The I-Positions Between Us: Exploring how Politically Polarised Citizens Sustain Dialogue Discussing the UK’s Global Relationships

Thesis

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Link(s) to article on publisher’s website:

http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.00014887

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Word Count: 98,416

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

January 2022
Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own composition, and that no materials contained within have been previously submitted for any other degree or award. This entire document has been composed by the author, except in cases where due acknowledgment has been stipulated in the text.

………………………………..

Anthony English
Acknowledgments

Firstly, I would like to offer my admiration and gratitude to both Rachael Webb and Glynnis Rumley for funding this research. I say admiration as the aspiration to fund a project which aims to explore how the public can sustain dialogue in these politically polarising times is a noble one.

A special acknowledgment must go to my lead supervisor, Dr. Kesi Mahendran whose subject knowledge, encouragement and wise counsel have enriched my learning experiences immeasurably (the best ‘guide from the side’ I could have asked for).

Furthermore, I would also like to offer special thanks to my other supervisors, Professor Nick Hopkins, Dr. Brigitte Weiffen, and Dr. Agnes Czajka, for both encouraging and challenging me in equal measures.

I would also like to thank both my third-party mentor Dr. Lara Frumkin, and fellow Public Dialogue Psychology Collaboratory researcher Sue Nieland for their support and interest in the research as it unfolded.

My sincere thanks also go out to all of the interviewees who donated their time and dialogical positions! Not least as study two’s fieldwork was conducted in the challenging circumstances of a global pandemic. Those fascinating discussions will remain with me for a long time.

I am incredibly grateful to my family, close friends and much missed Grandmother who all offered support, encouragement and humour during times when it seemed the ‘finish line’ would be eternally elusive.

Finally, my love and gratitude to Judith, who makes the world a better place.
Abstract

The aftermath of the 2016 UK-EU referendum has created a heightened polarisation between the public on the UK’s future global relations. This has manifest in increasingly partisan political alignments via public discourse and hostile social media interactions. Such polarisation presents psychologists with a challenge; namely, to understand how a polarised public can engage with one another to sustain dialogue. The proposal here is that exploring polarised dialogue with a dialogical approach offers the ontological assumptions relevant to understand an individual’s multifaceted capacities. This thesis introduces the Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model and proposes to understand polarised discourse between interlocuters by exploring the following: (1) Internalised (shared social representations), (2) Interactive (I-, We- & They- dialogical positions), and (3) Dimensional (temporal/spatial chronotopes which locate the discourse). To explore this, a two-study process was developed to answer the following questions: (1) Do either (A) Migration-mobility or (B) Place-person relationships, influence how individuals position the UK and its global relations? (2) Are there I-positions which can sustain dialogue between interlocuters during polarising discussions on the UK’s global relations? The first study (N = 28) explored migration-mobility experiences and place-person relationships among coastal (Seaburn) and urban (Dundee) residents. Analysis found that, in contrast with the generationally non-mobile, those with higher migration-mobility reject ‘glorious past’ representations during discussions on the UK’s historical global relations. Furthermore, a high place-person relationship among coastal residents influenced how they positioned the UK’s post-Brexit relations as a threat to their community. To answer the second research question, study two paired individuals together (N = 10) on both shared and conflicting core dialogical positions with different levels of political polarisation (high or low). This quasi-experimental study brought the pairs into dialogue with one another to re-adopt previously shared core positions before a researcher-led rupture exposed them to polarising differences. In the subsequent polarising discourse, the pairs sustained dialogue in three different ways: (1) Independently-sustained dialogue, (2) Sustained dialogue, or (3) Supported sustained dialogue. For the pairs who independently-sustained dialogue, three common features were present: (1) Shared re-adopted core positions, (2) Shared-affective responses to the polarising materials, and (3) Adoption of ‘distancing’ I-positions during the polarising discourse itself. These findings offer a substantive first step in understanding the factors influencing how dialogue is sustained between polarised individuals on vexed political questions.
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Introduction

This thesis explores how polarised citizens sustain dialogue during vexed political questions on the UK’s global relations. Specifically, polarising discourse on the issue of the 2016 UK-EU referendum and its aftermath on the current political climate. This thesis is dialogical in its ontological assumptions regarding the dynamic, multi-positional capacity of the public to engage in political discourse. This introduction offers a brief overview of this thesis’s key theoretical occupations and outlines the content of each chapter. At this early stage, it is important to consider the actual value in exploring how polarised individuals could sustain dialogue. After all, a certain level of polarisation between individuals and/or groups is an essential part of a healthy democracy. Therefore, the focus here is on how individuals could sustain dialogue in order to engage in ‘reasonable disagreement’. Ideally, this creates a discursive context in which both parties feel they have been received and respected by the other. Thus, potentially, offering steps towards deconstructing bad-faith assumptions for those with different political opinions (Vihalemann and Juzefovičs, 2020).

At the level of the individual, an ability to sustain dialogue allows a person the experience of engaging in vexed discourse without irreconcilably damaging a relationship (be it a family member, a friend, or a colleague). Considered in a more ambitious context, there are future challenges facing the international community (e.g.: climate crisis) which will involve collaborations that are pluralistic in their ideological imperatives. In such circumstances, it seems that the ability to sustain dialogue on challenging issues will be an essential factor in finding collaborative solutions. To be clear, this thesis’s focus on sustaining dialogue does not inherently involve exploring how individuals could seek consensus. Moscovici and Doise (1994) define consensus during discursive exchanges as occurring when all interlocuters make an active internal choice (as opposed to conforming to external pressures to ‘agree’ with one another based on societal norms). This thesis proposes that an absolute consensus on the UK’s future global relations is unrealistic given the politically polarising influence of the 2016 UK-EU referendum (as discussed in Chapter One, section 1.2). Indeed, Innes (2004) argues that consensus building is only appropriate in very specific circumstances. Those circumstances being ones of uncertainty in which all stakeholders have incentives to find consensus, as it will be mutually beneficial.
Whilst this is certainly the case with the UK’s future global relations, this is only relevant if all stakeholders perceive both of these factors as salient to their circumstances (Muller, 2017). In such a political climate, focusing on how individuals could sustain dialogue to depolarise those engaged in this vexed political question is a more realistic ambition. Furthermore, it could be the case that consensus is not an entirely desirable outcome. Friberg-Fernros and Schaffer (2014) propose that there is a paradox at the heart of approaches which attempt to achieve consensus. That paradox being that any successful consensus intervention impedes the conditions for future rational public discourse as disagreement is vital for rigorous, forward-thinking political debate. Therefore, negatively impacting on the democratic values sought to be preserved by those striving for consensus in the first instance. This thesis aims to avoid such limitations by focusing on how the public can engage in ‘reasonable disagreement’ on vexed political questions.

The Dialogical Approach – Exploring how the Public could Sustain Dialogue

The issue of how to depolarise political actors when discussing vexed issues has long been a focus of social and political psychology (Iyengar and Westwood, 2015). This thesis proposes that adopting a dialogical approach could offer a means of understanding how interlocuters could sustain dialogue by adopting shared dialogical positions. The dialogical approach is the ontological commitment that citizens are multifaceted, dynamic, and historically situated. This thesis supports the dialogical assumption that interlocuters engage dynamically during discursive engagements and offers an alternative to the idea of citizens as static or binary (Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021a; Marková, 2017a). Indeed, dialogicality conceives citizens’ political identities as multifaceted and dependent on elements beyond the influence of a singular out-group (Akkermann and Meijer, 2011). This is certainly not to say identity is irrelevant to how individuals define themselves. Rather, the argument here is that focusing exclusively on identity is somewhat limiting given the myriad of factors influencing political engagement. It seems an individual’s political imperatives are likely a complex interplay of differing ideologies, moral commitments and other context-relevant factors (Graham, Haidt, and Nosek, 2009; Jost, 2017).

This thesis focuses on dialogical positions and the presumption individuals possess a multiplicity of internal voices which emerge in differing discursive contexts (Ellis and Stam, 2015; Richardson, Rogers, and McCorroll, 1998). This rejects the Cartesian model’s assumptions of a fixed,
ahistorical self, and, instead, focuses on contextual and fluid personal identity (Bourke, Abreu, and Rathbone, 2018). In practice, this means understanding an individual via their adopted I-, We- & They- positions within the context of the discursive interaction. An I-position is a ‘voiced position’ in which perspectives are constructed, be it on the positions’ own terms or in responding to an external context (Vee, Dobber, and Oers, 2018). The We- & They- positions show who a person aligns with or distances themselves from; thus, offering insight into an individual’s self-other relations with the public (Mahendran, 2018). An I-position has an active position (positioning of the self), a passive position (positioning by others during discourse), or an answering position (confirming or denying another’s positioning) (Hermans, 2015). This supposes that an individual comprises of multiple versions that result in a complex, multi-narrative structured self. Such a focus on dialogical positions offers a wider remit in which to explore the inherent complexities of political discourse.

This is especially salient for considering the individual’s internal political life, as it likely consists of contrasting internal voices creating complex (even contradictory) political opinions (O’Dwyer, 2020). Assigning an individual a specific political identity can be highly relevant in certain contexts (e.g., social conservative, radical feminist etc.). However, the limitation here is that is does not offer a context for understanding the dynamic capacity of individuals during political discourse. Indeed, categorising individuals via binary group-identities fails to acknowledge the ‘bit that doesn’t fit’. That is to say, acknowledge an individual’s conflicting internal political views and how these discrepancies impact on vexed discursive engagements. A justifiable criticism of previous dialogical research is the emphasis on ‘academy-facing’ theory-based concerns. These, too often, eschew real-world interactions for examples using self-imagined or literary characters (Hermans, 2001; Raggatt, 2007). As Holleman, Hooge, Kemner, and Hessels (2020) note, the term ‘real world’ is often ill-defined within the context of psychology. To be clear, this thesis defines a ‘real-world’ context as engaging in dialogue with individuals in their everyday settings on topics relevant to their lives. The imperative with this thesis is to explore if the following dialogical model offers insight into polarised discourse in such real-world contexts.

**Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model**

The Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model (DSTM) was developed from the ontological assumptions of specific dialogical theories; namely, social representations, dialogical positions,
and chronotopes. This theoretical foundation also functions as the dialogical three-step analysis to explore the data from both studies (as detailed in Chapter Five, section 5.2). DSTM proposes a dialogical means of exploring the discursive dynamic between politically polarised individuals. As proposed earlier, the focus here is on how individuals could sustain dialogue rather than achieve consensus, as the former is a more attainable goal. Whilst discussed extensively in Chapter Three (section 3.7), the following offers a brief overview of the model and its purpose. Important to note this is not a predictive model, but a preliminary step in exploring the discursive dynamic between polarised individuals in real-world contexts. The model was devised during the process of developing the fieldwork materials as a means of exploring the interviewees’ discursive interactions. The aim with the fieldwork was to explore these ideas in real-world context so that they may become applied knowledge. As originally outlined in English and Mahendran (2021) this model consists of three distinctive components for exploring both research questions. These are as follows: (1) Internalised (political worldviews), (2) Interactive (dialogical positioning), and (3) Dimensional (temporal/spatial chronotopes). These three components also align with the dialogical three-step analysis used to analyse the interview transcripts for both study one and two.

**Internalised: The individual as a political actor with worldviews**

The framework guiding the model’s first component is that individuals are political actors with the capacity to engage both with one another and the democratic process. That is to say, they have the capacity to speak for or against an issue with others in mind (Dewey, 1954; Mahendran, 2018). From this assumption, the model’s initial step focuses on how these views manifest via social representations during political discourse. Knowing this affords an understanding of: (1) How individuals orientate themselves to concepts in their social world, and (2) How interlocuters exchange and communicate concepts (Höijer, 2011). The latter being their ‘common-sense knowledge’ exchanges (Galli and Fasanelli, 2020) which are implicitly taken for granted as conceptual ‘truths’ (Marková, Linell, Grossen, and Orvig, 2007). Understanding both their hegemonic representations (those shared by most group/nation members), and polemic representations (those symbolising societal controversies between-group conflicts) offers insight into political discourse between interlocuters. For example, hegemonic representations show the shared expectations of the political/social world regarding both self-other and self-world relations (O’Dwyer, 2020). The polemic representations allow an understanding of when one person’s common-sense knowledge is not aligning with another’s social representations (Höijer, 2011).
Together, both offer an insight into the representational basis on which individuals are engaging with one another and the potential impact on discursive exchanges.

Interactive: Worldviews to relational positions

This second component focuses on dialogical positioning as this is essential for understanding how social representations manifest during discursive engagements (Andrews, Kinnvall, and Monroe, 2015). Gillespie and Martin’s (2014) Position Exchange Theory (PET) states that social positions are interdependent on another position and are moved between in relation to context. This concept of interdependent positions is especially relevant to exploring polarised political discussions. For vexed interactions are inherently interdependent in that the interlocuters offer each other an opposing force. In such a context, the focus here is on what shared I- or We- & They- positions are adopted by interlocuters during these interactions. To this end, Kinnvall and Lindên (2010) found individuals have the capacity to adopt different dialogical positions in relation to one another. Therefore, it could be important to understand what shared social positions are adopted during discourse on vexed political issues. Principally, as this offers a move towards a novel explanatory model for understanding how polarised political actors could sustain dialogue.

Dimensional: The chronotopic boundaries in polarising dialogue

The third component focuses on exploring the interlocuters chronotopic understanding of where in time (past/present/future) and space (national/local/ group boundaries etc.) they are engaging with a vexed political issue. This could be insightful as individuals evoke chronotopic representations when telling personal narratives in social contexts (Zittoun, 2008; Zittoun et al. 2013). This is also found to be relevant in larger political narratives when politicians are addressing a nation. For example, how right-wing populists use hegemonic chronotopic meaning-making to evoke a ‘golden past/stalled present/great future’ narrative for the public (Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021b). DSTM’s assumption is that understanding context-relevant past/present/future boundaries could be valuable when studying political dialogue. Principally, as understanding chronotopic thinking offers insights into how and where the interlocuters are ‘locating’ the vexed political question. Research (Blanton, 2011; Davidson, 2007; Woolard, 2012) indicates that evoking differing spatial and/or temporal connections possess a representational relevance for highly motivated political actors. Therefore, knowing the interlocuters’ chronotopic meaning-making on a vexed political issue offers a third avenue for understanding how they are engaging
with one another. To move from these theoretical assumptions to an applied knowledge, the next step is to explore DSTM’s principles in a relevant real-world context.

The Polarising Impact of the 2016 UK-EU Referendum

This thesis proposes that the 2016 UK-EU referendum is a highly salient case study for exploring how citizens sustain dialogue on a vexed political issue. The argument here is that the 2016 UK-EU referendum produced two polarising factors which directly increased political divisions between the public. The first factor is three polarising narratives which emerged directly from the campaign: (1) Distrust of experts, (2) Leave voters as ignorant, and (3) Remain-voters as saboteurs. As discussed in the opening chapter (section 1.3.1), such narratives created bad faith assumptions for anyone on the opposing side of the debate. Indeed, in some instances, creating stark remain-leave divisions among family members and friends (Davies and Carter, 2019; Woodcock, 2019). The second polarising factor is the social media context in which dialogue on these vexed issues was conducted in the public sphere.

In this regard, both Twitter and Facebook exacerbated polarising discourse via social robot activity which increased hostility between groups (Ferrara, Varol, Davis, Menczer, and Flammini, 2016). These platforms also created echo chambers with biased information resources (Del Vicario, Zollo, and Caldarelli, 2017), and heightened the original conflict with the inclusion of other culture war issues (Brändle, Galpin, and Trenz, 2021). The role of both traditional and social media exacerbated these divisions with partisan portrayals of both sets of voters. This elevation of divisive stereotypes has exasperated ill-feeling towards ‘the other’ and polluted the political climate with negative assumptions (Andreouli, Greenland, and Figgou, 2019). These negative preconceptions seem to be eroding the potential for discursive political engagement as the other side are assumed to be bad faith actors. This challenges social/political psychologists to consider the factors restricting the public from sustaining dialogue on the UK’s future global relations. In assuming the public is more polarised on this issue, the initial focus was to explore the factors influencing how citizens position the UK’s global relations.

After exploring the literature, this thesis considers both an individual’s migration-mobility experiences and their place-person relationship to be important influences on how they position the UK’s global relations. As detailed extensively in Chapter Three (section 3.2), research on the potential influence of migration-mobility experiences is an underexplored area. Especially given
that research (Lee, Morris, and Kemeny, 2017) found mobility (or the lack thereof) an influence on support for leaving the EU. This thesis argues that the dialogical focus of the Migration-Mobility Continuum offers insight beyond binary migrant/non-migrant concepts (Mahendran, 2018; Mahendran, Magnusson, Howarth, and Scuzzarello, 2019). Furthermore, this thesis argues that understanding UK citizens possess differing mobility narratives (e.g.: internal migrant, returnee migrants, etc.) acknowledges the myriad of diversity that exists among the UK public. Therefore, providing greater capacity for exploring if migration-mobility experiences influence how the public position the UK’s global relations.

Alongside migration-mobility, different place-person relationships could also be an influencing factor on how individuals position the UK’s global relations. Research (Brooks, 2019; Neal, Gawlewicz, Heley, and Dafydd Jones, 2021; Sensier and Devine, 2017) found distinctive Pro- and anti-EU sentiments in the context of specific geographical environments. However, previous Brexit-based research on geographical locations has primarily focused on the urban-rural dichotomy (Johnston, Manley, and Jones, 2016), with coastal regions remaining underexplored. Comparing population density mapping on EU voting behaviour (Green, 2017) shows distinctive patterns in support for leaving the EU between Brexit-supporting north-east coastline town residents and Pro-EU urban areas. The divisions between urban and coastal towns are underresearched, and, possibly, offer distinctive insights into how citizens locate the UK’s global relations in a post-Brexit context. As discussed in Chapter Three (section 3.3.2), exploring the interviewees’ place-person relationship will be done by combining place identity/attachment measures with a dialogical analysis. Therefore, offering specific insight into how much residents identify with their geographical environment and if this influences positioning of the UK’s global relations.

Exploring the Research Questions

To explore if migration-mobility experiences and place-person relationships influence how individuals’ position the UK’s global relations, this thesis consists of complementary fieldwork studies. The purpose of study one is to answer the first research question:

(1) Do either (A) Migration-mobility or (B) Place-person relationships, influence how individuals position the UK’s global relations?
This question also offers a context for pairing together participants for study two in order to answer the second research question:

(2) Are there I-positions which can sustain dialogue between interlocuters during polarising discussions on the UK’s global relations?

The following sections offer a brief overview of the complementary studies and the methods used to answer both research questions.

Study One
One to one interviews with twenty-eight residents from both coastal (Seaburn/Sunderland) and urban (Dundee) geographical environments were conducted between November 2019 and January 2020. The semi-structured interviews initially explored the interviewees’ political engagement, migration-mobility experiences, and place-person relationships. The latter was explored with a mixed-model concurrent nested design, which involved the dialogical analysis of interview questions supported by contextualising self-report measures for both place identity and attachment (Chapter Four, section 4.1.1). The interviewees were then exposed to the following bespoke stimulus materials: UK-EU referendum timeline footage, contrasting world map projections, and a jigsaw map. The purpose being to explore their experiences of Brexit and how they positioned the UK’s global relations. The interviews were then analysed with a three-step dialogical process developed from previous research by the Public Dialogue Psychology Collaboratory (Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021a; Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021b). Alongside understanding migration-mobility experiences and place-person relationships to answer the first research question, study one also created the foundation for pairing interviewees together to conduct the second study.

Study Two
Study two used a quasi-experimental design to pair participants together for discussions that were facilitated via online technology (due to COVID-19 restrictions) and occurred between September and October 2020. Based on the three-step dialogical analysis of study one, ten participants were paired together on two shared dialogical positions and a (potentially) polarising Brexit-related issue. The paired discussions were designed with three stages: (1) Shared Positions: Questions creating a context for the participants to re-adopt previous positions both had adopted in study one, (2) Polarising Moment: The interjection of polarising stimulus material (e.g.: UK-EU transition
period) during discourse, and (3) Post-Polarising discussion: Questions further exploring this potentially polarising moment between the two participants. To offer a comparative context, two of the five pairings were matched together without any known polarising issue between them regarding Brexit.

**Thesis Outline**

This introduction closes with an overview of the thesis by outlining the following eight chapters, which are divided into three parts. The opening chapter proposes that the UK is politically polarised on the issue of the UK’s future global relations. The chapter argues that 2016 UK-EU referendum is highly relevant as a case study in how the UK is now more politically polarised, both ideologically and affectively. A particular focus here is on three polarising narratives intended to delegitimise particular groups and the social media context in which public dialogue on these issues occurs. The chapter then considers and critiques relevant social psychology models (e.g.: shared-identity, perspective-taking etc.) for depolarising individuals in a political context. Chapter Two focuses on the ontological and epistemological assumptions in the dialogical approach developed for this thesis. Specifically, the basis for rejecting the post-positivist ontological commitment so prevalent in contemporary social psychology. The chapter also offers an alternative ontological commitment within the dialogical tradition and introduces three key theoretical approaches relevant to this research (e.g.: social representations, dialogical positions, and chronotopes).

The third chapter explores the rationale for the two research questions and offers a critique of the knowledge gaps in the current literature. For the first research question, the chapter considers the explanatory insight in exploring migration-mobility experiences and place-person relationships as potential influences on how the public position the UK’s global relations. The chapter then focuses on the second research question and presents the Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model as a means of understanding how individuals could sustain dialogue. Part two begins with Chapter Four’s discussion on the various methodological challenges inherent in exploring sustaining dialogue within a dialogical approach. This also involves critiquing the assumptions and potential parameters of the dialogical approach and considering these within the context of this research. The chapter then reviews the findings from this research’s pilot interviews and how the stimulus materials were developed as a result of this process. Finally, the chapter outlines the methods used
in study one and its dual purpose regarding the two research questions. Chapter Five presents an analysis of study one’s data to explore the extent to which both migration-mobility and place-personal relationships influence how citizens’ position the UK’s global relations. Thus, answering the first research question and offering a context for pairing together participants on shared and conflicting dialogical positions.

A detailed account of the methods and procedures for study two’s paired discussions opens Chapter Six. The chapter then offers a detailed account of the dialogical rationale which guided the process of pairing participants together. The focus being on the process of selecting certain I- or We- & They- positions and why they were considered to have the potential to be readopted in a different context. In part three, the focus turns to the analysis of study two and a final discussion on the implications of this research’s findings. To begin this, Chapter Seven offers an in-depth analysis of study two to explore and answer the second research question: Are there I-positions which can sustain dialogue between interlocuters during polarising discussions on the UK’s global relations? The chapter offers an extensive analysis of all five pairings, considers the novel findings from this study, and the wider implications for this thesis. Finally, Chapter Eight describes and contextualises these novel findings within the broader dialogical and political psychology literature. The chapter also discusses the parameters of the research and considers the results within this context. The focus then turns to considering both the theoretical and methodological implications of this approach on future research. In closing, the chapter offers some final thoughts on the factors which allowed interlocuters to sustain dialogue on polarising political issues.
Part One
Chapter One: Depolarising the Public to Sustain Dialogue - Considerations and Challenges

Introduction

Existing models within social and political psychology which examine polarisation have tended to focus on shared-social identity, perspective-taking, or narrative-framing. This chapter will reveal that such approaches are often inadequate for contexts in which heightened political polarisation is occurring. The proposal here it that the UK public are politically polarised on issues relating to the nation’s future global relations. The opening section begins by defining terms regarding polarisation and proposes that both affective and ideological polarisation are evident. This chapter (section 1.2) then proceeds to argue that the 2016 UK-EU referendum offers a relevant case-study for exploring how polarised citizens could sustain dialogue on vexed political issues. Principally, as the referendum produced two distinctive factors which have accelerated polarised political divisions between the public. As proposed in section 1.3.1, the first factor consists of three narratives from the UK-EU referendum which have, in different ways, polarised public discourse. These are: (1) Distrust in experts, (2) Leave voters as ignorant, and (3) Remain-voters as saboteurs. The second factor is the social media platforms (e.g.: Facebook and Twitter) which have facilitated a polarising of the public during discussions on the UK’s future global relations (section 1.3.2). Specifically, the influence of social robots and algorithms to exacerbate out-group hostility and generate misinformation to further polarise dialogue. Section 1.4, then considers what different social psychology models/theories offer for depolarising the public on vexed political issues before drawing final conclusions.

1.1. Defining Political Polarisation

The focus of this research is on exploring how polarised individuals could sustain dialogue on vexed political questions (e.g.: the UK’s future global relations). To this end, it is important to define what is meant by the term political polarisation in the context of this research. This thesis acknowledges that political conflict is an essential part of a functioning democracy. As Dahl (1967) correctly proposes, democracy is not the absence of conflict, but one which must not be consumed by a single divisive political issue. The term political polarisation is frequently used in psychology however, it is a somewhat broad label consisting of distinctive types in varying contents (Maher, Igou, Van Tilberg, 2018). Until recently, the dominant defining features of political polarisation
have been focused on ideological differences (Reiljan, 2020). Ideological Polarisation is generally defined as heightened partisan divisions over specific policy issues (Barber and McCarty, 2015). Research (Dreyer and Bauer, 2019) suggests that ideological polarisation between the voters increases political party extremism as they attempt to align themselves with the new political climate. Moreover, further real-world research (Harel, Maoz and Halperin, 2020) shows that understanding such ideological polarisation offers insight into these intragroup conflicts.

However, alongside ideology, Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes’ (2012) influential research shows that focusing on affective polarisation also offers insight on the dynamic interplay between polarised political groups. The fundamental conceptualisation of affective polarisation is located within Social Identity Theory’s focus on inter-group dynamics. This focus on group identity recognises an individual’s need to distinguish themselves from others (Sindic and Condor, 2014). The purpose here being to solidify political-based in-group norms with comparisons to a relevant out-group (Postmes, Haslam, and Swaab, 2005). That out-groups offer a means of distinguishing an in-group identity seems especially meaningful in a political context. For example, Iyengar and Westwood (2015) show, affective polarisation manifests with a predominant focus on out-group animus rather than in-group favouritism. Moreover, Abramowitz and Webster (2018) found evidence to show individuals support their political party’s policy in order to oppose an out-group, rather than for its own ideological merits. Druckman, Klar, Krupnikov, Levendusky, and Ryan’s (2021) recent research on the polarising impact of COVID-19 found a strong association between partisan animosity and responses to the pandemic restrictions.

There is growing support for the argument that it is a false dichotomy to consider affective and ideological polarisation as entirely distinctive influencing factors. Recent theoretical models by both Bliuc, Bouguettaya, and Felise (2021) and Wilson, Parker, and Feinberg (2020) have proposed that these two types have a causal relationship. Bliuc, Bouguettaya, and Felise’s (2021) model theorises that, alongside inter-group conflict, affective polarisation also consists of groups forming around a collective narrative of social reality. Whilst this seems to indicate the researchers are advocating for social representations (see Chapter Two, section 2.3.1.), this is never explicitly stated as the theory of interest. Therefore, creating an element of ambiguity around the concept of a shared reality when considered alongside more established social representations research on shared self-world relations (Elcheroth, Doise, and Reicher, 2011; Gillespie, 2008; Jovchelovitch, 2019). Wilson, Parker and Feinberg’s (2020) cyclical model focuses extensively on false
polarisation (i.e.: the overestimation of divisions between groups) as the instigating factor which connects both affective and ideological polarisation. That false polarisation fuels affective responses which, over a sustained period of time, foster an ideological polarisation. Whilst an interesting proposition, the model states certain assumptions about causal relationship which are not supported by real-world evidence at present.

When considered in the context of Brexit, the departure point for this thesis is that both ideological and affective polarisation are relevant to this research. Duffy, Hewlett, McCrae and Hall (2019) analysis of broader polarising trends in a post-Brexit UK show the public are more affectively polarised (compared with ideology) on issues relevant to party-political support. As discussed in section 1.3.2, this seems to have been exacerbated by social media platforms which have been found to increase affective polarisation on discourse exploring Brexit issues (North, Piwek, and Joinson, 2020). However, focused on the polarising impact of everyday rhetoric when the public communicate via focus groups (Andreouli, Greenland, and Figgou, 2019) the importance of ideology becomes apparent. As this thesis focuses on creating a space for individuals to discuss Brexit-related polarising issues directly with one another, this is highly relevant.

Moreover, considered in the context of political issues which are impacted by Brexit (e.g.: Northern Irish border), the relevance of ideological polarisation is evident. For example, Abswoude and Vries’s (2021) three-month ethnographic fieldwork on the border town of Derry/Londonderry found ideological polarisation to be an influencing factor on polarising perceptions of both the UK Government and the public. Considered together, this thesis proposes that both ideological and affective polarisation are important factors regarding the UK’s post-Brexit political climate. As Murray, Plagnol and Corr (2017) argues, Brexit-based identities (e.g.: Remainer or Leaver) are multifaceted in that they are a single-issue position which also cuts across party identities and symbolic ideologies. Due to this myriad of factors, the proposal here is that the 2016 UK-EU referendum offers a highly relevant case study for social and political psychologists to explore dialogue sustainment between a polarised public.

1.2. 2016 UK-EU Referendum: A Case Study for Exploring Dialogue Sustainment on a Polarised Public

The argument here is that the 2016 UK-EU referendum created one of the most polarising UK political climates in the post-war era. Both in terms of the referendum campaign itself and the
prolonged aftermath in which the public were obligated to reconsider the UK’s global relationships. In June 2016, a binary in/out vote on the UK’s continued membership in the European Union produced 52%-48% majority in favour of leaving. The result was a seismic shift in the UK’s relationship with Europe, as this was the first time a member state had voted to leave the EU (Malik, 2018). Moreover, this was the first time in a generation that the UK voted on a matter relating to the European Union (Benwell and Pinkerton, 2016). This decision to leave the EU posed challenging existential questions as to the UK’s future role within the global community. However, given the subsequent COVID-19 global pandemic and its impact on almost every facet of UK life (Keogh-Brown, Jensen, Edmunds, and Smith, 2020; Kim and Asbury, 2020), it is not unreasonable to consider how polarising the UK-EU referendum is in the current political climate.

There is evidence to suggest that the shared collective experience of COVID-19 has actually unified the public. Juan-Torres, Dixon, and Kimaram (2020) found UK citizens’ perceptions of public virtue and solidarity increased during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, subsequent research (Atay, Carr, Lasko-Skinner, and Mackenzie, 2020) found Brexit was usurped by the pandemic as the main polarising UK issue (e.g.: disputes regarding lockdown rules and regulations). Evidence also exists to indicate that Covid-related polarisation is a manifestation of previous Brexit-based divides. Sturgis, Kuha, and Jackson (2020) found support for Brexit was a significant influence on the polarising attitudes regarding national lockdowns. Furthermore, similar findings were found when exploring attitudes to lockdown on the differing values associated with pro- or anti-EU sentiments (Dennison and Duffy, 2021). Moreover, the strained UK-EU negotiations regarding vaccine procurement (Stewart, 2021) also rekindled polarising media rhetoric on the issue of national sovereignty (Davies, 2021).

Whilst Brexit is certainly a polarising issue, it would be simplistic to designate 2016 as ‘year zero’ on political polarisation in the UK. That is to say, the singular event responsible for everything polarising in the UK’s current political landscape. It is perhaps more accurate to consider polarisation as a contextual question of degrees rather than an ever-present binary state (i.e.: either polarised or non-polarised) between two homogenous blocks (Campbell, 2018; Duffy, Hewlett, McCrae, and Hall, 2019). Indeed, considered dialogically (as defined in Chapter Two, section 2.1), political discourse is highly context-dependent and related to the individual’s political sense-making (e.g.: internal discourse, positioning by others, media influences, etc.) (Cameron, Maslen, and Todd, 2013; Da Silva, Fernández-Navarro, Gonçalves, Rosa, and Silva, 2020). The following
offers an overview of the two polarising factors from the 2016 UK-EU referendum relevant to exploring sustaining dialogue.

1.3. Dividing the Public: The Polarising Impact of Narratives and Social Media

As the aim of this research is to explore how the public could sustain dialogue, understanding relevant polarising influences on the political climate is important. The argument here is that the referendum had two polarising factors which have negatively impacted the UK’s political discourse. The first is the three polarising narratives that emerged directly from the referendum and the second is the social media platforms in which the public discussed the vexed issues. Important to acknowledge that this thesis’s dialogical ontology rejects the oft-used binary labels of ‘Remainer’ or ‘Leaver’ for understanding the public in a Brexit context (Chapter Two, section 2.1). However, the following sections do refer to the public in this remain/leave binary for the purposes of clarity when discussing the referendum campaigns.

1.3.1. Three Polarising Narratives

The first proposal here is that three specific narratives which emerged directly from the UK-EU referendum influenced public debate on the issue. These narratives are: (1) Distrust the experts, (2) Leave-voters are ignorant, and (3) Remain-voters are saboteurs. The prevalent function of all three narratives is to delegitimise specific members of the public (be it experts, Remain-voters, or Leaver-voters). Prior to exploring these further, it is important to briefly define the term ‘narrative’ within the context of this research. To consider the role of narratives is to acknowledge that reality is, at the level of the individual, an ontological condition of life (Bruner, 1986) That is to say, narratives are a sense-making process to unify fragmented events in both time and space (Graef, Silva, and Lemay-Hebert, 2020; Raggatt, 2014). Considered in a political context, narratives are stories which can empower personal lives by impacting on an individual’s internal world (Squire, 2021). Alongside remaking the personal, narratives have the potential to influence self-world relationships at the social and political levels (Andrews, 2014; Andrews, Kinnvall, and Monroe, 2015). The following focuses on three national-level narratives and argues that each in turn have been a polarising influence on public discourse by delegitimising the vote/voice of a section of the public.
1.3.1.1. Distrust the Experts

The first polarising narrative here is the proposal that establishment opinions on the issue of Brexit are not entirely trustworthy. This narrative was embodied by the (then) Justice Secretary Michael Gove’s “I think people in this country have had enough of experts” comment (Portes, 2017). The message invited voters to ‘trust themselves’ rather than expert opinion on Brexit’s financial impact on the UK economy (Mance, 2016). The important wider point here is that such discourse offered every voter, who was inclined to believe so, a reason for dismissing expert or establishment opinion unfavourable to their personal position (Davis, 2016). A content analysis of referendum media coverage found independent experts were now framed as partisan, regardless of claims to legitimate impartiality (Cushion and Lewis, 2017). Furthermore, in subsequent post-referendum polls, voters who supported leaving the EU were now less likely to consider any expert opinion trustworthy or impartial (Lait and Cliffe, 2019; Smith, 2017). Given the UK’s support for experts during the COVID-19 pandemic (Boswell, 2021; Heinzel and Liese, 2021), it would be premature to assume public perceptions of experts are permanently damaged (Dommett and Pearce, 2019).

However, this narrative did offer Leave-voters (Smith, 2017) a means of rejecting expert-originated evidence not aligned with their worldview. Indeed, Lait and Cliffe’s (2019) research indicates that supporters of Brexit still distrust economic experts’ impartially on the UK’s future global trading relationships.

Analysis of public dialogue in direct response to Gove’s statement on expert opinion found heightened levels of discursive polarisation. Zappavigna’s (2019) analysis of Twitter responses both to Gove himself and among other users found a high frequency of caustic remarks which increased polarising dialogue. This discourse on experts also seems to have polarised public opinion on the integrity of those with greater political knowledge. Axe-Brown and Hansen (2019) found value judgments on MP’s integrity focused predominately on Brexit divisions. That is to say, the participants determined the politician’s integrity based on whether they should be considered a ‘Remainer’ or a ‘Leaver’. A wider impact of discourse questioning the integrity of experts is that it has created a general scepticism towards knowledge in other contexts. Indeed, Yelin and Clancy (2021) found anti-expert rhetoric (specifically, towards female experts) has increased in public discourse on various political issues since the referendum. Moreover, Foster and Feldman (2021) argue that mistrust of experts is now a prevalent feature in political discourse due to the general rise in populist politics among Western democracies. In this context, ‘populist’
refers to right-wing rhetoric on who is considered part of the ‘true people’ (Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021b; Mols and Jetten, 2014; Staerklé and Green, 2018).

