and the risk of independence [...] So maybe that has affected a change in attitude over the last five years or so [...] Any policies that directly affect my business are now very important such as tax breaks, high tax on whisky duty, or incentives to hire people[...].

Participant 27<sup>309</sup> concluded that his economic situation was riskier at the time of data collection than the risks he faced in 2014, closer to the referendum. His measurement of risk is highly contextual and subjective. This finding supports *No* findings in the last chapter, in which respondents were less likely to see themselves as risk-averse when asked. Yet, questions are raised regarding the extent to which masculinity is attached to perceptions of risk. For example, being a risk-taker is considered more traditionally masculine, whereas being risk-averse is considered to be feminine, as risk-aversion suggests a fear of risk (Meier-Pesti and Penz, 2008; Hinojosa, 2010). Therefore, there may be some respondent bias based on gendered perceptions of risk. However, I found no major gender differences between men and women regarding their self-reported risk-aversion but only broad differences between *Yes* and *No* voters regarding the cost and benefits of independence.

Indeed, voters weighed the cost and benefits of independence, and the processes of this weighing can be seen in interviews. Yet, this weighing was highly subjective to their personal lives and experiences and depended on various individual social factors such as their job (as we see previously), age, income, national identity, and housing situation. This is seen again in Participant 35's<sup>310</sup> interview, where she reflects on her shifting constitutional attitudes since 2014:

In 2014, I was still pretty young, [and] heavily influenced by my parents, and they're kind of right-wing, low-risk people [...] And I think that was heavily influencing how I felt at the time, like, it would be such a big change. [...] It's that unknown of what happens when you kind of take away all ties from such a large, powerful government, being Westminster. And we [Scotland] do get a huge amount of money from Westminster. [...] More than half of our exports go to the rest of the UK. So that in itself is like taking the risk.

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<sup>309</sup> Participant 27 – *Undecided Man*, 20-29 years, white, born in Scotland, Scottish NI, four on a scale of one to five - closer to a *Yes* vote, voted *Yes* in IndyRef14.

<sup>310</sup> Participant 35 – *Undecided Woman*, 20-29 years, white, born in Scotland, British NI, did not vote in 2014, 1=one Very Undecided.

In this quote, we see the emergence of various themes. We see *Yes* themes such as power emerge as Participant 35 considers Westminster's power politically, economically, and financially. *No* themes in her quote also emerge regarding economic and financial concerns. She considers how her relationships and where she lived during the 2014 independence referendum influenced her 2014 perspectives. Participant 35, due to her indecision, did not vote in 2014 as she felt she 'didn't know enough' to feel confident in voting either *Yes* or *No*.

My small study did not exhibit significant differences in risk between *Undecided Men and Women* but did illustrate the complexity of perceptions and the impact of risk. When comparing Participant 27 and Participant 35, we can see differences in how they voted in 2014 and how risk impacted their constitutional attitudes. Yet, at the time of data collection, both voters were younger *Undecided* voters. If scholarly analysis only considered their age and vote choice, we would miss these subtle details regarding personal experiences, conceptualisations of risk and power distribution. What can be noted, again, is that the relationship between risk and constitutional attitudes is highly contingent and move beyond traditional understandings of the relationship between gender and risk.

#### 7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented evidence of gendered trends amongst *Undecided* voters across and within gendered voting groups. However, the differences and the risks' influence on women's constitutional attitudes were not as significant as expected based on risk's significance in extant literature. Yet, parallels regarding influential factors to constitutional attitudes could be drawn from other voting groups. Although my study has low external validity, findings from *Undecided* voters also illustrated the importance of how voters' social values and belief systems shape their constitutional attitudes, particularly their beliefs regarding the redistribution and conceptualisation of power. As outlined in the last chapter, power redistribution was a key theme influencing *Yes* constitutional attitudes.

For example, *Undecided Women* were more likely to mention the utilisation of devolved powers as an influential factor in their constitutional attitudes. Largely, *Undecided Women* felt that the Scottish Government were insufficient in dealing with devolved matters and remained unconvinced regarding Scottish independence. However, my *Undecided* samples were small, and there was not a broad consensus on this belief, as some *Undecided Women* felt more drawn to independence as they believed the Scottish Parliament was effectively utilising devolved powers.

*Undecided Men* were also interested in how power was distributed and utilised in society, with some *Undecided Men* stating that their constitutional attitudes were influenced by wealth inequality between powerful political actors and citizens in UK society. *Undecided Men* were particularly influenced by increased taxation and whether this would improve societal inequalities or prove detrimental to Scotland's economy.

Broadly, *Undecided* respondents were influenced by various aspects of Brexit. Brexit negotiations and processes simultaneously attracted and discouraged them from Scottish independence. The complexity of Brexit constitutional power negotiations illustrated how difficult leaving a constitutional union could be. Yet, the democratic deficit felt by *Undecided* Remainer voters led to feelings of powerlessness and frustration towards Westminster. For younger *Undecided Women* particularly, Brexit signalled a shift away from progressive thinking as they believed the EU represented progressive ideals.

Although there were some differences between *Undecided Women's* and *Men's* constitutional attitudes, more similarities could be linked to *Yes* and *No* voter data. For example, *Undecided Men* and *No Men* broadly shared concerns about the economy. Yet, they differed in that *Undecided Men* were particularly concerned with higher taxation and wealth inequality, whereas *No Men* shared concerns regarding the economic futures of forthcoming generations. Both *Yes Women* and *Undecided Women* shared concerns regarding power configurations, but *Undecided Women* were interested in the distribution and utilisation of devolved powers, whereas *Yes Women* focused on self-empowerment as well as women's empowerment broadly. *Yes Men's* constitutional attitudes were also related to power, yet their concerns revolved around the disempowerment of the state.

These findings illustrate the complexity of *Undecided* voter constitutional attitudes and the variability depending on the political context, aspects of their identity, social values, and voting history. They also illustrate the importance of how voters conceptualise power and power inequalities within society. Without qualitative analysis, complex understandings of themes such as devolution, tax, and constitutional change would be difficult to uncover. These findings provide further evidence that qualitative analysis is needed to supplement quantitative inquiry, which seeks to understand why voters vote the way they do and whether there are gendered voting patterns. The next chapter will synthesise these empirical findings, present the contributions of this thesis and address wider implications related to the thesis.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

### 8.1 Introduction

This thesis began with the puzzle of why female voters were less supportive or undecided about Scottish independence than male voters. The sex gap in support for constitutional change has been persistent in voting behaviour studies and a target of campaigns for and against independence. Three interrelated questions motivated and guided this thesis:

1. In what way and to what extent are women's political preferences with regard to constitutional change expressed through their voting behaviour, and how has this changed over time?
2. Which women and men differ or are similar in their constitutional attitudes?
3. What explains similarities and differences in men's and women's political preferences concerning constitutional change? Further, how do the factors identified in related research (age, risk, national identity) interplay with gender and support for constitutional change?

In seeking to answer these questions, I have drawn on insights from voting behaviour studies, feminist theory and feminist constitutionalism to explore the complexity between sex, gender, constitutional attitudes and voting behaviour. This thesis makes a case for how the relationship between these aspects can be untangled to offer a deeper understanding of voting behaviour. Methodologically, I used a feminist problem-driven approach that acknowledged how societal power structures influence political belief systems and behaviours. I also conducted data collection through both a top-down and bottom-up approach. I employed elite background interviews (top-down), a large-scale quantitative voting behaviour survey, focus groups and interviews with voters (bottom-up) to comprehensively analyse how constitutional attitudes are shaped and influenced. Empirically, the thesis' findings illustrate the importance of campaigns and relationships with voters. The thesis also provides a wealth of thick empirical data by utilising qualitative data to enrich scholarly understanding of gendered constitutional attitudes and influences. These contributions clarify but also complicate our existing understanding of sex, gender and constitutional attitudes.

The thesis highlights the importance of feminist approaches to understanding sex and gender gaps in voting behaviour to avoid essentialising voting groups and to uncover causal explanations of differences in voting behaviour while questioning gendered power structures. Collated quantitative data analysis of large-scale voting behaviour surveys indicated that female voters are the most likely

to oppose and most likely to be undecided about Scottish independence. Campaign actor perspectives from elite background interviews indicated that respective *Yes* and *No* campaigns were shaped to target gendered voting groups in ways that were linked to normative understandings of gender stereotypes. Voter focus groups and interviews illustrated the complexity of voter attitudes, revealing belief systems that were often contradictory, gendered conceptualisations of power structures, and some subversion of societal gender norms. Voter conceptualisations of constitutional change were highly linked to their perceptions of personal and national identity, relationships, views on democracy and entrenched belief systems.

In this concluding chapter, I present the major findings of this research and draw out the broad themes found in my qualitative study. I reflect on this research's theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions and highlight lessons for future researchers by reflecting on the research agenda. The chapter concludes by considering the wider implications of this research for Scottish politics and pro-independence movements globally and highlighting the broad significance of this research to political science.

## 8.2 Findings

As argued in Chapters 4 and 6, a key finding from my research is that campaigns and voters are inextricably linked due to their mutual impact on each other. Campaign actors shape their campaigns around perceived voter identities, and voters are impacted by the messaging and tactics that campaigns project to the electorate. Yet, to structure my synthesis of the findings, I organise the findings below dichotomously by presenting key findings from my top-down approach with campaign findings and then my bottom-up approach from voter findings. Voter findings will include data from my secondary quantitative analysis in Chapter 5 and the qualitative voter analysis in Chapters 6-7.

### 8.2.1 **Campaign Findings**

Chapter 4 contextualised the 2014 Scottish independence referendum using findings from elite background interviews with critical campaign actors. These interviews indicated that campaigns were aware of the sex gap in constitutional attitudes found in academic voting behaviour and independent campaign data. Chapter 4's findings highlight a crucial contribution of this thesis: how campaigns interpret women's voting behaviour (and men's) shape the campaign's perception of voter identities and, in turn, the gendered nature of the campaign. These perceptions, in turn, relate to unequal gendered power redistributions in society, such as men as breadwinners and women as caretakers. Yet, it was also clear that campaigns viewed men and women in monolithic

voting groups (women voters, men voters) but also in subgroups (working-class men, mothers, older women, working-class women). Findings highlight the significance of the gendered perceptions of those in power with decision-making capabilities, voter identities' ability to shape campaigns, and how constitutional futures are proposed. Here, the link between gender, constitutional attitudes, and the reframing of constitutions becomes more apparent. Voter attitudes and identities shape constitutional campaigns but also the gendered perceptions of those in politically powerful positions.

### **The Gendered Nature of the Campaign Teams**

Chapter 4 presented findings that the respective *Yes* and *No* campaign teams were male-dominated, and some female campaign actors viewed this as influential to certain failures campaign teams experienced in targeting women, such as Better Together's Cereal Woman advert. Although the Yes Scotland team made concerted efforts to have a gender-balanced campaign board, those working within the teams and those with the most decision-making power were men. This gender distribution was mirrored at Better Together. Due to this imbalance, female actors believed that male campaign actors had difficulty connecting to women voters due to their lack of experiential understanding of what was important to women. It can be argued that it was because of this knowledge gap, combined with the well-evidenced sex gap in voting behaviour studies, that much time and resources went into understanding the 'women's vote' for independence. Campaign actor interviews illustrated how gendered understandings of voting groups from predominantly male campaign teams contributed to how the campaigns were shaped and how voters were targeted.

### **Gendered Campaign Messaging and Gendered Vignettes**

Chapter 4 highlighted how campaign strategies were shaped upon the understanding that women were managers of the household, the family and overall, the care responsibilities. Yet, men were also targeted through gendered perceptions of men. Messages to appeal to men were structured based on patriotism, national identity and nationhood, highly masculinised themes. For example, the *No* side targeted male voters by framing staying in the union as the patriotic and masculine thing to do.

Interviews with *No* actors stated that women were targeted using risk messaging because campaign actors believed women were more risk-averse than men. Therefore, the *No* campaign framed independence as a risk to women's families, jobs, finances and, in turn, their daily lives. *Yes* actors sought to appeal to women using opportunities for free childcare during campaign discussions and held coffee mornings in local community areas where they expected women to be.

Elite background interviews with critical campaign actors, presented in Chapter 4, established that both *Yes* and *No* actors believed that voters in older generations were more likely to be against independence due to the risk and uncertainty it could bring to state-funded support such as pensions and healthcare. Campaign actor interviews also highlighted the gender-generational aspect of the puzzle, with some *Yes* actors stating that older women were less likely to support the breakup of the UK due to what it would signify regarding Britain's war history.

### **Gendered Message Carriers**

Interviews with campaign actors indicated that significant efforts to target gendered voting groups were made using specific message carriers. Findings highlighted that certain message carriers were used to target and appeal to men and women as voters as groups but also subgroups of men and women. For example, prominent female politicians were used by either side to appeal to women voters, such as Ruth Davidson and Kezia Dugdale from the *No* side and Nicola Sturgeon from *Yes*. The *Yes* side also utilised women-focused networks such as Women for Independence (WFI) to appeal to female voters. Actors stated that often, female actors were placed at the forefront of debates instead of male actors to rectify the sex gap. For example, Nicola Sturgeon was used as a stand-in for Alex Salmond because she was a woman and because of Salmond's 'Marmite' effect on voters. Better Together campaign actors also expressed that working-class men were a key target for the campaign because they believed the *Yes* side was attractive to working-class men due to patriotism and national pride themes. Thus, Better Together used familiar and trusted male message carriers such as George Galloway, John Reid and Jim Murphy to appeal to working-class men.