1.3.1.2. Leave-voters are Ignorant
The second narrative of interest here is the portrayal of Leave-voters as ignorant when compared with Remain-voters. Indeed, a number of articles proposing that Leave-voters were ignorant as to what they were voting for emerged within days of the outcome (Udland, 2016). Political science research (Goodwin and Heath, 2016) used a correlational analysis in Leave-voting areas to propose a relationship between education and Brexit support (e.g.: Leave-voters had less formal education than supporters of the EU). However, focusing on this one metric to understand knowledge is limiting when compared with exploring what voters understand about their own voting preference. In this regard, Carl, Richards, and Heath (2019) survey-based research found voters simply become knowledge ‘specialists’ relevant to their own voting position. Indeed, Leave-voters were no more or less ignorant than Remain-voters regarding EU-related matters. For example, Remain-voters had a substantially (though not statistically significant) better knowledge of the EU’s power to determine the affairs of UK government. Moreover, they also had an appreciation of how this is often overestimated by critics of the EU. In contrast, Leave-voters had a greater knowledge of both the cost of EU membership and the limitations on free trade deals for members. However, despite such findings, the idea of the ignorant Brexit supporter is a prevalent one among online communities and, in some cases, between family members (Brett, 2017).

As a consequence, this hostile narrative towards Leave-voters seems to have had a polarising impact on the public. Research on self-other discourse between both Remain- and Leave-voters indicates this ‘ignorance’ narrative was a polarising factor. Andreouli, Greenland, Figgou’s (2020) analysis of Brexit-based focus groups shows that defending against accusations of ignorance was a key discursive move by Leave-supporters. It was found that Remain-supporters regularly aligned a pro-Brexit position with anti-immigrant views. Therefore, Leave-supporters positioned themselves as rational voters by emphasising the potential economic benefits of leaving the EU. Thus, attempting to disrupt the ‘leave voters are ignorant’ discourse in the aftermath of the referendum. Furthermore, North, Piwek, and Joinson’s (2020) research of online (Twitter) discourse 36-months after the referendum found Remain-voters frequently characterised Leave-voters as uneducated when discussing the UK’s future EU relationship. However, as the next
section illustrates, this out-group hostility was not exclusively focused on those supporting the UK’s departure from the EU.

1.3.1.3. Remain-voters are Saboteurs

The third relevant narrative is the argument that the referendum outcome was being sabotaged by Remain-voters. Such discourse gained prominence in response to repeated calls for a second referendum by the People’s Vote campaigning group. The argument being that the public initiated the Brexit process with the result in 2016 and should now be able to vote on the final outcome (Ramsey, 2019). High profile critics of the movement argued this was suppressing the ‘will of the people’ (Bickerton, 2016; Muller, 2017), and that Brexit was in danger of being overturned by Remain-supporters. Freeden (2020) argues that such discourse became a political tool to re-frame the outcome of the UK-EU referendum. Specifically, to create an illusionary homogeneity for a singular outcome from a small majority (52%). Whilst support for leaving the EU was clearly the majority among voters, such discourse falsely portrayed a disparate set of voters as a singular ‘voice of the people’ (Quinn, 2017). Moreover, such discourse aligned with populist rhetoric of a corrupt parliamentary elite and an ‘out of touch’ middle-class intelligentsia (Larcinese, 2016). Therefore, dividing the public on the good faith arguments from those who regarded Brexit as a high-cost mistake for the UK’s future global relations.

As with the previous two narratives, this also seems to have negatively impacted political discourse by polarising the public. Emma O’Dwyer’s (2020) work applying social representation principles to real-world political disagreements between UK-EU referendum voters offers insight here. Thematic analysis showed that, depending on the citizen’s voting endorsement (e.g.: remain or leave), key political events relating to Brexit were either conceived as enacting or subverting public will. For example, Leave-supporters portrayed any counterarguments to Brexit as resisting the ‘inevitable’ and an afront to public will. This representational distinction in the public’s capacity for deciding the UK’s relationship with the EU aligns with the ‘saboteurs’ narrative. Previously discussed research into Twitter usage by North, Piwek, and Joinson’s (2020) also offers insights here on how the ‘saboteurs’ narrative polarised the public. For example, antagonistic characterisations of Remain-voters as ‘Remoaners’ who are ‘whining’ and unsupportive of the democratic outcome were prevalent during direct online discourse between the two groups. Indeed, Remain-voter responses to such accusations co-opted this discourse to position themselves as ‘Proud Remoaners’. North, Piwek, and Joinson (2020) argue that discussions on the outcome of
the UK-EU referendum seem to have heightened tribal political behaviour on social media. As it is becoming clear, alongside these narratives, the social media context for such discussions was another important factor here in polarising the public. The following section argues that social media’s role as hosts for political narratives on Brexit is the second factor which increased political polarisation in the UK.

1.3.2. Social Media’s Polarising Influence on Public Discourse

The focus here is on social rather than traditional media (e.g.: newspapers, television, and radio) as this thesis is focused on how the public are communicating directly with one another. In this regard, both Facebook and Twitter are important discursive spaces to consider as 77.9% of UK adults are active users (Zivkovic, 2021). Indeed, these two social media platforms have become the dominant spaces for political discourse in the public domain. Both longitudinal (Garimella and Weber, 2017) and meta-analysis (Kubin and Sikorski, 2021) research indicates a trend towards increasingly polarised political discourse on social media platforms. Facebook users commonly experience segregation due to the impact of echo chambers (Bessi et al. 2016; Del Vicario, Zollo, and Caldarelli, 2017), algorithms (Cecan, 2019) and ‘filter bubbles’ (Flaxman, Goel, and Roa, 2016) as the platform attempts to increase user engagement. On Twitter, social bots are deployed to replicate and manipulate human behaviour to increase user interactions with the platform (Ferrara, Varol, Davis, Menczer, and Flammini, 2016). Evidence (Bail et al, 2018) indicates exposure to these social bots increases opposition to contrasting views. Indeed, research has found an increase in expressions of out-group hostility during analysis of Twitter responses to nationalistic celebrations (Bliuc, Smith, and Moynihan, 2020), and evaluations of trust in others (Hetherington and Rudolph, 2015). Moreover, the polarising impact of these platforms is also evident when considered in the context of public discourse on the UK’s future global relations.

During the 2016 UK-EU referendum, social robot activity mirroring pro- or anti-Brexit sentiments increased both in-group favouritism and out-group negativity for users during human interactions (Gorodnichenko, Pham, and Talavera, 2018). Furthermore, a prevalence of negative discourse among users’ communication networks (e.g.: online connections and affiliations) substantially increased polarising dialogue between both Remain- and Leave-voters (Buder, Rabl, Feiks, Badermann, and Zurstiege, 2021). Moreover, North, Piwek, and Joinson (2020) found that this online out-group negativity continued to be an influencing factor on the issue of Brexit long after
the referendum outcome. Social media platforms also seem to have created a space for the public to polarise their opinion on Brexit-related issues. Indeed, Leave-voters were found to actively seek social media echo chambers (Hänska and Bauchowitz, 2017) and, compared with Remain-voters, were more likely to post links to external partisan websites (Gorrell, Roberts, Greenwood, Bakir, Iavarone, and Bontcheva, 2018). An additional element here is social media’s capacity for users to share information about broader ‘culture war’ issues relating to the vexed issue in question. Brändle, Galpin, and Trenz (2021) found Brexit discourse was exacerbated by this additional factor, which created wider polarising discourse on the issue of democratic legitimacy. It is worth noting that research exists to indicate exposure to political diversity can ameliorate conflict on social media (Barberá, Jost, Nagler, Tucker, and Bonneau, 2015; Heatherly, Lu, and Lee, 2017). However, as discussed, research specific to the 2016 UK-EU referendum shows that public dialogue on this issue seems to have been a polarising influence.

Considered together, these two factors (i.e.: campaign-based narratives and discourse on social media) have heightened polarisation among the public on the UK’s future global relations. The explicit rejection of expert opinion seems to have created divisions between the public in terms of how they engage in dialogue. That is to say, these inherent bad faith assumptions of expert analysis have polarised the public as to the value in any data-led view which opposes their political endorsement. Therefore, creating a context in which dialogue on the issue is characterised by ad hominem attacks on dissenting voices. A prevalence for directing hostility at members of the public (e.g.: ‘Leave voters as ignorant’ and ‘Remain voters are saboteurs’) has also been a polarising factor. This has manifest in discourse between the public on the issue of Brexit, which has been explicitly dismissive and polarising to both sets of voters. The second polarising factor is the social media context in which dialogue on these vexed issues occurs in the public sphere. Both Facebook and Twitter’s model of operation exacerbate and incentivise discourse which is inherently polarising. Be it, social robot activity to increase out-group hostility, the algorithmic promotion of bespoke facts aligned to a specific narrative, or the inclusion of other culture war issues to heighten the original conflict.

1.4. Social Psychology Models for Depolarising Public Attitudes
Given this chapter’s argument that the UK is a more polarised political climate, the next step here is to consider previous depolarising research and the lessons this has to offer. Namely, how
social/political psychology researchers have engaged with the challenge of reducing polarisation. Curiously, limited research exists for exploring how the UK public could be depolarised on the issue of Brexit. Indeed, the focus of social science researchers has largely been on determining the factors which influenced the outcome of the referendum. Be it, divergent education experiences (Alabrese, Becker, Fetzer, and Novy. 2019), intergenerational differences (Dorling, 2016), diminishing employment opportunities (Tomlinson, 2017), and/or immigration attitudes (Clarke, Goodwin, and Whiteley, 2017). Recent research (Marchal, 2021) exploring how affectively polarised groups exchange dialogue focused on a retrospective analysis of interactions via online discussion boards. This limited focus on specific Brexit-based depolarisation could be due to the issue being considered out-dated in the context of larger disruptive influences (e.g.: the global pandemic). However, as discussed in section 1.2, divisions which emerged as a result of the UK-EU referendum still have resonance in this new context. It is important now to consider the possibilities with current psychology-based models for depolarising the public to create a context for sustaining dialogue.

1.4.1. Shared Identity Approaches

Social Identity Theory (SIT) has been a substantive influence on the social and political psychology research landscape for over four decades (Hogg, 2016; Stets and Burke, 2000). Given SIT’s wide-ranging explanatory value for intergroup relations and group processes (Hornsey, 2008; Sindic, and Condor, 2014), this could offer potential insight into Brexit-based polarisation between Remain- and Leave-voters. As discussed earlier, the core tenet of SIT is that individuals have the potential to derive a sense of identity from group membership. For members of a political group in a comparative context, three key factors must be present: (1) High in-group identification with their political group, (2) An opportunity for group comparison, and (3) The presence of a relevant out-group (Stets and Burke, 2000). The clarity of these stipulations offers a valuable framework for exploring discursive polarisation within a political context. This framework guides Common Ingroup Identity Model’s (CIIM) claim that polarised individuals could be mediated by a shared group identity. Therefore, allowing individuals the opportunity to adopt a shared identity as a means of recategorization and to reduce bias (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, and Rust, 1993). In theory, this creates a super-ordinate identity which transcends the inter-group conflict (Brewer, 2000). In practice, CIIM has been successful in reducing contact-bias in a variety
of contexts; for example, between different nationalities (Eller and Abrams, 2004), and among children in various cultural contexts (Gaertner, Mann, Murrell, and Dovidio, 1989).

A relevant question for this thesis is to consider if adopting super-ordinate identities offer an effective means of reducing polarisation in explicitly political contexts. Levendusky (2017) demonstrated that affective polarisation can be reduced using CIIM by priming Americans to consider national identity above political party. However, the depolarisation observed for an out-group political figure in this context was modest. Moreover, there was a strong likelihood that patriotism, rather than American identity, was actually what was being primed. The individual’s depolarisation was measured in brief survey responses and via feeling thermometers which is problematic. Principally, as it indicates CIIM may not be ecologically valid in real-world discursive contexts. That is to say, measuring depolarisation in this manner is unlikely to offer a relevant template when applied to those involved in politically polarising discourse. Indeed, similar issues of ecological validity are present in Riek, Mania, Gartner, McDonald, and Lamoreaux’s (2010) identity research. Specifically, a disproportionate focus on undergraduates in WEIRD cultures (western, educated, industrial, rich, and democratic) (Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan, 2010) which limits the explanatory potential of the model in non-western political climates.

Indeed, it seems that when CIIM is applied in differing real-world contexts, the model does not successfully reduce political polarisation. Noor, Brown, Taggart, Fernandez, and Coen (2002) found CIIM to be ineffective at reducing affective polarisation in a Northern Irish Protestant-Catholic context. Neither did CIIM meaningfully increase the salience of a super-ordinate group (i.e.: Irish identity) for either set of group members (McNicholl, 2018). Furthermore, Glasford, and Calcagno (2010) found that any commonality messages adopted among minority identities using CIIM were easily disrupted by reminders of more salient in-group membership (in this case, the individual’s ethnic group). CIIM’s susceptibility to disruption through reminders of macro-identity substantially increases the likelihood of further political polarisation. These limitations are troublesome and imply a divergence between the theoretical model and complexities of application in real-world settings.

In response to CIIM’s limitations in this area, the concept of dual identities has been proposed as an alternative route to identity-engagement. The idea is that polarised individuals can co-exist as
sub-groups’ if both adopt a shared dual identity. Adopting a dual identity, as opposed to merely recategorising, offers the potential for successful negotiations by reducing the threat of the superordinate group (Eggins, Haslam, and Reynolds, 2002; Hornsey, and Hogg, 2000). However, this approach has a potential problem regarding identity-legitimacy issues. Hopkins, Reicher and Rijswik’s (2015) research among Scottish undergraduates found that, politically based, sub-group identities can be dismissed as spurious if relevant identity signifiers are not present. Such a dismissal challenges the legitimacy of an individual’s claims for being part of the in-group. Furthermore, Hopkins, Reicher and Rijswik (2015) also found any criticisms of the in-group were only likely to be received if the critic possessed relevant identity signifiers. That the dual-identity model’s success for depolarising hinges on the opposing individual recognising identity signifiers is a key limitation here. The reason being that this asks a number of unlikely demands from politically polarised individuals during vexed interactions.

Firstly, the theory assumes political identities have robust signifiers that are easily identifiable to one another. However, it could be the case that political identities are distinctive when compared to other types of identities due to the multifaceted nature of political engagement. That is to say, political identities can also include moral imperatives (Graham, Haidt, and Nosek, 2009), or intergenerational influences on political party support (Gidengil, Lahtinen, Wass, and Erola, 2020). Thus, offering a multifaceted basis for political identity which may not necessarily be apparent during casual discourse. Another issue with this dual identity approach is the transitory nature of the political climate and dynamics within political groups. A new political party leader with a contrasting outlook to the status quo can substantially alter where the individual places themselves within the group’s ideological spectrum (Barnfield and Bale, 2020). Hence, what were salient identity signifiers to others can seem less relevant within this shifting ideological context. An alternative approach to this focus on identity is the concept that politically polarised individuals could be depolarised by adopting the perspective of the other.

1.4.2. Perspective-Taking

Perspective-taking (PT) focuses on depolarising individuals by encouraging them to understand the perspective of the other. To achieve this, PT redirects the attentional focus from group signifiers to that of the individual (Galinsky and Moskowitz, 2000). Trötschel, Hüffmeier, Loschelder, Schwartz, and Gollwitzer (2011) found PT is used for either altruistic ends (e.g.:
negotiating a mutual beneficial outcome) or to gain a self-serving advantage (e.g.: understanding an opponent’s strategy to win a game). Perspective-taking has shown itself to have efficacy in workplace environments, be it during work-related negotiations (Longmire and Harrison, 2018) or to increase cohesion among colleagues (Goldstein, Vezich, and Shapiro, 2014). However, PT’s efficacy diminishes substantially when the context is changed to inter-group engagements with conflicting aims (Trötschel, Hüffmeier, Loschelder, Schwartz, and Gollwitzer, 2011).

Indeed, Tarrant, Calitri, and Weston (2012) found PT opportunities are rarely taken among high in-group identifiers compared with moderate in-group identifiers. Principally, due to the potential risks to social group distinctness inherent in adopting the perspective of a previously maligned out-group member. In these heightened circumstances, it seems perspective-taking alone does not offer a means for polarised individuals to engage with one another. Rather, the combination of perspective-taking alongside social motivation creates a context for empathising with another’s situation (Dovidio, Ten Vergert, Stewart, Gaertner, Johnson, Esses, and Pearson 2004; Galinsky and Mussweiler, 2001). A salient question for this research is to consider PT’s capacity for depolarising political actors in order to sustain dialogue over vexed issues. In the political domain, perspective-taking offers mixed results for depolarisation between conflicting individuals. A positive aspect of PT is that it is a consistent mediator for reducing stereotyping among in-group members, irrespective of out-group influence (Vescio, Sechrist, and Paolucci, 2003).

However, for inter-group relations between political group members, perspective-taking does not offer such a positive outcome. A 12-month field experiment in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Paluck, 2010) found PT actually reduced out-group tolerance and heightened previous war-related grievances. It could be argued exploring this theory in a post-civil war context is overly ambitious given the heightened polarisation that likely exists. However, even in more democratic contexts, PT does not seem to offer an explanatory insight in a real-world scenario. In a US study during the 2008 election campaign, Falk, Spunt and Lieberman (2012) found partisan bias persisted despite PT initiatives for opposing party members. Moreover, PT seems unable to create a context for out-group engagement even when said group are vulnerable and unlikely to challenge the in-group. Indeed, PT fails to increase sympathy for the plight of refugees (Glăveanu, Saint-Laurent, and Literat, 2018) nor create any long-term inclusionary behaviour towards marginalised groups (Adida, Lo, and Platas, 2018).
Such results ask questions of PT’s value in depolarising individuals to create a discursive space with others on a vexed political issue. It could be the case that, due to the implicitly partisan, high stakes nature of politics, asking polarised individuals to engage in PT is overly demanding. That is to say, PT creates a cognitive-load which is untenable given the other demands inherent in politically polarised interactions. Indeed, evidence shows PT does create an impairing cognitive-load for the individual (Cane, Ferguson, and Apperley, 2017; Robnagel, 2000). However, it is important to note that contrasting evidence exists as to the impact of a high cognitive-load on empathic responses and PT could actually be mediating such empathy (Bajouk and Hansenne, 2019). As no research explicitly focuses on cognitive-load in politically discursive contexts, focusing on this as a potential PT limitation is speculative. However, what is apparent is that perspective-taking has not been found to reduce polarisation among political engaged actors.

1.4.3. Narrative Framing

Whilst shared-identity and perspective-taking models focus on modifying how individuals perceive one another, narrative research focuses on changing how political information is presented and interpreted. The core principle being to allow the politically polarised individuals to find a connection via a shift in the narrative framing. The Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) offers an important move towards increasing the public’s knowledge of policy issues via narrative-based interventions (Jones and McBeth, 2010; Shanahan, McBeth, and Hathaway, 2011). This is a framework attempting to apply an objective epistemology to a subjective ontology. That is to say, the post-positivist assumption that, in the domain of public policy, concepts are social constructs susceptible to variability and context (Jones, Shanahan, and McBeth, 2014). A key NPF assumption is that effective public communication relies on meaningful narratives to engender meaning-making when discussing complex political issues. For example, climate change information is likely to engage the public more readily with narratives then merely stating statistical data (Owens, 2000). This certainly aligns with, as Chapter Two examines, the dialogical concept of common-sense thinking in which the public moves beyond ideological and scientific to engage in a ‘third way’ of conceiving and discussing an issue (Moscovici, 2000).

Narrative Policy Framework researchers propose that, to understand what a policy means to the public, you must understand the narratives used for meaning-making purposes (Jones, Shanahan, and McBeth, 2014). In this regard, researchers emphasise the framework’s capacity for empirically
measuring policy realities (Smith and Larimer, 2013). Thus, it is interesting to consider what insight NPF has to offer regarding depolarising political actors in vexed discussions. NPF offers researchers insights into how polarised political groups exchange narratives and the factors exacerbating conflict. Indeed, Stephan (2020) found familiar conflict expansion trends among both pro- and anti-fracking groups when presenting this vexed issue. Other NPF research also found this framework valuable in understanding populist narratives (Jones and McBeth, 2020), and why evoking ‘villains’ creates successful narratives on environmental policy (Crow and Berggren, 2014). However, research applying this framework to depolarise political actors produces results which do not entirely achieve this intention. Two complementary studies (Lybecker, McBeth, and Kusko, 2013; McBeth, Lybecker, and Garner, 2010) found framing narratives have the potential to render political ideology less relevant. For example, both liberals and conservatives endorse recycling if framed as a duty-based issue associated with good business practice, cost-lowering, and space saving for landfills. However, this is not the case if recycling is framed as an act of global citizenship, corporation blaming, or for addressing the climate crisis. In this latter framing, those with socially conservative allegiances actually reject the benefits of recycling.

Whilst interesting, the result does not quite offer the advancement towards depolarisation the researchers (Lybecker, etc.) claim it to be. For example, whilst local recycling is self-evidently related to the issue of climate change, it does not directly allow participants to engage in wider ideological differences on the environment. That is to say, explore the fundamental differences in worldviews which can exist between the right- and left-wing on the issue (Hornsey, Harris, Bain, and Feilding, 2016; Jacques, Dunlap, and Freeman, 2008; Jylha, Strimling, and Rydgren, 2020). Indeed, as the studies show (Lybecker, McBeth, and Kusko, 2013; McBeth, Lybecker, and Garner, 2010) when recycling is considered directly with a political imperative for addressing climate change, framing is ineffective. Therefore, it is arguable that depolarising individuals on a side-issue to the larger ideological conflict offers somewhat limited value. A key concern directly relevant to this thesis is that NPF research does not engage participants in dialogue with one another. Rather, this research uses survey-based responses to explore opinion changes between polarised individuals. The issue here being that the results offer no direct application in real-world discursive contexts. Given that real-world discursive exchanges are the domain of political discourse (be it in person or on-line), this is a limitation with the approach.
1.4.4. Summary
Whilst all three approaches have notable positives, none seem to offer an effective means of either depolarising the public or creating a context for potential agreement. Depolarising a politically polarised public is important as this could offer the potential to create a space for dialogue sustainment. Both the shared-identity models and perspective-taking encounter a similar limitation when applied to polarising political interactions. Namely, that individuals are required to engage in processes which could be at odds with the reality of heightened polarising encounters. The shared-identity models require individuals to embrace a superordinate identity or recognise identity signifiers which may not be politically relevant. In a perspective-taking scenario, the cognitive-load involved in this process is likely detrimental to any type of depolarising engagement. A different conceptual emphasis is to move from attempting to modify how political actors engage with one another to changing the polarising potency of the political message. In this regard, the Narrative Policy Framework does offer some insight into the factors which exacerbate conflict. However, it does not seem to offer a means of depolarising those who are ideologically polarised on a vexed political issue.

1.5. Conclusion
To conclude, this chapter argues that the 2016 UK-EU referendum has had a polarising impact on the public. Specifically, in creating conditions which have reduced the public’s ability to sustain dialogue when discussing the UK’s future global relations. Both polarising narratives and the influence of social media platforms have combined to heighten divisions between the public. Therefore, creating political polarisation which has resulted in bad faith assumptions between those who disagree on the UK’s future global relations. This challenges social and political psychologists to consider how the public can be depolarised to re-engage with one another on vexed political questions. As discussed, an issue here is that the psychology models explored (e.g.: shared-identity, perspective-taking etc.) offer limited real-world insight into depolarising the public. The next chapter considers this challenge further in discussing the ontological value of the dialogical approach for exploring how citizens could sustain dialogue. Specifically, the approach’s assumptions that the public possesses multifaceted capacities for political engagement that offer the potential for novel insights.
Chapter Two: The Ontological and Epistemological Commitments of the Dialogical Approach

Introduction

Chapter Two offers insight into the ontological assumptions guiding this research to explore the following two questions: (1) Do either (A) Migration-mobility or (B) Place-person relationships, influence how individuals position the UK’s global relations? and (2) Are there I-positions which can sustain dialogue between interlocuters during polarising discussions on the UK’s global relations? The chapter opens (section 2.1) outlining this thesis’s ontological assumptions on the public’s multi-positional capacity as political actors. The purpose here is to outline the parameters of the public’s capabilities regarding political discourse and its relevance to this research. Section 2.2 then focuses on the research’s epistemology in providing knowledge which understands the individual within the context of a relational whole (i.e.: within the wider context of discursive exchanges and stimulus materials). The chapter (section 2.3) then offers an overview of social representations and explores the importance of understanding an individual’s self-world and self-other relations for both research questions. Section 2.4 introduces this thesis’s dialogical commitment to understanding self-world and self-other relations with the following three concepts: (1) Social Representations, (2) Dialogical positions (I-, We- & They), and (3) Chronotopes. This is based on the dialogical assumption that individuals are multifaceted, complex political actors who engage in meaning-making through discourse. The chapter (section 2.5) then proposes that understanding an individual’s chronotopes (temporal/spatial connections) offer complementary insight into how individuals frame their migration-mobility narratives, place-person relationships, and how they discursively engage with others. Finally, section 2.6 briefly considers the thesis’s ontological assumptions and epistemological commitments regarding the two research questions.

2.1. Exploring the Dialogical Approach’s Ontological Assumptions

This opening section offers insight into the thesis’s ontological assumptions in terms of the implications and expectations for this research. Marsh and Furlong (2002, p.1) succinctly analogue a researcher’s ontology as being akin to a ‘skin rather than a sweater’. That is as a fixed (rather than flexible) commitment to a worldview from which all other assumptions must arise (be it post-positivist, realist, etc.). In this case, a key factor for the second research question is the public’s
capacity for political discourse. In terms of public capacity, this research aligns with Mahendran’s (2018) considerations regarding public-opinion formation. The idea being that if a conversation’s consequences extend beyond the two involved, then the discursive act imbues a public capacity. Specifically, that they act for a ‘generalised other’ which, in the context of this research, could be relevant to the macro-narratives prevalent in political discourse (e.g.: the ‘will of the people’ narrative discussed in Chapter One, section 1.3.1.3). To define terms, a ‘generalised other’ is a broad positioning of the public’s views from which an individual may advocate for, or position themselves against, in a relevant discursive context (Staerklé, 2013). Whether explicitly stated or not, a researcher’s ontological assumptions directly impact on the research process and what observed phenomena are considered to be meaningful (Hewer, 2018). Therefore, it is important for the researcher to acknowledge their own ontological assumptions and the inherent bias therein. In this regard, the assumption here is that citizens do have a multifaceted capacity which can be identified via discursive engagements with one another. Therefore, this thesis’s ontological assumption is dialogical. As Davey (2003, p. 63) notes, dialogicality rejects the ‘empiricist view of private mental lives’ in favour of Marková’s (2000, p. 427) claim that ‘every individual lives in the world of others’ words’. That is to say, dialogicality assumes the human mind has the multivoiced capacity to conceive, create and communicate about social realities (Marková, 2003).

Based on this assumption, Kinnvall and Lindén (2010) argue that dialogical research must not focus on individuals or groups as separate entities, but in mutually interdependent communication at some level (e.g.: an oppressed minority is mutually interdependent with an oppressive majority). Therefore, social psychology research within the context of such assumptions will, at one level, focus on ego-alter relations. Specifically, social relationships between the individual (ego) and their social peers (alter) (Arnaboldi, Passarella, Conti, and Dunbar, 2017), whilst also considering the wider influence of political culture. This assumes that the public adopt political positions which are historically situated, dynamic to cultural changes and multifaceted in positioning capacity (Andrews, Kinnvall, and Monroe, 2015; Akkerman and Meijer, 2011; Mahendran, Jackson, and Kapoor, 2015). Indeed, for the first research question, this assumes that an individuals’ migration-mobility experiences and place-person relationships are, to some extent, the result of discursive interactions. Be those self/self-other narratives on the value of their personal mobility experiences or their discursive relationship with the local community (e.g.: urban or coastal environment). As discussed at various points in Chapter Five’s analysis, the latter does seem to manifest by
individuals’ adopting voices from their local community or by addressing imagined others who have negative preconceptions about their home environment.

Regarding the second question, the assumption that citizens can adopt multifaceted positions during discourse offers potential for exploring how they could sustain dialogue. In UK and US political psychology, there is a dominating ontological focus on inter-group dynamics (Gaither, 2018). Specifically, an assumption that a politicised individual’s modus operandi is to set themselves in opposition to others based on identity (i.e.: in group/out-group). In certain political circumstances, this focus on identity is highly relevant, be it for understanding the dynamics of political party membership (Greene, 2002), voting behaviour (Ben-Bassat and Dahan, 2012) or the imperative to protest (Klandermans, 2013). However, as discussed in Chapter One (section 1.4.1), exploring how individuals sustain dialogue by focusing exclusively on identity (i.e.: political group, gender etc.) could be limiting in terms of real-world insight. Wendt (1999) notes that ontological assumptions not only determine how researchers perceive reality, but it also defines the limits on what they consider to be possible. This is important as a dialogical ontology considers the public to be capable of multifaceted dynamic positionalities that go beyond shared-identity models. Alongside these ontological assumptions, it is important to also consider the epistemological value of exploring this issue dialogically and reflect on what knowledge is being created.

2.2. Considering the Epistemology of Dialogism

Dialogism is a language-based epistemology focused on reflexivity and interpretation of human and social phenomena (Wells et al, 2020). In discussing its epistemological relevance to this thesis, it is briefly worth considering how this contrasts with monologism. As Marková (1997) notes, monologism is a process in which discrete entities are ‘objectively’ analysed and organised into a hierarchical system, therefore aligning with a Cartesian epistemology (Jovchelovitch, 2019). In contrast, dialogism focuses on the relational whole (as opposed to discrete entities) as the claim here is knowledge exists in relation to additional factors and is not examined ‘objectively’. This focus on the relational whole regarding objects of knowledge is a key consideration for both of this thesis’s research questions. For the first question, both the interviewees’ migration-mobility and place-person relationships are to be considered in relation to a discursive context. That is to say, discursive interactions with another person or in response to a specific stimulus materials.
Therefore, offering knowledge on how the individual’s self-other and self-world relations in these two contexts influence how they position the UK globally.

The research’s epistemological focus on language is key part of exploring the main aim of this thesis (i.e.: how politically polarised individuals sustain dialogue). Bakhtin (1981) proposed that individual words are not analytical units themselves, but, rather, part of a broader context for analysis. Indeed, a discussion between two individuals is a ‘two-sided act’ in which a speaker depends on an addressee to contextualise the meaning of their discourse. This is part of a triadic structure in which, alongside the literal addressee, the speaker also addresses a ‘super addressee’ (Dop, 2000). This super addressee is considered sympathetic and understanding to the concepts being espoused by the speaker. That is to say, the ‘ideal listener’ who, even if no one else understands, is symbolic of the fact the speaker’s utterances possess intrinsic value (Ahmad, 2020).

To ground the super-addressee concept in a real-world example, a teacher may experience opposition from the classroom-collective based on an unpopular decision. However, the teacher can derive strength from considering that the super-addressee (in this case, an older teaching mentor), understands and approves the decision (Bryzzheva, 2008). Furthermore, the super-addressee need not necessarily be an actual person but can also be a meaningful concept (e.g.: a higher voice of authority) (Seikkula and Olson, 2016).

Midgley (2011) proposes that, when both individuals are addressing the same super-addressee, this process offers a means of understanding when a level of connection, though not necessarily consensus, is occurring between individuals. This assumption of interdependency on the part of speaker and listener, both in their shared communications and with whom they address, is relevant to this thesis. That is to say, a dialogical epistemology creates ‘objects of knowledge’ on the discursive actions between individuals with a reflexive understanding of the wider context. Indeed, this epistemology is inherently reflexive as it presupposes an active involvement between the self and the other, which also includes the researcher’s role (Linell, 1998). These objects of knowledge are considered as a ‘ground-figure’ dynamic within a temporal/spatial dimension. An individuals’ social representations on a discursive topic are the ‘ground’ from which they dialogically position themselves (the ‘figure’) within a temporal/spatial dimension (see figure 2.1) (Mahendran, Jackson, and Kapoor, 2015). As introduced in the next chapter (section 3.7), these interactions are the basis for the Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model’s (English and Mahendran, 2021) framework for exploring how individuals discursively engage with one another.
2.3. Common Sense Knowledge: The Importance of Understanding Social Representations

A key aim for both research questions is to develop greater insight into an individual’s internal self-world and self-other relations. The first proposal here is that understanding an individual’s discourse offers insight into their internal world via social representations. Understanding the interviewees’ social representations could provide insight into the factors influencing how they position the UK’s global relations. Thus, also providing a foundation for pairing interviewees together to explore dialogue sustainment. Devised by Serge Moscovici from Durkheim’s ‘Collective Representations’, Social Representations are collective cognitions on cultural, social and/or symbolic objects (Moscovici, 2000). The initial focus here is to outline three ways in which social representations are valuable for understanding an individual’s self-world and self-other relations on relevant political issues. To define terms, this thesis aligns with Staerklé’s (2013) definition of self-world relations as a relationship between a person and a meta-representation (be that political movements or nations). In contrast, self-other is defined here as the relations between
an individual and another person or group. For example, a UK citizen who has an I-positional relationship with Africa would be self-world, whilst a relation between them and an African resident would be self-other.

The thesis proposes that social representations are important for the following reasons: (1) Exploring shared or contrasting internal symbolic representations of reality between individuals, (2) Understanding how new information is incorporated into existing knowledge, and (3) Identifying if/how an individual understands the knowledge of another. Moscovici (1988) proposes that social representations are an intrinsic part of communication as it provides a shared means of ‘organising reality’. Indeed, social representations are systems of common-sense knowledge that offer insights into an individual’s self-world relations with their socio-political environment (Howarth, Andreouli, and Kessi, 2014). Although different definitions prevail, Höijer (2011) proposes that the function of social representations are: (1) The process in which an individual orientates themselves to concepts in their social world, and (2) A means of social exchange in which community members communicate concepts. This affords a context for understanding shared knowledge, be it interpersonal/inter-group (group norms), social phenomena (religious groups), or social activities (Engeström and Middleton, 1996; Marková, 2017a).

Considered politically, Moscovici (1988) proposes three distinct types of representations are relevant to this context. Firstly, *hegemonic representations*, which are shared by most members of a group or nation and are prevalent in thoughts and actions. Secondly, *emancipated representations* are relevant to sub-groups who develop a distinctive representation from the broader definition (e.g.: Libertarian group members representation of free market enterprise). Thirdly, *polemic representations* are related to societal controversies and between-group conflicts based on an antagonistic engagement. Staerklé, Clémence and Spini (2011) correctly argues this does not mean all group members share identical knowledge on a particular issue. Instead, such knowledge must be anchored via common reference points from discursive exchanges. Important to note that a representation is not merely a reproduction of a shared external reality, but, rather, a symbolic space in which competing versions of the external world exist between individuals (Galli and Fasanelli, 2020).

An additional consideration here is Gillespie’s (2008) proposal for *alternative representations* which refer to the representation of a competing representation to one held by an individual or
This is an important consideration in the context of political discourse as these alternative representations could function to offer simplistic versions of the counter argument. Therefore, potentially creating a context which results in a political debate based on substantially different representations of reality. Indeed, these alternative representations could be due to bad faith interpretations or self-deceiving misrepresentations of a convincing counter argument. Given the key aim of this research (i.e.: pairing polarised individuals together to explore if they can sustain dialogue), understanding how these differing symbolic representations of reality manifest in discourse via ‘common sense’ knowledge could be insightful. Moscovici (2000) considers common-sense knowledge a ‘third-way of thinking’ which offers an alternative from both scientific (i.e.: ‘expert knowledge’) and ideological perspectives when considering a topic as a collective. The emergence of common-sense knowledge is defined in the following contexts: (1) first-hand experience (subjective), or (2) second-hand knowledge which develops in response to a new concept or discovery (Jovchelovitch, 2019). The focus of this thesis is not on the mechanisms which produce representational changes, but, rather, the influence of this knowledge on the dialogical positions adopted. For example, understanding how individuals dialogically engage with one another when encountering conflicting political ‘common-sense knowledge’ (i.e.: ‘taken for granted’ truths about the world).