This finding is important as it shows the process of gendered targeting from either side of the independence campaigns. The predominantly male campaign team creates gendered vignettes based on their understanding of gendered voting identities. This understanding is shaped by their subjective understanding of voter identities *and* academic and private data. Then, gendered message carriers are chosen to appeal to corresponding gender groups: women appeal to women, and men appeal to men. Again, we see the importance of descriptive and substantive representation in campaign teams, parliament, and institutions more broadly.

Critical campaign actors had distinct understandings of voter identities and inserted these perceptions into campaign messaging and strategy. Essentialised understandings of voters can turn into entrenched beliefs regarding gender voting groups, which turn into political myths, e.g., the Cereal Woman. Thus, although women were more likely to be *Undecided* regarding independence than men (shown in Chapter 5), this indecision was not necessarily based on risk or care

responsibilities. What is certain is that monolithic understandings of men and women as voters have been challenged in this work. Voter identity is contingent and often based on their lived experiences. Yet, these identities are often constructed and shaped by society and can, therefore, influence their constitutional attitudes.

### **8.2.2 Voter Themes**

My first research question asked how women's constitutional attitudes were expressed through voting behaviour in order to understand better the correlation between the two political behaviours: political attitudes and voting. Answers to the first research question began in Chapter 1 of this thesis, where I briefly illustrated the sex gap in support for independence in Scotland across voting behaviour studies. This data was explored more thoroughly in Chapter 5, where I collated Scottish voting behaviour data analysing the relationship between sex and support for independence.

Data was presented from various voting behaviour studies across approximately three decades and analysed using descriptive statistics. Sex gaps in support for constitutional change could be seen in quantitative data, aggregately from 1997 to 2021. In data before the 2014 independence referendum 2014, the sex gap margin was larger, ranging from seven to 12 per cent (SES, 2007; SSA, 2013; SRS, 2014). However, in some post-referendum voting behaviour studies, the margin between male and female voter's support for constitutional change was small at two to three per cent (SES 2016; SES 2021), suggesting that the sex gap was narrowing. Data in this chapter also illustrated a persistent gap amongst female voters in feeling undecided about Scottish independence. Collated quantitative data from a range of datasets provided broad evidence of the sex gap in constitutional attitudes, and in the following chapters 6 and 7, I sought to explain this gap.

Chapters 6 and 7 presented original qualitative data from voter participants regarding their constitutional attitudes, answering the first research question. Voters reflected on their vote in the 2014 independence referendum (if applicable) and how they would vote in the event of a second referendum. If voters felt negative about the prospect of Scottish independence, they would vote against it. If they were unsure about Scottish independence, they would vote against it. The Scottish Voting Behaviour (SVB) survey I created and administered offered an overview of voting behaviour history and constitutional attitudes.

Focus groups and interviews with voters allowed for a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of voters' constitutional attitudes as influential factors and motivations could be

explored more deeply and interplay with each other. When voters were isolated into gender subgroups based on their vote choice, gender, and other factors, patterns emerged across and within gender voting groups. Qualitative methods offered thick contextual data regarding how aspects of a voter's identity influenced their constitutional attitudes. Voters were asked, in their view, to identify what influenced their constitutional attitudes the most. These reflections offered high internal validity as the voter could speak personally regarding how their perspective of Scottish independence was shaped. Similarities across groups were apparent, especially for those in the same vote choice groups (*Yes*, *No*, *Undecided*), and broad thematic findings will be synthesised in the next sections.

### **Identity and National Identity**

Broadly, analysis of *Yes* and *No* voter data supported existing research findings arguing that national identity and weighing economic cost and benefit were key influential factors in shaping voter constitutional attitudes in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum (Henderson et al., 2022). These factors proved influential to voters in my study in all vote-choice groups, gender groups, and gender subgroups. Generally, voters who felt their Scottish identity was important to them were likely to vote for independence, and those who felt that the financial loss of independence was far greater than its benefit, were likely to oppose independence.

Data analysis provided a further contribution regarding similar constitutional attitudes amongst men and women within *Yes* and *No* voting groups, e.g., similarities between *Yes Men* and *Yes Women*. Across voting groups, *Yes* and *No* voters were similar within their groups regarding whether they believed Scots differed from the rest of the UK or that Britons were all the same. For example, for *Yes* voters of all genders, the belief that Scots differed from other Britons was rooted in the belief that Scotland is culturally, socially and politically more progressive. This myth has been challenged by scholars (Bond, 2006; Rummery, 2016; Mooney and Scott, 2016; McCabe, 2021) with varying types of evidence, but the myth remains an intrinsic part of *Yes* belief systems regardless of background characteristics.

*Yes* voters largely believed that Scottish people are different and envisaged constitutional futures in which Scotland was independent. Conversely, *No* voters believed that Britons were all the same and that the Scottish identity was not nearly distinct enough to prompt Scotland's separation from the union. These beliefs were highly influential to constitutional attitudes, and this similarity was found in transcripts across men and women in their respective groups (*Yes/No*) instead of only within subgroups such as gender, age and class (e.g., *Yes Women/No Women*, or older *No* voters/younger *Yes* voters). I found no gender difference among voting groups, meaning *Yes Men*

were no more likely than *Yes Women* to believe that Scots differed from Britons. Again, I found no gender difference between *No Men* and *Women* in their beliefs that Britons were all the same.

These findings relate to findings in existing research which address the importance of national identity in influencing Scottish constitutional attitudes (Pattie et al., 1999; McCrone, 2002; Johns et al., 2009; Hearn, 2002; Kiely et al., 2005; Breeze et al., 2015; Henderson et al., 2021). Yet, the findings in this thesis differ from related literature, which explores how Scottishness and Britishness influence voting behaviour. Rather, these contextual findings contribute to existing research on gender and national identity in the scope of Scottish independence (Johns et al., 2011), as the findings raise questions regarding the interplay between national identity and feelings of difference or sameness. Further, when analysed critically, questions are raised regarding who, in society, is likely to feel a part of the majority and who is likely to feel different from the majority. Further research investigating which background identity characteristics intersect to shape a voter's feelings regarding their national identity and how this influences their constitutional attitudes concerning societal power structures would be valuable.

There were similarities across voting groups which transcended gender, as outlined previously. Yet, due to the richness of contextual data, more differences were found than similarities in terms of how voters' constitutional attitudes were shaped. Gender subgroup analysis offered a far greater opportunity to analyse the differences between and within gendered voting groups as opposed to the similarities. The intersecting aspects of a voter's identity interplayed with how each participant experienced equality and power within society, impacting how they envisaged constitutional futures.

### **Power, Gender and Constitutional Futures**

In subgroup gender analysis, gender differences amongst and within voting groups became more apparent. Most notably, findings from gender groups (*e.g., Yes Women, No Men*) and subgroups (*older No Women, younger Yes Men*) indicated that men and women within and across groups had different conceptualisations of power distribution, and these understandings influenced their perception of constitutional futures. Subgroup gender analysis suggested that, in some subgroups, different aspects of a voter's identity (age, national identity, parenthood, birthplace) influenced the voter's experience with power in society. For example, gender subgroups differed in that some subgroups were interested in different kinds of power redistribution (*Yes Women and Men, Undecided voters broadly, No to Yes Switchers*), more effective use of existing powers (*Undecided Women*) or no change in power (*No voters*).

Regarding broad differences between men and women within voting groups (as opposed to subgroups), *Yes Women* expressed different perceptions regarding power configuration and how constitutional power was distributed in society compared to *Yes Men*. *Yes Women* were motivated to vote for independence because being a part of the *Yes* movement empowered them. Further, *Yes Women* voters hoped that opportunities and equalities for women would be improved in an independent Scotland. *Yes Women* supported independence as they desired empowerment of the self. Constitutional attitudes of *Yes Women* were largely shaped by their experiences as women and as Scottish citizens at the intersection of the two identities: being a woman living in Scotland. *Yes Women's* discussions, in this way, carried themes linked with feminism both implicitly and explicitly. This finding adds further weight to existing research by Bell and Mackay (2012) regarding how constitutional change can benefit those with less power in society and who are marginalised. Yet, this notion of feminism is arguably more an individualistic one as opposed to a radical notion.

Research by Morrison (2016) investigates how feminist the *Yes Women's* movement was with a particular focus on the women's pro-independence group, Women for Independence (WFI). Morrison (2016) argues that WFI's brand of feminism did not go beyond the invocation of themes such as the patriarchy and capitalism and failed to develop a collective feminist praxis which challenged institutional structures for radical feminist change (pp. 79-80). Morrison's (2016) findings argued that the feminist resistance in the *Yes* movement was rather focused on 'self-transformation or persuading others to change their personal behaviour' (Morrison, 2016, p. 79). Findings within my thesis would support Morrison's (2016) findings in that *Yes Women* were focused on self-empowerment and individual actions. Morrison's critique based on her findings posited that WFI's focus on individualism and individual behaviour prevented the development of a 'collective feminist praxis' in Scotland (p. 80). Thus, from a critical lens, while *Yes Women* were influenced by factors relating to more power for marginalised people, such as equality, self-empowerment, and the promotion of women's rights, these factors do not necessarily imply a radical or progressive feminist future for an independent Scotland.

Similar to *Yes Women*, *Yes Men* also discussed the redistribution of power but differed in that *Yes Men* were more interested in bringing more power from 'the South' to Scotland. *Yes Men* desired empowerment of the state, e.g., Scotland's power and empowerment. *Yes Men* were more likely to see Scotland as disempowered and see independence as the vehicle to give Scotland, the state, more power and control. *Yes Men* rarely mentioned personal empowerment or wanting more power in their everyday lives. *Yes Men*, particularly those aged 18-39, stated that their constitutional

attitudes were influenced by the uneven power distribution between Scotland and Westminster governments and, therefore, were interested in more *state* power than *self*-power.

This finding could suggest that *Yes Men* are particularly more interested in only a power transfer between institutions (the governments: Holyrood/Westminster or the state: Scotland/England) because patriarchal institutions such as the government and the state were built largely by men and therefore disproportionately benefit men (Connell, 2000; Vickers, 2017). Using a feminist lens, *Yes Women's* desire to earn more power in their lives through independence is understandable due to the patriarchal nature of political institutions. For example, the pro-independence women's movement organisation, Women For Independence (WFI), stresses that they are not only an organisation of women who support Scottish independence. Rather, WFI is a social movement organisation which aims to improve women's independence in an independent Scotland by focusing on constitutional aims that improve women's equality (Women For Independence, 2023). Largely, *Yes Women* support Scottish independence as they believe constitutional power restructuring in Scotland will offer equality opportunities for themselves and other women.

*Yes Men's*, and especially younger *Yes Men's*, conceptualisations of the disempowerment of the state are important as they highlight their perception of the importance of the state's power as opposed to the power of the self. Younger *Yes Men* often used words such as 'local' to describe the improvements they wished to see from power transfer in an independent Scotland. Specifically, younger *Yes Men* voiced concerns over the amount of power concentrated in London instead of Scotland. Thematic findings related to this belief were also found within *Undecided Men* groups. Understanding why younger men are particularly influenced by increased local power suggests an interest in experiencing more power within their local communities at a constituent, regional or national level. This finding also raises questions regarding how intertwined improved accountability of those in power making decisions was related to more localised power in Scotland.

Regarding gender differences, *Yes Men* believed that the state and the political institutions which govern the state are disempowered due to power being held and wielded by Westminster. *Yes Women* largely perceived themselves as women, as well as other women, to be disempowered due to constitutional structures. *Yes Men* were largely focused on the nation and its institutions as an entity as opposed to personal power. This difference in *Yes* influential voter factors is highly gendered and suggests a parallel between the patriarchal nature of institutions and the societal imbalance of power in which men are more likely to benefit from institutions than women. As stated in Chapter 3, gender in society is societally constructed, with men more likely to be the benefactors of professional, financial and economic gain than women. Therefore, men are more

likely to benefit due to the patriarchal nature of societal institutions which govern our lives. Gender equality in society is imbalanced in various arenas, including the political sphere. Due to this power imbalance, men are more likely to be society's breadwinners, whereas women are more likely to be society's caretakers. Research indicates that women, on average, have lower incomes than men and are less likely to be employed full-time (Pettit and Hook, 2009; Boll and Lagemann, 2014). Research of the EU and other industrialised nations has found that if a woman has children, her likelihood of being in part-time work as opposed to full-time work is amplified (Pettit and Hook, 2009; Boll and Lagemann, 2014) and therefore suggests that her pay is lower due to the decrease in hours working.

Concerning the gendered puzzle of this thesis, the gender imbalance in how women and men experience power and equality will likely influence voters' attitudes towards the prospect of constitutional change such as independence. This imbalance also contributes to understandings of men and women as voters, as recently argued in this chapter and Chapter 4. As women are more likely to work and earn less, women who earn less could be more attracted towards constitutional change as an opportunity to gain more. The power imbalance in society is likely linked to *Yes Women's* perceiving Scottish independence as an opportunity for constitutional restructuring in their favour.

Conversely, some women could also be repelled from constitutional change in order to maintain what they have in terms of security and stability. For example, *No Women* hardly mentioned power distribution and instead were focused on what they would lose in an independent Scotland in terms of unity. They largely believed that Scottish nationalism threatened national security and that anti-English rhetoric was causing a divide between Scotland and the UK. Further, *Undecided Women* were less interested in gaining more personal power but were concerned in terms of how to maintain the current power distribution effectively in terms of Scotland's devolved powers.

Gender difference theory can also be applied to men from a different vantage point based on their patriarchal privilege. For example, research finds that married men are more conservative regarding how the state should regulate economic inequality (Hayes, 1993). Research finds that working men have higher incomes than working women, are more likely to be employed in the private sector than the public sector and do less care work (Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2006; Knutsen, 2001). Yet, theorising that because men are more privileged in society and less likely to be caretakers, they will be inherently less interested in improved equality measures is overly simplistic and essentialist. For example, *No Men* were likelier than other subgroups in my research to state that the economy influenced their constitutional attitudes. However, *No Men* over 50 often

tied the concern for the economy with their concern for forthcoming generations, the collective ‘we’, and younger family members. This finding does not suggest that *No Men* were more likely to care for others or are more economically minded than other subgroups. Rather, *No Men*’s economic concerns, tied to fear or worry for the constitutional futures of loved ones, especially children, were highly influential in their *No* vote. This pattern was notable compared to other subgroups in my study and subverted normative understandings of gender stereotypes, which envisage men as voters who are less interested in family and caretaking and more interested in issues which are deemed to be masculinised such as the economy, security, and finances (Coffé and Theiss-Morse, 2016).

For *Switcher* voters across all subgroups, Brexit and Tory-rule were key factors influencing *Switcher No* to *Yes* voters. Tory-rule and Brexit are both linked to the theme of power. Tory-rule was an influential factor in shaping attitudes supporting independence (*No to Yes Switchers* and *Yes*) in that these voters opposed consecutive Conservative Westminster governments. Voters supportive of independence were displeased regarding who held power and how those in power distributed power. Again, we see how power was important in shaping *Yes* and *Switcher* attitudes over time. Brexit was particularly important to *Undecided* voters and inherently linked to power distribution. Brexit altered power distribution in the UK in that with the UK’s departure from the EU, more power was given to those in power in Westminster.

Brexit and Tory-rule also influenced *Yes* voters who voted *Yes* in 2014 and would vote *Yes* again; the *Switcher* finding aligned with *Yes* themes found through open coding. This parallel in influential factors to constitutional attitudes between *Yes* and *Switcher No to Yes* voters offered a deeper understanding regarding the catalysts which turned voters from *No* to *Yes* over time (from 2014 to 2019/2020, the time of data collection). Results from the SVB, voter interviews and focus groups indicated that, largely, voters were potentially less volatile in their constitutional attitudes as there were very few *Switcher* voters in my study<sup>311</sup>.

Further, with Brexit also came the changing of the UK constitution. My young *Undecided Women* participants felt that staying in the EU represented equal power distribution and progressive ideals. As the introduction states, constitutions are power maps illustrating how power is distributed and to whom (Duchacek, 1973). These themes, coded at ‘Tory-rule’ and ‘Brexit,’ link with the

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<sup>311</sup> As stated, results from the SVB were not intended to be representative of the electorate but were descriptive of my sample of participants.

overarching theme of power and illustrate how shifts in power (or lack thereof in terms of consecutive Tory-rule) can impact and shape constitutional attitudes over time. Interview analysis of voters offered valuable insights into voters' changing constitutional attitudes regarding *what* shifted constitutional attitudes, *when* and *why*.

### **Discourse on Nationalism and Gender**

Regarding other subgroup group analyses, quantitative voting data presented in Chapter 5 illustrated a generation gap in support for independence. Therefore, it was unsurprising that older voters would be less supportive of Scottish independence. Consequently, it was not surprising when themes of war in older *No Women* groups emerged. Yet, the measure of influence that the theme of anti-nationalism had on older *No Women* voters was notable in its thematic link to war.

In my study, *No* voters who were women and older (40 and above and particularly those 60-69) were likely to vote against independence in 2014 because they believed Scottish nationalism posed a threat to unity, security and safety in Scotland. In qualitative data analysis, security was linked thematically to voters against nationalism<sup>312</sup>. In analysis, it became clear that this stance against nationalism was shaped by their perspectives and experiences related to World War II (WWII), particularly their proximity to people involved in the war (family or friends). Many older *No Women* likened the threat of Scottish nationalism to the rise of Nazism in Germany in their interviews and focus groups. Analysis of this data highlighted that many older *No Women*'s belief systems were influenced by political myths that linked the SNP to Hitler and the Nazi Party. While these views differed in extremity, these beliefs were present in most older *No Women* interviews and were found in the one *No Women* focus group. When analysing gender group differences concerning anti-nationalism, the difference between *No Women* and *No Men* broadly was notable (22 *No Women* references compared to six *No Men* references).

Gender differences between older *No Women* and older *No Men* suggested that at the intersection of age and gender were differences in how Scottish nationalism influenced constitutional attitudes, as this concern was more significant amongst women. Older *No Women*'s constitutional attitudes were partly influenced by their proximity to WWII, the union's success in WWII, and nationalist ideologies signifying something dangerous. Many of the women in this subgroup were born post-WWII, yet theoretically, their families and lives would be influenced by the effects of WWII in

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<sup>312</sup> Many older *No Women* stated they were anti-nationalist although it was unclear if they were also against British nationalism as opposed to being against only Scottish nationalism.

gendered ways, potentially in employment, family structures or resources. These findings illustrate how constitutional histories influence attitudes regarding constitutional futures and can do so differently based on aspects that shape a voter's experience in society, such as gender, birthplace, age and national identity. Yet, these findings raise questions regarding why wartime sentiments less influenced older *No Men's* constitutional attitudes as *No Men's* transcripts rarely mentioned war or WWII as influential to their constitutional attitudes.

On the surface, the influence of war on older *No Women's* constitutional attitudes could be seen as a subversion of gender stereotypes if only looking at relative frequencies between older *No Men* and *No Women*. Normative masculine stereotypes suggest that male voters are more interested in war and favour war (Lawless, 2004). Research has found many sex gaps to provide weight to this theory as male voters are historically more in favour of war (Brooks and Valentino, 2011; Lizotte, 2019). Yet, analysis of my study suggests that older *No Men's* constitutional attitudes were impacted by other factors rather than that they were not interested in or in favour of war. Gender difference theory could also suggest that wartime sentiments less influence older *No Women* and, rather, are more influenced by their relationships with people living close to war. This theory leans on beliefs that female voters are more likely to vote with family and personal relationships in mind (Bourque and Grossholtz, 1974; Plutzer and McBurnett, 1991). Yet, the application of this type of gender difference theory requires deeper investigation as it can, again, be overly simplistic. Further probing would be needed to flesh out the cause of these beliefs, yet these findings offer pathways for future research to investigate subgroups of older *No Men* and *Women*.

Linking back to the significance of anti-Scottish nationalism in the *No Women* group and subgroup, I found interactions between other characteristics such as birthplace and national identity. For example, *No Women* were most likely to be born in Scotland. However, all *No Women* who identified as having a British national identity (as opposed to a Scottish, Scottish and British, or a different national identity) expressed concern for anti-English rhetoric. *No Women* with British national identities stated they felt more opposed to independence due to the anti-English rhetoric, which they believed to be fuelled by the *Yes* movement. Many of the women within this subgroup believed that the rhetoric was racist, exclusionary and causing unnecessary division within the union. Again, older *No Women* felt disturbed by this rhetoric due to the uniting of England and the rest of the UK during WWII. For many *No Women*, especially those with British identities and those who were older, the union of the UK was something they believed in, offered security, and was important to them due to the perspectives on British constitutional history. Again, we see how negative feelings toward Scottish nationalism, sentiments for WWII, and exclusionary language

such as anti-English sentiments are all significant and interlinked to *No Women* voters. These themes shaped *No Women's* constitutional attitudes and raised questions about why anti-nationalism less influenced *No Men's* constitutional attitudes. Again, campaign actor interviews in Chapter 4 illustrated that actors believed that men, especially working-class men, had a preponderance for patriotism and were drawn to nationalist movements. This theory could support why *No Women* are more likely to be repelled by Scottish nationalism, as it could be due to their gender. Yet, further, questions are raised regarding what causes *No Women* to be repelled by the Scottish nationalist movement, and *Yes Women* are more drawn to the Scottish nationalist movement.

These *No Women* gender subgroup differences are notable as they highlight how, although constitutional attitudes amongst voters are the same within the voting group (*No* voters will vote against Scottish independence), the influential factors behind constitutional attitudes differ amongst gender groups and subgroups. Further, as in the case of *No Women* subgroups, constitutional attitudes can depend on an intersection between age, gender, birthplace, national identity, and lived experiences. These *No* subgroup findings support the use of gender subgroup analysis to dig deeper into explanatory powers in how constitutional attitudes are shaped and expressed through voting behaviour. They also complicate and challenge gendered understandings regarding men and women as voters as often, voters subvert gender stereotypes instead of reinforcing them.

### **Inequality, Wealth and Gender**

Lastly, the subversion of normative gender stereotypes of voters was also found in the data analysis of *Undecided* voters. Although my qualitative *Undecided* study was small, gender differences from this study indicated potential avenues for future related research on gender and constitutional attitudes. *Undecided Men* were more likely than other groups to state that their constitutional attitudes were influenced by the inequalities they perceived between powerful elites in Westminster and citizens. This belief was found in frequency analysis when I contextually analysed the thematic code of 'taxes.' The surface-level or thin analysis would indicate that *Undecided Men* were primarily concerned with tax. But, in a contextual analysis of this theme, these tax concerns were related to social and wealth inequalities. Most of these *Undecided Men* had voted *No*, against independence, in 2014. Yet, their perception of wealth inequality, particularly emphasising powerful critical actors in the Tory party, had changed their constitutional attitudes since 2014. They believed wealth inequality would be better addressed in an independent Scotland between powerful political elites and regular citizens and that wealth inequality would narrow. However, whether *Undecided Men*

believed higher taxes would improve inequality or cause financial difficulties was split; therefore, a broad consensus amongst this group was not found.

As stated in the previous analysis, gender stereotypes of voters suggest that men would be less concerned about social inequalities as women are more likely to experience social inequalities than men. But, again, this analysis is overly simplistic as it only takes gender into account as opposed to other aspects of a voter's identity. Further, concern for wealth inequality between elites and citizens also links to the issue of power distribution in society, a predominantly *Yes* theme. Concern regarding taxes, as a theme, fits within the concerns for the economy, which is a *No* theme. These findings further highlight the heterogeneity of voters within and across gender subgroups, with *Undecided Men* being more concerned with inequalities than men in other subgroups and some women in other groups such as *No Women*. Voter's perceptions of inequalities highly differ based on their lived experiences in society, but these nuanced perceptions relating to constitutional attitudes can, in turn, reinforce and subvert gender stereotypes depending on the analysis. A deeper qualitative analysis conjoined with a more representative analysis of *Undecided Men* could provide causal explanations for these influences.

Gender difference theories can offer insight into how constitutional attitudes are shaped in gendered ways. Therefore, voting behaviour researchers must acknowledge the heterogeneity of voters and conduct an in-depth contextual qualitative analysis of voters' perspectives to offer a fuller picture regarding how voters' constitutional attitudes are shaped. For some women, such as *Yes Women*, their view of gender inequality in society imbues a desire for constitutional restructuring. Yet, not all women were focused on gaining power, such as *No Women*, and not all *Yes* voters were interested in gaining personal power, such as *Yes Men*. The aforementioned gender difference theories based on societal power relations offer potential insights into how subgroups of men and women can be explored. Yet, again, these experiences depend entirely on their lived experiences, such as whether they are employed, have children, are married, and more. Findings from this thesis stress that subgroup analysis of voter similarities can challenge and complicate stereotypical understandings<sup>313</sup> of men's and women's voter identities and voting behaviour. These identity factors can, therefore, influence constitutional attitudes in gendered ways based on the

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<sup>313</sup> Women as risk-averse voters: Liñeira and Henderson, 2021; Henderson et al., 2015.  
Men being more nationalistic or patriotic than women: Pennamen, 1990; Johns et al., 2011.  
Older people being more fiscally conservative: Crowther et al., 2018.

interplay between voter experiences with societal gendered power structures that either work to benefit or disadvantage them.

### 8.3 Contributions

This thesis fills theoretical, empirical and methodological gaps. The major contributions of this thesis will be synthesised below by pointing to gaps this work has filled relating to research on gender, voting behaviour, constitutional change and referendums.

#### 8.3.1 **Theoretical**

This thesis takes a feminist approach to the question, which foregrounds power to explore how understandings of power shape constitutional attitudes. A thread which has been pulled throughout this thesis is the argument that gender is a social power structure, and therefore, when the changing of constitutional power maps is proposed, differences in attitudes towards constitutional change are shaped by gender and its interplay with other power structures. Bell and Mackay (2012) argued that constitutional change offers a critical juncture for voters grappling with 'big questions' around agency, equality, representation, democracy and citizenship (p. 270). Constitutional change proposes a breakaway from the societal status quo and provides opportunities for power redistribution; it is therefore crucially important to big issues in political science relating to democracy. As power is restructured and reformed through constitutional structures, inequalities such as gender inequality in the polity can be addressed (Bell and Mackay, 2012).

Critical campaign actor perspectives on the gendered nature of voter identities and the campaigns' structure had not yet been explored in contextual detail. This thesis offers critical insights regarding how gendered perceptions of voter identities within and outwith the campaigns are shaped. Researchers must acknowledge the distinction between sex and gender to understand how societal power structures influence constitutional attitudes in gendered ways.

Voter findings in the previous section showed that men's and women's constitutional attitudes differ because their experiences with societal power differ. Men and women are impacted differently by institutional structures which govern legislation, policy, and social structures, such as gender norms which, in turn, influence their experience of society. Therefore, their views on society, how power should be distributed and to whom will differ. For example, in linking *Undecided Women* with *Yes Women* themes, we see similarities in the prominence of the theme of power and constitutional futures. Women within my study were largely concerned with power, how it was

distributed, and to whom. These findings challenge normative perceptions of women voters as voters who are uninterested and uninformed.