Another important consideration could be the role of semantic barriers, which is Moscovici’s (2008) term for how specific semantic structures possess the capacity to inhibit dialogue. Gillespie (2008) outlines two types of semantic barrier (1) Rigid opposition and (2) Transfer of meaning. The first is a proposition which emphasises a ‘with us or against us’ response to a representation, typically used in authoritarian propaganda. The second focuses on redirecting a core opposition to a secondary opposition, thus stigmatising the latter with a negative association. For example, a US Republican senator wishing to refute a universal health care bill could align this to a broader ideological opposition to socialism (e.g.: a ‘socialist healthcare bill’). This potential for inhibiting dialogue is clearly an important consideration when exploring the second research question. Specifically, for exploring if dialogical positions offer a means of ascending these potentially inhibiting semantic barriers. Alongside the factors which may sustain or inhibit dialogue, social representations theory also offers insight into how new information is incorporated into a person’s self-world relations. As explored below this is especially relevant to answering the first research question and, thus, creating a context for pairing interviewees. To reiterate, the first research
questions is: 1) Do either (A) Migration-mobility or (B) Place-person relationships, influence how individuals position the UK’s global relations?

Moscovici (1984) proposes two main mechanisms which increase an individual’s familiarity with new information: (1) Anchoring: this creates a means of understanding an unknown concept by evoking previous social representations to provide a context for interpretation, and (2) Objectifying: this process produces familiarity to abstract concepts by conceiving something which may be perceived concretely by the senses. In terms of anchoring, a variety of different types (thematic, naming) are useful for the purpose of understanding new information via previous social representations. Moscovici (2000) proposes that the mechanism of objectifying is more active and more effortful than anchoring due to the frequency of new information which is encountered. For example, whilst climate change is a reality, the concept is somewhat abstract and requires representation which is achieved by the media’s process of objectifying, such as images of a polar bear isolated on a melting ice formation (Smith and Joffe, 2009).

As Chapter Four (section 4.5.2.4) will discuss, answering the first research question involves presenting novel map projections of the UK’s global position to the interviewees. Therefore, creating a context for understanding current social representations of the UK’s global relationships and what an unfamiliar positioning of the UK does to these self-world relations. This exploration of social representations provides a context for pairing interviewees together on shared/conflicting representations to explore dialogue sustainment. However, it is not just self-world relations that are important here when considering how individuals discursively engage with one another. Indeed, Elcheroth, Doise, and Reicher (2011) emphasises the importance of understanding social representations as meta-knowledge. Thus, aligning with Mead’s (1934) argument that an individual’s conscience is the product of social relations. This offers potential insights into both an individual’s personal knowledge, but also what the individual thinks about other people’s knowledge. Staerklé, Clémence, and Spini (2011) argue this focus on meta-knowledge offers potential insight into the intergroup influences and, consequently, communication. Here, they go further in proposing that, alongside social relations, individuals must be understood within the context of the hierarchical intergroup system in which they position themselves.

This affords an understanding of an individual’s social relations which are likely relevant for pairing together interviewees on issues both may find polarising. For example, interviewees may
possess representations about the UK’s global role which is (falsely) assumed to be shared by the other person. That is to say, what the individual feels they know about the other person’s understanding. Thus, offering an insight into the interviewees’ intersubjectivity (i.e.: mutual awareness of an agreement or disagreement) on the how the issue in question is defined (Gillespie and Cornish, 2010). This understanding of how individuals position themselves when faced with a lack of commonality on inherent assumptions could be insightful. Principally, as a means of identifying ruptures in their shared knowledge and assumptions about the other person and how this manifests in dialogue between them.

The intention to rupture a social representation is also relevant to exploring how individual’s position the UK’s global relations via differing map projections. The aforementioned map projections used in study one offer contrasting interpretations of the UK’s global positions (e.g.: the UK is either at the centre or on the periphery of the world stage). Therefore, exposing the interviewees to new information on the UK’s global status which requires them to either modify an existing representation or reject the stimulus material. Considering these differing aspects together, social representations theory offers specific advantages for the research questions explored in this thesis. Specifically, an insight into self-world and self-other relations which are valuable for answering both of the research questions. That said, it is also important to address the potential limitations of social representations and how this relates to the research.

2.3.1. Social Representations: Addressing the Conceptual Limitations

The first consideration here is the frequent criticism of social representations theory as simply being too ‘ambiguous’ (Valsiner, 1998). That social representations are overly broad and fail to offer a level of context specificity (Billig, 1988). Indeed, it is certainly the case that social representations are not a deductive model with operationalized guidelines which can be tested. However, Marková (2000) argues that complex social phenomena are not easily reduced into simple propositions. Moreover, considered in the triadic asymmetry context of self-other-object, social representations are inherently volatile and will likely transform over time (Jovchelovitch, 1996). Indeed, Liu (2004) argues that social representations are inherently dialogical in that they are dynamic and interdependent. Therefore, are sensitising rather than definitive concepts which have the potential to change in response to new information in a relevant discursive context. Batel and Castro’s (2018) recent proposal that social representations are a compatible theory with the
field of discursive psychology highlights the theory’s potential for integration. Therefore, emphasising the theory’s conceptual clarity as a potential integrative model in the context of a 30-year debate on the compatibility of social representations and discursive psychology (Jovchelovitch, 2018).

Another criticism relevant to this thesis is the argument that social representations theory diminishes, or misunderstands, a human capacity for reflexivity (Jahoda, 1988). That is to say, the public are framed as passive actors trapped within an existing framework of social knowledge. Moreover, McKinlay and Potter (1987) argue that social representations do not acknowledge the individual’s capacity for social shifts in response to changing traditions and history. As a counterpoint, Voelklein and Howarth (2005) argue this criticism is reductive in that it focuses solely on society’s influence on the individual, rather than also considering the dialogical epistemology of social representations. That is to say, an internal dialogue in which social representations may be re-constructed and re-presented. Indeed, Kadianaki and Gillespie (2014), correctly reject the criticism that social representations deny individual agency. Instead, they propose that, alongside objectification and anchoring, social representations can change via a process of self-reflection (i.e.: a person understanding how they represent their own representations). This process of self-reflection occurs either through social interactions, a shift between contexts, or the rupture of a current representation. Therefore, whilst individuals will likely be enthralled to a social representation during talk/action, a period of self-reflection creates a capacity for reflexivity not acknowledged by the aforementioned criticisms.

A third criticism is Potter’s (1996) assertion that social representations offer insight into how action is influenced but are not themselves a part of the action. That there is a disproportionate focus on cognitive implications to the detriment of acknowledging wider social influences. However, Howarth’s (2007) research on the experience of black pupils in British schools offers evidence to suggest teacher’s social representations influence racialised encounters both in thought and action. Moreover, the implicit assumption in Potter’s critique is that such processes are cognitive. In reality, research in a variety of contexts, e.g.: Portuguese Luso-tropicalist assumptions (Valentim and Heleno, 2018), Finnish collective memory (Hakoköngäs and Sakki, 2016) and UK’s Brexit discourse on social media (Tong and Zuo, 2021), shows these processes do have social and ideological factors alongside cognition. Furthermore, when compared with psychology theories that only consider the relations between separate domains (i.e.: individual and
social), social representations actively challenge this dichotomy (Verheggen and Baerveldt, 2001). Specifically, as social representations align with a dialogical understanding of the mind (Caillaud, 2016; Marková, 2000), cognition is considered as social-cultural and, thus, beyond reducing to the level of the individual.

2.4. Exploring the Explanatory Potential of Dialogical Positions

Given this research’s ontological commitment to the multifaceted capacity of the individual, the following considers how this assumption can be explored via dialogical positions. Dialogism (or dialogicality) is, in simplified terms, the proposition that knowledge is a contextual and dynamic phenomenon which emerges from dialogue between differing (both real and imagined) perspectives (Marková, 2016). Based initially on the ideas of Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) these were developed in different academic domains by Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur and Martin Bubur to challenge the idea that the self is an isolated subject (Ellis and Stam, 2010; Malpas, 2018; Lipari, 2004). Indeed, a dialogical approach offers a counterpoint to any scientific community which emphasises the individual at the expense of the wider contextual environment (Gillespie, 2011).

Linell (2015) argues dialogicality acknowledges that the process of meaning-making is interdependent on the relational dynamic with others. Specifically, that an individual’s utterances are derived from what has been said before and what is anticipated to come during the process of sharing knowledge (Teachman, McDonough, Macarthur, and Gibson, 2018). This is in opposition to rationalist assumptions of shared knowledge which assume individual rationality is the primary knowledge source, and shared knowledge is secondary (Gellner, 1998). Alongside both Mead’s philosophical pragmatism and Hegel’s dialectics, Bakhtin’s proposition ultimately inspired a variety of theories and approaches on the nature of self (Grossen and Orvig, 2011). The following sections briefly explore these different approaches and consider the relevance to this research’s aims.

The term ‘dialogical approach’ is something of a misnomer in that no singular, unifying concept exists. That is to say, a variety of different approaches reside within the banner of ‘dialogical’, with varying assumptions and ideas. Zittoun (2014) identifies four independently developed considerations applicable to dialogicality. These are as follows: (1) Beyond individual-based ontology: An individual is considered within a relationship context (the world, another
interlocuter, etc.), (2) Dialogicality as an epistemological stance: Each individual lives in a world of other’s words (which can be in tension), (3) Forms of Dialogue: Dialogicality are the conversations and interpersonal communication which emerge (be it with another, the self, super-addressee etc.), and (4) Dialogical Self Theory: Focus on inner-dialogues and the multiplicity of I-positions within the individual. It is important to note that these different approaches are also combined due to their complementary nature. For this research, each of the four approaches possess relevant aspects to the exploration of sustaining dialogue among politically polarised citizens. That said, of specific interest is the concept of dialogical positions which, in principle, aligns with Dialogical Self Theory (DST). However, as DST is typically applied in therapeutic interventions (Hermans, 2001; Hermans and Hermans-Jansen, 2001), it may not offer an entirely relevant comparative context for exploring political discourse in polarised contexts.

Instead, focusing on the wider concept of dialogical positions (specifically, I-, We- & They-positions) seems salient to the dynamic of political discourse. Principally, as dialogical positions can often be ‘identity related’ (i.e.: the position ‘overlaps’ with a political identity) (Zittoun, 2014). This focus on the public’s capacity to adopt dialogical positions rejects the presumption in social science for self-contained individualism (Richardson, Rogers, and McCorroll, 1998) The understanding here is that an individual comprises of multiple versions that create a complex, multi-narratively structured self. These self-narratives, alongside the person’s lived experiences, create a dynamic interplay from which I-positions emerge (Prokopiou, Cline, and Abreu, 2012; Raggatt, 2007). These are ever-shifting, self-adopted positions which influence how the individual engages with themselves and others in discursive contexts.

An I-position is a ‘voiced position’ in which an individual’s perspectives are constructed, be that on the positions own terms or in responding to an external context (Raggatt, 2000; Vee, Dobber, and Oers, 2018). As discussed in the introduction, a dialogical I-position is considered in two contexts: (1) Active positioning (in which the individual positions themselves) or (2) Passive positioning (the individual is positioned by others in a relevant discursive context). This latter position can also evoke an 'answering position' (i.e.: either agreeing or disagreeing with the contextual positioning of another) by the individual being positioned (Hermans, 2015). In this regard, the concept acknowledges that meaning-making between both the self and other individuals is an intersubjective process of shared and conflicting positions (Gillespie and Cornish,
This capacity for understanding complexity within the individual could be advantageous for understanding place-person relationships with the geographical environment. Principally, due to the subtle distinctions in the type of relationship a citizen may have with their home environment (Mannarini, Rochira, and Talò, 2012; Vidal, Valera, and Peró, 2010). Therefore, considering this dialogicality acknowledges the complex potential influences a place-person relationship may have on the individual. Alongside I-positions, Mahendran’s (2018) research on We- & They- positions have been found to offer insight into an individual’s self-other relations with the public. Specifically, who the individual aligns with or distances themselves from when engaged in relevant discourse. To be clear, We- & They- positions are not merely in-/out- group alignments in a different guise, but assume individuals have the capacity to consider the public creatively. For example, individuals have the capacity to align themselves (i.e.: assume a we-position to adopt the voice of another) with those who have vastly different migration experiences (Mahendran, 2013; Markovà, 2003).

Mahendran (2018) proposes six different We- & They- positions, which are as follows: (1) Avant-Garde position (future-oriented): Ahead of the public and showing an energetic drive to want to shape the public’s action, (2) Advocating position (future orientated): Speaking, diplomatically, on behalf of the public who are misunderstood or without a voice, (3) Distancing position (static-co-present): This position is adopted to distance themselves from the public, (4) Segmenting position (static – co-present): This position is adopted to generalize the public along clearly defined differentiations, (age, ethnicity, etc.), (5) Homesteading position (dynamic-co-present): The public are assumed to be integrated in a protected home-space which is reliable, and (6) Progressive position (dynamic-co-present): This position possess a linear, progressive narrative in which the public are not static, but mobile. Considered together, this thesis proposes that understanding how individuals adopt these positions offers a context for exploring how dialogue could be sustained. Principally, due to the assumptions of dynamic positionality and an acknowledgment of the importance of wider contextual influences.

In exploring polarised political discourse, the assumption here is that conflicted, even contradictory, interactions move beyond Cartesian assumptions of a singular subjective self within
a contained context (Marková et al. 2007). Important to note that the proposal here is not to suggest that a citizen may effortlessly shift between starkly different political positions (e.g.: liberal to fascist). Rather, that those engaging in discourse have the capacity to adopt various positions in relation to one another if consistent with macro-political narratives (Andrews, Kinnvall, and Monroe, 2015). Indeed, it is important to reiterate that the positions adopted by interviewees are directly related to their social representations (i.e.: common-sense knowledge) (Gonçalves and Riberio, 2012; Staerklé, Clémence, and Spini, 2011). Gillespie and Martin’s (2014) Position Exchange Theory (PET) proposes that, in moving between positions, individuals develop levels of psychological discourses and, thus, become dialogical. Moreover, Gillespie and Martin propose that discursive exchanges in the social world are interdependent on one another (e.g.: teacher and pupil, doctor and patient, etc.). As outlined in the thesis’s introduction and detailed extensively in Chapter Three (section 3.7.2), this is highly relevant to this research’s aim to explore polarising political discourse.

The proposal here is that vexed political interactions are inherently interdependent in that both interlocuters provide the other with an opposing force (e.g.: a free-market libertarian debating a socialist on government interventions). Therefore, exploring the discursive dynamic between polarised citizens on the dialogical positions they adopt could offer some insight. For example, exploring if shared or conflicting I-positions can influence discursive interactions between interlocuters. Therefore, determining if there are any specific dialogical positions which are especially relevant in creating a context for interlocuters to engage with one another. It could also allow researchers to note if frequently sharing positions creates an ‘accumulative impact’ on the interlocuters ability to sustain dialogue. It is important to acknowledge that this focus on dialogical positions in the context of polarised political discourse is highly novel. Moreover, applying this concept in a real-world context among polarised political individuals adds an additional level of novelty. In the context of this research, dialogical positions seem highly relevant as a potential means of exploring both research questions. However, it is valuable to consider some potential limitations with dialogical positions and the implications for this thesis.

2.4.1. Dialogical Positions: Challenges and Considerations

Given the earlier critique of shared-identity models (Chapter One, section 1.4.1), it is important to consider if dialogical self-labelling is merely self-identity with a different name, a distinction
without a difference. Dialogical practitioners themselves (Lyra, 1999) have critiqued positions as sometimes being limiting labels not aligned with the creative dimension of the dialogical dynamic. Indeed, it is certainly the case that individuals will adopt dialogical positions which overlap with core identities (be it class, race, gender etc.). Akkermann and Meijer (2011) argue that dialogical positions incorporate the social influence of identity in acknowledging the differing voices which emerge from an individual during discourse. Dialogical researchers have explored identity within this dynamic framework in a variety of contexts: learning (Ligorio, 2010), self-narrative (Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann, 2000) globalization (Hermans and Dimaggio, 2007), and in anthropological research (Meiji, 2008).

This thesis proposes that dialogicality captures processes which are entirely distinguishable from any ‘identity with a different label’ criticisms. Principally, as this research focuses on internal self-world relations and how these manifest into dialogical positions. As depicted in figure 2.1, social representations are the ‘ground’ from which dialogical positions can be adopted (Gonçalves and Riberio, 2012). This combination of self-world and self-other narratives alongside lived experiences offer a dynamic interplay for how a person engages with both themselves and others (Hermans and Kempen, 1993). Thus, are sensitive to the potential for conflicting, even contradictory, political narratives which may emerge from this dynamic interaction. Understanding identity offers substantial explanatory insight when acknowledging an individual’s political imperatives (e.g.: radical feminist, social conservative etc.) (Sindic, and Condor, 2014). However, a focus on binary group identity affords less insight into the dynamic capability of the individual in discursive political contexts. Such a focus also has a diminished capacity for considering the impact of conflicting political views and the potential impact on discursive exchanges.

Another criticism is that dialogicality offers a substantially broader conceptualisation of the self when compared with other psychological fields (Greenwald et al, 2002; Kühnen and Oyserman, 2002). The criticism here is that I-positions lacks conceptual clarity on the boundaries of the self and risk overly emphasising the importance of external relations. Firstly, this is, arguably, a modernist, western conception of the self when compared with non-WEIRD cultures (Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan, 2010). Indeed, a long-term bias towards emphasising the norms in WEIRD cultures has been a limiting influence on social psychology research for decades (Haidt, 2012). Secondly, it is certainly not inconsistent for psychological theories to explore the potentially
permeable aspect of the self. For example, concepts such as the relational self (Anderson and Chen, 2002) and shared reality experiences (Higgins, 2000) consider engaging with others to be a key part of the meaning-making process. This thesis proposes that understanding dialogical positions actually offers greater insight on the self by considering both internal and external as possessing equally influencing potential.

A third criticism here is that dialogicality is irreconcilable with traditional approaches to personality which emphasise the importance of traits. That is to say, dialogical positions overly fragment the individual without acknowledging the potential for a unification of self. However, a dialogical counter-argument is that the self ‘re-centres’ through participation and engagement in a relevant context. Indeed, research in various differing social contexts (Akkermann and Meijer, 2011; Cameron, Maslen, and Todd, 2013; Kuusela, Hirvonen, Aromaa, and Eriksson, 2020) shows dialogical positions actually highlight a consistency of self. That, via engagement in a relevant discursive context, dominant I-positions emerge which impact on self-other relations. A key feature of this research’s second study is the assumption these core positions can be ‘re-evoked’ in a relevant discursive context. Whilst this assumption is consistent with the concept of dialogical positions, empirical evidence is limited with only Silvia, Fernández-Navarro, Gonçalves, Rosa, and Silvia’s (2020) study indicating this could be the case. Therefore, this second study implicitly challenges the concept of dialogical positions by exploring if understanding I-positions at different points in time aligns with a unified self. The next section argues the third important factor for exploring sustaining dialogue is to identify in the individual’s chronotopic understanding of their discursive engagements. Specifically, where in time (be it past, present or future) and space (be it local, national or international) individuals position themselves and others (Woolard, 2012).

2.5. Chronotopes: Understanding a Political Positions Within Temporal and Spatial Boundaries

This section argues that exploring the interviewees’ temporal/spatial meaning-making offers further potential insights relevant to this research. Understanding why interviewees are evoking specific temporal and spatial connections may offer insight into migration-mobility narratives and/or place-person relationships. Specifically, in terms of how a temporal legacy from previous political issues may impact the individual’s relationship with their geographical environment. Furthermore, understanding the temporal and spatial connections made by interlocuters on the
polarising issue of Brexit may offer insight into how dialogue is (or, indeed, is not) sustained between them. In this regard, the concept of chronotopes has a distinct relevance to both of the research questions.

A chronotope is a literary conceptual metaphor devised by Mikhail Bakhtin in 1937 that aligned with contemporary developments in physics (Bemong and Borghart, 2002). Bakhtin neglected to offer a definitive definition which, as Holquist (2008) highlights, has resulted in a plethora of meanings that are often ambiguous. In literal terms, the word chronotope means time-space (i.e.: a unit which is indivisible and functions as an analytical tool in literature) (Bakhtin, 1981). This thesis aligns with Marková and Novaes’ (2020) conceptualisation of a chronotope which is defined as: (1) An epistemological organising principle for human activities, and (2) Possesses a set of dialogical features that are temporally and spatially interconnected in daily thinking. For example, research (Zittoun, 2008; Zittoun et al. 2013) exploring life narratives found chronotopic representations to be a highly prevalent feature of the interviewees’ meaning-making. For this thesis, a key consideration is the extent to which chronotopic representations are meaning-making features when discussing contextually relevant political issues.

Although a chronotope is a unified concept involving both temporal and spatial aspects, the following considers them individually to explore the concept’s relevance to political discourse. Previous real-world research acknowledging a political movement’s temporal-focus highlights the value chronotopes can have on meaning-making. Blanton (2011) found Oklahoma black community activists evoked temporal-connectivity between previous racist municipal policies and the consequences on current environmental issues when soliciting local government support. Such meaning-making has also been found among Castilian political protestors and their temporal-orientated objections of Catalanian independence signifiers in Spain (Woolard, 2012). For the paired discussions in study two, this type of temporal meaning-making could be important for understanding if the interviewees are discursively ‘locating the issue’ in different temporal contexts. Indeed, the transitory nature of political events means that positive or negative narratives can often be created depending on the temporal emphasis. For example, the UK-EU trade negotiations (prevalent news at the time of this thesis’s fieldwork) could either be narratively framed as a warning for the UK’s perilous future global relations or merely a temporary period of instability before future prosperity.
Alongside temporal meaning-making, research indicates that a spatial-focus is also important for meaning-making among those in highly political contexts. Davidson’s (2007) interview-based research with former East-Germans found they evoked spatial chronotopes when discussing the current political climate. For example, in discussing German citizenship, Eastern Germany is described as Hier (‘here’), a still-existing space. In contrast, drüben (‘over there’) or im Westen (‘in the West’) is used to discuss a unified Germany. Such insights into how interviewees engage politically with their environment have also been found among activists. For example, activist group Occupy Wall Street reorganised corporately-owned public spaces using spatial-chronotope symbolism (Perić, 2015). Exploring and understanding this spatial focus in the context of the UK-EU relationship could be relevant. Principally, as the UK-EU referendum, both explicitly and implicitly, asked questions on the nature of home and who ‘belongs’ in a particular space (Cassidy, Innocenti, and Bürkner, 2018; Georgiadou, 2019; Ranta and Nancheva, 2019). Indeed, this has been exacerbated by COVID-19 discourse on the centrality of home (Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021a) and the new symbolic meaning of national borders as containment measures for the virus (Bozorgmehr, Saint, Kaasch, Stuckler, and Kentikelenis, 2020; Liu and Bennett, 2020). In this regard, there does seem to be evidence to suggest that political narratives are chronotopic, thus offering an additional level of insight into an individual’s self-world relations for both research questions.

2.6. The Ontology and Epistemology of the Research Questions

After considering this thesis’s ontological and epistemological assumptions, the research questions can now be revisited with this new understanding. As outlined, the questions are: (1) Do either (A) Migration-Mobility or (B) Place-person relationships, influence how individuals position the UK’s global relations? and (2) Are there I-positions which can sustain dialogue between interlocuters during polarising discussions on the UK’s global relations? The first study has a dual purpose in that aiming to answer the first research question also creates the foundation for pairing interviewees together on shared/conflicting dialogical positions. Therefore, providing a relevant conceptual context for understanding how the interviewees could sustain dialogue on vexed political issues.
2.6.1. Research Question One

The first part of this research question focuses on exploring if migration-mobility experiences influence how individuals position the UK’s global relations. The ontological commitment here is that individuals have the capacity to speak of integration beyond archetypal migrant/non-migrant troupes. The assumption being that when citizens are brought into dialogue with official categories, they have the capacity to diffract from oppositional categories (e.g.: migrant/nonmigrant) to a spectrum of context relevant positions (Mahendran, 2021). This can manifest as citizens adopting the voice of migrants (Mahendran, 2013) or refugees defying official categorisations intended to impose an ‘outsider’ status (Mahendran, Magnusson, Howarth, and Scuzzarello, 2019). That an individual’s migration-mobility experiences are considered dynamic and relational to context may offer distinctive insights into how they engage with positioning the UK globally.

The first question also explores the potential impact of an individual’s place-person relationship and how this influences positioning of the UK’s global relations. This research is committed to the idea that a place-person relationship is an on-going negotiation between an individual’s sense of self and their experiences with the environment. In this regard, a place-person relationship is considered dialogical in that it is dynamic, complex and, at times, creates contradictory self-world relations (Akkermann and Meijer, 2011). Therefore, the assumption here is that study one may capture the importance of a residents’ place-person relationship with their geographical environment through discursive interactions. Moreover, this dialogical focus affords an exploration of the interviewees’ place-person relationship through both explicit utterances and other voices that are evoked (e.g.: community members, critics of their hometown, etc.). The focus is to then identify if this relationship influences how individuals’ position the UK’s global relations. Answering both aspects of this first question offer a dialogical foundation for pairing interviewees together to explore if they can sustain dialogue.

2.6.2. Research Question Two

As discussed, the second question aims to understand how individuals could sustain dialogue during politically polarising discourse. To reiterate, exploring dialogical positions in the context of polarising political discussions is highly novel as it is applying these ontological assumptions in a real-world context. The assumption here is that an ontological commitment to dialogicality offers potential insight in this regard. In contrast with self-contained individualism, a person
comprises of multiple versions of different self-narratives relative to the discursive context. The combination of self-narratives, lived experiences, and specific discursive contexts create a dynamic interplay which are understood as dialogical positions (I-, We- & They-). The assumption here is that vexed political interactions between two interlocuters are inherently interdependent (i.e.: they provide each other with an ‘opposing force’). Therefore, exploring the potential influence of dialogical positions (e.g.: shared or conflicting positions) on a polarising discursive dynamic could offer novel insight into how dialogue could be sustained in these vexed contexts.

2.7. Conclusion

The ontology of this thesis assumes that the public possess a multi-positional capacity as political actors which manifests in discursive exchanges. In turn, this offers an epistemological value in providing knowledge which understands the individual within the context of a relational whole. This research’s dialogical commitment affords the opportunity to understand an individual’s self-world and self-other relations via social representations, dialogical positions (I-, We- & They-), and chronotopes. Thus, providing an ontological framework for exploring the two research questions: (1) Do either of the following factors: (A) Migration-Mobility or (B) Place-person relationships, influence how individuals position the UK’s global relations? and (2) Are there I-positions which can sustain dialogue between interlocuters during polarising discussions on the UK’s global relations? The next chapter focuses on reviewing the literature from which the two research questions were developed. The key focus here being the important factors which may influence how the public position the UK’s global relations. The chapter also introduces the Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model and its dialogical commitment to exploring how polarised individuals could sustain dialogue.
Chapter Three: Sustaining Dialogue on Polarising Political Issues - Exploring the Factors Influencing How the Public Position the UK’s Global Relations

Introduction

As this thesis explores how individuals sustain dialogue on the UK’s future global relations, Chapter Three considers the factors relevant to exploring this preoccupation. The focus here is on discussing the development of the following two research questions: (1) Do either of the following factors: (A) Migration-Mobility or (B) Place-person relationships, influence how individuals position the UK’s global relations? and (2) Are there I-positions which can sustain dialogue between interlocuters during polarising discussions on the UK’s global relations? The chapter is divided into three parts to explore the factors which led to the development of the two research questions. The first part (sections 3.2 – 3.2.2) offer insight into understanding how differing personal migration-mobility experiences influence how individuals position the UK. The second part (sections 3.3 – 3.3.2) shifts focus to explore the role of the place-person relationship as an influencing factor on how the public consider the UK in a global context. Specifically, how residents in contrasting coastal and urban areas engage with their geographical environments. The third part (section 3.5 – 3.6.1) considers the public’s capacity for political discourse (e.g.: deliberative polls and mini-publics research) before outlining the Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model (3.7). The focus here being on understanding how the following: (1) Internalised (political worldviews), (2) Interactive (dialogical positioning), and (3) Dimensional (chronotopic engagement), could offer insight into how polarised individuals sustain dialogue.

3.1. Research Aims and Objectives: An Overview

Prior to discussing the research questions, it is worth reiterating aspects of the thesis here for the purposes of clarifying the research and its aims. As discussed in Chapter One, this thesis argues that the public are politically polarised on the issue of the UK’s global relations because of two factors. Namely, polarising narratives which delegitimized sections of the public and the broader social media context in which the issue of Brexit was discussed. This has created both an ideological and affective political polarisation which assumes bad faith on the part of the ‘opposing side’. This thesis aims to explore how polarised citizens can sustain dialogue when discussing this vexed political question. This thesis’s ontological assumptions on the multifaceted positional
capacities of the public are a guiding principle for this research. The study’s first aim is to understand a person’s dialogical positions on relevant issues that may influence how they position the UK’s global relations. Study two will then pair interviewees together on both shared and conflicting positions relating to this issue to explore sustaining dialogue. This first and second parts of this chapter discuss the value in exploring both migration-mobility experiences and place-person relationships to understand how individuals position the UK globally.

3.2. The Influence of Migration-Mobility on the Public’s Positioning of the UK

As explored in Chapter One (section 1.2), social and political psychology research has been especially focused on explaining the UK-EU referendum outcome. However, as Lee, Morris, and Kemeny (2017) correctly note, the general influence of mobility (or, indeed, a lack of mobility) has been underexplored by political psychologists. This is somewhat curious in that it has been found UK citizens with a higher mobility develop broader social networks (Oishi, 2010) and experiences (Gordon, 2017) which are likely to foster a globalist outlook. That is to say, endorse a future context in which the UK engages in transglobal relationships, which is certainly relevant to the Brexit discussion. Indeed, in this UK-EU referendum context, Lee, Morris, and Kemeny (2017) found limited mobility experiences had a small influence on support for leaving the EU. However, it would be unwise to draw a simplistic ‘immobility = anti-EU isolationism’ conclusion from this finding. Indeed, Leave-voters may argue they are actually more outward facing as they voted for the UK to develop global relationships beyond the remit of the EU trading block (Sathyanarayana, 2017). These contrasting positions possess an inherent tension which may which be worthy of further exploration. Principally, regarding the conflicting self-world relations in which both sets of voters consider themselves to be outward facing citizens on the UK’s global relationships.

An issue with previous research which explores migration-mobility is in how the concept is explored. Shuttleworth, Finell, Bjarnason, and Stevenson (2021) explored mobility using the OCEAN (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism) personality traits model as a proxy for mobility due to previous correlational research (Rentfrow, Jokela, and Lamb, 2015). It can be argued focusing on the OCEAN personality traits could be problematic due to limitations with model itself, such as substantial inter-generational (Beck,
Condon, and Jackson, 2019) and cross-cultural inconsistencies (Laajaj et al. 2019). However, even putting such concerns aside, seeking linear correlations on the complexities of personal mobility experiences is somewhat limiting (Cangià and Zittoun, 2020; Jovchelovitch, Priego-Hernández, Dedios-Sanguinetti, and Nogueira-Teixeira, 2020). Specifically, as such probability sampling neglects to consider a citizen’s capacity for evoking mobility narratives that align more with experiences (Bourke, Abreu, and Rathbone, 2018), self-world relations (Mahendran, 2018), and/or imagination (Zittoun, 2020).

The other challenging factor in exploring mobility is not only the individual’s personal experiences/narrative, but also their perceptions on the mobility of others. In this regard, there seems to be a prevalence among mainstream social psychology research to focus on either pro- or anti-immigration views (Bjarnason, Stevenson, Shuttleworth, and Meckl, 2019; Kirkwood, McKinlay, and McVittie, 2014). Whilst there are research contexts in which this is certainly relevant, such binary categorisations fundamentally fail to capture the human potential for complexity (Bakhtin, 1981). Indeed, a particular risk is that the multifaceted, culturally embedded reality of the citizen is not acknowledged due to this focus on binary categories (Weinfurt and Moghaddam, 2001). In contrast, Bakhtin-inspired dialogical approaches focus on how the culturally-embedded-self engages with social knowledge in the public sphere (Mahendran, 2013). Therefore, offering a multifaceted context for considering the public’s capacity for engaging with issues of otherness when considering mobility (Markovà, 2003). That is to say, understanding how public narratives are being authored, who is being addressed, and what social representations are being used to engage in dialogue on the issue. The next section proposes that understanding the multifaceted capacities of citizens offers a potentially interesting avenue for exploring mobility and its influence on positioning the UK.

3.2.1. A Dialogical Alternative: The Migration-Mobility Continuum

The first step in exploring the influence of mobility is to consider an individual’s self-world relations. Research on ‘continuation of self’ narratives among migrants defies other people’s positioning of them as either a threat (Obradović, Power, and Sheehy-Skeffington, 2020) or as perpetually ‘out of place’ (Hanson-Easy and Augoustinos, 2011). Indeed, Bourke, Abreu, and Rathbone (2018) found that migrants possessed a positivity about the future and considered any ‘discontinuation of self’ experiences as nondetrimental. Moreover, Kadianaki, O'Sullivan-Lago,
and Gillespie (2015) show migrants have the capacity to resist the voice of others and re-define their sense of self. Given such findings, it is worth considering what the ontological assumptions a dialogical approach offers this thesis in exploring mobility experiences. To this end, Mahendran’s (2013) Migration-Mobility Continuum embodies the assumption that, when citizens are brought into dialogue with official categories, they are likely to engage in a process of ‘diffraction’. That the positions they adopt can diffract from oppositional categories (e.g.: migrant/nonmigrant) to a spectrum of context relevant positions (Mahendran, 2021). To be clear, this is a process which emerges from interpretive analysis rather than an individual acting on the motivation to diffract categories. The MMC’s degrees of migration are on a 10-point continuum that is broadly categorised as non-mobile, low migration-mobility, or high migration-mobility (See Figure 4.1 in Chapter Four, section 4.5.2.2). The continuum is a dynamic and relational so citizens may move along the continuum at different stages in their mobility experiences, regardless of any externally defined status (Mahendran, 2018).

Dialogical research of migration-mobility shows the public speak of integration from positions which transcend archetypal migrant/non-migrant troupes. For example, refugees who defy official categorisations that are intended to denote their current status (Mahendran, Magnusson, Howarth, and Scuzzarello, 2019). Moreover, research on right-wing populism (Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021b) shows even citizens with low migration-mobility (MMC 1) still have the capacity to speak from the position of a migrant for rhetorical purposes. Moreover, those with higher migration-mobility experiences are not necessarily ‘transglobal homemakers’. For example, Mahendran, English, and Nieland (2021a) also found that other factors, such as spiritual beliefs, provide a complex picture when exploring an individual’s self-world relations and personal mobility narratives. Considered together, a key advantage with the MMC is that it allows for an understanding of migration-mobility among UK citizens beyond the binary migrant/non-migrant (Mahendran, 2013). Therefore, offering a means of focusing on internal or returnee migration experiences among UK citizens and how this may influence their relationship with the UK. The argument here is that understanding the influence of migration-mobility on self-world relations means moving beyond binary groupings. Thus, affording citizens the capacity to be dynamic and, sometimes unexpected, in their personal mobility narratives. This widens the context in which migration-mobility experiences can be understood and the potential influence it may have on how UK is positioned globally.
3.2.2. Migration-Mobility Continuum: Challenges and Considerations

As with any approach, exploring migration-mobility with the MMC offers specific challenges that must be considered. The first challenge is the potential for over-estimating an individual’s personal capacity for mobility with the MMC. That differentiating between citizens exercising their mobility freedom and those who have high migration-mobility as a consequence of larger political-social factors. For example, white citizens have been shown to possess a greater capacity for movement in Europe compared with other groups (Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021a; Sheller, 2017). Hence, understanding this mobility-limiting dynamic beyond the usual social economic status metrics (Savage, Cunningham, Reimer, and Favell, 2019) is a factor which should not be underestimated when exploring a citizen’s narratives. Another challenge, as Mahendran (2021) acknowledges, is in designing studies/materials which allow citizens the opportunity to explore their dialogical capacities. This research’s first study uses the MMC’s questions (see Chapter Four, section 4.5.2.2) as a means of creating a discursive space for interviewees to reflect on their migration-mobility story. However, these questions alone do not achieve the primary aim of study one. That being to explore how migration-mobility influences how interviewees position the UK and its global relations. These questions must be combined with the other stimulus materials (e.g.: differing map projections) to comprehensively explore how interviewees position the UK.