Another argument throughout this thesis is that a voter's identity is multi-faceted and how aspects of their identity intersect will affect their relationship with societal power and, therefore, their constitutional attitudes. The differences and similarities between men and women in their constitutional attitudes are due to the heterogeneity of voters. For many reasons, men and women share similarities and differences in their constitutional perspectives. These reasons become clearer through gender subgroup analysis. Theoretically, as the number of identities included in one subgroup analysis increases (e.g., a subgroup with voters all living in the same place, job, and gender identity), the understanding of differences and similarities amongst those within that group increases. Through subgroup analysis with a gendered lens, understanding gendered differences in political attitudes at a deeper and more nuanced level improves. Constitutional histories (such as power inequalities) ultimately influence constitutional futures. The aforementioned findings add theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions which validate the importance of feminist approaches to analysing sex and gender gaps in voting behaviour in support of constitutional change.

The thesis is also novel in the Scottish context as it utilises a feminist approach to understanding the sex gaps in Scottish voting behaviour, which has rarely been adopted in Scottish voting behaviour research or studies of constitutional attitudes more broadly. In acknowledging the sex/gender distinction, Scottish gender identities and the relationship between constitutional change and power inequalities become clearer. Further, the findings in this thesis will be useful to comparative studies and in other contexts, such as analysing sex gaps in support of constitutional change in Quebec and Catalonia. This work offers a blueprint for how future research models investigating Scottish voting behaviour can be designed and those comparable to the Scottish case.

### **8.3.2 Empirical**

#### **Risk, National Identity and Age**

Thematic empirical findings have been synthesised in the previous finding section. Yet, this thesis makes further contributions that challenge and complicate normative arguments regarding the association between risk, national identity, age, and gendered constitutional attitudes. In the previous sections, I outline the importance of the relationships between gender and age, as well as gender and national identity, in shaping constitutional attitudes. As outlined in Chapters 1 and 2, related literature on the sex gaps has investigated whether risk (Henderson et al., 2015), age

(Crowther et al., 2018), and national identity (Johns et al., 2012) explain the sex gap in support of independence. Age and national identity, however, cannot be isolated as one-variable explanations for differences in constitutional attitudes. Rather, it is the intersecting of these variables with gender and other power structures that affect voters' lived experiences and, consequently, shape constitutional attitudes. Therefore, studying voters in gender groups and subgroups using rich contextual analysis provides an explanatory understanding of the sex and gender gaps in support of constitutional change. Explanations for the sex gap in related literature rooted in gender difference theory, such as women's risk aversion or a difference in national identity between men and women, proved less influential in shaping constitutional attitudes. Instead, gendered conceptualisations of power redistribution and how gendered voting groups perceive nationalism were found to be more influential in my study.

As outlined in Chapter 2, risk has been the most popular explanation of sex gaps in constitutional attitudes in the existing literature due to findings in research related to gender differences in risk aversion (Liñeira and Henderson, 2015; Henderson et al., 2015). Analysis of my findings, however, suggested that risk was not nearly as significant in shaping constitutional attitudes in my study as the other factors mentioned previously. How voters envisaged constitutional futures were more likely to be shaped by configurations of identity and power than risk. While risk may have a part to play in these configurations, such as the risk of independence being worth the gain or the loss, the risk was more peripheral. For example, identity-related themes such as whether a voter felt different to the rest of the UK versus whether they felt similar were more instrumental to shaping their constitutional attitudes. From a gendered lens, women were less interested in the risk of Scottish independence and were more concerned with the rise of division, anti-English rhetoric, and the loss of a unified Britain. In my study, these themes were more instrumental to voter constitutional attitudes in broad groups and subgroups than the potential risks or aversion to risks.

Further, voters were not likely to state that their aversion or predisposition towards risk influenced their views on Scottish independence, although there could be an element of response bias. For voters, the risks of independence were difficult to isolate into neat groups such as business risk, non-business risk, or personal financial/economic risk, and the areas that could be impacted by Scottish independence were inextricably linked. What largely separated voters was beliefs regarding which constitutional futures would offer more power or security.

### **The Scottish Case**

This thesis makes a significant empirical contribution to the understanding of Scottish politics. The constitutional question has dominated Scottish politics well after the 2014 independence

referendum (Henderson et al., 2022; Johns, 2021; Bennie et al., 2021; Mitchell et al., 2017). This thesis contributes to the academic understanding of the experiences of voters and critical campaign actors before, during and after the 2014 independence referendum.

Empirically, the thesis provides rich data points from various perspectives and in various data formats of the referendum and the constitutional debate in Scotland more broadly. This thesis's most notable contribution to Scottish political scholarship is its new qualitative data, which offers insights into voters' understandings of power, constitutional change, and identities in Scottish society. With over 120 qualitative and one thousand quantitative participants, this thesis comprehensively analyses the interaction between sex, gender and constitutional attitudes in Scotland with high internal validity and contextual meaning.

Findings from this thesis help deepen our understanding of the heterogeneity of Scottish men and women voters and challenges normative conclusions regarding 'the cause' of the gender gap. The thesis complicates what is currently known regarding why Scottish women are less supportive of independence as it challenges the risk-aversion theory. Rather, findings from this thesis substantiate the need for deeper subgroup analysis to highlight that men and women voters have much more complex reasons to support or oppose independence. As outlined previously, a voter's conceptualisation of power in constitutional futures and their national identity plays a key role in shaping constitutional attitudes. Further, due to the entangled nature of gender, power and identity, constitutional attitudes are inherently shaped by a voter's gendered experience in society. As gender is a power structure, the ways in which a voter experiences and visualises power are gendered.

### **8.3.3 Methodological**

A key contribution of this research is its methodological approach. In Chapter 3, I argued how and to what extent mixed-method approaches can offer a more comprehensive understanding of a puzzle in that the research design is shaped around the problem. My mixed method research design supplemented quantitative findings from existing voting behaviour survey data, or what we already know, with what we do not know. For example, as highlighted in Chapters 1 and 4, quantitative data analysis of existing voting behaviour studies suggested that the sex gap in support of Scottish independence was closing (Henderson et al., 2021; Curtice, 2020). In the 2021 SES, researchers distinguished sex and gender identity in their questionnaire. They found that the gender gap between men and women was closing, with men only being one to two per cent more likely to support independence than women. In *Undecided* voter data, the gap was also narrowing. For example, in 2013 SSA data, the gap between female and male voters in feeling undecided was a

margin of approximately seven per cent. In 2021, this margin narrowed to approximately three per cent.<sup>314</sup>

Chapter 2 outlined a knowledge gap in research regarding *which* women and men differed in their constitutional attitudes and which were similar. While psephologists such as Curtice (2012, 2014, 2013, 2015) have used quantitative data to illustrate who voted *Yes* and who voted *No* in the referendum, this analysis of the sex gaps can only go so far in terms of offering contextual evidence regarding *how* voter's constitutional attitudes are shaped. Further, quantitative analysis of the sex gaps is limited in that it cannot offer explanations for the gendered nature of constitutional attitudes without considering gendered power structures. Chapters 2 and 3 detail how existing causal explanations often draw only partial conclusions as to why the sex gaps exist and outline how gender difference theories are applied to sex differences. Through this 'one-size-fits-all' application of gender difference theory, the heterogeneity of voters and gendered voting groups is flattened and can consequently contribute to normative and stereotypical understandings of men and women.

When looking at broad quantitative patterns, female voters' constitutional attitudes towards Scottish independence have changed over time in that female and male voters share similar constitutional attitudes with margins narrowing in voting behaviour studies. However, qualitative analysis shows that the factors influencing voters' constitutional attitudes can vary amongst male and female voters and highly depend on their lived experiences instead of solely their sex. To ameliorate the gender flattening of voters, feminist political science researchers stress the importance of asking the question of *'which'* women—asking *'which'* women has been crucial to much gender and political science research (Lovenduski, 2005; Campbell, 2006; Smooth, 2011), as understanding the *'which'* aspect of a puzzle helps to challenge monolithic and essentialist understandings of women (and men) as political actors—further, understanding the *'which'* adds deeper insight into the explanatory powers of gender gaps in political science. Therefore, to answer the second research question, this thesis conducted a gender subgroup analysis of voters to delve deeper into gendered voter identities and how constitutional attitudes are shaped. In carrying out this particular work, this thesis answers the call by scholars asking for a deeper empirical investigation of the sex gap in constitutional attitudes to better understand how a voter's sex and

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<sup>314</sup> It should be noted, however, that the SSA and SES are two vastly different surveys, with the SSA being a social attitudes survey and the SES being a voting behaviour study. Therefore, the two data points are not inherently comparable but offer a descriptive understanding of voting behaviour patterns over time.

gender identity can influence their voting behaviour (Johns et al., 2011; Ormston, 2013a; 2013b; Verge et al., 2015).

Findings from gender subgroup analysis illuminated various gender differences in the conceptualisation of societal power distribution in an independent Scotland. There were also gender differences found in subgroups regarding how identity, nationalism, and security were conceptualised, as well as in social attitudes. Some of these findings subverted normative gender stereotypes regarding men and women as voters. Ultimately, as described in the previous findings section, gender subgroup analysis outlined the heterogeneity of voters across and within gendered subgroups and challenged monolithic understandings of men and women as voters.

## 8.4 Future Research

As stressed throughout this thesis, constitutions serve as power maps (Duchacek 1968; 1973) as they are instruments which establish political and legal hierarchy (Irving, 2017). Therefore, understanding power relations as well as power imbalances within the confines of constitution-making and re-structuring is critical for political scientists. Further, discerning how voters perceive these structures is essential for garnering a deeper understanding of the interplay between power and democracy in political society, as constitutions can empower and constrain both institutions and actors. Yet, constitutions are not self-executing and are, rather, made and sustained by the same institutions and actors they are made to empower or disempower. Therefore, any further analysis which wishes to understand constitutional power must understand how constitutional power can influence societal power structures such as gender. This thesis provides a blueprint for future research investigating constitutional power, attitudes and change from a gendered perspective as it foregrounds the understanding that both constitutions and gender are power structures that are societally constructed and maintained. The sections below will offer suggestions for future research.

### 8.4.1 Future Surveys

This thesis has argued that a deeper exploration of the sex gap requires that researchers contextualise gendered voter attitudes and experiences. By investigating *which* women, as the second research question of this thesis poses, I have illustrated the importance of gendered perceptions of power and belief systems through heterogeneous analysis of voting groups. Yet, many questions remain regarding sex and gender gaps, constitutional change and voting behaviour. To better understand the relationship between sex, gender and political behaviour, key factors must be considered.

Firstly, as argued in Chapter 5, surveys must distinguish between sex and gender within their survey skeleton. As feminist scholars argue, when researchers develop surveys acknowledging the sex/gender distinction, a more accurate and richer dataset is created (Bittner and Goodyear-Grant, 2017; Stauffer and O'Brien, 2018; Tripp and Hughes, 2018). Surveys which only measure for sex or use sex and gender interchangeably not only reinforce normative understandings of sex and gender but also risk alienating crucial data points which can better illustrate societal equalities, inequalities and power distribution. The disaggregation of data using a multi-axis approach (as opposed to a single or binary axis) allows for other background identities such as sexuality, class, race, age, ability, and national identity to be explored more comprehensively.

Second, if the research puzzle pertains to gender, gender differences or inequalities, a feminist problem-driven approach is required. Again, as gender is a societal power structure, feminist approaches seek to understand, challenge and address power inequalities in society for marginalised groups.

Finally, a key argument of this work is that the application of mixed methods allows the researcher to centre the problem and utilise the best methods to 'get at' the problem. As outlined in previous sections, quantitative inquiry can struggle to get at the contextual meaning or more nuanced factors which impact a voter's political behaviour. All quantitative inquiry regarding how and in what ways voter identity impacts political behaviour would be supplemented by qualitative inquiry to contextualise and deepen understandings. The blending of quantitative and qualitative methods to explore sex and gender gaps will be explored in the next section, which outlines how I believe the methods should be combined based on my experience.

#### **8.4.2 Applying Mixed Methods**

This thesis' main critique of existing research was its lack of contextual understanding and limited internal validity. Weighted quantitative data helps scholars understand patterns in voting behaviour, and qualitative analysis is the next step as it adds subjective meaning. As stated in Chapter 3, qualitative methods allow political scientists to understand a puzzle from the affected individual's perspective through thick contextual description, and therefore, generalisability is not a goal (Mahoney and Goertz, 2006). This thesis aimed to take a comprehensive approach in utilising mixed methods and a multi-pathway approach to political power distribution (top-down, bottom-up). Thus, while I conducted quantitative analysis, most of the new data collected was qualitative.

The overall qualitative study size of the PhD research is particularly large (n=120) compared to other PhD projects. However, when qualitative participants are broken down into gender groups and subgroups, the number of participants decreases as the subgroup's variability increases. Crucially, qualitative inquiry does not seek to attain generalisability as qualitative methods draw conclusions from individual experience. Instead, this thesis offers a foundation for future research with more resources than what was available to me. Future studies would delve deeper into gender subgroup exploration using a broader intersectional framework. For example, as stated in Chapter 7, my *Undecided* study was small, yet some similarities emerged in broad gender groups (*Undecided Men*, *Undecided Women*), which would be crucial to investigate in further research with gendered subgroup analysis.

Further, key variables which could impact a voter's experience with constitutional power structures, such as race, sexuality, ability and class, would be explored as well. As outlined in Chapter 6, my qualitative study had very few non-white and non-gender-conforming participants. For example, focus groups would be conducted with women of colour from particular working-class communities, or those belonging to LGBTQI+ communities would be within their subgroups based on vote choice. Gender subgroup analysis in focus groups and interviews allows for richer and more comprehensive data, thus offering more accurate and reliable conclusions based on voter experience and perspectives.

### **8.4.3 Expanding Contextual Timelines**

A benefit and a limitation of this work's investigation of voting behaviour was its proximity to the political context at the time of data collection. Campbell (2006) has highlighted that voting behaviour can be volatile and contingent on the political context. This research offers a snapshot at a point entirely dependent on the data collection period and, in terms of reflective insights, is dependent on participant memory and perception. Events such as Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, and various Tory scandals have undoubtedly influenced belief systems, constitutional attitudes, and electoral behaviour possibilities outlined in this thesis. Ideally, this project would continue and reconnect with its participants to track the extent to which constitutional attitudes of gendered voting groups had evolved. Future work investigating sex and gender gaps would broaden the contextual timeline of political behaviour and acknowledge how people's belief systems and voting behaviour change and evolve.

For example, in response to the second element of the first research question, which asks how women's political preferences have changed over time with regard to constitutional change, future

research could continue quantitative and qualitative analysis across a representative group of women to understand how different groups of women's constitutional attitudes change over time. Then, this data could be explored broadly through the benefit of more resources and time unavailable to this project. This type of research would be impactful to understanding the volatility of voter constitutional attitudes paired with gendered experiences and provide insight into the heterogeneity of voter lived experiences.

As outlined in previous sections, research that aims to fully acknowledge voter heterogeneity is crucial for understanding the relationship between identity, power structures, and political behaviour. Therefore, a more nuanced approach to identity is required.

#### **8.4.4 Broadening the Intersectional Framework**

As stated, constitutions serve as power maps which often inherently privilege the majority and disempower the minority (Irving, 1999; 2008; 2017; Vickers, 2000; 2017). Therefore, further exploring a range of marginalised groups and subgroups regarding their constitutional attitudes would be invaluable to constitutional politics. A thick contextual description of voter attitudes, perceptions and belief systems offered rich data analysis findings, demonstrating future research paths for intersectional analysis into voter identities and voting behaviour. An intersectional analysis of gender voting groups and subgroups utilising a variety of intersecting voter identities with a larger volume of participants would be crucial to delving deeper into the explanatory powers behind the sex and gender gaps in support of constitutional change globally.

#### **Race and Ethnic Background**

In Chapter 5, I highlighted key relationships between constitutional attitudes and ethnic background in Scottish voting behaviour studies. For example, I found that in the SES of 2011 and 2021, participants who identified as Mixed race were more supportive of independence when compared to other non-white groups. In the SES 2007 and 2021, I found that Chinese participants were the ethnic group most likely to oppose Scottish independence. Future explorations into these data points would be important, as there is very little data exploring the impact of race or ethnic background on Scottish constitutional attitudes (Sanghera et al., 2018; Arshad et al., 2014). Therefore, much remains unanswered. Currently, only one study focuses exclusively on exploring the political place of women of colour in Scotland's 2014 constitutional debate (Yaqoob, 2024). Yaqoob (2024) supported this thesis' findings by stating that during the independence referendum, women were treated as a homogenous group with 'little to no reflection of the intersecting experiences of marginalised women' (pp. 4-5). As stated in Chapter 6, my qualitative study was

limited in its racial diversity. Future research should centre on marginalised intersections of identities and follow in the footsteps of related researchers (Sanghera et al., 2018; Arshad et al., 2014; Yaqoob, 2024) in investigating constitutional attitudes and the intersection of race but with a gendered-focused approach. As Yaqoob (2024) argues, the problem of the ‘pernicious nature of exclusion, particularly for marginalised women across Scotland’s politics, policy, media, and influencing [...] desperately’ needs to be addressed (p.4). Further, Yaqoob (2024) highlights gaps in data and ‘practical interventions’ that need to be implemented ‘urgently’ (p. 4).

### **Men and Masculinities**

This thesis's findings highlight that more emphasis should be on the intersectionality of men’s experiences. The wider research agenda of this thesis is to widen the scope and understanding of men's and women’s voting groups from homogenous to heterogeneous. In Chapter 1, I outline that I take a ‘gender as relational’ approach to operationalising the term gender (Lovenduski, 1998, p. 340). Gender is measured on a continuum; therefore, gender does not exclusively mean women. Rather, my operationalisation of gender moves beyond binary terms and encompasses the gender spectrum. Masculinity and femininity exist in tandem as societally constructed power structures. Both masculinity and femininity are highly contextual and nebulous, and as such, men’s heterogeneous identities are of paramount importance to understanding gender differences in voting behaviour.

The importance of masculinities to constitutional attitudes has been presented through multiple frames in this thesis. In Chapter 3, I outlined my theoretical approach, which included an examination of the theories of masculinity. In Chapter 4, it became clear that working-class masculinities, particularly, were targeted by the Better Together campaign. Gendered vignettes were created of subgroups of women but also of subgroups of men. In Chapter 5, I presented an analysis of secondary data, which depicted that men have historically been significantly more supportive of independence than women. In Chapters 6 and 7, normative understandings of traditional masculinity were subverted and reinforced in qualitative voting behaviour. From the work presented in this thesis, it is clear that femininity and masculinity are intertwined with Scottish constitutional attitudes in various ways. Thus, further exploration is needed to understand better the nuanced relationship between subgroups of male voters and their constitutional attitudes.

## **8.5 Wider Implications**

This thesis has presented wider implications for future research, which will now be addressed in the preceding sections, moving from the broad to the specific.

### **8.5.1 Gender and Political Science Research**

As Chapters 2 and 3 outlined, feminist researchers have established the need to distinguish sex and gender in voting behaviour analysis (Campbell, 2006; Lovenduski, 2005; Bittner and Goodyear-Grant, 2017; Tripp and Hughes, 2018). This thesis' research model and its subsequent findings further support the need for the integration of feminist understandings of sex and gender into voting behaviour analysis in order to answer causal questions regarding the relationship between gender and voting. In order to comprehensively understand the explanatory powers of the gender gap, voting behaviour scholars must move away from monolithic groupings of gendered voting groups in order to understand why different groups of voters vote the way they do.

As stated, feminist scholars investigating voting behaviour have established the need to bring a gendered lens to the literature on voting. This thesis broadens the scope of understanding the relationship between gender and voting in the UK by deepening the understanding of the interaction between gender and Scotland's place within the UK. This thesis also contributes to the discipline of gender and politics more widely. This thesis widens the scope for gender scholars to investigate how power interacts with institutional and constitutional change to influence gendered power distribution and the potentialities of redistribution. Building from gaps outlined in Chapter 2, gender and voting behaviour literature in the UK has yet to convincingly engage with referendums and constitutional change except for notable contributions from Fowler (2021; 2022), who explored the relationship between sex, gender and support for Brexit in the EU referendum of 2016. Fowler's (2021) analysis lacks contextual qualitative data and fails to acknowledge a distinction between sex and gender. Still, it contributes significantly to how referendums can be analysed through various sociodemographic factors instead of only their sex. Therefore, this thesis offers a research model to investigate future referendums acknowledging the sex/gender distinction, tapping into deep contextual meaning, and exploring explanatory powers of *gender* differences in vote choice with high internal validity.

### **8.5.2 Referendums and Pro-independence Movements Globally**

Constitutional change as a subject is under-researched in traditional voting behaviour research and gender and voting behaviour research. Many scholars in polities such as Scotland, Catalonia and Quebec have substantially contributed to existing knowledge on the importance of constitutional change to political science. Yet, these polities are not the only states influenced by the interplay between multi-level governance and constitutional restructuring.

This thesis answered calls in existing research regarding a deeper, more nuanced investigation of constitutional change and independence referendums (Wenzel et al., 2000). While this thesis does not explore nationhood in-depth, the findings offer a deeper understanding of the multiple configurations of what an independent state looks like and is influenced by voter identities, experiences, and belief systems. Constitutional change offers an interesting case to study how citizens and critical actors propose how political power is allocated, to whom and why. Studying independence referendums offers important insights into the mobilisation of nations and the functioning of unions. As exhibited in the Scottish case, the complexity of the constitutional debate is inextricably linked to depictions of the national histories, national identities, and the nation-state.

Beyond the Scottish case, several states are multi-national with constitutional unions, making investigation into independence referendums more relevant. This thesis highlights the importance of devolution and multi-level politics, more generally due to the rise of regional authority (Hooghe et al., 2010). Understanding how voters perceive power restructuring in multi-level governance is crucial as more states become internally and externally multi-levelled with multi-actors due to globalisation (Hooghe et al., 2010). As political society becomes more pluralistic in power sharing, citizens become more involved in participative democracy to influence various levels of government. Therefore, decision-making power in political institutions is no longer solely concentrated at 'the top' and is rather decentralised across and within institutional structures.

This thesis presented wider implications for pro-independence movements globally. Again, constitutional attitudes are intertwined with power structures due to constitutions acting as power maps (Duchacek, 1983). As Bennie et al. (2021) outlined, the Scottish independence movement encompassed a broad range of actors, including political parties, groups, and individual actors. Independence movements are highly nebulous and connect many intersecting political and social networks. Due to the broad scope of actors, including within and across movements, a richer and more diverse pool of actors can and should be considered both from the top down and the bottom up.

As explored in earlier sections of this chapter, wider implications of unequal gender distribution on campaign teams highlight a need for women and those from other marginalised groups to be at the decision-making table in future political and, particularly, independence campaigns. Vignettes can prove to be helpful in targeting voters. Yet, if these vignettes of gender subgroups of voters are based on traditional, normative, and/or essentialised understandings of groups of men, women, and other gender identities, they will consequently fail to reach heterogeneous voter identities.

### 8.5.3 Scottish Politics

In Chapter 2, I argued that the Scottish independence referendum was an interesting case to investigate the relationship between sex, gender and constitutional attitudes. There is a breadth of Scottish voting behaviour data, the constitutional debate remains salient, and there are many unanswered questions regarding what influences constitutional attitudes. In Scotland, all policy issues and legislation become entrapped in the umbrella of the constitutional question. All Holyrood governments post-2014 have been comprised exclusively of the SNP or a coalition between the SNP and the Scottish Greens. The SNP and the Scottish Greens are pro-independence, and the remaining three parties represented in Holyrood (Scottish Liberal Democrats, Scottish Conservatives and Scottish Labour) oppose independence (Belknap and Kenny, 2023). As such, tension exists in the Scottish Parliament between pro-independence and anti-independence parties in that solutions to political issues are often depicted across the poles of the constitutional debate.

The opposing nature of Scotland's political parties mirrors Scottish voters' constitutional attitudes. As Chapters 4 and 5 highlight, there is a moveable middle in the Scottish electorate, but the size of the moveable middle has decreased (SES, 2021). As ever, Scottish voters become less volatile in terms of their constitutional attitudes and more entrenched in their views. The ability of political parties and independence campaigns to sway the moveable middle to their side would seem paramount. Yet, with Sturgeon's departure from the SNP and various SNP scandals, the mandate and voter support for independence has burned to an ember. Understanding the complexity of how and in what ways voter constitutional attitudes are shaped and dependent on their identity would be paramount moving forward if and when the independence movement is reignited.

## 8.6 Concluding Remarks

This thesis has detailed how constitutional change is both significant and relevant to understanding key themes of interest to political scientists, such as power, identity, democracy and representation, which represent big questions in political science. In terms of power, understanding how constitutional attitudes are expressed through voting behaviour offers insight into how citizens configure societal power relations. This thesis presented how voters differ in their conceptualisations of constitutional futures. Subgroups of men and women within voter groups (*Yes*, *No*, *Undecided*, *Switcher*) conceptualise power differently from each other, both across groups and within them. Depending on unchangeable aspects of their identity and their lived experiences, whether a citizen supports or opposes independence is highly contingent on their perception of

and experiences with power. Those with more power (elites, privileged groups) and those with less (non-elites, marginalised groups) are divided across the constitutional question in Scotland and understanding how citizens perceive power can offer insights into whether they desire more or are happy with the status quo.

Sex gaps in constitutional attitudes indicate a difference in gendered experiences of political society and perceptions of constitutional futures. Gender is crucial to understanding power structures in society. As political science is concerned primarily with how political institutions exercise and distribute power, the scientific analysis of gender as a social power structure is integral to understanding societal inequalities and equality. Campbell (2006) stated that gender's influence on political attitudes and voting behaviours is both 'subtle and pervasive' and, therefore, 'should be included in any comprehensive model of vote choice' (p. 132). In order to do so, however, scholars must also move beyond the conflation of sex and gender and use gender as an additive variable. Instead, the integration of gender difference theories must occur *after* research models have been designed with the spectrum of gender identities and, ideally, alongside other interacting identities which can privilege and oppress individuals in society.

Academic endeavours must move beyond the analyses of gendered voting behaviour in monolithic voting blocs based solely on sex and gender and towards intersectional approaches. Academic approaches that appreciate the multiplicity and heterogeneity of women as voters can create meaningful opportunities to study how and in what way women's lives are impacted by the political power structures that govern them.

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# Appendixes

## Appendix A: Information Sheets (Survey, Focus Groups, Voter Interviews and EBI)

### Information Sheet

Thank you for taking the time to do this survey. It should not take longer than 15 minutes. Please read the following for survey information:

#### Who should participate in this survey study?

- Participants should be eligible to vote in Scottish Elections and Referendums

#### What is the intention of this survey?

- The intention of this survey is not only to analyse survey answers but to access potential participants for phone interviews to discuss their perspectives and life experiences.

*\*You are asked to provide your contact information at the end of the survey only if you are happy to be contacted about participating in a phone interview. This information will only be seen by one analyst before you are assigned a unique participant number that anonymises you. Your contact information will not be used in any other way.*

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#### Information about Survey Study:

This survey will aid in the doctoral research of Emilia Belknap, the Research Investigator for this study and a PhD Research Candidate at the University of Edinburgh. The anonymised results of this survey will be used in the analyst's doctoral research project.