A third challenge is that there is limited previous research on the efficacy of the MMC to explore the public’s migration-mobility narratives. This is not a criticism of MMC as it is a relatively new analytical lens (Mahendran, 2013) which originates from ontological commitments (i.e.: dialogical) outside the social psychology mainstream (Shotter and Billig, 1998). Moreover, the most recent studies involving MMC (Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021a; Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021b) could be broadly defined as residing within the small, though developing, field of political psychology (Huddy, Sears, and Levy, 2013). However, whilst political psychology is certainly relevant to this thesis, the lack of applied MMC research in other contexts or academic fields is somewhat limiting. Principally, as no research exists which highlights the potential parameters of the MMC outside the narrow field of dialogical practitioners in a UK context. However, despite these challenges, the MMC offers a complementary means of exploring if/how migration-mobility could influence a citizen’s positioning of the UK. The second
part of this chapter now shifts to consider how the public’s place-person relationships can also offer insight.

3.3. Exploring an Individual’s Place-Person Relationship with their Geographical Environment

Given the UK-EU referendum was, at a fundamental level, about the UK’s global relations, the public’s place-person relationship is worth considering as a potential influencing factor. Christopher Green’s (2017) mapping of each area of population density and the number of eligible referendum voters per kilometre offers insight here. Green’s map (figure 3.1) offers specificity by highlighting pockets of substantial support for leaving the EU in high or low populated areas. Through this prism, a pattern of Leave-support emerges among residents in north-east and southern coastline towns when compared with densely populated urban areas. Indeed, Sensier and Devine (2017) also found that patterns of Brexit-support became apparent when considered in the context of specific geographical environments. However, Brexit-focused research on differences between geographical environments has been primarily focused on exploring a rural-urban dichotomy (Johnston, Manley, and Jones, 2016).

Such research typically explores the factors influencing rural communities’ support for Brexit, be it voting to protest (e.g.: in response to a modernising Conservative Party) (Brooks, 2019), voter disengagement (Abreu and Jones, 2021) or social and economic precarity (Neal, Gawlewicz, Heley, and Dafydd Jones, 2021). Curiously, there seems to be limited research exploring differences in the person-place relationship between urban and coastal communities in the context of Brexit. Jennings, Lent, and Stoker (2018) found that, compared with urban residents, provincial-coastal residents possessed the most optimistic Brexit outlook on the potential benefits of leaving the EU (specifically, increased NHS funding and reduced immigration numbers). However, this is based on British Election Study data conducted prior to the outcome of the UK-EU referendum. Therefore, does not capture the public’s relationship with the current political climate (i.e.: a post-Brexit and COVID-19 context). That said, focusing on potential differences between coastal and urban areas offers a potentially interesting avenue of exploration.

3.3.1. Coastal and Urban: Exploring the Geographical Divide

Given the predominantly urban-rural focus of Brexit research, exploring differences between coastal and urban communities offers novelty. The specific focus here is on exploring if residing
in an urban or coastal community influences how the public position the UK’s global relations. To this end, the coastal region of Seaburn in the north-east city of Sunderland offers an interesting case study. Since 2016, Sunderland has been consistently portrayed as a ‘Brexit Heartland’ (Wallis, 2019) by the media due to a high proportion of support for leaving the EU. Indeed, Seaburn, is an almost archetypical northern community for the, somewhat simplistic, ‘left behind’ narrative. That is to say, the community consists of a high percentage of white residents (94.8%) with a low number of graduates (18%) and an aging local population (Rushton, 2017). The city of Sunderland has become a key place of interest for social science researchers seeking answers as to the referendum outcome. Both quantitative (Abrams and Travaglino, 2018; MacDougall, Feddes, and Doosje, 2020) and qualitative (Bromley-Davenport, MacLeavy, and Manley, 2019) research found economic deprivation, social marginalisation, and threat-perceptions of further EU integration to be fostering anti-EU sentiments. Indeed, even among young north-east coastal residents, who are typically more pro-EU (Brown, 2018), the interviewees presented a portrait of dispiriting decline (Wenham, 2020).

Whilst such research offers insight on the factors influencing the referendum outcome, there seems to be a limited focus on the actual place-person relationship among coastal residents. That is to say, the residents’ relationship with their coastal environment is not considered a key influence but merely the backdrop to an important single issue. For example, highly specific research (Agnisola, Weir, and Johnson, 2019) exploring the impact of UK-EU fishing deal on coastal resident’s attitudes to Brexit. Whilst certainly a relevant issue to those involved, this issue-specific focus offers limited insight into the broader influence of residing in a coastal environment. Hopkins and Dixon (2006) argue that understanding the complex relations between space and identity are important for political psychology. Specifically, a resident’s person-place relationship as it offers a sense of who belongs where and what constitutes home. These are two issues which are especially salient in a post-Brexit era as the UK must embark on new global relationships. Overall, there seems to be a distinct gap in the literature regarding the potential influence of a coastal environment on how residents position the UK in a post-Brexit context. The next step now is to consider a relevant urban environment which could offer a relevant comparator for Sunderland/Seaburn.

In this regard, the Scottish city of Dundee offers both comparable population demographics (density, ethnicity, and age) (Dundee City Council, 2016) and a similarly vibrant industrial past
(Nomis, 2017). However, Dundee also provides stark political differences which offer the potential for meaningful comparison. Indeed, Dundee residents expressed favorable support for remaining in the EU (59.8%) when compared with Sunderland’s leave vote (61.3%) (Electoral commission, 2016). Moreover, as the place with the largest support for 2014’s referendum on Scottish independence (57.3%), Dundee has become known as the ‘Yes City’ (Morelli, 2020). This support for independence offers an additional influencing factor given the continuing political divide between England and Scotland on the issue of the union (Johns, Henderson, Larner, and Carman, 2020). Mitchell and Henderson (2020) argue, correctly, that recent (pre-covid) political discourse on the England-Scotland union has been, in part, driven by the consequences of the UK-EU referendum outcome.

Figure 3.1. 2016 UK-EU referendum vote by electorate population density (Green, 2017).
As Scotland voted to remain in the EU (Higgins, Ridge-Newman, and McKay, 2018), the outcome of the 2016 UK-EU referendum has been cited (Henderson, Jeffery, Liñeira, Scully, Wincott, and Wyn Jones, 2016) as an exemplar of the political divide between Scotland and England. In this regard, Sunderland/Seaburn and Dundee offer shared and contrasting features on which to explore if place-person relationships could be an influencing factor on how the public position the UK’s global relations. To be clear, this is not comparing the culture of the cities, but, rather, exploring the residents’ place-person relationships with their geographical location. Thus, creating a foundation from which to pair interviewees together to explore the second research question in study two. As discussed later in this chapter (section 3.7), the dialogical three-step analysis offers a means of understanding an individual’s multi-positional capacity to achieve this. The next section considers this analysis and the broader dialogical approach in the context of exploring the influence of geographical environment. Specifically, the potential benefits of understanding the place-person relationship within a context which combines dialogicality with standard place identity measures.

3.3.2. Identity and Environment: Exploring the Place-Person Relationship

This chapter proposes that exploring the place-person relationship in both coastal and urban locations could offer insights into the potential influence of geographical environments. However, to do so, it is important to consider the key social psychology concepts which have previously explored this relationship. In this regard, place identity research offers insight into studies exploring the relationship between individuals and their geographical environment (Twigger-Ross, Bonaiuto, and Breakwell, 2003; Vidal, Valera, and Peró, 2010). Place identity is a social constructivist theory which emphasises the individual’s subjective experience with their geographical environment (Haartsen, Groote, and Huigen, 2000). The assumption here is that a geographical environment is, or can be, considered a symbolic category influencing how residents define themselves (Stedman, 2002; Wester-Herber, 2004). The theory has been explored in a variety of different academic disciplines, from the environmental sciences to public administration (Peng, Strijker, and Wu, 2020). Typically, social psychology research emphasises the importance of both social and place-based bonds to create a sense of self (Reicher, Hopkins, and Harrison, 2006). As discussed later in this section, this is not to be confused with place attachment which is the endorsement of external features (pleasing landscape, social hubs etc.) rather than focusing on the self (Brown, Perkin, and Brown, 2003).
Research shows a strong place identity seems to be a key factor in shaping a Psychological Sense of Community (PSOC) (Mannarini, Rochira, and Talò, 2012; Obst and White, 2007). Moreover, it seems to be an influence on a variety of different issues, be it satisfaction with the urban landscape (Jaśkiewicz, 2015), architectural evaluations (Foroudi, Balmer, Chen, Foroudi, and Patsala, 2017) or negative attitudes to visiting tourists (Wang and Chen, 2015). As discussed, a substantial body of literature exists which highlights the importance of place identity in understanding an individual’s relationship with their geographical environment. However, place identity has a substantive conceptual challenge which is important to address here. That being the confusion over what is meant by place identity and what distinguishes this from place attachment (Hidalgo and Hernández 2001; Pretty, Chipuer, and Bramston, 2003). Whilst originally the domain of geography and architecture (Altman and Low, 1992), psychology’s adoption of the place-person relationship concept has resulted in a post-positivist emphasis. This focus seems to have produced research which interchangeably uses identity and attachment attitudinal measures, thus creating difficulties when defining concepts (Hidalgo and Hernández, 2001, 2002; Vidal, Valera, and Peró, 2010).

Hernández, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplacea, and Hess’ (2007) research offers some clarity on this issue by determining how identity and attachment manifests among residents alongside other influencing factors (e.g.: length of residence and birthplace). It seems that a strong place identity is more prevalent among those born in the area, whilst place attachment is higher among those who relocate to the area. Further explorations of this measure show place-salience can also have an impact on both intensity of identification (Bernardo and Palma-Oliveira, 2013) and overall satisfaction (Bernardo and Palma-Oliveira, 2016) with the local neighborhood. Therefore, those with a strong sense of place identity will likely retain that sense of self in different contexts (e.g.: an urban dweller with a coastal childhood may still consider themselves to be a ‘coastal person’) (Rollero and De Piccoli, 2010). Given these subtle distinctions between identity and attachment, the use of these measures in exploring residents’ relationships with their geographical environment offers a specificity of insight. As the dialogical approach is an ontological commitment rather than a method, it is not incongruous to incorporate quantitative measures (Ligorio, Loperfido, and Sansone, 2013). However, it is important to articulate the need for incorporating both these measures into a dialogical approach to explore place-person relationships.
The analysis for study one involves a three-step dialogical process which identifies (1) Social representations, (2) Dialogical positions (I-, We- & They-), and (3) Chronotopes (Spatial/Temporal). As discussed, the MMC questions offer an insight into an individual’s migration-mobility, which includes how they position themselves in their current ‘mobility story’. Exploring the place-person dynamic dialogically in the first instance offers a means of identifying the residents’ capacity for complex geographical relationships. Indeed, this dialogical approach offers an understanding of complex, even contradictory, self-world relations (Akkermann and Meijer, 2011; Hermans and Hermans-Jansen, 2001) which may exist between interviewees and their geographical environment. This thesis proposes that a place-person relationship is not an ‘endpoint’ but, rather, an on-going negotiation between an individual’s sense of self and their current location. The design for study one uses a concurrent nested mixed methods design (see Chapter Four, section 4.1.1) in order to contextualise the interviewees’ dialogical positions with Hernández, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplacea, and Hess’(2007) place identity and attachment measures.

This offers a means of understanding and, if appropriate, categorising the interviewees’ meaning-making responses. Therefore, offering a greater insight into how much of their geographical environment is a part of their identity. This is especially valuable in instances where the interviewee may offer ambiguous or contrasting verbal responses. For example, an interviewee offers an affirmative answer to a question regarding how much their current geographical environment defines their sense of self. Yet may actually focus on external indicators (landmarks, social interactions, etc.) which are more consistent with an attachment to the area. Therefore, the additional measures offer a confirmatory process for contextualising this discourse alongside the dialogical analysis. Moreover, this process allows the urban and coastal residents’ place-person relationships (be it identity or attachment) to be contextualised in relation to one another. Whilst this may not be required, the option to consider broader locational differences could be advantageous when initially exploring the data. This then offers a broader comparative context for understanding similarities (and differences) which emerge between locations, as opposed to exclusively focusing on differences between individuals within the locations (see Chapter Five, section 5.2.4).
3.4. Research Question One: The Influencing Role of Migration-Mobility and Geographical Environment

This thesis proposes that the UK’s global position is in the process of being reimagined in the aftermath of the 2016 UK-EU referendum. The first research question seeks to explore if coastal (Seaburn/Sunderland) and urban (Dundee) residents’ migration-mobility narratives and place-person relationships influence how they position the UK globally. Such an understanding creates a context for pairing polarised interviewees together to explore sustaining dialogue on this vexed issue. As outlined in the first part of the chapter, the interviewees’ migration-mobility narratives offer an explanatory insight beyond binary migrant/non-migrant concepts. Be it as UK citizens with differing mobility narratives (e.g.: internal migrant, returnee migrants, etc.), or as those with the capacity to speak as a migrant. This research’s dialogical approach acknowledges the myriad of diverse migration-mobility experiences that exist among UK citizens. Therefore, offering a greater capacity for exploring if and how migration-mobility experiences influence the public’s positioning the UK’s global relations. Alongside migration-mobility, an individual’s place-person relationship also offers a relevant context for exploring if this factor is important for understanding how the public position the UK. The specific concurrent nested design offers a means of exploring this potential influence via both dialogical and self-report measures, as detailed in Chapter Four (section 4.1.1). The third, and final, part of this chapter discusses issues relevant to answering the second research question. The initial focus here is on exploring the public’s potential for engaging in political discourse and its implication for this thesis. The focus then turns to introducing the Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model’s three distinctive components for understanding how polarised citizens could sustain dialogue.

3.5. Exploring How the Public Could Sustain Dialogue on Polarising Political Issues

The second research question aims to explore if there are shared dialogical positions which can sustain dialogue between politically polarised citizens. To reiterate, the question is: Are there I-positions which can sustain dialogue between interlocuters during polarising discussions on the UK’s global relations? This thesis proposes that a dialogical assumption on the multifaceted capacity of the individual offers potential explanatory insight. Specifically, as a prism for exploring the shared common-sense understandings that could create a context for interlocuters’ engaging in
dialogue on a vexed political issue. The aim here is not to reach a consensus but, rather, enhance the interlocuters’ capacity for sustaining dialogue and engage in ‘reasonable disagreement’. Therefore, creating a context for both parties to feel mutually respected and offer an opportunity to understand a different worldview. As the next section focuses on discussing the ‘public’ in the context of political dialogue, it is important to define terms. This thesis aligns with Bamberg and Andrews (2004) in proposing that the public position themselves in relation to narratives that are considered to be positioning them. Indeed, Mahendran (2017) argues that engaging (both methodologically and theoretically) with individuals as the public allows their on-going situated narratives to be foregrounded.

3.6. Exploring the Public’s Capacity for Political Discourse

It is important to acknowledge here that pairing together strangers on the basis of dialogical positions is highly novel. Indeed, even the limited previous research on paired discussions has only done so between those sharing experiences of motherhood (Thomson, Kehily, Hadfield, and Sharpe, 2011) or to observe patterns of disagreement between friends in Israeli higher education (Blum-Kulka, Blondheim, and Hacohen, 2002). In both cases, a high level of specificity on the discursive interactions between interlocuters was observed, which offers an advantage over focus group settings (discussed further in Chapter Four, section 4.1.2). However, it is the case that research on how the public engage in political discourse is dominated with studies in focus group settings. Consequently, this chapter must consider what relevant insights can be garnered from research in such settings. The relevance here is that this second research question assumes the public have the capacity to engage in political discourse with one another on polarising issues. Therefore, exploring research which focuses on how the public discursively engage with each other on politics will likely be insightful for study two.

3.6.1. The Public as Political Actors in Polarised Contexts

The initial point of interest here is to consider the public’s capacity for engaging in political discourse. Specifically, to understand if such engagement is the result of internal motivations, a consequence of specific contextual factors, or, indeed, both? To this end, Deliberative Polls research offers insight as the process explores the public understanding of policy information and how this manifests in shared discourse (Fishkin, Shanto, and Luskin. 2005). These polls involve representative samples of the public who are grouped together and led by an expert offering timely
advice during the discussions (Muhlberger, 2005). It is important to note that the majority of deliberative polls are framed to the participants as a process aiming for collective consensus (Gastil and Levine, 2005). That is to say, the participants understand, from the outset, that consensus is the purpose of the deliberation process. The additional aims of a deliberative polls process are: (1) increase the group’s knowledge of policy issues, and (2) increase political participation in an online context (Price and Cappella, 2002). Further research (List, Luskin, Fishkin, and McLean, 2012) offers empirical evidence that this deliberation process protects against ‘majority cycling’ (i.e.: majority rule) outcomes during political debate. Principally, as the process can move the discourse towards a group alignment by framing the median choice as a compromise option. However, this was only effective in low to moderate salience issues, rather than the highly salient issues synonymous with polarising political discourse.

Whilst valuable as a means of empowering the public to engage in political discourse, the process of deliberative polls is not without issues. As outlined, the deliberative polls are framed to the participants as an exercise in reaching a collective consensus. This is an issue as evidence (Felton, Crowell, and Liu, 2015) indicates framing public discourse as a consensus achieving exercise is overly influencing. Principally, because it influences the interlocuters to increase their use of caveats when expressing their personal opinions. This is the antithesis of this research’s second study which aims to create a context for the interviewees to express polarising views to one another. A more general critique of deliberative polls, which even its practitioners acknowledge (Gastil, Bacci, and Dollinger, 2010), is that the ‘direction’ of opinion change can be difficult to ascertain. That is to say, opinion changes can be the result of a temporary shifting of values to align with the group (Mitofsky, 1996; Posner, 2003). Moreover, Siedlecki, Szwabinskil, and Weron (2016) found that artificially unified opinions often occur due to conformity and consensus-seeking behaviour on the part of the deliberators. Primarily due to the influence of collective opinion, a desire to confirm, and/or the facilitating expert’s influence on the outcome (Anderson and Hansen, 2007). Thus, impeding participants from engaging in explicit discursive exchanges on difficult or polarising political issues.

These limitations challenge any notion that deliberative polls offer the most effective means of exploring polarised political exchanges. However, it does offer important lessons for researchers seeking to create a context for exploring discourse on vexed political issues. Namely, to ensure the deliberators are not burdened with the expectations of the researcher prior to engaging in polarising
political discourse. Another area of research which offers exploratory group work on dialogue in polarised political contexts is Mini Publics. Whilst harboring many similar features to the deliberative polls (i.e.: representative samples, experts offering advice), the focus here is on how citizens offer policy recommendations via the process of group engagement (Carson and Schecter, 2017). Relevant to the interests of this thesis, mini-publics’ research shows citizens have the capacity to develop substantive knowledge for the purpose of engaging in complex political debates (Elstub, 2014). Also relevant is evidence (Grönlund, Setälä, and Herne, 2010) that those who engage in a discursive process on a political issue can change their opinions. This indicates that partisan political practices are not necessarily the default mode for engagements with others on critical issues.

It is also relevant for study two’s paired design to consider the potential limitations in exploring political discourse in the context of small group meetings. Specifically, meetings which are in-person and conform to a preconfigured structure for the discussion (Elstub, Johnson, Puttick, and Wilkinson, 2018). It seems important to acknowledge that the dynamics of group deliberation may not align with the realities of everyday political discussions. That is to say, the artifice involved in deliberative polls or a mini-publics’ assembly is difficult to reconcile with either passionate online debates or more casual, everyday political discussions. For example, the intervention of an expert is an element which, potentially, limits authentic engagement. Indeed, Anderson, and Hansen (2007), found such an influence increases the desire for individual conformity to group opinion. This is an important consideration for this thesis as exploring the second research question involves facilitated paired discussions. Therefore, acknowledging that a researcher/facilitator can, potentially, reduce authentic engagement during political discourse is important.

Indeed, it likely the case that this issue cannot be entirely negated as an unintended influencing factor. As Lazard and McAvoy (2017) note in their evaluation of qualitative researchers’ practices, reflexivity on the researcher’s own influence can be somewhat neglected. In this regard, a key ontological advantage of the dialogical approach is that it creates a reflexivity on the part of the researcher as to their potential influence on discourse (Poopuu, 2020). As discussed in Chapter Four (section 4.1.2), the questionnaire structure for the paired discussions stimulates (rather than directs) discourse between the interviewees. Therefore, offering a discursive space for interviewees to re-adopt core dialogical positions from study one entirely of their own volition. The next section proposes a dialogical-focused theoretical model for exploring how and why
polarised political actors could sustain dialogue. It is important to note that this is not a predictive model, but a dialogically-focused, preliminary step in how to explore the discursive dynamic between polarised individuals in real-world contexts.

3.7. Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model

The Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model (DSTM) model offers three distinctive, but complementary, components for exploring dialogue between politically polarised individuals. As originally proposed in English and Mahendran (2021), these components are (1) Internalised (political worldviews), (2) Interactive (dialogical positioning), and (3) Dimensional (chronotopic engagement). The first component (section 3.7.1) argues that exploring the dynamics of political discourse must involve understanding the social representations inherent in an individual’s political worldview. Secondly, section 3.7.2, proposes that understanding the multifaceted capacity of individuals is achieved most effectively by focusing on dialogical positions. Finally, the third component (section 3.7.3) argues a dimensional (spatial/temporal) knowledge offers an understanding of where in time and space individuals are engaging with the polarising political issue. Moreover, these three components are the basis for the dialogical three-step analysis used to explore the interview transcripts (see Chapter Five, section 5.2).

3.7.1. Internalised: Understanding the foundations of a political worldview

The assumption guiding this first component is that the public consist of political actors who possess the capacity to engage in the democratic process. As discussed, mini-publics research (Carson and Schecter, 2017; Elstub, 2014) shows that the public can deliberate complex political issues given a relevant context. However, understanding the ‘mechanism’ in which individuals interact with others based on their self–world relationship with the political climate is a vital element. To this end, this first component focuses on the role of social representations and how this manifests into common-sense knowledge in a discursive context. As discussed in Chapter Two, this is not simply identifying an individual’s political worldview (e.g.: socially conservative, liberal, etc.), but, rather, their assumptions about the world and what they presume is shared by others (Jovchelovitch, 2019). This assumed knowledge on how the world functions then becomes fundamental to the individual’s political worldviews (Marková, Linell, Grossen, and Orvig, 2007). This includes both self-other and self-world representations, such as a focus on liberal migration.
policies (Kinnvall and Lindén, 2010), caring communities (Salvatore, Fini, Mannarini, Veltri, Avdi, and Battaglia, 2018), or ordering society with a social-justice emphasis (Staerklé, 2013).

Understanding these social representations offers a potential foundation from which to explore political debate between polarised interlocuters. For example, understanding hegemonic representations (i.e.: shared by most group/nation members) affords an understanding of their shared expectations regarding the political world and how this manifests in discourse. In contrast, understanding their polemic representations (i.e.: things symbolising societal controversies between-group conflicts) offers potential insight into moments of dissensus. That is to say, understanding if misaligned social representations increase the likelihood of dissensus moments between interlocutors. In such instances, analysing the discursive outcome of such moments offers a means in which to understand why dialogue is not sustained. If an individual’s worldview is the sum of their social representations (Elcheroth, Doise, and Reicher, 2011; Staerklé, Clémence, and Spini, 2011), then understanding the interviewees self-world, self-other relationships with the political world offers a first step in understanding any consensus/dissensus moments.

3.7.2. Interactive: positionalities between polarised interlocuters

This second component focuses on how these social representations manifest in discursive exchanges. As Chapter Two (section 2.4) outlined, this is understood via the I-, We- & They-positions adopted during dialogue. This moves beyond a Cartesian perspective and its assumptions of a singular subjective self (Marková, Linell, Grossen, and Orvig, 2007). Instead, individuals are assumed to have the capacity to engage in multifaceted dialogue in which they receive, reject, or resist various subject positions (Davis and Harré, 1990; Kinnvall and Lindèn, 2010; Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021b). That is to say, the self is dialogical in that is comprises of multiple versions which are responsive to differing discursive contexts (Sullivan, 2012). This thesis proposes that a person’s political ‘sense-making’ emerges from discursive exchanges understood in the context of differing dialogical positions. To this end, a key theory for this second component is Gillespie and Martin’s (2014) Position Exchange Theory (PET). This theory is based on the following three assumptions: (1) Social positionings are context dependent and interdependent on another position, (2) Social positions influence action and thought, and (3) Social positions are constructs moved between by individuals in relation to context.
The first assumption, based on Durkheim (1983), is that society consists of a multitude of differing social positions that are interdependent on one another. This is relevant to the thesis as political discourse arguably contains inherent interdependent positions, be it by advocating or rejecting the other’s ideology. This interdependence offers a means of exploring political discourse and if these interdependent positionalities are creating an environment in which dialogue is being sustained. PET’s second assumption focuses on how these positions can influence thoughts and actions. This, potentially, has value as a means of understanding the real-world implication of dialogical positions. For example, understanding the extent to which an interlocuter’s initial voiced thoughts in responding to another then manifest into further discursive action. Be that to actively heighten or ameliorate moments of political discord during vexed political discussions. Therefore, offering further insight on the types of positioning interlocuters engage in when discussing vexed political questions.

Finally, the third assumption that social positions are adopted in relation to context (Harré and Langenhove, 1991; Martin and Gillespie, 2010) is also important for this research. To be clear, this is distinct from the first assumption in that the focus here is on a relationship between the larger political context and related positional shifts (as opposed to focusing on interdependent positions). For this research, the focus is not only on the discursive context between the interlocuters, but the wider political climate (i.e.: UK-EU transition period, COVID-19 first wave). Specifically, the impact of current macro-narratives on salient political issues and the positional voices adopted by individuals when engaging in such discourse. Considered together, the inherent assumptions in Position Exchange Theory offer a valuable framework for DSTM’s second component. Specifically, as a means of exploring how self-other relations manifest into discursive positions and how these could sustain dialogue in real-world domains.

3.7.3. Dimensional: The chronotopic boundaries of polarised dialogue
The model’s third component focuses on understanding the chronotopic nature of the interlocuters’ political positions. That is to say, where in time (past/present/future) and space (national/local/group boundaries, etc.) do they position themselves. As introduced in Chapter Two (section 2.5), the assumption here is that an individual’s political narratives are, intrinsically, chronotopic in nature. That is to say, the process of meaning-making requires the individual to understand political events in time/space (Mahendran, 2019). As discussed, chronotopic representations are
often evoked to contextualise personal-political narratives. For example, research on populist narratives (Brescó de Luna, 2017; Mols and Jetten, 2014) found chronotopic meaning-making was used to present the need to recapture a ‘lost past’ in order to legitimise stringent immigration policies. Moreover, Mahendran, English, and Nieland (2021b) found that nationalist’s meaning-making evoked hegemonic chronotopes with a ‘golden past-stalled present-great future’. This was used to offer justifications for supporting populist political policies which attempted to return to an imagined time. Moreover, it seems identifying chronotopic representations evoked during political discourse does offer a potential for understanding meaning-making between interlocuters (Davidson, 2007). Therefore, offering an additional level of contextual understanding when exploring the discourse in study two’s paired discussions.

In the context of this thesis, understanding the interviewees’ time/space relationship in a post-Brexit and COVID-19 context is especially relevant. Holman and Grisham (2020) argue convincingly that the collective trauma of the global pandemic has likely disrupted the public’s relationship with the future. A future which, for some, was already precarious due to the uncertainty associated with the ongoing UK-EU transition period negotiations. Moreover, research (Holman, 2015; Holman and Silver, 1998) indicates that disrupting the time flow of personal narratives (as was the case with the UK’s covid-induced national lockdowns) creates temporal distortions of other events. Therefore, the chronotopic representations of COVID-19 could be impactful on Brexit’s salience as a priority political issue. Furthermore, the role of spatial chronotopes among ideologically invested political citizens is also highly salient in this digital age.

Specifically, as a key feature of social media is its emancipation from the physical realm and its emergence as a trans-national discursive platform unlike anything previously experienced. Schwartz and Halegoua (2014) found social media users’ digital expressions of self (the ‘spatial self’) indicated a new relationship with the spatial domain when untethered from the limitations of a physical reality. In contrast, everyday political discussions in the recent past used to be limited to those who shared the same physical space, be it family, friends, or other members of the local community. In contrast, these new digital platforms have shifted the paradigm for how individuals engage in political discourse (Gorodnichenko, Pham, and Talavera, 2018; Spohr, 2017). This dual reality (i.e.: the real and digital) presents, arguably, a greater need to consider if such experiences manifest in real-world political discourse, and what that means for the ability to sustain dialogue.
3.7.4. Summary
The Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model proposes a conceptual foundation for exploring how polarised citizens engage in discourse on vexed political questions. To reiterate, this is not a predictive model, but a preliminary step in re-considering how to explore the discursive dynamic between polarised individuals in real-world contexts. This proposal here is that DSTM offers the possibility to explore the multifaceted complexities of dynamic interplay between interlocuters. This is achieved by focusing on three key components: internalised (political worldviews), interactive (dialogical positioning), and dimensional (temporal/spatial chronotopes). Therefore, offering the capacity to explore a pairing’s social representations of the issue, the positions they adopt in the context of this common-sense understanding and where in time/space the utterances are located. Together, this offers a context for exploring the conditions which could facilitate how interviewees sustain dialogue during vexed political discussions. In this regard, DSTM offers a first step in providing a theoretical alternative to previous social psychology models for exploring this issue.

3.8. Conclusion
This thesis is preoccupied with exploring how individuals could sustain dialogue on the vexed political issue of the UK’s future global relations. This chapter proposes that understanding both an individual’s migration-mobility experiences and place-person relationships offers potential insight here. For the former, dialogically exploring an individual’s migration-mobility understands the multifaceted capacities of the individual to speak from different mobility positions. Therefore, widening the context in which migration-mobility experiences can be understood regarding its influence on positioning of the UK’s global relations. The place-person relationship is also explored dialogically, but with an additional focus on the identity/attachment dynamic between residents and their coastal or urban environment. Understanding differences in how the UK is positioned globally also offers a foundation from which to pair interviewees together. Therefore, creating a context to explore how citizens could sustain dialogue on such polarising political issues.

To this end, the Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model offers a dialogical means of understanding how dialogue could be sustained between polarised individuals. Specifically, by acknowledging the importance of an individual’s political narratives based on their self-world relations (i.e.: social representations), how these manifest in discourse and with whom they align
or reject (I-, We- & They- positions) (Mahendran, 2018). Furthermore, the broader temporal and spatial context (chronotopes) in which individuals discuss vexed political issues offer an additional level of explanatory insight. Considered together, DSTM offers a, potentially, multi-faceted exploration of political discourse which moves beyond binary in-/out- group paradigms in complex, real-world contexts. This is a highly novel approach and moving from the theoretical to the applied is the central challenge for the next chapter. To this end, the opening chapter in part two offers a detailed consideration of these challenges and the decision-making process to overcome such difficulties.
Part Two
Chapter Four: Methodology and Study One Methods

Introduction

Chapter Four (section 4.1) begins by considering the methodological decision-making process for this research. The initial focus is on outlining the rationale (section 4.1.1) for the use of a concurrent nested mixed-methods approach to understand the participants’ place-person relationships. Study two’s quasi-experimental design is then discussed (section 4.1.2) to consider both the advantages and alternatives to this approach. The chapter then addresses (section 4.2) the broader parameters of the dialogical approach and its relevance to this research. Section 4.3 focuses on the potential advantages and challenges in exploring the first research question dialogically via semi-structured interviews within real-world contexts. Specifically, the dual-purpose of both answering the first research question and creating a dialogical foundation for pairing interviewees together for study two. This section also focuses on the importance of the interviewer-interviewee dynamic (section 4.3.1) before discussing the challenges in selecting complementary stimulus materials (section 4.3.2). The pilot interviews (section 4.4) are then briefly discussed with a focus on how the stimulus materials were developed for study one as a result of this process. Section 4.5 then details the procedure and methods used for study one before drawing final conclusions on the methodological decision-making (section 4.6).

4.1. Methodological Decision-making

The key consideration at this initial stage is to explore the methodological decision-making process for this research. To reiterate, this is two-study process which attempts to answer the following two questions: (1) Do either (A) Migration-mobility or (B) Place-person relationships, influence how individuals position the UK and its global relations? and (2) Are there I-positions which can sustain dialogue between interlocuters during polarising discussions on the UK’s global relations? Study one aims to answer the first research by exploring if these two factors influence how the UK is positioned in a global context. A secondary purpose is to create the foundation for pairing interviewees together on shared and conflicting dialogical positions. Therefore, creating the context for exploring how interviewees could sustain dialogue on vexed political issues. The methodological decision-making to explore both studies must align with the ontological assumptions outlined earlier. That is to say, a rejection of Cartesian assumptions on the stability of thought and action (Shotter and Billig, 1998). Instead, the research’s dialogical approach
focuses on ever-present dichotomies (good/bad, dark/light etc.) which Marková (2003) argues are fundamental characteristics of the human mind. Indeed, the decision-making process for this research is complicated by the novelty involved in pairing together individuals for politically polarising discourse.

4.1.1. Study One: A Concurrent Nested Mixed-Methods Approach
This section focuses on the decision to incorporate a concurrent nested mixed-methods design into study one to understand place-person relationships. The purpose being to offer a means of differentiating between identity and attachment signifiers when exploring the participants place-person relationships. A concurrent nested design prioritises one type of data, whilst the other is ‘embedded’ into this to offer a contextualising role (Castro, Kellison, Boyd, and Kopak, 2010). As briefly discussed in Chapter Three (section 3.3.2) and detailed in Chapter Five (5.2.4), the design for study one prioritises the dialogical positions adopted in response to three questions which explore the interviewees’ place-person relationships. The place identity and attachment measures then contextualise these discursive responses as being features of either identity or attachment. Thus, offering a context for understanding if the interviewee’s sense of self-identity is strongly aligned with their geographical environment (as opposed to merely being ‘attached’ to their current location). This design isn’t expected to provide data which can be generalised to a wider population. Instead, this explores if a place-person relationship influences how participants position the UK globally to answer the first research question.