Participants will be asked to answer questions about their voting history and current perceptions of Scottish Independence. Participants will also be asked to answer questions about themselves. This survey should take no longer than 15 minutes.

Most responses are optional and *the survey participant can opt-out at any time*. The information you provide will be stored securely and held confidentially in accordance with data protection legislation.

[University of Edinburgh Data Protection Privacy Policy](#)

There are no known risks for participating in this survey. After you complete the survey, if you wish to, you can withdraw your consent to participate by using the contact details below.

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#### What are the benefits of taking part in this study?

A benefit for taking part in this study is to personally help contribute to the broader academic understanding of issues of power, identity, and representation in the Scottish political system and the Scottish electorate as a whole. Your participation in this research is a vital part of the knowledge this project hopes to add to the study of politics.

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#### For more information:

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Edinburgh University Research Ethics Board. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Emilia Belknap  
G.10, 28 George Square  
Edinburgh, EH8 9LD  
Scotland, U.K.  
Email: Emilia.Belknap@ed.ac.uk

You can also contact Emilia Belknap's supervisor:

Professor James Mitchell  
21 George Square  
Edinburgh, EH8 9LD  
Email: James.Mitchell@ed.ac.uk

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## Information Sheet

### Virtual Focus Group Discussion

**Research Project Name:** Feminizing the Gender Gap: Understanding the Gender Gaps in Support for Scottish Independence

**Research Project Institution:** The University of Edinburgh

**Research Project School:** School of Social and Political Science

**Research Investigator:** Emilia Belknap

**Address & Contact Details:** G.10, 28 George Square  
Edinburgh, EH8 9LD  
Scotland, U.K.

#### **About the Project:**

Gender gaps in support for constitutional change like independence have been found in places like Catalonia and Quebec, as well as Scotland. Previous scholarship has suggested that independence referendums offer fertile ground in which issues like women's inequality can be brought to the forefront. However, voting data has illuminated a gender gap, with men being more supportive of independence than women. Scholars have predominantly used quantitative data in the form of large-scale surveys to understand this puzzle and have suggested a variety of explanations to women's and men's differences preference towards independence: risk aversion, a lack of women's voices in the independence debates, and national identity. Yet, the range of varying explanations to this phenomenon continues to puzzle scholars.

Listening to women's and men's perspectives and experiences relating to constitutional change and beginning to understand the nuanced complexities that exist in this relationship is the next step, I argue, in teasing out the puzzle of the gender gap which quantitative data has previously shown us. Understanding subjective meanings beyond quantitative inquiry that have been internalized by both women and men during the independence campaign and then after is a dialectical process and one that has not yet been done in-depth. Now, this project will investigate views from respondents further in semi-structured small groups organized by grouping like-minded respondents together.

#### **Who is responsible for the data collected in this study?**

Emilia Belknap is the Research Investigator for this project. She is a PhD Research Candidate at the University of Edinburgh. Emilia will be working on this project under the supervision of Professor James Mitchell and Dr Meryl Kenny. The data being collected for this project is qualitative data including semi-structured phone/video interviews and various semi-structured online focus group interviews from women and men in Scotland.

Quantitative data will also be analysed that has been provided by the UK Data Archive. All data will be stored on USB external drives that are encrypted to only Emilia. Additionally, Emilia will have data stored on her private University laptop which only she has access to in order to ensure confidentiality. Your data and the data collected during your recorded online focus group interview will not be shared with other organisations whatsoever. The research will be reviewed and passed by the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh.

**What is involved in the study?**

In this study, the research investigator works to collect both primary and secondary data in order to answer her research question. Your online focus group discussion will be a part of the primary data she collects for this study in order to answer a broader academic research question. There will potentially be a follow-up semi-structured interview on the phone or another video call to talk about your responses and further questions related to this project if further understanding is needed. The participant can opt-out of any portion of the discussion as well as the project in its entirety.

**What are the risks involved in this study?**

This project has been marked a Level 1 on the ethical approval rating list. This means that ethical approval has been granted and that this project has achieved a Level 1 of ethical scrutiny. This means that there are no reasonably foreseeable ethical risks involved in this study. This means this online focus group does not have any participants that are considered vulnerable nor does it explicitly ask questions on subjects which could cause emotional, physical, or mental stress.

**What are the benefits of taking part in this study?**

A benefit for taking part in this study is to personally help provide to the broader academic understanding issues of power, identity, and representation in the Scottish political system, the Scottish electorate as a whole, and specifically, feelings of constitutional change amongst Scottish women and men. Your contribution to this research is a big part of the new contribution to knowledge this project hopes to make in the world of politics.

**What are your rights as a participant?**

Your rights in this study as a participant revolve around the understanding that your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this study and research at any time. You may also choose to retract statements that you have made during this process or provide further clarification. Additionally, you can see any transcriptions that are made which include your responses in order to ensure that full anonymity is given.

**Will I receive any payment or monetary benefits?**

You will receive no payment for your participation. The data will not be used by any member of the project team for commercial purposes. Therefore, you should not expect any royalties or payments from the research project in the future,

**For more information:**

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Edinburgh University Research Ethics Board. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Emilia Belknap  
G.10, 28 George Square  
Edinburgh, EH8 9LD  
Scotland, U.K.  
Cell Phone: 07732 702996  
Email: Emilia.Belknap@ed.ac.uk

You can also contact Emilia Belknap's supervisor:  
Professor James Mitchell  
21 George Square  
Edinburgh, EH8 9LD  
Email: James.Mitchell@ed.ac.uk

## Information Sheet

### Interviews (Phone or In-Person)

**Research Project Name:** Feminizing the Gender Gap: Understanding the Gender Gaps in Support for Scottish Independence

**Research Project Institution:** The University of Edinburgh

**Research Project School:** School of Social and Political Science

**Research Investigator:** Emilia Belknap

**Address & Contact Details:** G.10, 28 George Square  
Edinburgh, EH8 9LD  
Scotland, U.K.

#### **About the Project:**

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Listening to women's and men's perspectives and experiences relating to constitutional change and beginning to understand the nuanced complexities that exist in this relationship is the next step, I argue, in teasing out the puzzle of the gender gap which quantitative data has previously shown us. Understanding subjective meanings beyond quantitative inquiry that have been internalized by both women and men during the independence campaign and then after is a dialectical process and one that has not yet been done in-depth. Now, this project will investigate views from respondents further in semi-structured small groups organized by grouping like-minded respondents together and in phone or in-person interviews where focus groups cannot be organized.

#### **Who is responsible for the data collected in this study?**

Emilia Belknap is the Research Investigator for this project. She is a PhD Research Candidate at the University of Edinburgh. Emilia will be working on this project under the supervision of Professor James Mitchell and Dr Meryl Kenny. The data being collected for this project is qualitative data including semi-structured phone/video interviews and various semi-structured online focus group interviews from women and men in Scotland.

Quantitative data will also be analysed that has been provided by the UK Data Archive. All data will be stored on USB external drives that are encrypted to only Emilia. Additionally, Emilia will have data stored on her private University laptop which only she has access to in order to ensure confidentiality. Your data and the data collected during your recorded online focus group interview will not be shared with other organisations whatsoever. The research will be reviewed and passed by the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh.

**What is involved in the study?**

In this study, the research investigator works to collect both primary and secondary data in order to answer her research question. Your interview will be a part of the primary data she collects for this study in order to answer a broader academic research question. There could potentially be a follow-up semi-structured interview to talk about your responses and further questions related to this project if further understanding is needed. The interviewee can opt-out of any portion of the interview as well as the interview in its entirety.

**What are the risks involved in this study?**

This project has been marked a Level 1 on the ethical approval rating list. This means that ethical approval has been granted and that this project has achieved a Level 1 of ethical scrutiny. This means that there are no reasonably foreseeable ethical risks involved in this study. This means this interview does not have interviewee participants that are considered vulnerable nor does it explicitly ask questions on subjects which could cause emotional, physical, or mental stress.

**What are the benefits of taking part in this study?**

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**What are your rights as a participant?**

Your rights in this study as a participant revolve around the understanding that your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this study and research at any time. You may also choose to retract statements that you have made during this process or provide further clarification. Additionally, you can see any transcriptions that are made which include your responses in order to ensure that full anonymity is given.

**Will I receive any payment or monetary benefits?**

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You can also contact Emilia Belknap's supervisor:  
Professor James Mitchell  
21 George Square  
Edinburgh, EH8 9LD  
Email: James.Mitchell@ed.ac.uk

## Appendix B: Ethical Consent Forms (Survey, Focus Groups, Voter Interviews and EBI)

## Consent Form

Consent is necessary for the Research Investigator to ensure that you, as the survey participant, understand the purpose of your involvement and thus agree to the conditions of participation. If you haven't already, please return to the previous page and read the information sheet that was provided and then sign click 'Yes' at the bottom of this form to certify you approve of the following:

1. Your answers from this survey will be recorded anonymously, saved safely, and the data will be analysed for this research project.
2. At the completion of the survey, you can see your responses and then print a copy of your answers for your own keeping.
3. The data of the survey you provide will be analysed by Emilia Belknap as the research investigator
4. Access to the survey data will be highly limited to Emilia Belknap and her academic colleagues, supervisors, and researchers with whom she might collaborate as part of the research process and in her future publications
5. Any summary of survey content or direct quotes from the survey you provide will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified whatsoever
6. Care will be taken to ensure that any of your personal information given in the survey that could be used to identify you will not be revealed through any academic publication to academic outlets
7. The actual data of the survey will be protected on the University of Edinburgh Drive
8. Any variation of the conditions above will only occur if you have given your formal explicit consent further on during this process

---

By clicking 'Yes' at the bottom of this form I agree to the following;

1. I have read the information sheet provided
2. I do not expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation unless otherwise stated by Research Investigator
3. The survey answers I give or extracts from this survey may be used as described above
4. I am voluntarily taking part in this survey. I understand explicitly that I do not have to take part and that I can stop the survey at any time.

- 1.** Do you consent to all of the above and that you are willing to take part in this survey intended for research? \* *Required*

- Yes  
 No

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< Previous

Next >

## **Focus Group Discussion Consent Form**

### Independent Women?

#### Investigating the Gender Gap in Support for Independence Referenda

The University of Edinburgh: School of Social and Political Science

**Research Investigator:** Emilia Belknap

**Research Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for agreeing to be a focus group participant as part of the '**Independent Women? Investigating the Gender Gap in Support for Independence Referenda**' research project. This focus group discussion will take approximately 60 minutes. This project is not anticipated to have any risks associated with your participation. However, it is essential for you to understand that any moment, you have the right to stop the focus group or withdraw your participation from the research project in full.

Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from institutions in the United Kingdom, specifically The University of Edinburgh, require that participants agree to the focus group process in its entirety. This entails that the focus group participant is aware and agrees to give the interview, their responses, and all data involved with their interview to the Research Investigator to use in the Research Project for the Research Institution. This consent is necessary for the Research Investigator to ensure that you, as the focus group participant, understand the purpose of your involvement and thus agree to the conditions of participation. Please read the information sheet that was provided and then signs this form to certify you approve of the following:

- 1) This focus group will be recorded and a transcript will be produced for the purposes of this project
- 2) At the completion of transcribing, you can request to receive a copy of the transcript and be given the opportunity to correct any factual errors or provide further clarity if you wish to do so
- 3) The transcript of the interview you provide will be analyzed by Emilia Belknap as the research investigator.
- 4) Access to the focus group transcript will be highly limited to Emilia Belknap and her academic colleagues, supervisors, and researchers with whom she might collaborate as part of the research process and in her future publications
- 5) Any summary of focus group content or direct quotes from the focus group you provide will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified whatsoever
- 6) Care will be taken to ensure that any of your personal information given in the focus group that could be used to identify you will not be revealed through any academic publication to academic outlets
- 7) The actual recording of the focus group will be kept by Emilia Belknap on a protected University Drive
- 8) Any variation of the conditions above will only occur if you have given your formal explicit consent further on during this process

Page 1 of 2

Quotation Agreement between Participant and Research Investigator

I am aware as the focus group participant that my words may be quoted directly by the Research Investigator in academic publications or other academic work. With regards to being quoted for this project and any further projects of Emilia Belknap, **by initialing below I agree that:**

\_\_\_\_\_, I, the participant, agree to be quoted directly through a pseudonym (made up name) or alias (alternate identity) and I understand that my name and my identity will not be published.

\_\_\_\_\_ I, the participant, explicitly agree to be quoted directly through a pseudonym in any form of Emilia Belknap's academic work and publications now and in the future.

Data Usage

A portion or all of the content provided in your focus group may be used for the following:

- Academic or policy papers
- News articles
- Academic profile online
- Spoken presentations for conferences or showcases
- Feedback events
- Archive of the project noted above and other projects in the future using this data

By signing this form, I agree to the following.

- 1) I have read the information sheet provided
- 2) I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation unless otherwise stated by Research Investigator
- 3) I can request a copy of the transcript of my focus group discussion and I may make edits that I feel are necessary in order to ensure the clarity, accuracy, and anonymity or my responses
- 4) The transcribed focus group discussion or extracts from this discussion may be used as described above
- 5) I am voluntarily taking part in this project by Emilia Belknap. I understand explicitly that I do not have to take part and that I can stop or leave the discussion at any time.
- 6) I have been able to ask questions that I might have, and I am aware that I am free to contact Emilia Belknap with any questions I may have in the future regarding my participation with this project.
- 7) To receive a short briefing at the end of the study to show the findings of this research if I wish to request it

X: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Page 2 of 2

## **Interview Consent Form**

### Independent Women?

Investigating the Gender Gap in Support for Independence Referenda

The University of Edinburgh: School of Social and Political Science

**Research Investigator:** Emilia Belknap

**Research Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the '**Independent Women?** Investigating the Gender Gap in Support for Independence Referenda' research project. This one-on-one interview will take approximately 60 minutes. This project is not anticipated to have any risks associated with your participation. However, it is essential for you to understand that any moment, you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw your participation from the research project in full.

Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from institutions in the United Kingdom, specifically The University of Edinburgh, require that participants agree to the interview process in its entirety. This entails that the interviewee is aware and agrees to give the interview, their responses, and all data involved with their interview to the Research Investigator to use in the Research Project for the Research Institution. This consent is necessary for the Research Investigator to ensure that you, as the interviewee, understand the purpose of your involvement and thus agree to the conditions of participation. Please read the information sheet that was provided and then signs this form to certify you approve of the following:

- 1) This interview will be recorded, and a transcript will be produced for the purposes of this project.
- 2) At the completion of transcribing, you can request to receive a copy of the transcript and be given the opportunity to correct any factual errors or provide further clarity if you wish to do so.
- 3) The transcript of the interview you provide will be analysed by Emilia Belknap as the research investigator.]
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- 5) Any summary of interview content or direct quotes from the interview you provide will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified whatsoever.
- 6) Care will be taken to ensure that any of your personal information given in the interview that could be used to identify you will not be revealed through any academic publication to academic outlets.
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Page 1 of 2

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\_\_\_\_\_ I, the interviewee, agree to be quoted directly through a pseudonym (made up name) or alias (alternate identity) and I understand that my name and my identity will be not published.

\_\_\_\_\_ I, the interviewee, explicitly agree to be quoted directly through a pseudonym in any form of Emilia Belknap's academic work and publications now and in the future.

Data Usage

A portion or all of the content provided in your interview may be used for the following:

- Academic or policy papers
- News articles
- Academic profile online
- Spoken presentations for conferences or showcases.
- Feedback events
- Archive of the project noted above and other projects in the future using this data.

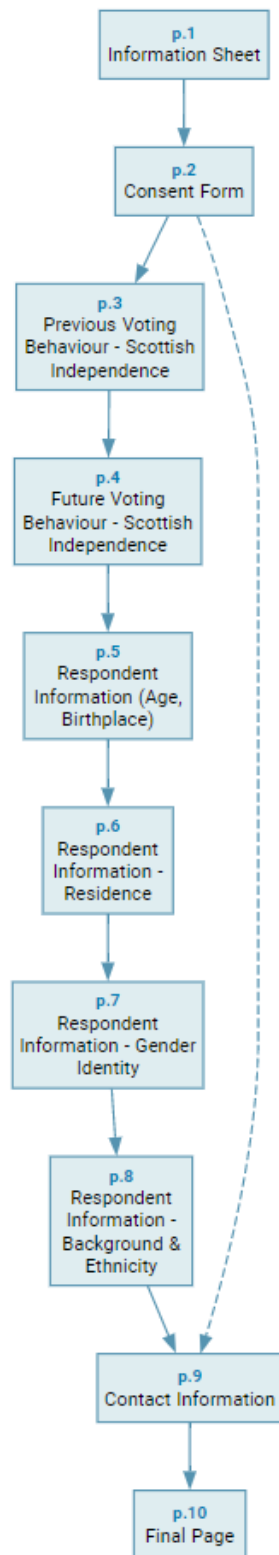
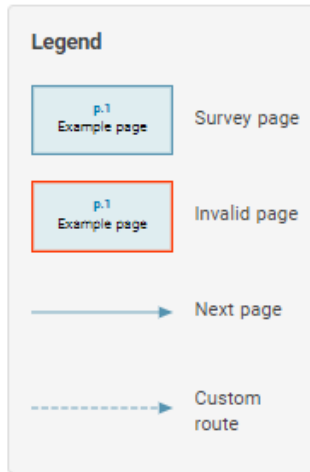
By signing this form, I agree to the following.

- 1) I have read the information sheet provided.
- 2) I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation unless otherwise stated by Research Investigator
- 3) I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview, and I may make edits that I feel are necessary in order to ensure the clarity, accuracy, and anonymity of my responses.
- 4) The transcribed interview or extracts from this interview may be used as described above.
- 5) I am voluntarily taking part in this project by Emilia Belknap. I understand explicitly that I do not have to take part and that I can stop the interview at any time.
- 6) I have been able to ask questions that I might have, and I am aware that I am free to contact Emilia Belknap with any questions I may have in the future regarding my participation with this project.
- 7) To receive a short briefing at the end of the study to show the findings of this research if I wish to request it.

X: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Page 2 of 2

Appendix C: Scottish Voting Behaviour Survey Skeleton Map



## Appendix D: Focus Group and Interview Schedules

### **D.1 Focus Group Interview Schedule**

**Introduction:** Welcome to the focus group and thank you for being here. Each of you has previously filled out the Scottish Voting Behaviour survey that was distributed at

the end of last year and earlier this year. Thank you again, for your responses and for agreeing to further assist me with my research despite what is happening in the world today.

As stated in the Information Sheet and Consent Form of this project, this project is a Level 1 in Ethical Risk assessment which means there is little to no foreseeable risk to you the participants. However, your participation is voluntary which means you can leave the mini focus group video chat or the research in its entirety at any time.

This mini focus group discussion aims to gain your perspective and experiences with Scottish independence. Focus groups are different from interviews in the sense that you are all able to discuss amongst each other opposed to discussing your views with only me. Because this focus group is smaller, it allows for each of you to have time to share your ideas, concerns, and experiences. *No* one needs to be overlooked or miss their opportunity to speak. There are no 'right answers' or 'wrong answers' as this project aims to understand your lived experiences and perspectives.

Do you have any questions about the mini focus group process? *(Yes.../No)*

I do need to gain your written consent which you should all have sent to me and your oral consent. As previously stated in the emails I have exchanged with each of you, I will be recording the focus group which will help me for my data analysis.

**Do I have your oral consent to participate in this project?** *(Yes/No)* If you are unsure feel free to leave this chat now. I will ask for a recorded oral consent again once I start the recording. Again, this is for ethical purposes and I apologise for any repetitiveness!

Okay, I will start recording.

Are all aware that I have started recording and give consent again? *(Yes/No)*

Great, thanks again! Let's get started. You have all been chosen to be a part of this mini focus group because you took the Scottish Voting Behaviour survey and all of you (were supportive, unsupportive, undecided) about Scottish independence. This is the main topic we are discussing today.

You have each responded that if there was another Scottish independence you would be: supportive/unsupportive/undecided. I am going to ask questions today to get us started and to help me understand your perspective.

Main Questions:

1. All of you have responded that you would be *(supportive/unsupportive/undecided)* if there was another Scottish independence referendum in the future.

- a. Tell us some of the main reasons why you are (supportive/unsupportive/undecided) of Scottish independence
2. Was there a specific moment or event that solidified your choice to be (supportive/against) Scottish independence?
  - a. Undecided: What, do you think, could help bring you closer to deciding on how you would vote for Scottish independence?
3. What would it take to change your perspective on Scottish independence?
4. Reflecting on what we spoke about today  
What is the strongest influence behind your (*support, being against, undecided*) of another Scottish independence referendum?
5. Have we missed anything today that you feel is important to your experience and perspective on Scottish independence?

## D.2 Individual Interview Schedule

### Semi-Structured Phone Interview Schedule & Questions

Hi \_\_\_\_\_, how are you?

My name is Emilia Belknap and I am the lead researcher behind the Scottish Voting Behaviour survey that you took a few months ago. **It's nice to finally meet you.**

*(Pause)*

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me and share your thoughts about Scottish independence with me. **There are a few things I need to go over before we start for ethical reasons** and before I start recording! Is that okay?

*(Pause)*

**Have you been able to hear me alright thus far?**

*(Fix any issues with phone difficulties and make sure recording device and back up is prepared)*

As stated in the Information Sheet and Consent Form that I sent you, **this project is a Level 1 in Ethical Risk assessment which means there is little to no foreseeable risk to you as the participant.** However, something that should be noted is that **your participation is voluntary.** This means you can leave the phone interview at any time or leave the project as a whole at any time.

This phone interview is **semi-structured which means** I have a few questions prepared to ask you to help me with my research yet there isn't a strict guide we need to follow. This means that there are no 'right' answers or 'wrong' answers as this project aims to understand your lived experiences.

**Do you have any questions about the phone interview process?**

*(Pause)*

Thank you for filling out the consent form and giving me your written consent. **I need to gain your oral consent as well.**

**So I am going to start recording and get that while the recording is on.** Is that okay?

*(Pause)*

**Okay I have started recording. Are you aware that the recording is on?**

*(Pause)*

**Do I have your oral consent to participate in this recorded phone interview?**

*(Pause)*

**Great! Let's get started:**

## Questions

I want to understand what causes or influences you the most to:

**Yes – Be Supportive of Scottish Independence**

**No – Be Supportive of the Union and Scotland staying in the UK**

**Undecided – To Be Undecided about Scottish Independence**

**Switchers No 2 Yes – Today, I want to understand what caused you to change your attitude on Scottish Independence from being Unsupportive of Independence to now being Supportive. Here is what you said in the survey:**

- **What are the main reasons behind:**
  - **Your Support of Scottish Independence and another referendum?**
  - **Your Support of the Union and thus being Unsupportive of Scottish independence?**
  - **The uncertainty you have towards Scottish independence?**
  - **Your switch from being unsupportive of Scottish independence to now being supportive?**
  
- **Does anything about your background you think could influence how you feel about Scottish Independence?**
  
- **Was there a specific moment or event that solidified your choice to:**
  - **Be supportive of Scottish independence?**
  - **Be opposed to Scottish independence and support the Union between Scotland and the UK?**

**Switchers: Was your change in support for independence caused by a specific moment or event or was it more gradual?**

**Undecided: What do you think could help bring you closer to making a decision on how you would vote for Scottish independence?**

- **Is there a party you currently align with the most?**
  - **Is that the party you typically vote for?**
  - (Potential questions about voting history)
  
- **What are some political issues that are important to you?**
  
- **Why do you think people would disagree with you?**
  - Why do you think someone be unsupportive of Scottish independence?**
  - Why do you think some people would be unsupportive of the Union and supportive of Scottish independence?**
  - Why do you think some people are more certain about their feelings of Scottish independence?**
  - Why do you think you felt the way you did about Scottish Independence back then in 2014? (If not answered already).**
  
- **Has Brexit influenced your feelings towards:**

- Scottish independence? (**Yes/Undecided**)
  - **The Union?**
- **At the time of the Independence Referendum of 2014, where were you and how involved in the referendum or any campaigns were you?**

**Switcher: What was it like going into the polling booth? Did you have reservations? Do you have regrets about the way that you voted?**

**Would you consider yourself as a risk-averse person?**

- **Do you remember the Better Together Commercial aired in 2014 known as 'The Woman who made up her mind?' Wherein which the woman says that Independence is a big gamble?**
  - **What did you think about that commercial?**
- **What would it take to change your perspective on Scottish independence?**  
**Undecided: Do you feel pulled towards one side right now? Or do you fall still very much in the middle of the two debates?**  
**If there was another independence referendum tomorrow would you vote?**

**Switcher: Do you think you'd change your attitudes towards Scottish independence again?**

**Wrapping Up:**

- Reflecting again on what we spoke about today, **what is the strongest influence behind your (support of, opposition of, indecision towards, Your change in attitude towards) another referendum, or independence per se?**
- **Have we missed anything today** that you feel is important to your experience and perspectives on Scottish Independence? Was there anything you felt you were going to **discuss today but have not yet had the chance to?**

I'm keeping an eye on the time here and I am aware we are getting to our time mark. If it's okay with you **I am going to turn the recording off?**

Great, I want **to thank you** so much for your time and sharing your perspectives with me. I think I have gotten a good hold on understanding what influences your vote the most.

**I will be in touch with a follow up and a thank you regarding our phone interview.** If you have any suggestions, comments, or criticisms you can always contact me through email.

### **D.3 Elite Background Interview Schedule (Better Together Example)**

#### **QUESTIONS**

**What I want to today is to gain insight into how those from the (No or Better Together) side of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum viewed the reported gender gap between men and women in support for Scottish independence where in which women were found to be less supportive than men of Scottish independence.**

- Why don't we start with you telling me a little bit about your background and how and when you got involved in the Better Together campaign?
- What responsibilities did you have personally to further the agenda of the campaign for Scotland staying in the UK?
- Why was this campaign important to you in 2014?  
How, if any, have your feelings changed about that campaign now?
- Can you describe how you felt in the lead up to the 2014 referendum?
- At the time of getting involved in this (campaign, organisation, etc.) had you heard about a sex gap between men and women?
  - Where had you heard it from?
  - When did you first hear about it?
  - Did it surprise you? Why or Why not?
- Would you say other around you in your political networks knew about the sex gap? Why or why not?
- Was the sex gap something that was spoken about often in your political networks or would you say it was a smaller feature?
  - Why do you think this was?
- Was targeting women voters something that the campaign was interested in?
  - Why or why not?
  - How did the people from the campaign you were associated with try to access women voters?
  - Was there any specific voting bloc of women voters your team was trying to access? For example, older women over 60? White women or BAME women?
    - Why or why not?
  - **Were there any specific ways your campaign looked to target women voters?**
    - **What about (this idea/strategy/policy) did your team think would be attractive to women voters in Scotland?**
    - **Do you think (this idea/strategy/policy) was successful?**
      - **Why or why not?**
    - **Were there any other strategies your team used to attract certain women to your campaign?**
- Was targeting men voters something that the campaign was interested in?
  - Why or why not?
  - How did your team try to access men voters?
  - Was there any specific voting bloc of men your team were trying to access? For example, younger men or university-educated men?
    - Why or why not?