This design offers a means of identifying any complexities in the interviewees’ self-world relations regarding their own geographical environment. The contextualising role of identity and attachment measures is particularly valuable in instances where interviewees may provide ambiguous or contradictory discourse in response to the interview questions. As outlined in the analysis process for study one (Chapter Five, section 5.2.4), the two responses together (i.e.: dialogical positions and self-report measures) can distinguish between identity and attachment to understand the individual’s relationship with their urban or coastal environment. Establishing a place-person relationship in the first instance offers a context for then exploring if this relationship has any impact on how participants position the UK during the map selection (section 4.5.2.4) and re-configuration tasks (4.5.2.5). This also offers a potential context for pairing together interviewees in study two on both shared and conflicting positions on the UK’s global relations.
Exploring place-person relationships by combining dialogical analysis and place identity/attachment measures would, in the broad definition of the term, be classified as mixed-methods (Freshwater, 2007). An essential feature of any mixed-methods design is the integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to answer a specific research question (Wu, Deatrick, McQuaid, and Thompson, 2019). Whilst it is certainly the case that dialogical research can involve quantitative methods, such as self-report questionnaires (Rowiński, 2008), it is not prevalent among dialogical practitioners (Ligorio, Loperfido, and Sansone, 2013). This aspect of study one risks being perceived as, to use Valsiner’s (2014, p. 4) expression, ‘assigning numbers to unquantifiable phenomena’. Therefore, not considered ‘dialogical enough’ to be engaged with as research with a dialogical ontology. Indeed, resistance could also emerge from researchers who consistently apply self-report measures based on post-positivist assumptions. Principally, as dialogical practitioners generally eschew the ‘mainstream’ social psychology assumption that casual factors and distal effects are linear regardless of the contextual complexities of the research. Therefore, it is important to offer clarification on this aspect of the research and its role in answering the first question.

Selecting a mixed-method design presents the possibility for a wide number of variants; for example, Tashakkori and Teddlie’s (2003) review noted 40 variations in the literature. However, Creswell and Plano Clark’s (2007) proposition of four major mixed-method designs (with variants in each category) offers a more manageable means of encapsulating the fundamental processes. These four mixed-method designs are as follows: (1) Triangulation, (2) Embedded, (3) Explanatory, and (4) Exploratory. Study one uses both qualitative and quantitative data in attempting to understand the nuances of the interviewees’ place-personal relationships with their urban or coastal environment. This knowledge can then be used to contextualise how/if this place-person relationship has any impact on the interviewees’ positioning of the UK’s global relations. However, study one’s process of combining dialogical positions alongside place identity and attachment measures does not entirely align with even the two most relevant designs; these being the triangulation and exploratory designs.

Whilst an exploratory design also focuses on using quantitative data to support qualitative findings, the quantitative aspect is typically conducted with different participants for the purpose of generalising the results to a population (Fetters, Curry, and Creswell, 2013). In contrast, study one
does not involve collecting data from a new sample, but actually uses a sub-sample to explore the second research question. The triangulation design typically provides an equal weighting for both quantitative and qualitative methods (Doyle, Brady, and Byrne, 2009), which is not the case for study one. Rather, the role of the quantitative data is to offer a means of contextualising and distinguishing between identity and attachment in the interviewees’ discursive responses. Moreover, an authentic triangulation design combines the data together to offer a novel output which, as both Bryman (2006) and Fielding (2012) note, is often not the case for research which claims to use this design. Therefore, it would be inaccurate to frame study one as a triangulation design as it will not combine the data together to create an entirely novel output. The most relevant mixed-methods approach for study one’s exploration of place-person relationships is the concurrent nested design.

In a concurrent nested design, both qualitative and quantitative data are collected in the same instance, before one set of data is prioritised whilst the other offers a contextualising role (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, and Hanson, 2003) (see Chapter Five, section 5.2.4 for specific examples from the data). The focus on embedding one set of data within the other (in the case of study one, quantitative within a predominantly qualitative focus) offers a means of enriching an understanding of the phenomena being researched (Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, Petska, and Creswell, 2005). Taguchi’s (2018) overview of mixed methods designs highlights the advantage of using a concurrent nested design. Specifically, for offering researchers a means of understanding the complex influence of environmental factors on individual worldviews. This is highly salient to study one’s exploration of the participants’ place-person relationships given the aforementioned ambiguities (Chapter Three, section 3.3.2) between place identity and attachment (Hernández, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplacea, and Hess, 2007; Vidal, Valera, and Peró, 2010). Study one’s design will explore if a dual understanding of an individual’s relationship with their environment offers insight into how (or if) a place-person relationship influences positioning of the UK.

4.1.2. Study Two: A Quasi-Experimental Design to Explore Dialogue Sustainment
The methodological challenge for study two is to focus on a design which creates a discursive context for participants to engage in politically polarising dialogue. The design for study two is that participants from study one are paired together on two shared dialogical positions and a, potentially, polarising issue. The shared positions and (potential) polarising issue are both based
on the participants’ dialogical positioning to the stimulus materials in study one. This pairing process is a quasi-experimental design in that the participants are matched on specific criteria in order to answer the second research question. Whilst randomly assigning participants is typical in experimental designs (Reichardt, 2009), a randomised pairing process would not align with the aims of this research. Principally, as the process of matching participants on shared dialogical positions is essential to answering the second research question. In such instances, a quasi-experimental design is advantageous for fieldwork in which randomisation is neither practical nor relevant to the aims of the research (Gopalan, Rosinger, and Ahn, 2020). The quasi-experimental design allows researchers to create knowledge based on real-world interactions which, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, is not always the case for research attempting to develop new dialogical theories (Hermans, 2001; Raggatt, 2007).

The process of pairing together participants on shared dialogical positions is entirely unprecedented in the domain of social and political psychology. Indeed, as mentioned in Chapter Three, (section 3.6) pairing together participants to engage in direct discourse is, in general, an atypical approach (Blum-Kulka, Blondheim, and Hacohen, 2002; Thomson, Kehily, Hadfield, and Sharpe, 2011). Furthermore, the focus on creating a context which could increase (as opposed to reduce) political polarisation between participants is also highly novel and contrasts starkly with other social psychology research (discussed further in Chapter Six, section 6.2). Indeed, psychology research typically focuses on which factors can be modified in order to reduce ideological or affective polarisation (Chu and Yang, 2018; Huddy and Yair, 2019). The non-random emphasis inherent in a quasi-experimental design allows a researcher to target specific shared positions or polarising issues. Therefore, creating a context for exploring distinctive positions which may have emerged in response to the stimulus materials in study one.

A potential issue with a quasi-experimental design is the question of external validity (i.e.: to what extent can these results be generalised?) (Rogers and Révész, 2020). Such generalisability issues can extend to a variety of different contexts, e.g.: generalising to the general population, the relevance of the findings to other research, or issues with how the research can be applied in real-world situations (McLeary, McDowell, and Bartos, 2017). Whilst section 4.3 considers generalisability issues regarding this research’s broader dialogical assumptions, the focus here is on a design which pairs participants together with a researcher who acts as both a moderator and an ever-present audience. Whilst clearly an artificial discursive context, the social media platforms
which host the majority of political discussions (e.g.: Twitter and Facebook) (Kubin and Sikorski, 2021; Zivkovic, 2021) also involve both a moderator and an audience (Kissas, 2019). Moreover, the paired discussions also align with social media platforms in that both actively increase political polarisation between those engaged in discourse (Bail et al, 2018; Cecan, 2019). In both contexts, the discursive dynamic for the paired discussions possesses enough similarities to offer applicability in real-world online scenarios. Given the novelty of these paired discussions, it is worth considering if a more established technique, such as focus groups, could also offer an effective means of exploring how participants sustain dialogue.

Focus groups are potentially relevant for this research as they are already used in different fields of political research (Cyr, 2019) and focus on discourse to illuminate political differences between individuals (Rabiee, 2004). In principle, exposing political differences between participants in such a context is highly salient to answering the second research question as it would likely create a relevant polarising context. In terms of politically polarising rhetoric, Andreouli, Greenland, and Figgou, (2019) show that focus groups do offer insight into how Brexit-based ideological-thinking manifests in discursive exchanges. However, there are specific issues which can emerge within focus groups that would be especially detrimental to this research. As noted by researchers who facilitate focus groups, dominant voices often emerge which risk reducing the plurality of opinions that may exist among the participants (Belzile and Öberg, 2012; Sagoe, 2012; Smithson, 2000). In contrast, the dynamics within a dyadic encounter are substantively different in that it allows individuals to adopt a variety of positions to replicate real-world scenarios (Mahendran, 2020). Moreover, paired discussions offer a more manageable level of participant interaction due to the limited number of voices. This is desirable as the process of understanding dialogical positions and exchanges is already a complex proposition with even two interlocutors.

Given the Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model is in the early stages of development, it is advantageous to limit the number of potential influences on political discourse. Principally, as the design of the study can then focus on a set number of core dialogical positions to offer a more detailed account of how (or if) this influences dialogue sustainment. Furthermore, as noted when discussing the public’s capacity for engaging in political discourse (Chapter Three, section 3.6), a genuine shift in political positions can be difficult to ascertain in group settings. Principally, as a group dynamic increases the likelihood of a temporary shifting of values typical of group conformity or consensus-seeking behaviour (Anderson and Hansen, 2007; Siedlecki, Szwabinskil,
and Weron, 2016). If such instances of consensus-seeking or conformity occur with the paired discussions, the simplified design affords a greater likelihood of the researcher capturing such shifts in real-time or later during analysis. The proposed paired discussions are not without their own challenges however and these considerations will be addressed in detail in Chapter Six (section 6.2). For this chapter, the focus now turns to broader considerations on the potential parameters of the dialogical approach when developing methods and its relevance to this research.

4.2. The Potential Parameters of a Dialogical Approach

The following section considers three key criticisms of the dialogical approach, which are as follows: (1) Methods cannot be easily developed which fully align with a dialogical ontology, (2) A dialogical approach offers limited theoretical generalisability, and (3) Examples of applied generalisability are severely lacking in dialogically-focused research. To contextualise the following criticisms, it is important to note that a dialogical approach is an ontological commitment rather than an established set of methodological research tools. In her extensive critique, Grossen (2011) proposes that it may not actually be possible to develop methods which entirely lend themselves to a dialogical ontology. Relevant to this thesis is Grossen’s focus on methodological issues when attempting to understand the multivoicedness of interviewees. The argument here, in simple terms, is that understanding the dialogicality of an individual’s discourse and its inherent multivoicedness is overly complex.

That is to say, no method can comprehensively explore Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1981) proposal that discourse is a ‘social heteroglossia’ (e.g.: two or more expressed viewpoints) consisting of different sources (be it from previous discourses, echoes of other voices, societal and/or media narratives, etc.). Moreover, Gillespie and Cornish (2010) argue that a researcher’s methodological decision-making can reduce multivoiced capacities to a monological voice. This is an important consideration; however, it is also worth noting that a monological voice may not be inherently negative if the context implies this is a function of the discourse. For, as Linell (2009) proposes, there are certain contexts (e.g.: religious, scientific, political propaganda) that intentionally eschew multivoiced expression in order to achieve a specific aim. Therefore, understanding that a purposeful singularity of voice could feature in political discourse is important. However, in such cases, reflexivity is essential to truly establish the difference between singularly-focused political positioning and methods which simply do not capture multi-voiced discourse.
Another potential limitation with a dialogical approach, in the context of this research, is the applied generalisability of any findings from study two. Specifically, the role of shared/conflicting dialogical positions as factors which could allow the participants to sustain dialogue. A justifiable criticism of research on dialogical positions is the lack of studies which focus on applying these concepts in the real-world. That is not to say such studies do not exist, for example research on the self-continuity of migrants (Bourke, Abreu, and Rathbone, 2018) or in a work environment (Kuusela, Hirvonen, Aromaa, and Eriksson, 2020). However, prominent dialogical researchers often use self-imagined examples (Hermans, 2001), philosophical vignettes (Gillespie, 2012), fictional narratives (Brokerhof, Bal, Jansen, and Solinger, 2018) or fictional characters (Raggatt, 2007) to explore dialogical positions. Indeed, even Gillespie and Martin’s (2014) own exploration of Position Exchange Theory (discussed extensively in Chapter Three, section 3.7.2) retrospectively applies the theories’ core principles to archival data.

This limitation is somewhat problematic from the perspective of contributing to real-world knowledge. Whilst the researchers’ intentions were likely not focused on exploring these dialogical concepts in real-world contexts, this thesis has an epistemological commitment to creating applied knowledge. Therefore, there is an obligation to explore dialogical positions in the real-world as the imperative here is to offer other researchers an intervention for sustaining dialogue. Specifically, necessitating an approach using dialogical concepts which is interventionist and transcends the theoretical domain. In this regard, the absence of substantive real-world research to better understand and contextualise the findings from study two is somewhat limiting. Alongside these broader considerations, it is important to focus on potential challenges inherent in using semi-structured interviews and stimulus materials for study one.

### 4.3. Dialogical Interviews: Challenges and Considerations

The focus on semi-structured interviews with stimulus materials was selected to meet the aims of this research and align with a dialogical ontology. However, that is not to say semi-structured interviews do not present their own specific challenges. Therefore, the purpose of the following section is to discuss both the benefits and potential limitations of semi-structured interviews and consider alternative methods. As stated in the introduction to this thesis, an important part of this research is to explore dialogical assumptions within real-world contexts. In this regard, it could certainly be argued that focusing on naturally occurring dialogue, as opposed to semi-structured
interviews, would offer a more relevant approach for study one. Principally, as participants are more likely to engage in performative discourse with an interviewer (Potter, 2004). Therefore, fieldwork which does not require direct input from a researcher offers a more accurate reflection of the world (Goodman and Spear, 2015). It can also align with a dialogical ontology as there is research (Wadensjö, 2004) showing naturally occurring discourse (in this case, the role of a translator in a justice system setting) can be explored dialogically and offer insights into relevant positions adopted. However, in the case of exploring the stated research questions, there would be substantial limitations in focusing on naturally occurring dialogue in study one.

As mentioned, study two’s quasi-experimental design requires a level of researcher intervention to create a discursive context for polarising dialogue on a specific issue (e.g.: UK’s future global relations). The risk with a non-interventionist approach in study one is that any discussions between participants could simply shift into non-polarising topics which would not explore dialogical capacities. Furthermore, the idea of pairing participants together based on an initial study of naturally occurring dialogue would be problematic for a variety of reasons. Firstly, a trusting interviewer-interviewee relationship would not have been developed. This is important as Kingsley, Phillips, Townsend, and Henderson-Wilson (2010) found in their semi-structured interviews with Aboriginal participants that a trusting dynamic is essential when discussing sensitive issues. Furthermore, the pairings are based on dialogical positions which emerge from responding to specific questions or stimulus materials (Chapter Six, section 6.2). The advantage in using set stimulus materials is that the discursive contexts can then be compared across interviews to garner further insights. Given the unprecedented nature of this research (e.g.: pairings based on dialogical positions), a level of specificity is essential to offer future researchers knowledge which can be applied to other real-world encounters in a political context. This level of specificity could not be achieved from naturally occurring data with the same certainty, which is problematic for the purposes of comparison and subsequent research.

Another alternative to semi-structured one to one interviews is to design an initial first study which focuses on group discussions. Whilst the group dynamics for mini publics and deliberative polls have been discussed (Chapter One, section 3.6) it is worth briefly consolidating thinking here. As outlined in section 4.1, study one has a dual purpose: (1) Understand if migration-mobility experiences and place-person relationships influence how individuals position the UK globally, and (2) Create a dialogical foundation for pairing interviewees together on shared and conflicting
positions to explore dialogue sustainment. These aims do not align with the purpose of deliberative polls which aim to increase a group’s knowledge and political participation (Price and Cappella, 2002). The purpose of study one is not to increase knowledge, but, rather, capture an individual’s knowledge and their subsequent dialogical positions in a specific discursive context. Moreover, the deliberative polls are framed to those participating as aspiring to achieve collective consensus within the session. This is the antithesis of this research which is stiving to explore if a discursive context exists for participants to achieve civil disagreement.

Mini publics focus on how citizens can offer policy recommendations to relevant stakeholders via the process of group engagement (Carlson and Schecter, 2017). Whilst understanding the dialogical positions adopted during discussions on political policy is likely to be insightful, research shows (Elstub, Johnson, Puttick, and Wilkinson, 2018) this process is not inclusive for those who lack knowledgeable or are apathetic about politics. This also does not align with study one’s aim (sections 4.5.1 & 4.5.2) to engage with a diverse range of narratives from across society (including those who did not vote in the 2016 UK-EU referendum). As discussed earlier in the chapter (section 4.1.2) paired discussions are preferable to focus groups for study two. However, it is worth considering if focus groups could achieve the stated aims of study one. It is certainly the case that focus groups afford researchers insight into political discourse on the issue of Brexit (Andreouli, Greenland, and Figgou, 2019). However, as previously noted, focus groups too often minimise certain voices due to a small minority dominating the discourse which is also problematic for study one. The issue here is that, to achieve the aims of study one, the design must afford the time and opportunity for in-depth discussions with all participants. As shown (Belzile and Öberg, 2012; Sagoe, 2012), group discussions do not always offer this potential for in-depth discussion, which is severely limiting. Principally, as both answering the first research question and pairing interviewees together relies on a substantive knowledge of the participants’ social representations and related dialogical positions.

Another option would be for study one to focus entirely on capturing attitudes to polarising issues on the UK’s changing global relations via self-report questionnaires. This would also offer a means of pairing individuals together based on both shared and contrasting attitudes to various political issues. However, focusing exclusively on this post-positivist method to understand the public’s political imperatives can fail to acknowledge an individual’s duality of thinking. Potentially, this approach underappreciates that the public may have the capacity to adopt an ideological flexibility
to changing circumstances and cultural pressures. For example, the frequently used political orientation scale (seven-points between strongly liberal and strongly conservative) is prevalent in a range of social and political psychology research. Be it, politically-orientated moral differences research (Graham, Haidt, Nosek, 2009), ‘fake news’ evaluations (Roozenbeek and Linden, 2019), or engagement with climate change issues (Schuldt, Rickard, and Yang, 2018).

Such a criteria creates the issue of spurious comparison (e.g.: ‘strongly liberal’ in relation to who or what?) and negates the possibility a person possesses a capacity for differing ideological positions relative to context. It assumes an individual will engage with every political issue from the same ideological place. An issue here is that this may not necessarily align with the participant’s lived reality when engaging with politically polarising issues. In the case of the 2016 UK-EU referendum, considering those who voted as a binary dichotomy (i.e.: a ‘remainer’ or a ‘leaver’) does not necessarily offer insight at the level of the individual. Indeed, it may fail to acknowledge that individuals can support an identical voting outcome for starkly different reasons. For example, those who voted to leave the EU on a Lexit principle, i.e.: leaving the EU to create the conditions for a socialist society (Guinan and Hanna, 2017), have different motivations to right-wing Brexit-supporters who wish to limit immigration (Wasowicz, 2018). Whilst this is a meaningful distinction for the Lexit-supporter in question, it should also be so for the political psychologist exploring the issue.

Of course, understanding Brexit-based voting intentions beyond a remain/leave binary is not the exclusive domain of dialogicality. However, the dialogical approach offers a capacity for understanding the individual’s multifaceted self-world relations (Loon, 2017). This aligns with Gillespie and Cornish’s (2010) argument that there is a prevalent methodological individualistic bias in psychology (i.e.: the individual as the only unit of analysis). Consequently, this, falsely, renders the relationship between place, society, and other people as unimportant. Focusing on dialogical positions (e.g.: family/community voices, media narratives, etc.) engages with the possibility that individuals have a multifaceted internal political self. One which can be influenced by a variety of different social and cultural factors. Therefore, the challenge is to select methods which can explore this potential and align with the aims of the research. One to one interviews allow researchers to ask participants questions and present stimulus materials to then explore their responses in real-time. Thus, offering the potential to capture the multifaceted political self on a variety of salient issues. The purpose of the next two sections is to consider the interviewer-
interviewee relational dynamic in this context and the challenges in selecting complementary stimulus materials.

4.3.1. The Interviewer-Interviewee Interpersonal Dynamic

An important consideration here is the researcher’s own role in the interviewer-interviewee interpersonal dynamic. The risk is that the multivoiced capacity of an interviewee can too readily become the monological voice of the researcher. That a researcher’s interview technique can diminish the interviewees’ capacity for multiple positionings by imposing limiting questions (Marková, Linell, Grossen, and Orvig, 2007). The purpose of the pilot interviews (section 4.4.) is to evaluate if the questions/stimulus materials allow the interviewees to, as Sullivan (2011, p. 2) notes, explore their ‘complex and conscious subjectivity’. That is to say, see if the interviewees engage in discursive positional exchanges which are not limited by either overly leading or closed questions. Silvia, Fernández-Navarro, Gonçalves, Rosa, and Silvia’s (2020) dialogical-based life history research is, like this thesis, a two-study process which re-engages with interviewees after a substantive period of time. Whilst different in research aims, their focus on semi-structured interview questions in which the interviewees lead the discourse has relevance here.

The structure of this research requires interviewees to engage with specific stimulus materials for the purpose of creating a relevant discourse context (section 4.5.2). However, once an interviewee is engaging with the materials, the questions can then become responsive to the interviewees specific discourse. There is a risk here that the interviewer pursues a line of enquiry which does not offer any relevant discourse for the wider aims of the research. However, the value of the dialogical three-step analysis (see Chapter Five, section 5.2) is that it has the capacity for identifying any positions adopted directly from irrelevant lines of enquiry. Of course, this does rely on the analyst possessing a sensitivity to discursive context and its impact on a person’s utterances.

Another issue is the researcher’s pre-fieldwork preparation and its potentially negative impact on discourse. The reality is that all research methodologies and methods are at risk of biased interpretation by those conducting the research. Be it the inherent subjectivity in qualitative-based interpretations of data (Rose and Johnson, 2020) or the researcher’s subjective expectations of the social world when selecting psychometrics in quantitative research (Rogers, Stenner, Gleeson, and Rogers, 1995). Various dialogical researchers (Frank, 2005; Poopuu, 2020) argue that any pre-
fieldwork research must inform rather than direct the study. Therefore, allowing researchers to be receptive to the dialogue without unconsciously directing the interview to a pre-determined outcome. That is to say, researchers must acknowledge their own potential biases and reject epistemological monologism, which assumes ‘objectivity’ on the part of the researcher (Lundh and Gøtzsche, 2008).

In this spirit of reflexivity, it is important to note my own previous academic education (e.g.: BSc & MSc) and research output is entirely quantitative-based. Therefore, it is especially important for me to possess an insight into any habituated thinking or assumptions which may conflict with a dialogical ontology. Such as focusing on ideas which align with ‘discovering’ a social phenomenon rather than exploring the potential for participants’ to engage in a negotiated, dynamic reality. That said, embarking upon this research from a quantitative-background also offers a perspective on the process which is unburdened by the conventions of qualitative-based research. Indeed, as Rettke, Pretto, Spichiger, Frei, and Sprig (2018) argue, this, potentially, creates a context for both novel-thinking and methodological rigour. Specifically in terms of designing research which moves beyond the more typical dialogical focus of life-narratives (Silvia, Fernández-Navarro, Gonçalves, Rosa, and Silvia, 2020; Zittoun et al. 2013). It is also relevant to note that I am a British, white, early forties male with working-class roots in the North-east, and who voted to remain in the European Union. For the latter, it is important to, as Collins and Cooper (2014) note, maintain a high level of self-regulation in discussing issues which may be personally offensive to my own politics (e.g.: factually baseless criticisms of EU immigrants when discussing Brexit).

In such contexts, the aim here is not to endorse nor deny the interviewee their reality, but to explore the factors which influenced such a position and, ultimately, its relevance to the research question. It is also important to acknowledge that gender can be a substantive influencing factor when conducting fieldwork interviews. Research indicates that female researchers face greater challenges in terms of expectations by participants. Indeed, female researchers (Devault, 1990; Rubin and Rubin, 1995) argue they are unfairly expected to avoid being either ‘overly aggressive’ (i.e.: merely presenting direct questions) or unprofessional by appearing overly hesitant to avoid overtly ‘male vocabularies’. Furthermore, interviewing members of the Seaburn/Sunderland community (i.e.: predominantly white and working-class) could be advantageous for researchers with a similar profile. Principally, as this offers a familiarity to the participant’s own lived
experiences within their community. As such, this could diminish the normalisation of middle-class values inherent in many social science fieldwork interactions (Mao and Feldman, 2018).

Another important consideration is the debate on whether political psychologists are obligated to possess a knowledge of political issues relevant to the fieldwork. In this regard, this thesis aligns with Aveling, Gillespie, and Cornish’s (2015) argument that a dialogical researcher should possess a substantial contextual knowledge prior to conducting research. Although it is important to assert that this knowledge must not manifest into directing the interviewees to a specific conclusion on the issue being discussed. As will become clear in Chapter Seven, my own knowledge on the UK Government’s breaking of international law via the internal market bill was an essential part of the discourse for two of the five pairings. This ‘informed but reflective’ stance seems advantageous here as there is a risk the interviewee may consider the interviewer a ‘more knowledgeable other’. That interviewees may perceive the interviewer as a ‘knowledge source’ for which they must offer the ‘correct answer’. Instead, the role of the interviewer in such discussions should be of someone who possesses the required political knowledge to facilitate discussion if invited by the interviewee (e.g.: they ask a confirmatory question on a political event prior to discussing the issue). Alongside these considerations on the interviewer-interviewee dynamic, the inherent challenges in selecting stimulus materials must also be addressed.

4.3.2. Selecting the Stimulus materials
The key feature of the study one interviews is that they are stimulus-led and, as such, aim to offer a relevant context for discourse on the UK’s global relations. This involves developing (or adopting from previous research) questions and devising new stimulus materials which allow this to occur. Therefore, creating the opportunity to explore the social representations from which dialogical positions emerge. Specifically, the hegemonic representations (shared by most other group members) or polemic representations (which symbolise societal controversies between-group conflicts) relevant to the Brexit debate (Höijer, 2011). To achieve this, the decision was made to conduct pilot interviews (see section 4.4) for the purposes of testing various different stimulus materials to answer the first research question.

The interviewees’ migration-mobility experiences and place-person relationships may be influencing factors on how they position the UK in a global context. However, the challenge is in selecting methods which foster an understanding of how individuals actually engage in globally
poisoning the UK. As outlined (Chapter Three, section 3.2), the potential influence of the public’s migration-mobility experiences is a somewhat underexplored area within the context of political psychology (Lee, Morris, and Kemeny, 2017). The Migration-Mobility Continuum questions offer a dialogical means of exploring how these experiences manifest whilst discussing polarising, Brexit-based political issues. Indeed, given previous real-world MMC research (Mahendran, 2017; Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021b) shows how the public speak of integration from degrees of migration-mobility, this was an obvious choice. However, attempting to understand place-person relationships and its potential influence on how the UK is positioned globally was a more challenging prospect.

To this end, map-oriented research seems to, potentially, offer distinctive insights into how citizens’ position their country of residence with neighbouring nations. For example, O’Loughlin and Talbot (2005) found that in asking Russian citizens to consider which former USSR nations are culturally aligned with their home nation, a distinctive geopolitical difference emerged. Namely, a split between young, affluent ‘Westernizers’ who accept the present-day borders and older ‘Eurasianist’ supporters who seek reunification with both Belarus and the Ukraine. Such findings indicate the value of maps as stimulus materials which reveal insights into citizens’ common-sense assumptions and projections of their nation’s global relations. Moreover, given the UK’s previous role as an empire, world maps also offer the potential to explore a citizen’s chronotopes for any temporal connections that may exist between historical legacy and contemporary issues.

For example, Parellada, Carretero, and Rodríguez-Moneo (2020) found historical and contemporary map projections of Argentina offer insight into layperson knowledge on the relevance of borders as a nation’s defining feature. Whilst utilised in geopolitical research (Vujakovic, 2019) the use of world maps as stimulus materials is, arguably, an underused resource among social psychologists exploring relevant political phenomena (e.g.: nationalism, populism, etc.) As detailed in sections 4.5.2.4 and 4.5.2.5, this research’s use of map preference and map reconfiguration tasks offer a means of exploring the interviewees’ social representations, dialogical positions and chronotopes on the UK’s global relations. Thus, allowing the methodological conditions for answering the first research question on the influence of the interviewees’ migration-mobility experiences and place-person relationships. The next step in this
discussion is to explore how the stimulus materials were developed via pilot interviews in real-world contexts.

4.4. Pilot Interviews: Developing the Stimulus Materials

This section briefly discusses the pilot interviews to highlight the iterative process which developed the stimulus materials for study one. The pilot interviews were conducted in public spaces (e.g.: local cafes) and the interviewees were known to the researcher (either directly or via a mutual acquaintance). The six participants (M = 27, R = 20-40) all resided in the north-east of England at the time of the interviews in September 2019. All the participants were UK citizens with the exception of one Greek citizen who recently relocated to Newcastle Upon Tyne. The interview script for the pilot interviews was semi-structured and organised into five-distinct sections: (1) Political Engagement, (2) Migration-Mobility history, (3) 2016 UK-EU referendum images, (4) Map Selection Task, and (5) Jigsaw Map Reconfiguration Task. The first section explored the interviewees’ political history and current associations (if any). The interviewees migration-mobility history (discussed extensively in Chapter Three, section 3.2) was then explored before section three’s questioning of their UK-EU referendum experiences and positions.

The final two tasks involved map stimulus materials to explore how the interviewees’ position the UK’s global relationships. The map selection task involved comparing different projections before selecting a preference, whilst the jigsaw map offered an opportunity for the interviewees to create their ‘ideal world’ (see sections 4.5.2.1 – 4.5.2.5 for extensive detail on all the final stimulus materials used in study one). This focus on stimulus materials aligns with recent developments in dialogical research (Coultas, 2020; Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021a; Mahendran, Magnusson, Howarth, and Scuzzarello, 2019) which uses such materials to capture dialogical positions in real-world contexts. The interview style was informal in an attempt to mitigate any interviewer/interviewee hierarchy in which the former is considered a ‘more knowledgeable other’. Prior to the 45–60-minute interview, the interviewees were invited to complete a brief self-report questionnaire measuring place identity and attachment to their current location. The purpose here being to explore if, alongside the dialogical analysis, these measures offered a complementary, explanatory insight into their place-person relationships.
4.4.1. Findings and Insights

The pilot interviews were successful in offering insights into the efficacy of the stimulus materials and aspects which required further development. The following considers three meaningful changes which were developed as a consequence of this process. The first insight was that the UK-EU referendum images (e.g.: three pictures of either Brexit celebrations or street protests in London) did not create a discursive context from which to explore the polarising impact of the event. As an alternative, footage (rather than images) of these events may offer a more visceral representation of the polarising impact of Brexit on public discourse. Given that study one involves discussions with residents in Dundee, the idea of presenting footage depicting Scotland’s response to Brexit (and the potential implications for Scottish independence) was also considered to be relevant. Another issue was that the presentation of the UK-EU referendum materials seemed to lack a meaningful context for the interviewees. Principally, that the materials did not tell the story of Brexit’s impact on public political discourse. Therefore, it was decided that the footage should be presented as a timeline of events which depicted the escalating polarisation between the public on this issue. An advantage here is that it also created a context for exploring the interviewees’ chronotopic thinking on the event which aligned with the Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model.

The map selection task involved the interviewees discussing how the UK is positioned on three different map projections (e.g.: Mercator, Galls-Peter, and Authagraph) and then discussing their personal preference (see section 4.5.2.4 for further details). For those most familiar with the Mercator (i.e.: the majority of the interviewees), this offered a means of disrupting their social representation on traditional depictions of the UK in a global context. The idea being that this may create a new discursive context in which to explore the UK’s global position and relationships. An issue with this process was that a number of the interviewees responded with heightened concerns about offering the ‘correct answer’. It could be the case that the maps created a context which implicitly assumes a definitive answer is required. So, whilst the early stages of the interview focus on personal, subjective narratives (i.e.: political and mobility experiences), it could be that the map projections are interpreted as residing in the domain of ‘objective’ truth (e.g.: the interviewee could mis-attribute an event to the wrong country, mislocate a city, etc). To ameliorate this concern, a re-drafting of the interview script emphasising the subjective nature of the map section was
deemed essential. Thus, potentially, reducing interviewee concerns on having to offer ‘correct’ answers when interacting with the maps.

The final insight was on the research’s intention to focus exclusively on individuals who had voted in the 2016 UK-EU referendum. The rationale being that UK citizens were best placed to engage with Brexit-related materials and discourse as they would be more invested in the outcome. However, the interview with Delphine, an English tutor and Greek national (MMC 8), challenged this proposition by comparing the UK-EU referendum to Greece’s 2015 referendum to withdraw from the Eurozone (extract 01). Note that the name used in the following extract is a pseudonym to preserve the participant’s confidentiality. Also, table 4.1. details the Jefferson transcription conventions (Hepburn and Bolden, 2013) used for this extract and throughout the thesis.

Table 4.1. Transcription Conventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(.)</td>
<td>Brief pause in the dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(..)</td>
<td>Sustained pause in the dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italics</td>
<td>Emphasis on a specific word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Italics)</td>
<td>Description of action or stimulus material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>!</td>
<td>Indication of a participant’s surprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>Indication of a participant’s laughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…</td>
<td>Edit point in the transcript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xxx)</td>
<td>Inaudible dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/</td>
<td>Overlapping dialogue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extract 01

AE
102. What are the first few words that came to mind watching that clip?

Delphine
103. Well, when we voted to leave the EU, when ‘Grexit’ was voted for, it was exactly the same in Athens Square. They were dancing traditional Greek dances, they were celebrating like they won their world cup or something, it was worse than that! Not surprising.

AE
168. So, looking at things in that context, how does this fit into your sense of self?

Delphine
169. I don’t know, it’s like, they would normally be the people that actually voted pro-Brexit, the people that go to that? Well, this is good, and (. ) err (. ) optimistic, it makes you feel optimistic. So even if a wrong decision, or a questionable decision is made, you can hope that the people will try to show their discomfort with that. Like rallying like they did in Greece, protesting in a bad manner because they did in Greece.

This extract shows the potential for global, wide-ranging discussions on the 2016 UK-EU referendum amongst those who did not reside in the UK during the event. Moreover, this diversity of migration-mobility experiences offers, potentially, a greater variance in adopted positions on the UK’s global relations. Considered together, the pilot interviews provided various insights which improved both the stimulus materials and the approach to sampling. The next step is to detail the finalised stimulus materials used for study one and the process involved in conducting the fieldwork.

4.5. Methods - Study One

The following offers an overview of study one’s method for collecting data to answer the first research question: Do either (A) Migration-Mobility or (B) Place-person relationships, influence how individuals position the UK’s global relations? As outlined, the secondary purpose of the study is to provide a dialogical foundation for pairing together participants to explore sustaining dialogue in study two.

4.5.1. Participants

The participants (N = 28) were drawn equally from across both locations (England and Scotland) and diverse in their age ranges, social backgrounds, and education levels (see table 4.2). The intention here was to negate a common criticism of social psychology research; namely, the high percentage of participants who are undergraduates and, therefore, unrepresentative of wider society (Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan, 2010). In terms of diverse political representation, it transpired that recruiting individuals who endorsed socially conservative values was more difficult than their left-wing/socially liberal counterparts (see Chapter Eight, section 8.6 for a discussion on this research’s limitations).

4.5.2. Procedure

The one-to-one interviews were conducted in Seaburn/Sunderland (England) and Dundee (Scotland) between October 2019 and January 2020. The interviews coincided with the 2019 UK General Election in the UK. Therefore, offering an additional political reference point alongside
the interview’s focus on the 2016 UK-EU referendum. The Sunderland interviews were, predominantly, conducted in Seaburn to engage interviewees residing in a coastal area. In contrast, the Dundee interviews primarily engaged with urban residents. The interview script was semi-structured and organised into five distinct sections: (1) Political Engagement (3 items), (2) Migration-Mobility history (9 items), (3) UK-EU referendum timeline (5 items), (4) Map Selection Task (5 items), and (5) Jigsaw Map Reconfiguration Task (1 item) (see Appendix A for the interview questions and structure). The estimated time-frame for the interviews was around 60 minutes. However, as expected, there was a substantial variance in the length of the discussions.