- **Were there any specific ways your campaign looked to target men voters?**
  - **What about (this idea/strategy/policy) did your team think would be attractive to men voters in Scotland?**
  - **Do you think (this idea/strategy/policy) was successful?**
    - **Why or why not?**
  - **Were there any other strategies your team used to attract certain men to your campaign?**
- How would your campaign measure their success with a certain voting bloc of men and women in the lead up to the 2014 referendum?
- Where were you when the results to the independence referendum were revealed? How did you feel?
- Looking back now, why do you think more men were supportive of Scottish independence than women?
- What do you think your campaign could have done differently if any?

#### **WRAPPING UP**

Do you think that the sex gap still exists? (To what extent? Why or Why not?)

Have we missed anything today that you feel is important to your experience and perspectives on Scottish Independence?

Was there anything you felt you were going to discuss today but have not yet had the chance to?

# Appendix E: Voting Behaviour History Results from Online Survey (n=1214)



Online surveys

## Scottish Voting Behaviour Survey

Showing 1,215 of 1,215 responses

With **1 response excluded**

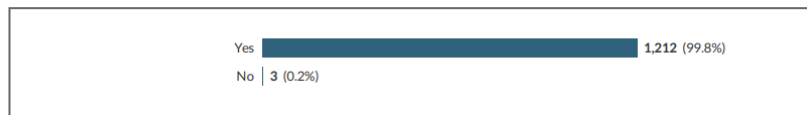
Showing **all** questions

Response rate: 233%

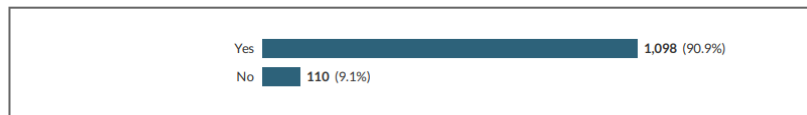
Responses merged with the following survey:

- [Scottish Voting Behaviour Survey vs. 2](#)

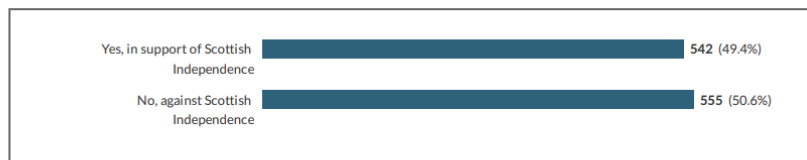
**1** Do you consent to all of the above and that you are willing to take part in this survey intended for research?



**2** Did you vote in the Scottish Independence Referendum of 2014?



**2.a** As you answered 'Yes,' How did you vote in the Scottish Independence Referendum of 2014?



**2.a.i** As you answered that you voted 'No, against Scottish Independence,' Why did you vote against Scottish Independence?

Showing first 5 of 530 responses	
Felt the time was not right	490722-490713-52432093
I had concerns about the economic viability of independence. I also thought that Scotland had sufficient control over the issues that matter to me - health, education, transport and more.	490722-490713-52780460
There were so many important questions without answers. It felt like more time was needed	490722-490713-52781221
I gave in to fear-mongering from the press and didn't go with my heart at all. I was also going with my family in England and all sorts of different factors.	490722-490713-52780333
Economic risk	490722-490713-52782993

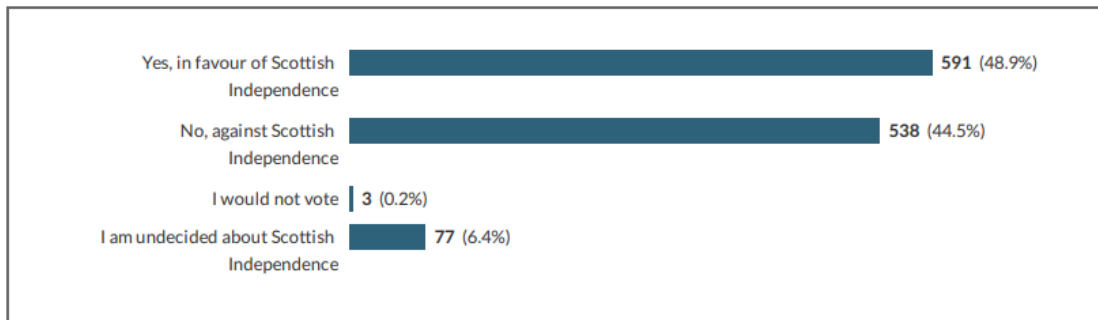
As you answered that you voted 'Yes, in support of Scottish Independence,' Why did you vote in support of Scottish Independence?

Showing first 5 of 510 responses	
So we can have responsibility of our own affairs and not be controlled by Westminster	490722-490713-52780234
I feel Scotland will benefit better from independence from the UK government and our voices will be heard more	490722-490713-52780943
Long held belief that Scotland should be an independent country. Austerity and the right wing politics of Westminster was also a contributory factor.	490722-490713-52780608
I believed Scotland and the rest of the UK have opposing views on a lot of political policies, and that Scottish people would benefit in having their voice heard more.	490722-490713-52780890
UK politics doesn't represent the values and beliefs of the Scottish people. Essentially Scotland's voice is not heard - Brexit is case in point.	490722-490713-52781276

As you answered 'No,' Why didn't you vote in the Scottish Independence Referendum in 2014?

Showing first 5 of 106 responses	
Was under the voting age	490722-490713-52780243
I wasn't living here yet	490722-490713-52780316
Didn't live here	490722-490713-52783641
I worked in London at the time and couldn't vote.	490722-490713-52784032
Didn't live in Scotland	490722-490713-52785496

**3** If there was another Scottish Independence referendum, how would you vote?



**3.a** Because you answered that you would vote 'Yes,' why are you in favour of Scottish Independence?

Showing first 5 of 552 responses	
Being part of the UK is not in the best interests of Scotland	490722-490713-52432093
For the same reasons as before also I dont want to leave European union as a separate country we can reapply to enter the EU	490722-490713-52780234
Recent events make my feelings much stronger and I feel the only way for Scotland to prosper will be independence.	490722-490713-52780943
I would vote for Scottish independence regardless of the political climate. However, Brexit and the shift to the far right are further reasons to vote.	490722-490713-52780608
Same reasons. And I don't want to leave the EU.	490722-490713-52780890

**3.b** Because you answered that you would vote 'No,' why are you against Scottish Independence?

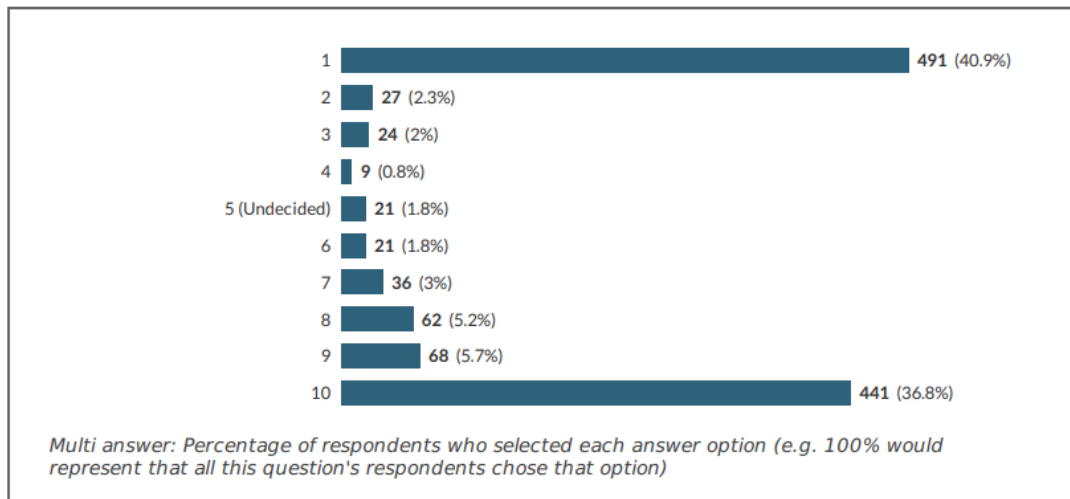
Showing first 5 of 503 responses	
I have the same economic concerns I had in 2014.  In addition, the aftermath of the Brexit negotiations has made clear just how difficult "divorce" negotiations can be.  I also think that Scottish independence would suffer from the same division as Brexit - not all "Yes votes" would be voting for the same concept of independence and this would lead to confusion.	490722-490713-52780460
Again I don't think it's the best option.	490722-490713-52785053
Same reasons as before	490722-490713-52786124
Scotland will struggle on its own.	490722-490713-52792485
Think we will be stronger as part of UK.	490722-490713-52796229

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3.c On a scale of 1-10, how supportive of Scottish Independence are you?

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3.c.1 Not Supportive At All vs Very Supportive

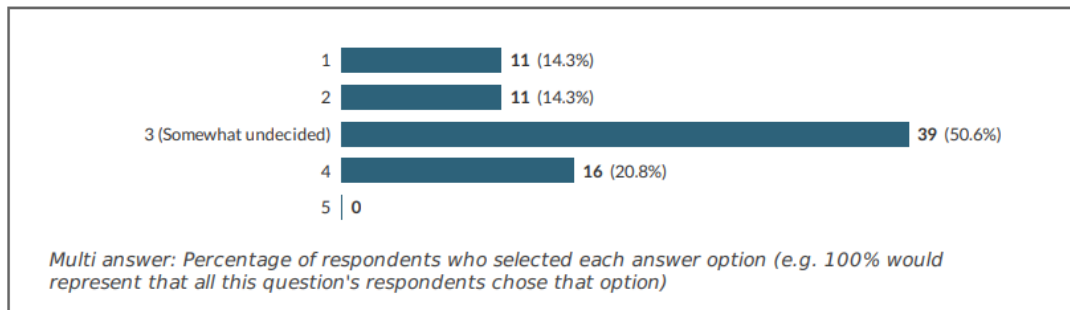


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3.d How undecided about Scottish Independence are you?

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3.d.1 Very undecided vs Close to making a decision on either Yes or No



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3.e Because you answered you were 'undecided' about Scottish Independence, why are you undecided?

Showing first 5 of 70 responses	
Unconvinced by economic argument and slightly fearful of logistics of separation when you consider how difficult how tricky Brexit has been.	490722-490713-52781276
Lack of clarity over financial position and Scotland's large debt	490722-490713-52782993
I don't feel I have enough credible information about the impact of it on Scotland	490722-490713-52783641
I have never had tunnel vision about independence: in 2014 I felt that my options as a left-wing supporter were limited in Britain. While I think Labour's politics are now closer to my own, I feel that Corbyn's ineffectual leadership has been exposed and the Conservatives have once again seized control of the narrative. This would point to me supporting 'yes' again, however I feel that both in 2014 and now it has been more an expression of my dissatisfaction with Britain as it exists rather than a strong belief that Scotland needs to be an independent country.	490722-490713-52782895
My decision is contingent on what happens with Brexit and current election in the UK. I don't really see Scottish independence as a "good" in itself, but if it provides a means of remaining within the EU or what appears to be the prevailing direction of politics in the rest of the UK, I might be inclined to support Scottish independence, but even that is very much in the balance.	490722-490713-52784032

3.f Because you answered 'you would not vote', why would you not vote?

Showing all 3 responses	
No longer live in Scotland so won't get a vote	490722-490713-52805029
Don't think my input is important to the total outcome	490722-490713-53408740
Personal reasons related to my beliefs.	596410-596401-59494570

## Appendix F: Participant Tables for Qualitative Methods

TABLE F.1: VOTER DATA OVERALL NUMBERS

<b>Data/Participants</b>	<b>Total</b>
Voter Focus Group Participants	37
Voter Interview Participants	78
Voter Interview Questionnaire Responses	1
<b>Voter Participants Overall</b>	<b>116</b>

TABLE F.2: VOTER DATA GENDER IDENTITY OVERALL

Women Participants	56
Men Participants	59
Non-binary Participants	1
<b>Total Participants</b>	<b>116</b>

TABLE F.3: YES PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN (N=49)

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Focus Group Participants</b>	<b>Interview Participants</b>	<b>Total</b>
Men	12	13	25
Women	21	2	23
Non-Binary	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>49</b>

TABLE F.4: NO PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN (N=49)

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Focus Group Participants</b>	<b>Interview Participants</b>	<b>Total</b>
Men	0	27	27
Women	4	18	22
Non-Binary	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>49</b>

TABLE F.5: UNDECIDED PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN (N=18)

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Participant Total</b>	<b>IndyRef14 Vote</b>	<b>Total</b>
Men	7	Voted, Voted <i>Yes</i>	2
		Voted, Voted <i>No</i>	4
		Did Not Vote	0
		Could Not Vote	1
Women	11	Voted, Voted <i>Yes</i>	2
		Voted, Voted <i>No</i>	6
		Did Not Vote	2

		Could Not Vote	1
Total	<b>18</b>		<b>18</b>

TABLE F.6: SWITCHER PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN (N=7)

<b>Yes to No, Gender</b>	Participants	<b>No to Yes, Gender</b>	Participants
Y2N Women	1	N2Y Women	2
Y2N Non-binary	0	N2Y Non-Binary Person	1
Y2N Men	1	N2Y Men	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>5</b>

TABLE F.7: CRITICAL ACTOR PARTICIPANT OVERALL BREAKDOWN (N=23)

<b>Campaign</b>	<b>Total Participants</b>
Better Together	13
Yes Scotland	9
Neutral Actor	1

TABLE F.8: CRITICAL ACTOR PARTICIPANT GENDER BREAKDOWN (N=23)

<b>Campaign</b>	<b>Total Participants</b>
Better Together	13
BT Woman	7
BT Man	6
Yes Scotland	9
YS Woman	3
YS Man	6
Neutral Actor	1
Neutral Woman	1