The interview questions and stimulus materials were reviewed and approved by Open University’s HREC ethics review panel (HREC/3184/ENGLISH) (see Appendix B for participant information, the consent form and the debrief sheet). Whilst a section of the interview focuses on the 2016 UK-EU referendum and its aftermath, it is important to note that 34.73% of the UK did not vote in the referendum (Electoral commission, 2016). Therefore, it was important to find individuals matching these criteria, which was achieved via messaging anti-establishment groups (e.g.: Scottish Communist group) who, it was predicted, would not be inclined to vote. All of the interviewees who were recruited were unknown to the researcher and contacted via a series email requests to political, community and/or social groups in both locations. Another recruitment technique was snowball sampling in which the interviewee was invited to suggest a person who may be willing to participate in the study. The latter technique facilitated five of the interviews which occurred in Dundee.

4.5.2.1. Political Engagement

The interview’s first section explores both the interviewees’ past and current relationships with political groups and events. The purpose here being to identify any core dialogical positions related to political engagement that could be important for pairing the participants. To explore political engagement, the following four questions were asked: (1) Are you someone who considers themselves to be a political person? (2) Do you follow the news? (3) Where do you follow the news and local events? and (3) Are you active in political/social issues? Consistent with the interview’s structure, additional follow-up questions were asked in response to the interviewee’s initial positions.
Table 4.2. Study One - Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Sunderland (England)</th>
<th>Dundee (Scotland)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td>38 – 72</td>
<td>19 – 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male:6 (43%) Female:8 (57%)</td>
<td>Male:8 (57%) Female:6 (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Urban:4 (29%) Coastal:10 (71%)</td>
<td>Urban:13 (93%) Coastal:1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>Secondary:4 (29%)</td>
<td>Secondary:4 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate:6 (43%)</td>
<td>Under-Graduate:5 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Graduate:4 (29%)</td>
<td>Graduate:1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Graduate:4 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU Referendum Vote</td>
<td>Remain:11 (79%)</td>
<td>Remain:6 (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leave:3 (21%)</td>
<td>Leave:2 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not eligible:4 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-voter:2 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Party Support</td>
<td>Labour Party:9 (64%)</td>
<td>Scottish National Party:3 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conservative Party:3 (22%)</td>
<td>Labour Party:4 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liberal Democrats:1 (7%)</td>
<td>Liberal Democrats:3 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green Party:1 (7%)</td>
<td>Conservative Party:1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Communist Party:1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None:2 (14%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5.2.2. Migration Mobility Continuum

The interview questions are based on Mahendran’s (2013) Mobility Migration Continuum and adapted to create nine items exploring different aspects of migration-mobility. The rationale being to explore how/if different migration-mobility experiences influence an interviewees’ positioning of the UK’s global relations. The MMC is a 10-point continuum broadly categorised as non-mobility, low migration-mobility, or high migration-mobility (figure 4.1). Citizens in one of the first three positions are considered non-mobile individuals as they are generationally non-mobile (MMC 1), born in the country to migrant parents (MMC 2), or a non-migrant in a long-term partnership with a migrant (MMC 3) The three low migration-mobility positions (MMC 4, 5, 6) encapsulate various degrees of movement (e.g.: home town returnee or internal migrant), whilst high migration-mobility positions (7,8,9,10) relate to those frequent movers who have either now settled or are serial migrants (Mahendran, 2020).

Figure 4.1. Migration-Mobility Continuum (Mahendran, 2018)

It is important to note that each position possesses its own distinctive features relevant to the subtle differences that can exist in mobility experiences. For example, MMC 4 is a distinctive position in that a central feature is possessing a capacity to ‘stand on the outside’ when discussing the world (Mahendran, 2020). This MMC interview section consists of nine items, which also has subsections for clarifying or follow-up questions. The questions focus on the interviewees’ current
residential situation, family-background, previous mobility circumstances and mobility aspirations. As outlined earlier, three modified questions exploring the individual’s place-person relationship with their urban or coastal environment were incorporated into the MMC items.

4.5.2.3. UK-EU Referendum Timeline

In response to insight garnered from the pilot interviews, this material was developed into footage (created by the researcher) depicting a timeline of three important events relating to the 2016 UK-EU referendum: (1) 2016 UK-EU referendum celebrations in Sunderland, (2) 2017 BBC Proms performance, and (3) 2018 second year anniversary street protests (access this footage at Figshare, 2022a). The purpose here is to identify important social representations and dialogical positions (I-, We- & They-) on the issue of the UK’s global relations. The first clip depicts events which have become symbolic of a change in the political zeitgeist as it was the first result to indicate Brexit was a realistic outcome (image 4.1). Furthermore, the celebratory images became, somewhat simplistically, representative of all Leave-voters and those with anti-EU sentiment (Rushton, 2017).

Image 4.1. 2016 UK-EU referendum celebrations in Sunderland

The second clip (image 4.2) depicted events from the 2017 Last Night at the Proms (this being the finale of an eight-week season of classical music hosted in London at the Royal Albert Hall). Its relevance to the referendum is the atypical prevalence of EU support which manifest in flag waving. At an event widely renowned for embodying Union Jack-waving patriotism (York, 2020), 2017’s event offered a stark counterpoint to that perception.
The third clip depicted both pro- and anti-EU protests in London on the second anniversary of the referendum vote (image 4.3). In microcosm, the event encapsulated the heightened level of polarisation which was still prevalent long after the vote. The rationale for presenting these materials was to offer the interviewees a context for discussing their own referendum experiences. The timeline structure provided the interviewees with the opportunity to position both themselves and the public when considering the impact of the vote.

4.5.2.4. Map Selection Task
The map selection task required the interviewees to select their preferred projection based on a criteria of their own choosing. The interviewees were presented with three world map projections: (1) Mercator, (2) Galls-Peter, and (3) Authagraph. All three maps were presented in grey tone to
standardise the materials and reduce the risk of interviewees focusing on aesthetics rather than content. The 16th Century devised Mercator map (image 4.4) is the primary geographical education tool for UK schools. Therefore, the Mercator is likely to be the map most familiar to the interviewees. The Galls-Peter, whilst created in the 1885, was popularized in 1974 and offers an alternative to the Mercator by correctly proportioning the land mass areas relative to each other (image 4.5). The 1999 Japanese-invented Authagraph (image 4.6) offers the most accurate 2-D depiction of the globe; thus, avoiding the distortions inherent in the other two maps (Jones, 2017).

Image 4.4. Mercator Map

These materials offer interviewees the opportunity for exploring the UK’s global relations by the contrasting levels of importance placed upon the UK’s position. The rationale here being that, as the maps originate from different time periods and cultural contexts, they offer contrasting symbolic representations of the UK’s global status. Therefore, offering the potential for disrupting established social representations of the UK. For example, the Mercator depicts the UK as disproportionality large and a central point on the globe when compared with the other projections. Therefore, understanding the interviewees’ map preferences affords the opportunity to explore further how they position the UK’s global positions. Specifically, the interviewees’ capacity for discussing the chronotopic nature of the UK’s global relations. Be it the past echoes of the British Empire or the uncertainty of future relations with Europe.
4.5.2.5. Jigsaw Map Reconfiguration Task

The final interview section involves the interviewees creating their version of an ideal UK-world relationship using the jigsaw map (image 4.7). The researcher created this hand-crafted map to offer an accessible task which did not require digital-based competencies. Therefore, providing an accessibility to all interviewees regardless of their previous digital experiences. Indeed, given the
uncertainty as to who would be participating in the research, it was important not to assume a high level of digital competencies. The task here is for interviewees to re-organise the jigsaw map to accurately represent their idealised version of the UK’s global relations. The purpose being to develop on knowledge from the previous task to further explore how the interviewees’ position the UK in a global context. The two map tasks can then be analysed within the context of the interviewees’ migration-mobility and place-person relationship to answer the first research question.

Image 4.7. Jigsaw Map

4.6. Conclusion
The aims of this research present specific methodological challenges which were important to address given the novelty of the designs (e.g.: concurrent nested mixed-methods and a quasi-experimental approach for study one and two respectively). The chapter proposed that interviews with a dialogical approach are more likely to foster an understanding of the public’s capacity for complexity and contradiction on polarising political issues. However, it was also important to acknowledge the limitations of dialogicality both on theoretical and applied generalisability issues. Therefore, offering a more realistic assessment of the methodological approach and potential difficulties in applying dialogicality in a real-world context. Study one presented a challenge in requiring stimulus materials which could capture the relevant discursive context to then explore
the first research question. To this end, the pilot interviews offered insights into the limitations of the initial stimulus materials developed and also facilitated future improvements. It was also important to consider the reflexivity of the researcher and the potential impact on the success of the interviews. Especially regarding the interviewer-interviewee dynamic and the potential factors (e.g.: social class, gender, EU-support, etc.) which could impact on this relationship when conducting fieldwork. However, despite these challenges, this chapter proposes that the methodological decision-making and selected methods offer a means of answering the first research question and creating a context for pairing interviewees together. The next step in this thesis is to explore the findings from this first phase of fieldwork and if either migration-mobility or place-person relationships are influencing factors.
Chapter Five: The Influence of Migration-mobility and Place-person relationships on Positioning of the UK’s Global Relations

Introduction
This chapter answers the question of whether migration-mobility and/or place-person relationships influence how interviewees’ position the UK’s global relations. The chapter opens briefly by discussing the analytical process for the three-step analysis (section 5.2) and how the interviewees’ place-person relationships were defined and understood (section 5.2.4). The analysis of study one (section 5.3) initially explores the influence of migration-mobility experiences on how the interviewees position the UK’s global relations. The focus here (section 5.4) is on both a ‘glorious past’ social representation that emerged in response to the stimulus materials and a focus on the UK-Africa relationship. Section 5.5. then discusses the potential relationship between these two findings and the implications for the first research question (section 5.5). The second part of this chapter discusses the potential influence of the interviewees’ place-person relationships with their geographical environment (be it urban or coastal). This section explores how context-specific place-person relationships seem to produce distinctive positionings on threat to either community or country (section 5.8). The chapter concludes by discussing these key findings (section 5.9) and then answers the first research question.

5.1. Migration-Mobility’s Influence on Positioning the UK’s Global Relations
As discussed in the previous chapter, the interviewees were mapped to the Migration-Mobility Continuum (MMC) via six specific interview questions (e.g.: ‘how long have you lived in your current location?’ etc.) (see Appendix A). Mahendran’s (2013) MMC offers a new analytical framework which rejects the binary, oppositional conceptualisation of migrant/non-migrant. Primarily on account that migrant/non-migrant is not a comprehensive concept for understanding how integration is constructed and enacted by the public (Mahendran, 2021; Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021a). The sample for this study includes interviewees with a variety of differing migration-mobility experiences (see table 5.1). It is worth noting that the number of MMC 1 positions (e.g.: generationally non-mobile) is especially high among the Seaburn residents compared to other migration-mobility studies with UK residents (Mahendran, 2017; Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021b).
Table 5.1. Participants’ Migration-Mobility Positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dundee Residents</th>
<th>Migration-Mobility Positions</th>
<th>Seaburn/Sunderland Residents</th>
<th>Migration-Mobility Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rob</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sharon</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mac</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhianna</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Roger</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sharonna</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gilbert</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelina</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gladis</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellie</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bobby</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbur</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Danny</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eevi</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Jimmy</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: all the names listed are pseudonyms

5.2. Analytical Procedure

The transcripts were analysed using a three-step dialogical analysis to explore the interviewees’ social representations, dialogical positions and chronotopes in response to the questions/materials. A common critique (Urquhart, 2013) of qualitative research is that the journey from initial data to key findings is often unnecessarily opaque. To negate such criticisms, this section offers details on the three-step process which support the analytical decision-making. Aveling, Gillespie, and Cornish (2015) correctly argue that it is the process of data conceptualisation and analysis, rather than the methodology, which distinguishes authentic dialogical research. Therefore, the focus here is to move beyond analysis which is deemed to be ‘dialogical’ simply by virtue of including social discourse. This research’s approach to dialogical analysis involves the following: (1) Process-orientated analysis, and (2) Subjective interpretation. The analysis is a three-step process adopted and developed from steps initially devised by Mahendran (2017) and applied in recent political
psychology research (Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021a; Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021b) as part of the Public Dialogue Psychology Collaboratory. As detailed in the following sections (5.2.1 – 5.2.3), the three-steps in this process-orientated analysis focus on the verbal traits which suggest the individual is applying assumed knowledge (e.g.: social representation), adopting a dialogical position or evoking a chronotope.

This three-step analysis explores the multi-voiced capacity of the interviewees’ migration-mobility narratives and its integration into relevant discursive contexts. For the purposes of conceptual consistency, the three-steps for identifying the interviewees’ discursive responses to the interview materials also align with the Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model. The three-steps are as follows: (1) Social representations: the representations being used to discuss the UK and its relationships, (2) I-Positions: which political positions the interviewees adopt, and We- & They-positions: who the interviewees align themselves with and distance themselves from, and (3) Chronotopes (Spatial/Temporal): the types of spatial and temporal connections or boundaries evoked when discussing the UK and its global relations. For both study one and two, the analysis for each of these three dialogical concepts was exhaustive in attempting to capture every social representation, I-, We- & They- position and chronotope in response to the questions/stimulus materials. This was achieved with a line by line analysis of each transcript in which every social representation, dialogical position and chronotope was coded with a node. These nodes were then used to organise the transcripts to facilitate the analysis and pairing process.

The second important element to consider in this analysis is the role of subjective interpretation in developing an understanding of an individual’s dialogical positions. That is to say, different researchers may draw varying conclusions on the positions individuals adopt based on the data. Given this research’s ontological assumptions that the participants are not objective political narrators (Marková, Linell, Grossen, and Orvig, 2007), it would contradictory to consider the researcher (and subsequent analysis) as an entirely objective process. This is not a failing but, rather, an explicit acknowledgment that a level of subjectivity is inherent in this iterative process (Kalu, 2019). Indeed, understanding the subjectivity a researcher brings to the analytical process is a vital part of maintaining a robust reflexivity. Specifically, in understanding the beliefs and assumptions which may influence which research questions are devised and how these manifest during actual discourse with the participant.
As both Valsiner (2005) and Wells et al. (2020) note, the process of capturing an individual’s dialogical positions from a transcript is a challenging one which can benefit from a collaborative process. To align with these concerns, two co-analysis sessions for both study one and two were conducted with supervisory team experts Dr. Kesi Mahendran and Professor Nick Hopkins. This involved both the supervisors and me conducting an independent analysis prior to sharing our dialogical interpretation of a chosen transcript. Some of the core positions identified by myself (e.g.: I-Democratic, I-Environmentalist) were debated to explore the essential incisive indicators for these key positions. Namely, a clear outline of the characteristics which indicate an utterance is consistent with the stated dialogical position. This offered additional insight and an appreciation of the potential for differing dialogical interpretations. Given my background in quantitative training, this co-analysis also provided me with the opportunity for reflection on the analysis process. Specifically, the risk of engaging in an overly linear interpretation of the relationship between the discursive context and the participants’ utterances. Which would have led to a somewhat superficial interpretation of the discursive responses to the stimulus materials and interview questions. The following three-sections offer an overview of each analytical step to provide transparency on how social representations, dialogical positions and chronotopes were identified from the participants’ discourse.

5.2.1. Step One: Social Representations

The first step allows for a greater understanding of the interviewees’ context-dependent knowledge on the issue in question (Moscovici, 2000). Moreover, as, discussed in Chapter Two, social representations are the ‘ground’ from which the interviewees adopt dialogical positions (Langenhove and Wise, 2019; Marková, 2016). Indeed, understanding representations affords insight on the ‘dimensions’ of a person’s knowledge on the topic in question (Jovchelovitch, 2019). For example, utterances which begin by including implicit assumptions (e.g.: ‘Obviously’ or ‘Clearly’) imply the statement is supported by a common-sense understanding of the issue. This can involve evoking specific troupes to explain a political position. For example, describing someone as a ‘traditional Labour voter’ would likely imply a representation of a white, working-class, northern voter. Exploring social representations affords an insight into disputes on polarising topics that could be occurring due to stark differences in assumed knowledge. Thus, creating a foundation for understating the importance and implications of social representations on how interlocuters sustain dialogue.
5.2.2. Step Two: Dialogical Positions (I-, We & They-)

The second step focuses on the interviewees’ adopted dialogical positions (I-, We- & They-) in response to both the questions and stimulus materials. As discussed extensively (Chapter Two, section 2.4 and Chapter Three, section 3.7.2), understanding I-positions offers an insight into how, and in what discursive context, a person’s social representations manifest in dialogue. An I-position is typically, although not exclusively, identified by utterances which contain the word ‘I’ and is, to some extent, a declarative statement. For example, an I-Socialist position could be ‘I’m a socialist, I believe the UK to be an unfair society.’. Alternatively, an I-position could manifest in how it is prioritised during discourse. To use the same position as an example, ‘For me, renationalising utilities is essential for the UK to become a fairer society’. So, whilst the dialogue is different, the social representations which underlie the dialogical position are the same. Alongside these I-positions, We- & They- positions are also important for understanding who the individual aligns with or distances themselves from when discussing the public.

The knowledge on We- & They- positions is based on Mahendran’s (2018) work on the multi-positional features of public-opinion formation (discussed extensively in Chapter Two, section 2.4). In the context of discussions on the UK’s global relations, a we-position from a UK citizen could be: ‘We just aren’t that important when compared with America’. This aligns the interviewees to their country of residence when comparing the UK’s global status with other nations. A distancing-they position is one in which an individual adopts a position which distances themselves from the public. For example, someone criticising those who voted to remain in the EU could state the following: ‘That’s my issue with Remainers, they don’t have a clue about people in the north’. Considered together, these positions offer a means of exploring how the interviewees position the public. This understanding is especially important for pairing interviewees together for study two. Principally, as knowing who the individual aligns themselves with (or distances themselves from) affords insight into the potential discursive dynamic of the pairing.

5.2.3. Step Three: Chronotopes (Spatial/Temporal)

This final step offers a chronotopic understanding of where in time (past/present/future) and space (national/local/group boundaries, etc.) the interviewees are engaging with the issue in question. This is an epistemological commitment that understanding an interviewees’ political positions involves knowing the wider temporal and spatial context. That an individual’s political meaning-
making does, implicitly, demand an understanding of time/space (Mahendran, 2019). This typically involves utterances which reference an aspect of time and/or space when discussing, in the context of this research, a political issue. An example of this could be someone evoking a chronotope to contextualise a personal-political narrative (e.g.: ‘Unlike today, in the seventies we had a trade union that supported us’). Considered together, the proposal here is that understanding these three-steps offer a means of exploring how the interviewees position the UK and its global relations to answer the first research question. The final part of this analytical process is to consider how the interviewees’ place-person relationships is to be defined and analysed.

5.2.4. Place Identity and Attachment Analysis

As outlined in Chapter Four (section 4.1.1) a concurrent nested mixed-methods design was used to explore the participants’ place-person relationships. This design prioritises the dialogical positions that emerge from the three questions on place-person relationships. The place identity and attachment measures were then used to contextualise these positions to understand if the individual had a place identity or attachment relationship with their geographical environment. The three-step analysis on what specific social representations, dialogical positions or chronotopes were evoked by the participants in response to three questions on their place-person relationship. The scores from the self-report measures (place identity and attachment) was then calculated measures were totalled to contextualise the dialogical analysis of their responses to the questions. This is consistent with a concurrent nested mixed-methods design and how both qualitative and quantitative data is used to explore a specific research question (Castro, Kellison, Boyd, and Kopak, 2010). It is important to offer clarity on how the three-step analysis process outlined and the place identity and attachment measures combine to explore place-person relationships.

Three questions were asked during the migration-mobility section of the interview, which complemented questions in the identity/attachment measures. The first question was ‘Where do you consider yourself to reside; an urban/rural/coastal environment?’ to understand where the interviewees locate themselves and how they describe their environment. This was especially relevant for coastal residents as defining distinctions between coastal and urban can became ambiguous when a location is on the periphery. The second question was ‘Do you think an urban/coastal/rural environment has shaped your sense of identity?’. This aligns with Hernández, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace, and Hess’ (2007) finding that individuals born in their current location
have a stronger sense of place identity than those who re-located from elsewhere (be it nationally or internationally). Indeed, they often have an internal sense of identity to their environment which remains despite future mobility experiences. In contrast, those with a higher place-attachment are likely to endorse external features, such as a pleasant neighbourhood or varied local attractions (Hernández, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace, and Hess, 2007).

This distinction is somewhat complicated by the likelihood that individuals will often score highly in both identity and attachment measures (Brown, Perkin, and Brown, 2003). In such instances, the analysis will initially consider which measure (place or attachment) has the highest score. More importantly, the interviewees’ dialogical positioning, social representations, and chronotopic thinking in responding to the second question will be then be considered. This will offer an opportunity for delineating between place identity and attachment features. Finally, the third question is adopted to align with either an urban or coastal environment and is as follows: ‘Some have considered that coastal towns voted a specific way in the EU referendum, when compared to urban environments, do you think this could be true, and, if so, why?’ This offers a potential insight into how the interviewees position themselves in relation to coastal areas (be that as a current coastal resident or from afar as an urban resident). To clarify terms, this analysis defines a high place identity as someone who both scored highly on the place identity measure (15-20) and responded affirmatively to the first question with the relevant emphasis on an internal identity. The outcome of this analysis for each interviewee is labelled as a Place Identity Score (PIS), which ranges from a low identity (PIS 1) to a high identity (PIS 20) with their urban or coastal environment.

5.2.5. Organising the Data: Migration-Mobility

After the dialogical analysis of every interview, the next stage is to explore if varying migration-mobility experiences influence how the UK is positioned globally. For the purposes of clarity, the process of organising data for place-person relationships is discussed later in section 5.7. To organise the data for MMC, NVivo 12 software was used to search for key words which may offer insight into the interviewee’s poisoning of the UK. The Text Search Query function searched the transcripts for the following key words: UK, World, Europe, England, and Scotland. Based on Mahendran’s (2017) 10-point visual representation, the interviewees were then broadly categorised into three groups: Non-mobility (1-3), Low mobility (4-6), and High mobility (7-10).
These broader categories are not intended to be representative of the interviewees’ subtle positional differences. Rather, this is simply a means of organising the data in the first instance.

Text Search Outcomes:
Non-Mobility (1-3): Cases 9, References 148
Low Mobility (4-6): Cases 16, References 324
High Mobility (7-10): Cases 3, References 86

The next stage was a fine-grain analysis in which the ‘coding context’ feature was used to explore the specific context in which the key words were discussed (e.g.: UK, World, Europe, England, and Scotland). Important to note that the focus here is on the social representations, dialogical positions and chronotopes that are adopted or evoked in response to the same question/stimulus material. The next section explores the findings from this analytical process to answer the first research question.

5.3. UK’s ‘Glorious Past’ Representation

A prominent finding is how the interviewees’ positioned the UK in relation to its legacy as an empire. A difference emerged between those who are generationally non-mobile (MMC 1) and the other interviewees who discussed the UK’s global position in response to ‘patriotic-orientated’ stimulus material. That being footage depicting the 2017 Last Night at the Proms event in the second stage of the interview (Chapter Four, section 4.5.2.3). The footage was notable in that, unusually for such an event, a high proportion of EU flags were prevalent among the audience. This collective act could be interpreted as a rejection of Brexit by offering a juxtaposition to the Union Jack flags and its associated patriotism. Interestingly, the interviewees with the most ardent responses seemed to focus exclusively on displays of patriotism. This stimulus material was either embraced or rejected in a ‘glorious past’ social representation on the UK’s empire legacy. It seems those with some level of migration-mobility found the Union Jack flags to be a troubling symbol of empire. Gilbert’s (extract 01) migration-mobility experiences (MMC 4 – see figure 4.1 in Chapter Four) involved work-related residency in various European countries (e.g.: France, Germany) before returning to Sunderland. Gilbert despaired at the outcome of the 2016 UK-EU referendum vote and, under the then current Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, considered himself ‘politically homeless’. Gilbert adopts an I-Patriotism-Rejector position when discussing the Proms audience and, what he considers to be, a lack of connection to current global realities.
Seaburn resident Danny, adopts an *I*-Patriotism-Rejector position (extract 02) to critique the audience for the ‘imagined past’ inherent in their patriotic displays. Danny is an internal migrant (MMC 5), who was also disenfranchised with the Labour party. He is a supporter of Brexit for pragmatic reasons rather than any symbolic significance typically found among Leaver-voters (Gardener, 2017). Indeed, he positions Brexit-supporters as ‘they’ because of their alignment with an ‘imagined past’ narrative. This pragmatism aligns with his rejection of patriotism and the symbolic meaning-making involved in the 2017 Last Night at the Proms footage.

Wilbur, a Scottish resident with an MMC 6 position, also adopts *I*-Patriotism-Rejector (extract 03) in response to the Proms footage. Indeed, his visceral reaction to the content is so aversive that only his regard for the interview process kept him engaging with the material. He adopts the voice of a Proms audience member to further critique these overt displays of British patriotism. As someone who was once an active member of the communist party and is now a Quaker of high standing in the local community, he offers a distinctive voice here. That is to say, he has been on a political-spiritual journey atypical of any other interviewee in the study. He evokes an open temporal chronotope to highlight what he perceives as the lineage of Empire-focused influences (e.g.: ‘what Britain is, ruling Britannia and all that stuff’), which still resonate in a post-Brexit UK context.

**Extract 01**

Gilbert
88. Jingoistic! Yeah (.) I’ve never been a fan of, that kind of, in yer face, flag-waving. Rule Britannia, and things like that, are of an age, and I think of a by-gone age and as a nation we need to move on, and the difference between places like Germany who have fundamentally moved on from their past and didn’t do the Japanese thing of ignoring it, actually acknowledged what happened in Germany was wrong…I think we are still stuck in this ‘great’, in inverted commas, to the point if you actually look at what is happening now…

**Extract 02**

Danny
96….Back to the way it was in a world that never really existed in the first place. I have been there a few times at the Royal Albert Hall, for other things. So that’s what that tells me, the England that doesn’t really exist; a small group of people who grabbed onto that. It is that thing that they sell us of warm beer, village greens (.) sound of cricket balls on willow and all that kind of stuff, that kind of thing.

**Extract 03**

Wilbur
68. That was grim!!* I watched it out of respect for you, but that was grim. The blood chilled in my veins from that scene...If they think that is what Britain is, ruling Britannia and all that stuff. Based on their (.) extraordinary establishment perspective of Royal Family, London-centric, House of Commons, House of Lords, y’know, err, Help the Heroes (.) it leaves me completely bewildered. I have heard all the excuses; ‘Oh, it is just a jolly jape, it is all good fun and nothing to do with politics’. Now read the words of the songs they are singing, read the words (.) saying you’re a member of the British Empire (.) vile.

In contrast with these interviewees, exploring responses to the 2017 Last Night at the Proms footage among the generationally non-mobile (MMC 1) offers distinctive differences. Karen (extract 04) is a resident of Seaburn who voted to leave the EU and was uncertain about her 2019 General Election voting intentions in a strong Labour constituency. In direct contrast with Gilbert, Danny and Wilbur, Karen adopts an I-Patriotic position as she recalls her pride in attending a local Proms event. Interesting to note her use of ‘obviously’ in stating that she has never been to the actual Proms event in London. This likely indicates her common-sense understanding that the working-class are not expected to attend the Proms. Alongside her I-Patriotic position, Karen also expresses her dismay at the lack of a Brexit deal (a highly controversial issue at the time) with a ‘glorious past’ social representation of the British Empire.

Extract 04

Karen
136.*I feel quite patriotic* I love to see the proms and all the flags flying and the kind of makes you feel proud to be British.

Karen
146. I sing in a choir and we do our, along South Shields, along the coast, that’s where the choir is, and they have a performance in the park in July on a Sunday afternoon. People go and we sang at Proms in the Park, and it was really quite moving. Obviously, I have never been to the Albert Hall at the proper proms, but just to be involved in a little off shoot was quite emotional for us, y’know? We really enjoyed it, I mean we sang all of the Rule Britannia songs, Jerusalem, I Vow to Thee My Country, the traditional, err, British, to make you feel proud.

AE
147. Do you think this clip represents the UK at the moment?

Karen
148. I think the UK is quite down-trodden at the moment. At the minute we are a bit of a laughingstock because of all the carry-on with Brexit and we don’t seem to be able to move forward. We seem to be treading water, being a bit stuck. Err (.) so yes, the Proms is a kind of hark back to the great days of empire, I suppose. Y’know, how valued Britain was in the world.
Another generationally non-mobile Seaburn resident Roger (extract 05) positions the UK as a diminished global power by comparing the present with the past. Roger also adopts an I-Patriotic position in the encouragement he receives from the musical celebration of Britain’s history. In contrast to Karen, Roger is an ardent supporter of the European Union and stalwart Labour supporter. Such differences show that these contrasting positions on patriotism and the UK’s empire past do not align neatly with referendum voting or party-political support.

Extract 05

Roger
103…I think that sometimes, that can be, y’know, bombastic about how they go on about things, but (.), that there is like an old tradition of, y’know, of how great ‘Great Britain’ was and the greatness has now come out of Great Britain, y’know (.) It is very heart rendering and everything, you hear these songs at a football or rugby match, hearing Sweet Chariot, y’know, and I think it is something that has always been there, during the war.

Roger
107. Well, it is just, y’know, (.) the music (.) it is the same as the remembrance service which I watch every year, but the Proms (.) I am not like sort of, you have so many nights there were they (.) I am not into classical music, but I think that it is, y’know, err, encouragement, y’know, where you see this event.

To broaden the discussion beyond binary patriotic/non-patriotic, the analysis offers other prevalent Proms-inspired positions. The first notable shared positioning in this regard focuses on the UK’s class structure. Gina, a 22-year-old, Dumfries-born, Dundee student, and Labour activist (MMC 6), aligns with the audience on an assumed I- (and We-) Middle-Class position (extract 06). Her common-sense knowledge of the working-class aligns with Karen (extract 04), but her positioning of Leave-voters evokes the prevalent ‘left behind’ representation discussed in Chapter Three (section 3.3.1).

Extract 06

Gina
191. Middle-class, or upper. I would say that the middle-class feel more European. But then we aren’t the ones who are feeling disenfranchised with failing industries and stuff, so possibly it being at the BBC Proms makes it a bit more, y’know, it is representative of a huge group of people but maybe it is missing out on a certain demographic (.) *potentially*.

Fellow Labour activist and Dundee student Joe (extract 07) also shares Gina’s assumptions on the absence of working-class attendees within the audience.

Extract 07
Joe
91...but also you said it was the Proms, so it is going to be upper class people attending the proms then some working-class lad, so (.) again, that is probably a big correlation between class and attendance. Also, education as well, like, you can earn a lot of money but if you are not very artistic in a sense or into the Proms and that.

The Proms footage also provides the opportunity for discussions on the interviewees’ relationships with the expression of patriotism (as opposed to personal declarations of patriotism). For the Irish-born and highly mobile (MMC 8) Dundee resident Thomas (extract 08), experiencing Northern Irish expressions of patriotism is threat-inducing (note his they-positioning of that community).

Extract 08

Thomas
101. I don’t feel too attached to that sort of thing, and I don’t think they mean it really. This may be somewhat off topic, but I have never been intimidated by people holding the Union Jack in my life, but this summer we went through Derry and there was flags everywhere! For the first time in my life, I felt intimidated by the Union Jack (.) the volume of them obviously, but also that people were still so much into displaying which camp they were in. Obviously, I knew I was not from that side, but I mean I don’t have any bad feelings about Protestants from Northern Ireland, but you are suddenly aware you are not a member of the tribe…

Jimmy (extract 09), a 71-year-old vicar and part-time music student, presents a more relativist relationship with overt displays of patriotism by adopting an I-Musicologist position. As the Sunderland/Seaburn resident with the highest level of migration-mobility (MMC 6), this endorsement of patriotic iconography is in tension with this chapter’s previous assertion that patriotic-support and non-mobility are linked.

Extract 09

Jimmy
71. Well, the first thing I was interested in was seeing the Swiss flags, and the Polish ones, err, lots of EU flags (. the Last Night at the Proms I can enjoy (3) I am interested from a musicological point of view in the music, but, err, the power of rousing things like that is wonderful. I actually find the Proms one of the places I can take it better than I can elsewhere, I have found (2), a week last Sunday I was required to sing the national anthem at a remembrance, they sang two verses, and I couldn’t remember the second verse and I was not that comfortable singing the first verse…

However, the five interviewees initially discussed (e.g.: Gilbert, Danny, Wilbur, Karen, and Roger) are the only ones to focus on the UK’s global relationships. This is a crucial difference as this focus on the UK’s global relations is fundamental to answering the first part of the research
question. In these instances, the interviewees’ relationship with their ‘glorious past’ social representations does seem to be a relevant factor in the positions they subsequently adopt.

5.3.1. Summary
Among the interviewees who responded to the 2017 Last Night at the Proms footage by explicitly discussing the UK’s global position, distinctive dialogical positions are apparent. Those with a level of migration-mobility seem to adopt an I-Patriotism-Rejector position to overt displays of British patriotism. However, Seaburn residents who are generationally non-mobile (MMC 1) discussed the UK’s global relations with an I-Patriotic position. There are variances in both political allegiances and UK-EU referendum voting behaviour among these adopting these positions. Therefore, this suggests migration-mobility could be an influencing factor on how they are positioning the UK’s global relations. That is to say, the experiences garnered from differing migration-mobility experiences offer a counterpoint to the British-centric focus of any ‘glorious past’ empire social representations. As such, dynamic relational positioning occurs which is substantially different when responding to symbols of British patriotism. The focus of this analysis now turns to how interviewees explored the two map-based tasks in the interview’s final stages. The purpose being to understand how the interviewees position the UK’s global relations. To reiterate, the first task (map selection) offered interviewees the opportunity to consider differences between three distinct map projections: (1) Mercator, (2) Galls-Peter, and (3) Authagraph. The second task required interviewees to reconfigure a jigsaw map to create their personal vision of the ideal UK-world relationship.

5.4. UK-Africa Relationship
The most unexpected finding from the map selection task was a focus on the UK’s relationship with the African continent. This was unexpected in that the dominant political discourse at the time of study one was the Brexit deal (Deacon, Smith, and Wring, 2019) and national sovereignty (Westcott, 2020). Not unreasonably, it was anticipated that the task would provoke dialogue which focused on these prevalent issues. In selecting a personal favourite among the three map projections, a focus on the Galls-Peter Projection and Africa’s global position was a distinctive feature. Among the three interviewees who selected the Galls-Peter projection, all adopted an I-Advocate position. In all three cases, this position highlights and then defends the cause of another nation/continent. In this case, the need for the African continent to be fairly represented in a global
context. Those adopting this position had contrasting migration-mobility experiences, political allegiances, and voted differently on the UK-EU referendum. Dundee-based Ellie (extract 10) is a retired linguistic academic, enthusiastic SNP activist, and ardent EU supporter with some migration-mobility (MMC 6).

Extract 10

Ellie

161. Fascination. This one (Galls-Peter), as I say, for the reasons that, the, (.) visual, I would almost say importance that is giving to this bit here, and also the importance of Africa and the African countries (.) it appeals in that sense.

In contrast, fellow Dundee resident Rob (extract 11) is a communist who abstained from voting in the UK-EU referendum and is generationally non-mobile (MMC 1). He also advocates for Africa (and South America) in arguing that the Mercator is limiting in its generalisations of the world.

Extract 11

Rob

126….This one (Mercator) is a generalisation of the world, and you have to look at it as a global thing. Africa is a massive place, South America is a massive place, so I would probably go for the Galls-Peter.

This differs again from Seaburn resident Bobby (extract 12) who has internal migration-mobility (MMC 5) and supports the UK leaving the EU from a ‘Lexit’ position (e.g.: a socialist-orientated departure from the EU).

Extract 12

Bobby

100. (3) err (.) I quite like that one actually (Galls-Peter), I like the sense of reality and the idea of Africa and the global south being kind of represented, as, at the moment, it is (.) a little bit, err, I like the idea of that one.

The disparate backgrounds of the interviewees show these responses do not differentiate along mobility lines. This is consistent with recent research (Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021a) that, in a relevant context, citizens do have the capacity to engage in transnational dialogue across the MMC. However, it does contrast with the I-Patriotic/I-Patriotic-Rejector divide found among interviewees discussing the UK’s global relations when responding to patriotic symbols. It is notable that those who adopted an I-Patriotic position in that context did not discuss Africa’s historical UK relationship. Perhaps indicating that the ‘glorious past’ social representation is a limiting one in providing the ‘symbolic resources’ to encompass the UK’s historical legacy. This
transnational focus on Africa is also prevalent when the interviewees were asked to reconfigure the continents to create an ‘ideal world’ for the UK’s global relationships. Another notable finding here was the interviewees’ chronotopic focus on the UK’s historical relationship with the African continent. Gladis, a Seaburn returnee (MMC 4) adopts an I-Advocator position when reconfiguring the map (image 5.1). In this context, both Canada and the USA are positioned as aspirational countries from which the UK can learn (extract 13). In contrast, the African continent is positioned as a place which must be financially supported by wealthier nations in the global community.

**Extract 13**

**Gladis**

166. I think we could learn a lot from Canada, the way of life, quality of life, from what I understand. We could learn a lot from US but as Trump is there, let’s keep them away. Russia is quite dangerous so keep them away. The rest of them is a mix of different cultures and, y’know, move Africa further in and spread some of the wealth around.

Image 5.1. *Gladis’ I-Advocator map configuration*

Adopting an I-Advocator position when discussing the UK-Africa relationship suggests the interviewees have specific Western-orientated conceptions about the continent. That they perceive Africa as a continent which requires Western intervention due to political corruption, poverty, and famine (Mahadeo and McKinney, 2007). Such considerations are a natural extension of the high proportion of news reports and mainstream entertainment negatively framing Africa (Evans and Glenn, 2010; Ogunyemi, 2011; Tesfaye, 2014). Interestingly, not all of the map reconfigurations
which focus on the UK-Africa relationship position the UK (and west more generally) as a positive force. The other UK-Africa focused re-configurations offer a more critical stance on this relationship. Here, Mac, Dundee-born and generationally non-mobile, (extract 14) adopts an I-Atoner position to highlight the UK’s colonial legacy and the necessity for atonement (image 5.2). This position being one which emphasises the need for the English to acknowledge and atone for previous colonial exploits.

Extract 14

Mac

100…I think there will be a scrabble for Africa and climate change is affecting everything differently, so I would put the UK in there. That is where the slaves used to come from, isn’t it?! That is where I would put Britain! (.) You are, if you are addressing them as an individual, you are what this was and this is because of you, so you should have a look at the consequences of your history!!

Image 5.2. Mac’s I-Atoner Map configuration

April (extract 15) also adopts an I-Atoner position when reconfiguring the map (image 5.3) and transforms the UK’s global status to that of the African continent. In contrast with Mac, Sunderland resident April does have a degree of migration-mobility (MMC 5 - internal migrant). However, the similarities in their adoption of this position are striking given the UK-EU focus of the interview questions and materials.

Extract 15
April
136. ...To change things that much, it is not that I would want to change where countries are, it is more that I would want to change which countries engage with each other...in terms of Africa, they have had a pretty rough time in terms of being exploited and (3) let’s give them a turn at being in a more, in a nicer part of the world, where the climate is a bit better. Let’s make us feel like Africa did, let’s put us right down there.

Image 5.3. *April’s I-Atoner map configuration*

Reconfiguring the map so that the UK may atone for its past relationship with Africa is not the only dialogical move here. Although Ellie declines to reconfigure the map (image 5.4), she does (extract 16) initially evoke a temporal-focus on the UK’s previous colonial relationship with Africa (a ‘dark past’ to contrast the ‘golden past’ past narrative). In this context, she adopts an avant-garde-we position which emphasises the UK’s present relationship with Africa as exploitative.

Extract 16

Ellie

177...if you were to put the clock back, I would say there should be no empire building, we shouldn’t go into other countries and exploit them, because when you think of Africa, and the wealth in Africa and even now how we are exploiting to maintain our own lifestyles, we are exploiting, not just the country, we are exploiting the people and that to me is wrong.

Interestingly, Eevi (MMC 8) a Finnish-born citizen who resided in Malawi for over a decade, does not share this position when considering the African continent. Instead (extract 17), she adopts an
Democratic position which honours the outcome of a democratic vote above other factors (e.g.: personal voting, wisdom of the decision, etc.).

Image 5.4. *Ellie’s non-configuration*

Extract 17

Eevi

145. I feel there is a relationship between North America and Canada and the UK…more than South America and even with Africa…I just thinking about (...) err (...) democracy and, err, the level of, err, you know people’s possibilities to actually engage in politics freely…Then Africa is kind of a democratic experiment in many places… but, in Africa we definitely we have seen a battle between the idea of democracy and an actual democratic process. Yes, there is parliament, especially for former British colonies, yes there is a president, yes there are MPs, but (...) err (...) it is a president who dictates everything. A sort of authoritarian politics, y’know is well and alive. They can say the right things, but they don’t actually act.

This is relevant here as she positions Africa as a ‘democratic experiment’ in which her valued democratic processes are not a prevalent feature. Consequently, she considers the UK’s relationship with Africa to be a tenuous one, due to these differing democratic values. Alongside this position, her high migration-mobility (MMC 8) could also be a factor here. Research (Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021b) shows those with a higher migration-mobility are more likely to perceive home as a threatened space. A previous residence in a place which does not align with her democratic values could be seen as threatening when compared with her current UK residency.
5.4.1. Summary
An important focus during the map-based tasks was the UK’s relationship with the continent of Africa. To reiterate, this is an unexpected finding given the Brexit-orientated political climate and focus of the interview questions. A common feature among interviewees focusing on Africa was the assertions that the continent is a place in which considerable suffering has occurred. This focus on Africa seems to manifest in two distinctive ways when responding to the stimulus materials. Indeed, interviewees selecting their preferred map projection favoured the Galls-Peter from an I-Advocator position. In doing so highlighted a map projection which accurately represents the geographical reality of the African continent in a global context. The second is the I-Atoner position in which the UK is positioned as a nation owing Africa a great debt due to its colonial past. Both positions indicate the interviewees here consider the UK-Africa relationship an important one, albeit for substantially distinctive reasons.

Indeed, it is important to note that these two positions (I-Advocator and I-Atoner) are distinct in how they position the UK’s role in Africa’s situation. At its worst, the I-Advocator position could be interpreted in the context of UK-Africa relations as inherently ‘white saviour’ in intention (Bell, 2013). That is focuses on neo-colonial representations of Africa which do not acknowledge the continents’ potential for autonomy and equal global status. In contrast, I-Atoner positions the UK as a negative influence which must offer atonement for the historical legacy of the British Empire. In general, such distinctions do not seem to be influenced by personal migration-mobility narratives. However, Eevi’s example illustrates, these positions may be more relevant among UK citizens due to the British Empire’s colonial legacy in Africa. Indeed, both the dialogical positions which focus on the UK-Africa relationship do so by emphasising the impact of historical legacy.

5.5. Final Conclusions on Migration-Mobility’s Influence
In concluding this first stage of the analysis, it is important to consider the following: Does Migration-Mobility influence how individuals position the UK’s global relations? Data indicates that differing degrees of migration-mobility can be an influencing factor on how the interviewees’ position the UK’s global relations. However, this also involves a number of caveats relating to the discursive context and the interviewees’ dialogical positions. Interviewees with higher migration-mobility reject ‘glorious past’ social representations when discussing the UK’s historical global relations compared with the generationally non-mobile (MMC 1). Indeed, when discussing the
UK’s historical global relationships, interviewees with some level of migration-mobility (e.g.: MMC 2 – 10) adopt an I-Patriotism-Rejector position. This rejection aligns with previous research (Woolard, 2012) showing chronotopes are meaningful when rejecting national-orientated political projects.

In contrast, the generationally non-mobile (MMC 1) were more likely to adopt an I-Patriotic position with a focus on a closed chronotope. Previous research (Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021b) found MMC 1 citizens possess a higher sense of security with home. Perhaps it is the case that the generationally non-mobile interviewees here equate the British Empire with this sense of security. For them, the British Empire offered other countries an opportunity to experience the positive aspects of UK social norms. Whilst this would be a rather naïve interpretation of historical events, recent polling (Booth, 2020) shows over a third of British people feel countries were better for being colonised (this is compared with 17% who felt the opposite). This distinctive difference in dialogical positions when discussing the British Empire could, to a certain extent, be due to differing migration-mobility experiences.

However, it would be presumptuous to conclude that interviewees with an MMC 1 position will always adopt a neo-colonialist position when discussing the UK’s global relations. Indeed, in evaluating the map reconfiguration task, the question of how influential migration-mobility is becomes more complex. For example, when interviewees were reconfiguring the map to create the UK’s ‘ideal’ global relations, the UK-Africa relationship was an unexpected finding. The role of migration-mobility does not seem to be the primary influencing factor in this context. Rather, a key influencing factor here is that the interviewees are UK citizens. Therefore, any attempts to elevate Africa on the global stage (implicit in the I-Advocator and I-Atoner positions) could be to reconcile a relationship fraught with negative historical legacies. An issue for consideration here is why the concept of the British Empire was more clearly influenced by individual migration-mobility experiences when compared to the UK-Africa relationship positions?

Clearly the latter issue has a relevant ‘cross over’ with the former in terms of the colonial legacy of the British Empire. However, there is a distinction between the positions adopted when discussing the UK’s Empire past or the UK-Africa relationship. This distinction indicates a tension between those who align with the symbolic appeal of the empire and those who focus on the real-world consequences. To the generationally non-mobile (MMC 1) interviewees, the symbolic
power of the British Empire possesses an appeal which may supersede their focus on specificity. In contrast, those with more migration-mobility experiences seem to consider questions of harm in a manner which negates any symbolic potency. This offers a subtle, but distinctive, contrast with populist research (Mols and Jetten, 2016; 2014) which proposes nationalist threat involves a glorious past-stalled present-glorious future narrative. In contrast, the finding among interviewees here seems to align more with a ‘dark past-diminished present-atoning future’ narrative. Migration-mobility experiences may be one factor which affords citizens the narrative prism in which to focus on issues of harm. Therefore, creating the capacity to position themselves as atoners when exchanging common-sense knowledge on the British Empire.

5.6. Exploring the Influence of Place-person relationships on the Positioning the UK’s Global Relations

The second stage of this analysis explores if place-person relationships have any influence on the interviewees’ positioning of the UK’s global relations. As discussed in section 5.2.4, understanding the place-person relationship initially involves a dialogical three-step analysis then a contextualising quantitative measure (place identity and place attachment). Thus, offering a sensitivity to the reality that geographical location, and the communities therein, do not always lend themselves easily to simple delineations (Hiner, 2014).

5.7. Organising the Data: Place-person relationships

To answer the second part of the first research question, the interviewees were divided into their respective urban or coastal locations. This division manifest, predominately, into an England-Scotland divide between Seaburn (coastal) and Dundee (urban). However, a Scottish resident in Arbroath (coastal) and three urban residents in Sunderland are also present in the sample. The focus of this analysis was on long-term residents with a high place identification to their coastal or urban environment. As discussed in section 5.2.4, an interviewees’ place-person relationship was determined by using an identity measure score to confirm their dialogical position to the following question ‘Do you think residing in an urban/coastal environment has shaped your sense of identity?’ . This was then quantified as a Place Identity Score (PIS) for each interviewee (e.g.: PIS 1 as the lowest and PIS 20 as the highest score). NVivo 12 software was used to search the interview transcripts for the following key words: UK, World, Coastal, and Urban. The words used in the search query were considered relevant to exploring discursive content on both the UK’s
global relations and the England-Scotland union. For the fine-grain analysis, the ‘coding context’ feature was implemented to explore the specific context in which the word was used.

Coastal Location (Seaburn and Arbroath)
Text Search Outcomes: Cases – 11, References: 133
Urban Location (Dundee and Sunderland)
Text Search Outcomes: Cases – 17, References: 296

5.8. The Urban & Coastal Divide: The Distinctions in Place-Person Relationships

Before exploring how the UK was positioned in a global context, it is worth briefly considering differences which emerged between the coastal and urban residents. Specifically, when the interviewees were given the opportunity to discuss their place-person relationship. Here, the Seaburn-born, coastal residents with a high place identity score adopted an I-Community-Member position. Linda (PIS 16) does so whilst also positioning the urban environment as a place lacking in community, due to her personal experiences. Specifically, her six-month relocation to an urban environment for professional purposes (extract 18).

Extract 18

Linda
71...I think that whenever I open my mouth, people can sort of guess where I am from and, y’know, definitely where we live has a sense of community and I felt that was missing when I moved to Gateshead.

Roger is another Seaburn resident who expressed a high identification with his coastal environment (PIS 20). Here, (extract 19) he adopts this I-Community-Member position when extolling the virtues of community life in Seaburn. Both interviewees’ community focus could align with a Psychological Sense of Community (PSOC) which emphasises an emotional connection over place (Mannarini, Rochira, and Talò, 2012; Perkins, Hughey, and Speer, 2002).

Extract 19

Roger
56. Err (.) err, I think when you live in a close-knit community like Seaburn, you tend to know a lot of, I mean to say, around here you have got Whitburn, Roker, err (.) I think that close-knit communities, they tend to know people more.

In contrast, the four Dundee-born residents with a high identification to the urban area responded differently to this question. Mac (PIS 20) considers social class rather than his place-person
relationship to be the determining influence on his sense of identity (extract 20). He evokes a chronotopic representation of family life within the context of local politics and social class discrepancies.

Extract 20

Mac
40. I don’t think so, an identity that is tied to a locality like that. It is very much class… I reflect on that a lot… So, I was at the north of Dundee, just as you are leaving Dundee, and I was twelve. They used to say it was a prison sentence that you had to do your 7 to 11 in the tenements before you got out to one of the houses… We lived in the tenement, one, two, three, four up, and with so many different people about the place, no much of a relationship with the Labour party really… We were never diehard Labour, I wonder why that was, we were quite radically minded, but it shows you the difference Labour claims for itself and what happens on the ground.

Rob, (PIS 19) is 63-year-old retired trade union representative who did not vote in the UK-EU referendum. He also focuses on poverty and social class (extract 21) by evoking a chronotopic representation of his childhood experiences to emphasise the lack of progress in the current climate.

Extract 21

Rob
54. No doubt about it, we used to go when we were young up to the train tracks and steal coal to keep the house warm. The poverty I have seen in Dundee is elsewhere, in Angus, for example, places that are nice, sweet places for American tourists and yet they have foodbanks, so that’s an indicator isn’t it?

Whilst Martin (PIS 20), a 21-year-old Liberal Democratic activist and student, is from a different generation to Mac, their responses have a similar focus. Here (extract 22), Martin also discusses experiences of a social class disparity, albeit with a focus on the middle-class aspirations of his family.

Extract 22

Martin
64.(2) Erm, how has Broughty Ferry shaped me? (3) I don’t know, I have never thought about that?!* Err, I think the school I went to, it is a very good school, and I think it has high expectations of its pupils, err, because I am, the place is quite privileged area, in comparison to the rest of Dundee, which needs to change alongside the rest of Dundee. I think what it did was, it really said that ‘This is the world and you have got to really (2)’, it was an emphasis on intelligence, which I, because I was brought up in that environment, I disagree with that… I think there was an undertone of ‘You’re from here and are expected to go to university ’, and
I think that changed my outlook on the system. That is somewhat political and maybe influenced my interest in politics. These responses to the question align with Domingues, Costas, De Jesus, and Ferreira’s (2017) finding that coastal residents (Faro Beach, southern Portugal) possess a strong identity-community connection. This Portuguese coastal region is especially vulnerable to the periodical threat from storms which causes substantive damage to infrastructure. One prevalent theme among the coastal residents was an inherent mistrust of the authorities to protect their coastal community from future threats. In a Brexit context, the concept of a community under threat seems especially salient to the Seaburn residents. However, there are stark differences in what they consider to be a source of ‘threat’ based on how they position the UK’s global relations.

5.8.1. The Threatened Community

Gladis (PIS 20) initially adopts an I-Community-Member position when considering Seaburn and its future (extract 23). However, she adopts a distancing-they position for Sunderland residents who voted to leave the EU. She focuses on the threat to community engagement with the implicit messages voting Brexit conveys to those moving to Seaburn. This implies her social representation of Leave-voters is that they are inherently isolationist. Gladis then focuses on the potential economic threat as a result of the UK’s changing global relationships with Europe.

Extract 23

Gladis

72. Lots of community groups, good strong community groups that are doing some wonderful things (2) integrating groups, welcoming newcomers into the city and you just think, this overwhelming leave vote (.) it just cannot (.) are they saying these community groups don’t matter? Do they not recognise what is going on beneath (.) it just really upsets me (.) obviously with Nissan, you just think how many people whose lives are so dependent on Nissan and if they do come out of the North-East (3) it’s just (2) I struggle to make sense of it. It really upsets me (.) embarrassing (.) yeah.

Roger (extract 24) engages in an open temporal chronotope here to contextualise the changing economic fortunes of the region with the decline of past industries. The ‘open’ aspect is that he directly connects and contextualises the positive aspect of Seaburn’s current economic situation with the precarity of recent industrial collapse. He adopts an I-EU-Advocate position in declaring that global relations with Europe best serves the Sunderland region in maintaining their current economic situation.
Roger
84. I thought that it was obviously (.) Nissan, as a big area for the Sunderland workforce, think over the years that what has been lost in Sunderland, the mining industry, the shipyards, they have gone. The next thing that came in was Nissan, and y’know, car manufacturing. Nationally, I thought it was better for the UK to be with Europe, y’know, rather than on their own. I would have thought, from the industry side, that Nissan, if they were to move, it would be a big blow to Sunderland. For the whole area, so you are talking about a workforce of five to six thousand there.

In recalling previous discussions with Brexit-supporting family members, Linda (extract 25) also adopts an I-EU-Advocate position when discussing Brexit’s impact on her home.

Extract 25

Linda
91…I think, err (. ) the age I am, I saw a lot of European money change the landscape of Sunderland and what has been new investment, so what the place would have looked like without that money and had those discussions.

This focus on threat from high-identifying coastal residents (PIS 15 or above) who adopt an I-EU-advocate position is distinctive from the current political psychology research on Brexit and threat. Indeed, previous research has focused more on Leave-voters’ perceptions of symbolic threat (Henderson, Jeffery, Wincott, and Wyn Jones, 2017; Van De Vyver, Leite, Abrams, and Palmer, 2018) and/or realistic threat from EU migration (MacDougall, Feddes, and Doosje, 2020). A threat to home space is typically the domain of right-wing populists who distinguish between the ‘true people’ and migrants via divisive social representations (Staerklé and Green, 2018). In such a context, right-wing populists use a closed chronotope when proposing present-threat to foreshadow a threatened future (Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021b). This research shows EU-supporting interviewees in coastal regions also foreground threat, albeit aligned to their own prior commitments. They position the UK’s changing global relations with Europe to be a meaningful threat to both their geographical environment and community.

5.8.2. The Threat from the European Union
This finding contrasts with the high place-identifying Seaburn residents who did vote to leave the EU. Indeed, exploring their responses to the stimulus materials indicates substantially different I-positions on threat. Danny (PSI 20) initially adopts the voice of a Remain-voter to propose and then reject the argument that Brexit will negatively impact on UK trading opportunities (extract
26. The I-Pragmatist position is then adopted to expand upon this initial argument in the context of Sunderland’s main employer. For Danny, a new global relationship is not imbued with a symbolic freedom from the EU, but simply a natural extension of the UK’s global role as a service nation. Danny is, dialogically speaking, in direct conversation with the concerns articulated by Gladis and Roger regarding Nissan. Here, his retort involves offering an alternative common-sense understanding that dismisses any potential economic threat to the region.

Extract 26

Danny
128…I am all for taking a chance (.) y’know, all for let’s see what happens, y’know, it might be better for trade, I mean, I cannot say that because we are not in the EU doesn’t mean we won’t trade with them, people say ‘the thing is, if we leave the EU, how can we sell our stuff?’ I mean, what do we sell?!!! We are pretty much a service nation now, we don’t have any massive industries to sell anymore, we are not dealing in anything, I have read up on some interesting facts about Nissan, err, did you know that Nissan have factories all over the world, people talk about Nissan and they will leave if we leave the EU, that’s the thing. Not going to happen…the reason why is because the carrot that was sold here is that if they build a factory in this country, Japan can import a lot of stuff without any embargos whatsoever…

In her response to Sunderland residents celebrating Brexit, Julie (PIS 19) also eschews any claims of economic threat from a revised trade deal (extract 27). Instead, she positions EU migrants as the threat with accusations they fraudulently claim on the UK benefit system. This aligns with previous research in Sunderland (Bromley-Davenport, MacLeavy, and Manley, 2019) which found perceptions of unfairness were prevalent when considering the welfare entitlements of EU migrants. It is important to note that Julie’s seeming comfort in expressing explicitly anti-immigration sentiments is likely due to her shared background with myself (i.e.: white, working-class, and northern).

Extract 27

Julie
60.(referring to the UK leaving the EU) *Err (3) at last!* Err (.) I think that it has been restrictive on trade, why cannot we trade elsewhere? That was the main reason that, err, I voted leave. Plus, also, I am not against free movement, but what I am against is that, I just know from experience, that some people are coming over and claiming benefits and going and spending that money back home, and they can because they are in the EU.

Julie then adopts an I-Parent position when discussing the UK’s post-Brexit immigration policy (extract 28). This position emerges in the context of discourse on EU migrants as she relates their
presence as posing a potential threat to her children’s future employment opportunities. Social class seems to be a factor here as she is less concerned with limiting migrants for middle-class professions. This could be due to the fact she feels such roles will not be relevant to her children’s future career options as working-class adults.

Extract 28

Julie

84. Yeah, I think we have a better future being unrestricted in terms of trade, but (.) I don’t want to be too restricted in terms of expertise with doctors, lawyers, engineers, especially. But on the other hand, you have to balance that as I have two kids, one is about to leave school after this year, and how is she going to get on? Err (.) then other has an apprenticeship and is doing really, really well. So (.) it is a choice of thinking of them, thinking of them first.

Mark (PIS 20) initially reaffirms an I-Apolitical positioning from earlier in the interview before adopting a distinctive I-EU-Critic position in which he directly attacks the existence of the European Union itself (extract 29).

Extract 29

Mark

72… I know I have already told you that I am not political but there has been so much said on Brexit you cannot really avoid it. The thing, most the people that I know who wanted to leave, voted out of a federal Europe, and that is where it is going. It is inexorably going towards a federal Europe, there will be, next thing you know, there will be a federal defence force, a European defence force which you would have to commit to, so that is more money, right, and then there is the Euro, inexorably going towards that; the Germans and French won’t pull away from that, so you end up with the Euro and all the stuff that goes with a federal, you end up with a federal Europe, governed by people who weren’t elected…

This is distinctive from the other critiques as this opposes the European Union’s actual existence rather than its consequences (e.g.: migration, trade deals, etc.). Mark is a retired naval navigator from a generationally non-mobile (MMC 1) family but has also travelled the world numerous times in a professional capacity. Mark positions the EU as an existential threat due to his concerns over the ‘federalization’ of Europe. He claims the consequences of this would have limited the UK’s sovereignty further had the vote not been won by Brexit supporters. The Seaburn residents discussed focus on aspects of threat related to the EU, whilst, in contrast, high-identifying, Dundee-born urban residents emphasise threats to the England and Scotland union.
5.8.3. The Threat to Scotland’s Future

Both Bruce and Rob position the UK’s decision to leave the EU as being an ‘English problem’. That is to say, any threat to the UK’s global relations is based on England’s support for leaving Europe. Despite England being the researcher’s country of birth (which was known to both interviewees), it did not seem to inhibit their stark criticisms of England. Bruce, (PSI 20) a retired 59-year-old SNP activist, focuses on Scotland’s need to leave the union before realigning with Europe. Here, Bruce (extract 30) evokes chronotopic spatial differences between England and Scotland’s engagement with the UK-EU referendum. He likely does this to affirm his proposition that Scottish independence is required before serious consideration can be given to any future global relations.

Extract 30

Bruce
100…I disagree with the SNP on this in terms of them being used by the English-remain campaign because there was a majority of Remainers in Scotland, I think it was a diversion to talk about somebody else’s issues. The SNP’s focus should be leaving the union and then the people of Scotland will decide if they want to be a part of the European Union, chances are they probably will, but, but, that felt, I mean when you look at that, I may be wrong but there was never a leave demonstration like that in Scotland so that was another example of how, in general, there was a lot of differences in Scotland, there was never a leave campaign demonstration in Dundee. This never happened in Scotland. That was an English video!! (Referring to stimulus material).

Rob (extract 31) responds to the UK-EU referendum footage with a powerful rejection England’s national flag. In discussing the UK’s global relations with Europe, he evokes a chronotopic representation on England’s diminishing status.

Extract 31

Rob
86… I still like to call the Union Jack the butcher’s apron because every time the flag is flown it is soaked with blood. The EU flags there just increase the entrenchment. Y’see, up here we see this as an English-problem (.) it wasn’t a huge talking point up here; yes, it was important to keep ties with the EU as Scotland needs the immigration, right? This division that gets deeper and deeper and it is an English-problem. The glory, glory days of England are long gone.

Martin (extract 32) adopts an I-Scottish position to establish his commitment to Scotland before dialogically addressing advocates of Scottish independence. He adopts a chronotopic representation which proposes a future threat to the UK ever re-joining the EU if Scotland becomes independent.
Extract 32

Martin

36. Now I am Scottish first and foremost, and I don’t think there is a polling trend for independence and I think people are starting to think ‘Is this what I want?’ because of Brexit, of course everyone is thinking that, I am deeply sad we left the EU, of course I am, but there are so many questions unanswered; would we get back into the EU after Independence? Would Spain let us in? What would our relationship be with the rest of the UK after Independence?. I think that people are thinking about this. It disheartens me, but it happened and I, unfortunately, I have to accept that.

This analysis offers some insight on the extent to which different place-person relationships influence how interviewees position the UK’s global relations. Specifically, on the issue of perceived threats to the community or country among those who have a strong place-person relationship. The final section offers an overview on the implications of these differences before drawing final conclusions.

5.9. The Influence of Place-Person Relationships: Final Conclusions

A high-identifying place-person relationship (e.g.: PIS 15 or above) does seem to be a factor in influencing residents’ positioning of the UK’s global relations. In this regard, high-identifying, Dundee-born urban residents focused on threats relating to the England-Scotland union. Specifically, by adopting different positions on the union’s potential impact on future global relations with Europe. A chronotopic representation of England as a diminishing power which imposed Brexit upon Scotland was a reoccurring feature of the discourse. The emphasis here being that Brexit was an ‘English problem’ and, as such, England are positioned as a potential threat to Scotland’s future relations with the EU. However, this concern was also reversed with a future chronotopic representation which limits the UK’s global relationships if Scotland gains independence. Such divisions align with the individuals’ prior political commitments and national survey data (Henderson, 2018). Thus, whilst not new, this finding does offer additional insight into how residents with a high place-person relationship discursively position the union in a post-Brexit context.

This analysis also found that Seaburn residents position the UK’s global relations based on identification with their coastal community. For high-identifying EU supporting coastal residents, the I-Community-Member position is important when discussing Seaburn and what it offers them as individuals. Furthermore, this position seems to be the prism for how they consider potential
threats resulting from the UK’s global realignment. Specifically, the threat of stark reductions in EU investment or mass unemployment for the region. Among the Brexit-supporting Seaburn residents, their positions on threat were notably different. The UK’s changing global relationship with Europe was considered either irrelevant or a positive step in reducing threat. For them, the threat to UK sovereignty or a lack of opportunities due to EU migration were key concerns. It seems clear that this division between the residents also aligns with their prior voting endorsements during the UK-EU referendum.

As discussed in Chapter Three, post-Brexit research has inevitably focused on Leave-voting Sunderland residents to understand the outcome. The general analysis typically identifies four key features: (1) economic deprivation, (2) social marginalization, (3) distrust of politicians, and (4) perceived threat from further EU integration (Abrams and Travaglino, 2018; MacDougall, Feddes, and Doosje, 2020). Qualitative research which gives North-East residents a voice found evidence broadly supporting these as the key factors among Brexit-supporters. Be it Teesside resident’s disillusionment with the political class and lack of opportunities (Telford and Wistow, 2020) or Sunderland resident’s concerns on EU migration (Bromley-Davenport, MacLeavy, and Manley, 2019). This thesis offers a novel finding in understanding the UK’s global relationships among both EU- and Brexit-supporters in Sunderland/Seaburn. Namely, that EU-supporting, high identity residents position themselves with their community to discuss the nation’s global relations.

These coastal residents do so by adopting an I-Community-Member position which seems to be important for meaning-making when evaluating the risk of economic threat in departing the EU. In this regard, it seems a meaningful place-person relationship with their geographical environment could be an influencing factor. Specifically, a high sense of place identity with their coastal environment which seems to influence how they position and understand the UK’s global relationships. A limitation here is that, when compared with the migration-mobility data, the positioning of the UK aligns with a prior political commitment for the majority of the interviewees. Therefore, it is more difficult to clearly define the influence of place-person relationships. However, these findings do offer further insight regarding the outcome of the 2016 UK-EU referendum in northern, post-industrial areas. Namely, that coastal, north-east Remain and Leave voters’ relationship with their community may have been an influencing factor on how they positioned the UK’s global relations with Europe.
5.10. Conclusion

The purpose of study one was to answer the following: Do (A) Migration-mobility or (B) Place-person relationships, influence how individuals position the UK’s global relations? Analysis of migration-mobility narratives indicates different experiences could be an influencing factor on how they position the UK’s global relations. Specifically, either endorsing or rejecting the UK’s ‘glorious past’ in response to stimulus materials depicting patriotic symbols of the British Empire. Moreover, those with migration-mobility experiences seem attuned to the potential harm created by the UK’s colonial past with either advocating or atoning positions. The second part of this analysis offers insight into differences between place-person relationships and positioning of the UK’s global relations. A novel finding here is in extending understanding of how EU-supporting, coastal residents position the UK’s new global role in a post-Brexit context. That is to say, the EU-advocates position themselves within the coastal community when considering the UK’s global relations. Indeed, the community becomes an important meaning-making position for considering potential threats which may emerge from the UK’s changing relationship with the EU. In contrast, urban residents in Scotland with similar high place-person relationships emphasised distinctions between communities (e.g.: differing social class). Moreover, for them, the UK’s relationship with Europe was considered within the context of the England-Scotland union. Specifically, the threat of national harm to Scotland from either being aligned with or disconnected from England. Considered together, this analysis indicates that, in a relevant discursive context, both the interviewees’ migration-mobility experiences and place-person relationships have some influence on how they position the UK’s global relations.
Chapter Six: The Methods, Materials and Dialogical Pairings for Study Two

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to consider how study two can answer the second research question by pairing together participants on shared/conflicting dialogical positions. The first section (6.1) offers an account of the methods used for study two and the procedure for the paired discussions. The chapter then (section 6.2) elaborates on the structure of the paired discussions and considers the challenges involved in this process. Specifically, the novelty in pairing individuals together based on previous dialogical positions to explore politically polarised interactions. Section 6.3 offers a rationale for the top-down approach to pairing participants based on the three-step analysis from study one and how this aligns with the broader assumptions of dialogicality. The final section (6.4) then overviews the process on which each of the participants were paired together. This offers specific insight into both the shared positions selected and the projected polarising issue between them. The focus here being to explore the potential of shared positions to create a discursive context in which the participants can sustain dialogue.

6.1. Method – Study Two

The opening section outlines study two’s method for exploring the second research question: Are there I-positions which can sustain dialogue between interlocuters during polarising discussions on the UK’s global relations?

6.1.1. Participants

Study two consists of five paired discussions (N = 10) between participants from both Dundee and Sunderland/Seaburn via an online platform (e.g.: Zoom) during September 2020. The participants were selected from a sample of 16 out of the initial 28 involved in study one. The unavailability of 12 participants was due to a combination of disinterest in further participation or a lack of access to the relevant online technology for Zoom calls. The participants selected had an equal gender split and mix of residents from both locations (table 6.1). However, the party-political support expressed by the participants during the discussions is predominantly left-wing and, therefore, not representative of the wider UK population.
Table 6.1. *Study Two – Participant Demographics*

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean Age</strong></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age Range</strong></td>
<td>19 – 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>Male: 5 (50%) Female: 5 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environment</strong></td>
<td>Urban: 7 (70%) Coastal: 3 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country of residence</strong></td>
<td>England: 3 (30%) Scotland: 7 (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country of birth</strong></td>
<td>England: 5 (50%) Scotland: 4 (40%) Finland: 1 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EU Referendum Vote</strong></td>
<td>Remain: 6 (60%) Leave: 2 (20%) Not Eligible: 2 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Party Support</strong></td>
<td>Liberal Democrats: 3 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labour Party: 3 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scottish National Party: 2 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conservative Party: 1 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green Party: 1 (10%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After their availability was known, ten participants were paired together based on both shared positions and (projected) polarising differences relating to the UK’s global relations. As discussed in Chapter Four (section 4.1.2) the design for this study is quasi-experimental; therefore, the participants are matched on a specific criteria (e.g.: shared dialogical positions) to answer the second research question. Table 6.2 offers an overview of the shared dialogical positions that existed between the pairings based on analysis of study one. Important to note that the pairings were not matched on every position they both adopted in study one. Instead, two key dialogical
positions were selected in an attempt to create a discursive context which would be relevant to both participants (see section 6.4 for a detailed account of the pairing process).

Table 6.2. *Shared Dialogical Positions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Pairings</th>
<th>Shared <em>I</em>-Positions</th>
<th>Shared We/They Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pairing A</td>
<td><em>I</em>-Democratic</td>
<td>We – Partner &amp; I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eevi &amp; Bobby</td>
<td><em>I</em>-Politically-Engaged</td>
<td>We – Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They - Leave voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pairing B</td>
<td><em>I</em>-Dundonian</td>
<td>We – Scottish citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce &amp; Martin</td>
<td><em>I</em>-Scottish</td>
<td>We – Dundee community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They – Leave voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pairing C</td>
<td><em>I</em>-Politically-Engaged</td>
<td>We – UK nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelina &amp; April</td>
<td><em>I</em>-Environmentalist</td>
<td>We – Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pairing D</td>
<td><em>I</em>-Democratic</td>
<td>We – UK nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda &amp; Thomas</td>
<td><em>I</em>-Centrist</td>
<td>We – Partner &amp; I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They – Leave voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They – Proms’ audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pairing E</td>
<td><em>I</em>-British</td>
<td>We – UK nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhianna &amp; Joe</td>
<td><em>I</em>-Politically-Engaged</td>
<td>They – Leave voters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alongside these shared positions, the pairings were also projected to have different levels of polarisation based on the analysis of study one. As detailed in table 6.3, this produced three highly polarised pairings (A, B, & E) and two pairings (C & D) projected to have low/no level of polarisation.
6.1.2. Study Procedure
The procedure and materials for this second study were reviewed and approved by the Open University’s HREC Ethics Review Panel. The original intention was to have the participants meet in person. However, due to the social restrictions imposed by COVID-19, this could not be achieved in a safe manner. Therefore, the paired interviews were hosted via online software (Zoom) as it offered the most effective compromise. A positive consequence of this change was that participants from either location (e.g.: Dundee or Seaburn/Sunderland) could be paired together. It was central to the purpose of study two that the participants were unaware of this research’s focus on sustaining dialogue. To ensure this, the participants were informed that the study was a ‘follow-up’ to capture their reflections on the UK-EU transition period. The paired discussions involved three main stages: (1) Stage One: Shared position exchanges, (2) Stage Two: Polarising moment, and (3) Stage Three: Post-polarising discussion (see figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1. Paired Discussion Structure

![Paired Discussion Structure Diagram]

The interview style at all stages was informal in an attempt to reduce a hierarchy in which the participants considered the researcher a ‘more knowledgeable other’. However, each stage had a standardised procedure for the number of questions asked in stage one. Each pairing was matched together in stage one on two shared core positions in which six interview questions were equally divided between the positions. For stage two, identical polarising footage was shown before stage three’s interview questions which, whilst on different aspects of the footage, involved four questions for all pairings. At the conclusion, the participants were debriefed as to the aims of the study and any immediate questions were answered. All participants were then contacted individually for an additional wellbeing check and compensated for their time with a £10 Amazon voucher. The following sections offer a more detailed accounted of the paired discussion structure.
6.1.2.1. Pre-Discussion

Given the magnitude of COVID-19’s disruption on everyday life, it was likely the topic would emerge during the interactions. Therefore, a pre-interview ‘catch-up’ was facilitated by the researcher with both participants together to discuss the issue. The aim being to reduce the likelihood of the participants focusing exclusively on the pandemic during the paired discussions. Therefore, creating a pre-interview space for the participants to recount their pandemic experiences prior to the study commencing.

Table 6.3. Projected Polarising Issues and Level of Polarisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Pairings</th>
<th>Projected Polarising Issue</th>
<th>Projected Level of Polarisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pairing A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eevi &amp; Bobby</td>
<td>Brexit’s impact on the UK</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pairing B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce &amp; Martin</td>
<td>Union’s future post-Brexit</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pairing C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelina &amp; April</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Low/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pairing D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda &amp; Thomas</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Low/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pairing E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhianna &amp; Joe</td>
<td>Brexit protest/campaign</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.1.2.2. Stage One: Shared position exchanges

The purpose of stage one was to, via six questions equally divided between two positions, create a context for the participants to re-adopt positions from study one. The aim here being to explore if the participants would adopt shared positions and if/how this impacts on dialogue sustainment. Importantly, the structure of the questions was open to encourage the participants to formulate their thinking.

6.1.2.3. Stage Two: Polarising moment

The polarising material focused on substantive events related to the 2020 UK-EU transition period that could be relevant to the participants (as outlined in section 6.1.3.2). The UK media’s focus in 2020 was, predominately, on events related to the global pandemic. Thus, greatly diminishing the
frequency of Brexit-related content despite the importance of UK-EU transition period. Therefore, the polarising material also functions as a reminder of the important UK-EU events that occurred during this transition period.

6.1.2.4. Stage Three: Post-polarisation discussion
For stage three, the pairings were projected to be highly polarised when asked four questions which explore the differences between the participants. The exception being two pairings (C & D) which would not be matched on any polarising issue for the purposes of comparison. For these two pairings, general questions on their impressions of the UK-EU transition period footage were asked instead.

6.1.3. Materials

6.1.3.1. Stage One: Shared I-Position-based Questions
Each pairing was asked six questions in the first stage of the discussion divided equally between two different positions that the interviewees had previously adopted in study one (see Appendix D for the paired discussion interview questions). The questions developed for this stage of the discussion were bespoke creations based specifically on the participants’ shared dialogical positions. For example, to explore Paring A’s shared I-Democratic position, the pair were asked the following three questions: (1) *Do you think that honouring the EU referendum outcome has been a good thing for maintaining people’s belief in democracy?* (2) *Do you think it is important that people can put aside their own personal preferences and support what might be the best for democracy? Or is that not possible?* and (3) *Thinking back to the Brexit Parliamentary stalemate last year, do you think the politicians showed themselves to be advocates of democracy?*

6.1.3.2. Stage Two: 2020 UK-EU Transition Timeline
To standardise the materials with study one, the polarising moment involved presenting participants with updated compilation footage depicting a 2020 UK-EU Transition timeline. The polarising footage depicts key events occurring in the UK-EU transition period from January 2020 until the beginning of study two (September 2020). These are as follows: (1) 31st January: Brexit Day Celebrations (public responses in both London and Edinburgh), (2) 18th May: Announcement of a new UK Immigration Bill, and (3) 1st July: Deadline passes for the UK-EU withdrawal extension (access footage at Figshare, 2022b). These three events attempt to, in microcosm, encapsulate the polarising issues relevant to the Brexit debate. Specifically, populist rhetoric on
national sovereignty (Davies, 2021) and increased controls on immigration to UK (Wasowicz, 2018).

Image 6.1. 31st January: Brexit Day Celebrations

Image 6.2. 18th May: Announcement of the New UK Immigration Bill

Image 6.3. 1st July: Deadline passes for the UK-EU Withdrawal Extension
As participants understood the study to be an exercise in seeking opinions about the transition period, it was also important that the stimulus materials aligned with their expectations by offering relevant moments for discussion.

6.1.3.3. Stage Three: Polarising Questions

As discussed in section 6.1.1, the pairings were projected to have different levels of polarisation based on the issue selected. The participants in the projected high polarised pairings (A, B, & E) were asked four questions relevant to their polarising issue. For example, Pairing B were projected to be polarised on the future of the England-Scotland union and were asked the following: (1) *Given the change in circumstances caused by Brexit, do you feel it is the right time to question the relationship between England and Scotland?* (2) *What would be the benefits if Scotland were to become completely independent?* (3) *What would be the losses if Scotland were to become completely independent?* and (4) *Do you think the end of the union is inevitable?* In contrast, the two pairings who were projected to have a low/no level of polarisation were both asked four identical questions seeking their opinion on the UK-EU transition period (see Appendix D for the list of questions).

6.2. Paired Discussion Structure: Considerations and Challenges

An important consideration here is to reiterate what is meant by the term ‘sustaining dialogue’ in the context of this study. Stage three of the discussion structure is the context in which the interviewees have the opportunity to sustain dialogue. The interviewees would be deemed to be doing so if they engage directly with each other in challenging, politically-relevant topics. That despite the high likelihood of dissensus moments, both interviewees engage with one another without consensus-seeking or avoidance (e.g.: changing topic or directing the discussion back to the researcher). The concept of sustaining dialogue is not a yes/no binary, but, rather, a spectrum in which the pairings produced distinctive differences in how dialogue was sustained. As outlined, three of the five pairings were projected to be highly polarised on a Brexit-related issue. The other two pairings were projected to have low/no potential for polarisation as neither had obvious political differences on EU-related issues. The advantage here is that the latter offers a comparative context in which to explore the impact of polarising stimulus on political discourse.
Moreover, this difference in polarisation creates a discursive context which aligns with the assumption that real-world engagement can often be nuanced. That is to say, political differences are not always divided by extreme ideological counter-points but can simply be nuanced differences on important issues. Indeed, the political differences between the pairings reject simplistic ‘Remainer vs. Leaver’ conflicts. Instead, the focus here is on a broader range of interrelated issues which have emerged since the 2016 UK-EU referendum (e.g.: the future of the union after Brexit). This aligns with the broader assumptions of Gillespie and Martin’s (2014) position exchange theory that people are dynamic and context-dependent in their position on salient issues. Indeed, it is highly unlikely that the polarised discursive exchanges will be concise or linear. Therefore, the follow-up questions are subject to being amended during the course of the discussion in response to this outcome.

Devising the questions for this study presented two substantive challenges, which were: (1) devise questions which would create a context for the participants to re-adopt a previous position, and (2) ask questions which appear credible to the participants regarding the (falsely) stated purpose of the study. As this first challenge was entirely novel, no previous research methods could be adopted to achieve this goal. Therefore, an important consideration guiding the construction of these questions was identifying essential elements which define the participants’ positioning. For example, both Angelina and April (Pairing C) both adopted an I-Environmentalist position in response to the map projections and 2016 UK-EU referendum footage respectively. The key elements for both were the stated importance of this issue and need for governmental action. Therefore, questions were devised which allowed the participants to re-adopt this position within the context of discussing the UK’s global relationships. For example, ‘First of all, how important are environmental issues on your list of political concerns?’, and ‘What do you make of the UK’s approach to environmental issues?’.

For the second challenge, the questions required a framing which would be consistent with the participants’ expectations about discussing Brexit-related issues. For example, in stage one, the framing for Pairing C’s I-Environmentalist questions were ‘I have been discussing with people how Brexit may have pushed other issues off the agenda. The issue I would like us to explore today is the UK’s role in environmental issues’. For stage three, the questions asked were related to the anticipated disagreements between the pairings considered likely to be a polarising factor. For example, with Pairing A, their potential for disagreement over a post-Brexit UK was explored with
the following: Are you concerned leaving will have a negative impact upon the UK after the transition period is over? The two pairings anticipated to have low/no polarisation received identical questions on the transition period during stage three. For example, ‘What are your initial thoughts or impressions of the footage?’ Another key challenge for this study is to introduce stimulus materials which would have the potential to create a polarising moment between the participants.

In social psychology, polarising stimulus materials are often used in experimental research to explore the media’s influence on the public in different political contexts. For example, the media’s role in shaping memory recall of polarising events (Hennessey, Feinberg, and Wilson, 2021), influencing the moral framing of contentious issues (e.g.: abortion) (Clifford and Jerit, 2013), or how biased coverage increases partisan political attitudes (Levendusky and Malhotra, 2016). However, a distinctive difference between previous research and study two’s focus is on the function of political stimulus materials. Typically, research attempts to expose partisan participants to material which will reduce polarisation, be that ideological (Chu and Yang, 2018; Morisi, Goldberg, and Jost, 2022) or affective (Huddy and Yair, 2019; Levendusky, 2017). In contrast, the purpose of study two’s stimulus materials is to disrupt discourse and create a context for political polarisation to emerge between the pair. This is a highly novel use of stimulus materials and, as such, does not have a defined precedent from which to develop an understanding of the implications for such an intervention. This is a challenge in that the intention of such an intervention does create ethical implications which are important to acknowledge and consider further here.

As outlined (section 6.1.2), an element of deception on the intentions of study two was essential to maintain the integrity of the research. Therefore, whilst the participants knew they would be sharing views with both myself and another participant, they may not have anticipated any politically polarising discourse. Given the potential for polarising discourse, there is a risk that participants will experience discomfort if they encounter stark resistance to their own political positions. Whilst a certain level of short-term, temporary discomfort is likely during polarising discourse, the intention is still to mitigate any long-term negative impact by adhering to the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (Oates, 2021). This code is based on the following four guiding principles: (1) Respect, (2) Competence, (3) Responsibility, and (4) Integrity. These four principles are highly relevant to study two, which prioritises respecting the self-determination of the
participants. That is to say, creating a discursive context in which, despite an element of researcher intervention (e.g.: the interjection of potentially polarising materials), the autonomy of the participants is the priority at all times. Indeed, my role here is to be highly sensitive to the needs of the participants and deprioritise the aims of the research if they conflict with the wellbeing of those involved. This requires developing a knowledge of both the explicit and implicit indicators that a participant does not wish to engage in dialogue. Such indicators are outlined in Draucker, Martsof, and Poole’s (2009) protocol on how to engage with a participant experiencing emotional distress and are implemented into the practice of this research. For example, participants who show visible emotional distress, engage in frequent displacement activities to avoid discourse, or become highly antagonistic to the other participant or myself. Such signs would mean the immediate termination of the paired discussion and those impacted would be offered follow-up support.

Alongside maintaining ethical standards to ensure the well-being of the participants, my role as a researcher was also to facilitate a discussion which explores the research questions. To clarify, the researcher’s role in these paired discussions is as follows: (1) Ask questions which offer a context for the participants to re-adopt previous positions, (2) Present participants with the 2020 UK-EU Transition timeline, and (3) Ask questions which explore potential agreements and disagreements between the pair. If the participants do sustain dialogue with one another, the expectation is that the role of the researcher will diminish as the discussion proceeds. That is to say, the participants’ discourse will move beyond the parameters of the questions posed by the researcher. This, in and of itself, does not offer definitive evidence for answering the research question. However, it shows the participants were able to sustain dialogue independent of a third-party and move beyond any performative consensus-seeking behaviour (Siedlecki, Szwabinskil, and Weron, 2016). The chapter now focuses on outlining the pairing process for matching participants to explore dialogue sustainment in polarised contexts.

6.3. An Overview of the Pairing Process

Firstly, it is important to consider what is involved in the dialogical analysis used for creating interviewee pairings. Specifically, what steps have been taken to understand the interviewees’ core positions and how this creates a rationale for pairing them. As discussed, (Chapter Five, section 5.2) the second step in the three-step analysis offers a means of understanding the interviewees’ adopted I-, We- & They- positions. The results of this second step are the foundation for pairing
the interviewees together to explore the second research question. A key consideration here is that an individual has the capacity to re-adopt specific dialogical positions if the discursive context is relevant. That is to say, the idea that dialogical positions can be both a ‘snap-shot’ of a specific context and also be re-adopted given certain criteria. This assumption aligns with Gillespie and Martin’s (2014) position exchange theory on the interdependent nature of shared positions relevant to a specific social context.

The purpose of the following sections is to outline the practical and conceptual issues in pairing participants based on their dialogical positions. The initial scoping process for identifying potential pairings was facilitated by NVivo 12’s Comparison Diagram feature. The process produces a visual template which displays all the shared nodes present between two selected participants. To clarify, ‘nodes’ is an NVivo term for coded content which, in this case, are the dialogical positions of each person. This comparison process allows for a visual representation of every shared feature that exists between the two participants selected. This affords an understanding of how many shared social representations, dialogical positions or chronotopes exist between the two participants. The visual representation can then be explored further by accessing the individual node to bring forth the relevant interview section (e.g.: migration-mobility questions, jigsaw map, etc.). This offers an understanding of the discursive context in which the positions are occurring and the relevance to both participants.

This process of pairing participants on dialogical positions is a top-down approach which categorises previous positions. This emphasis on categorising dynamic positions could be considered something of an anathema in a dialogical context (Frank, 2005). Specifically, as a top-down ‘capturing’ of dynamic discursive moments is not entirely aligned with the ontological assumption of dialogicality. However, whilst this may be the case, the aim of this research demands a top-down, categorical approach. Indeed, categorising the participants’ dialogical positions is innate to the project of pairing them together to explore question two. This aligns with Grossen’s (2011) argument that an unavoidable gulf exists between current methodological tools and the realities of dialogical research. Thus, the researcher is forced into a situation in which complex dialogical contexts are inevitably simplified to facilitate data organisation. Within the context of this research, such a compromise is reasonable given the focus on real-time interactions over oft-used retrospective analysis, such as examples found in Raggatt (2014), and Raggart (2010). A substantial challenge for this pairing process was to match participants who both share dialogical
positions, but also have the potential to disagree when discussing the UK’s global relations. Consequently, this process created a disparity between shared positions which are relevant to the pairings. However, an equal distribution of dialogical shared-positions among the pairings is neither present, nor necessarily desirable. Indeed, it is important to consider that not all dialogical positions possess similar levels of importance, with some offering a ‘core-position’ from which other positions can occur.

Indeed, Akkermann and Meijer (2011) found this to be the case with teachers; a role which demands a multi-positionality due to the disparate social-interactions and context. For example, a confrontational class or vulnerable student seeking assistance could provoke the teacher to adopt a I-Authoritarian or I-Nurturer position respectively. Therefore, core positions must be selected which possess the context-relevant importance required for positional re-adoption (Gillespie and Martin, 2014). Another important consideration is that focusing on projected polarising moments will not be exclusively based on binary ‘Remainer/Leaver’ labels. Rather, study two will explore multifaceted positions on both Brexit and related topics relevant to the UK (i.e.: Scottish independence). This is an important choice as it will create an opportunity to compare discourse between pairings with (potentially) high or low polarising moments. For example, pairings A, B, and E offer a highly polarised context due to the differences between the interviewees. In contrast, pairings C and D are projected to have low/no meaningful polarisation moments. Therefore, if consistent differences emerge in sustaining dialogue between the low/no and high polarising pairings, the factors influencing this can also be explored. This enables an understanding of the extent to which disagreement disrupts previous positional commonalities and how this manifests in discourse.

Furthermore, a low/no polarisation pairing offers an opportunity to explore if a certain level of polarisation is an essential factor in political discourse. That is to say, if it is the ‘oil in the engine’ for such political discussions. Brush (2020) argues that civil disagreement (in the context of her study, on environmental issues) is an essential part of political discourse and, therefore, a factor in furthering meaningful discussion. As foregrounded in Chapter Three (section 3.6.1), this aligns with the pragmatic assumptions of this research; namely, that consensus between polarised citizens is unrealistic, but improving the manner in which they engage in such discussions is an achievable goal. The definition of ‘improvement’ in this case is discursive engagements which accommodate for differences and foster a greater understanding of the other person. Hence, the low/no
polarisation pairings provide an opportunity to explore how political discourse is maintained when no obvious divide is apparent (assuming no polarising discourse emerges). Finally, it is important to note that all the levels of polarisation discussed here are projections of what could occur rather than predictions. In reality, the divide between anticipated moments of polarisation, and the actual discursive dynamics may be substantially different.

6.4. Interviewee Pairings

The following section details all five pairings and outlines the dialogical positions which directed the process of matching the participants together.

6.4.1. Pairing A (high polarisation)

This pairing involves residents from Dundee and Seaburn with an expected polarising position on the UK’s post-Brexit future.

_Eevi_

Eevi is a 59-year-old woman born in Finland who re-located to Dundee post-EU referendum after a career as a journalist. She has previously resided in Italy, Malawi, and England with her husband (Thomas – Pairing D) and their daughter.

_Bobby_

Durham-born Bobby is a 65-year-old retired police officer who currently resides in Seaburn/Fullwell area with his partner after re-locating from London.

6.4.1.1. Shared Dialogical Positions

_I-Democratic_

This position, in the context of this research, is adopted when the individual values honouring the UK-EU referendum outcome for the purposes of democracy. That is to say, the individual prioritises honouring the outcome of a democratic vote above other factors (e.g.: personal voting, wisdom of the decision, etc.). In such instances, this prioritisation would be considered an I-Democratic position. For this initial process of pairing, it is not important if the participants possess disparate everyday models of democracy. The criteria here singularly focuses on any shared social representation on the importance of direct democracy. During study one, both participants adopted an I-Democratic position when viewing the UK-EU referendum footage from study one. Indeed, both focused on the ‘greater good’ of serving the democratic process by honouring the vote. Eevi
(extract 01) adopts a *I*-Democratic position which is pragmatic in that, despite her personal hope that Brexit will not occur, she recognises the potential damage to democracy. Within this context she adopts an advocating-they position for Leave-voters who she feels would be wrongly ignored if the outcome were overturned. This is indicative of an *I*-Democratic position on the UK-EU referendum outcome

Extract 01

AE
78. Do you think this clip represents the UK at the moment?

Eevi
79. (.) it is very difficult to say because I think (.) to, err, the problem is that it is now three-years (.) people have had a chance to, err, to reflect, they have had access to different views and information, and yet the Brexit party was successful in the EU elections (.) yeah, err, and, and, and, and it keep coming up this 17.6 million voted for leaving, ‘why are we still here?’ . I think fundamentally that it will happen because, err, if it doesn’t go through now when, err, (.), I think, I think it, it is a pressure cook (.) but, honestly, I hope it will not go through with Brexit. Obviously, I hope personally it will not happen, but I think that for the politicians, but for society. It will be a very difficult problem because, err, because you have that number for people who then feel the vote didn’t matter and that they are now being (.) err (.) treated as some outsiders which could actually change the political landscape…

Bobby’s (extract 02) adopting of the *I*-Democratic position manifests in criticisms of the political elite and what he considers to be their undemocratic intentions.

Extract 02

Bobby
84….I think it is a failure on the part of all the MPs and parties, that they haven’t been able to come to something with lots of talking, instead of listening to people and asking’ What type of Brexit do you want?’; they have spent too much time fighting and arguing. The week after the referendum, they were talking about a second referendum! A lot of (.) let us find the middle-ground, a common-sense way of doing it, but they are trying to re-fight yesterday’s war, in my book.

However, his focus is on a democratic model is one which places discursive engagement with voters as a priority (e.g.: ‘what type of Brexit do you want?’). This future-orientated chronotope is absent from Eevi’s depiction of Leave-voters as disenfranchised and disempowered.

*I-Politically-Engaged*
Both participants adopted an I-Politically-Engaged position when asked to explore their background and level of political interest. The I-Politically-Engaged position is one where an individual expresses a commitment to a political party or movement. Typically, this involves engagement in politically-orientated activities, although this is not an essential aspect of this position. Identifying this position is not based on a metric which evaluates engagement via the number of political events attended. Rather it is an expression of engagement to a political cause in a shared context which influences the political worldview of both participants. Here both Eevi (extract 03) and Bobby (extract 04) share the similar experience of engaging in local politics later in life, after relocating to their current home. Both Eevi and Bobby seem to have become engaged in politics via an instigating political event; the 2016 UK-EU referendum and 2015 General Election respectively. Whilst the interviewees’ political affiliations have a different focus, the shared experiences evoking this position offer a means of potential connectivity.

Extract 03

Eevi
4. Yes, very interested in politics. We have lived now in Dundee for a year, we moved exactly in November… I have become actually active in politics to the extent that I joined the Liberal Democrats and been campaigning locally for a candidate. He does not have any chance of getting in, but we want to make a clear message. *We sort of go and scare the locals*. Yes, I am very happy about that decision to get involved and it has been interesting learning curve to see how it is done here, and how different, how there are some rules and regulations which obviously have to be followed and, so on, but it has, so far, been very interesting.

Extract 04

Bobby
4.Err. Yes, I am now, I never was, never was. I we, err, it was only in 2015 (.) I was watching the election with Miliband as leader, I was a lifelong Labour voter, I was watching it and, sort of, it was like watching Games of Thrones, I said to myself ‘I tell you what Bobby, go and join’, so I went and did something about it and stand up to people. So, I thought ‘I’d give it a go’, err, so I have been involved in every campaign since then, really, so (.) I would say up until the 30 years I was in the police, I wasn’t allowed to be political (.) but since I retired, yes I have been one of the more outspoken ones, so it has been very interesting, an interesting journey for me in Seaburn.

6.4.1.2. Projected Polarising moment: Brexit’s impact on the UK

A moment of disagreement between the two participants could be on the question of how impactful Brexit will actually be for the UK. In response to Brexit protest footage, Eevi (extract 05) adopts
an avant-garde they-position (i.e.: someone who considers themselves ahead of the public but does not reject them). Specifically, regarding her perception of the Leave-voters’ understanding of Brexit’s consequences. In her final sentence she evokes a chronotope (temporal, future orientated connection) between Brexit and the prediction of forthcoming damage.

Extract 05

Eevi

64. I was angry, very angry. I felt, err, (.) that people were, you know they are celebrating now, err, but I don’t honestly think people who voted to leave understand the full consequences. They were lied to, no question about it, things were exaggerated and there was mind games going on. Many people believed total rubbish (.) I am not saying that, err, that the EU is in any way perfect, it is not. But integration has come so far now so opting out now will do more damage to Britain then people may realise.

In sharp contrast, Bobby (extract 06) explicitly lambasts the Remain-supporting protestors prioritising a second referendum needlessly as the important domestic issues are not related to the outcome of a Brexit deal.

Extract 06

Bobby

80.*Remainiacs!* Yeah, y’know, I just think that if they spent more time trying to get a sensible solution and a sensible out of Europe, instead of both sides fighting. We have spent so much time fighting over a second referendum, as we have getting out and getting on with the big things that really, really, matter. My view is that it is not going to solve anything by leaving, or solve anything by staying!…People are dying in the street and you’re waving an EU flag, or a union flag. Y’know, it has been misused, and you look at the people who are doing it, they are middle-class (.) when they were doing that, how, any people did they walk past who will be sleeping in a doorway tonight? If we stay in Europe, they will still be sleeping in doorways, if we leave, the same!

Overall, this distinctive difference between the participants on the UK’s future relationship with the EU is one which is likely to create a level of polarisation.

6.4.2. Pairing B (high polarisation)

This pairing involves two Dundee residents with projected polarising positions on the future of the United Kingdom, and, by extension, Scotland’s EU future.

Bruce
Bruce is a 59-year-old Dundonian and SNP activist who has resided in the area the entirety of his life. Bruce took early retirement after a successful career in the construction industry.

Martin

Martin is a 21-year-old Dundonian who relocated to Glasgow to study politics and commutes back to Dundee regularly for weekends. He recently attempted to be elected as a local councillor for the Liberal Democrats in Dundee.

6.4.2.1. Shared Dialogical Positions

I-Dundonian

Here, both participants adopt an I-Dundonian position in response to positioning themselves on the migration-mobility continuum. Whilst Bruce (extract 07) doesn’t explicitly articulate an ‘I’, these broader evocations of his hometown imply this is relevant to him. Furthermore, Bruce adopts an avant-garde they-position on the public by determining them to be aspirational, small-city dwellers. Such a focus stems from this I-Dundonian position which considers his hometown as a spatial comparator for all other places. In the first line, Bruce acknowledges my (the interviewer) role as an outsider to Dundee and is describing the city within this context (i.e.: he is not assuming the possession of any prior knowledge). Therefore, he may be offering a version of the city which is somewhat simplified to align with the expectations he may have about his audience.

Extract 07

AE

34. Have you ever planned to leave your country of birth?

Bruce

35. No, no, Dundee is a fantastic place to live. You should come up, *it is great!* I think that most people, if they had a choice and their work allowed, they wouldn’t want to work in the very biggest cities. They would want to access some of the facilitates the biggest cities have, but with a population of a 140,000 you have the restaurants, bars, cafes, but it is not a mega city, it is liveable. It, it, maybe everybody thinks that about their hometown, but it feels like Dundee is a kind of place that is a good enough size that you walk down the street and bump into people you know, but also big enough to go off and not be discovered, no one would discover you

Martin (extract 08) adopts an explicit I-Dundonian position but with the aim of critiquing the political status quo. Given the importance of this position to both participants, this could offer a relevant context for shared positioning at the first stage of the pairing.
Extract 08

Martin
36….I am a Dundonian first and foremost, but I think the more visible, I think, as I was discussing on the way here with the taxi driver, there is a real anger with (.) I hope you’re not going to share this with Nicola *Sturgeon!* The SNP would do better to focus on domestic issues in Scotland because I am not a fan of Boris Johnson, not a fan of what London is doing and not a fan of Brexit.

I-Scottish

As with the I-Democratic position, the interest at this pairing stage is on context-similar positions, rather than both participants possessing an identical definition of Scottishness. The social representations of a symbolic object do not necessarily have to align entirely to offer a common-sense understanding. In the extract below, Bruce is responding to the UK-EU referendum materials by adopting an I-Scottish, and We-Scottish positions (extract 09). In this context he evokes a spatial boundary between England-Scotland which identifies differences between the countries’ Brexit-supporting protests.

Extract 09

AE
98. What are the first few words that come to mind after watching that clip?

Bruce
99. I am looking at this as a Scottish person now, the kind of, and we have seen a lot less up here thankfully, they took the cork out of the bottle, there was always lots of racist people, nutters, but they, the Leave campaign, seem to have given them licence to be open and be more (.), err, forthright, to (.) to think it was acceptable, they made it acceptable, to be anti-everybody you don’t like!

Martin also focuses on a political campaign when adopting this I-position within the context of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum (extract 10).

Extract 10

Martin
36….I was fifteen years old when I campaigned for ‘Better Together’, and, as I said to people during the campaign, I am more Scottish than anyone else. I deeply resent a political party taking my flag and saying, ‘The Scottish want independence’. Now I am Scottish first and foremost, and I don’t think there is a polling trend for independence…

151
Within this position, he adopts an external SNP voice to critique their own narrative about the prevalence of the independence vote. This position within a political context is potentially relevant to any shared positioning which may occur during the paired discussion.

We – Dundee Community

This is a shared position to I-Dundonian which is adopted when discussing personal mobility. Bruce (extract 11) adopts a temporal connection between previous industry/mobility and how this has created a distinctive character for Dundee.

Extract 11

Bruce
48….so we had a lot of highlanders coming down here, and at the same time, a lot of Southern Irish community coming over at the same time during the industrial revolution. Jute was the big industry and employed a lot of women, it was very high employment for women and pretty low employment for men, so we had it different through the industrial age to most places, so Dundee is a bit quirky that way.

Martin (extract 12) also adopt this we-position and praises the distinctiveness of Dundee. However, this is within the context of acknowledging negative changes which have occurred recently.

Extract 12

Martin
40….when I am in Dundee, I can step back. Lots of things have changed, it is the drug capital of Europe, a lot of issues and a lot of things going on here, the V & A, and Dundee is one of the most inspiring cities, but we have to get that right. I love this place, I really do.

Despite this difference in emphasis, this shared position offers the potential for a shared I-Dundonian positioning between the two interviewees.

6.4.2.2. Projected Polarising Moment: England-Scotland union post-Brexit

A point of potential disagreement emerges when Bruce and Martin consider the benefits and costs of a union relationship. The question of EU membership is relevant to wider issues relating to the union. For example, a key argument for a second Scottish independence referendum is that there has been a ‘material change of circumstances’ since 2016 (i.e.: Brexit) (Keating, 2020). For independence advocates, this has occurred and offers an additional level of complexity to any future union split (e.g.: could Scotland reapply for EU membership and also maintain a workable relationship with England?). Bruce (extract 13) and Martin (extract 14) adopt contrasting they-
and we- positions respectively when discussing the union. For Bruce, the England-Scotland relationship is based on an unequal status dynamic in which ‘they’ (English voters) are imposing self-interested voting preferences on Scotland. For Martin, the ‘we’ aligns himself to the UK (i.e.: the union) whilst distancing himself from the claims of those seeking independence.

Extract 13

Bruce
24.…Things like taxation, once again taxation in Britain is a reflection of what the majority of people in England want as they keep on voting for it. So, every facet of our lives are made for us, because a different country decided what is good for them, and I have to say, it is not for the people of Scotland to decide what is best for the people of England, that is for them. But equally, they shouldn’t decide for us.

Extract 14

Martin
88.…it give it a ‘Us and Them’, a UK or Scotland thing, and the SNP gained momentum and they said all the money was coming from the oil, everyone knew deep down that the oil wasn’t going to last forever as all revenues were going down, but, err, I just knew that (.) the sentiment for independence was strong. I don’t get it, but I slightly acknowledge it, different identities. I think we are better as part of a club…

Bruce’s argument within his *I*-Scottish position (extract 15) is almost an address to SNP stereotypes by rejecting ‘blood and soil’ nationalism in favour of pragmatic self-interest and equal autonomy.

Extract 15

Bruce
72. No, I mean, you get passionate in the moment. I am not a ‘blood and soil’ nationalist, I am more culturally Scottish now then I have ever been in my life, but that comes second to why I want independence, which is what is can deliver for the people of Scotland. My family, my street, my town. Running about with a kilt is alright, but not what I am doing it for!

In opposition to this, Martin (extract 16) considers Scotland to be the recipient of a beneficial union relationship which actually does offer autonomy. Martin’s ‘they’ positioning for the SNP, alongside his perception they are promoting spurious financial claims, highlights how important the union is to him.

Extract 16
Martin
80. Yeah, because I, I think that we in Scotland have a great deal. We have our own commons, and the Barnett Formula and we get a lot when it comes.

These substantial differences between Bruce and Martin on the best outcome for Scotland’s future are projected to create a polarising moment. Especially as study two’s stimulus material depicts overt differences between English and Scottish citizen’s aspirations for the future UK-EU relationship.

6.4.3. Pairing C (low/no polarisation)
This pairing is between a Dundee and Sunderland resident who are not projected to have polarising potential based on their dialogical positions.

Angela

Angelina is an 88-year-old long-time resident of Dundee who was born in Aberdeen. She had a long career as a midwife and, for professional reasons, resided in various parts of the country.

April

April is a 66-year-old retired genetics researcher and educator with a mobile past who has stood for local elections as a Green Party councillor in Sunderland.

6.4.3.1. Shared Dialogical Positions

I-Politically-Engaged

Here, both participants adopt this position when asked about their current interest in politics and previous experiences. Angelina (extract 17) adopts this core position in the context of informing a larger political worldview beyond the self.

Extract 17

Angelina
4. I am interested in politics, yes. (.) As it affects mankind, not just from a personal view, but I am interested in politics as it affects our wider situation.

April (extract 18) also adopts this core position in response to the same question on her political interests.

Extract 18

April
8. Yes, I am, I am actually, err, a member of the Green Party and politically engaged in the sense that I am politically engaged and a candidate in local elections. I
actively do go out campaigning…I am kind of on the fringes of Extinction Rebellion’s activities, I follow it, I support it, but I am not yet at the point, I almost went down to London this time, I looked into getting, looked into the buses in terms of going, and I was, hmm, well, hmmm, no, not this time, maybe next time! I’m sure there will be a next time!

Whilst this differs from Pairing A in that only one of the interviewees is currently ‘politically active’, the potential for both to re-adopt this position could be relevant to the aims of study two.

*I-Environmentalist*

An *I*-Environmentalist position is one in which an individual prioritises an imperative to conserve the environment and negate the impact of climate change. Whilst prominent ‘I’ statements are not present, an *I*-Environmentalist core-position is apparent within the context of the discourse. Angelina (extract 19) adopts this position instantly when offering her initial impressions of the projections during the map selection task.

Extract 19

Angelina

110. I am really concerned today (. ) climate change this…The weather (. ) really when you hear what is going on, it is not a very healthy place and I think that we are going to have to make space for people coming from that side of the world when there is nothing for them to live there (. ) environmentally, nothing to do with economic migrants. I really do feel that it is happening in Brazil at the moment, and in Delhi, and in China were people are having difficulty breathing, so we have all these factors to take into consideration.

April (extract 20) adopts this position when asked to consider if she has ever felt as passionate about a political issue as the Leave-voting protesters.

Extract 20

April

112. I like the idea of speaking truth to power, of actually making the voice of ordinary people heard (. ) but I think you have to be very cautious about how it is done (. ) Especially with climate change, where extreme action is needed because there is not a response coming from those who can actually do something to, y’know, sort of, the situation to some degree.

Such core positions could be valuable in creating a relevant context which allows both participants to re-adopt this position during the process of sustaining dialogue.
6.4.3.2. Projected Polarising Moment: Low/No polarisation

The positions between April and Angelina do not indicate disagreement will emerge after engagement with the polarising materials. The value here is to offer a comparative context to explore how differences in polarising contexts may influence dialogue and the positions adopted. This is of particular interest to this study’s aim of exploring to what extent disagreement is essential for sustaining dialogue.

6.4.4. Pairing D (low/no polarisation)

This pairing is between a Seaburn and Dundee resident which does not have an explicitly polarising potential based on their dialogical positions.

Linda
Linda is a 38-year-old resident of Seaburn with her family (husband and two children) who works in Newcastle Upon Tyne for the local authority.

Thomas
Thomas is an Irish 59-year-old early retiree who moved to Dundee after a career as an accountant and occasional teacher. He is married to Eevi and shares her mobility background regarding previous residency in Italy, Malawi, and London.

6.4.4.1. Shared Dialogical Positions

I-Democratic

A core position which emerges among both participants is the I-Democratic in response to the UK-EU referendum footage. We can see that both Thomas (extract 21 and 22) and Linda (extract 23) adopt this position when considering the protests and other possible outcomes available at that time (e.g.: People’s Vote campaign).

Extract 21

Thomas
82. Obviously we were on a different side of the fence to their situation, and, yeah, I mean I was a bit surprised, but, y’know, in the end, whatever the vote is, we live in a democracy and that was more important and is now. Even though my side lost the recent election, I am glad there was a clear result as it is healthy for democracy, *so*.

Extract 22

Thomas
90….yeah I think there is a smouldering resentment about the referendum and how it should be honoured, I think we went into the referendum with whatever the answer is, it is democratic.

Extract 23

Linda
95. No. I think (. ) err (. ) y’know, I think we have had one referendum and whether we have another or not, is very unlikely, err, I think, for me, now, I, y’know I am not going to fight for another referendum (. ) we have made a choice , and I wish the choice had been more informed at the time, and I think that the outcome would have been different, but we have made a choice and we just need to hurry up and do it!

Note the adoption of a We-UK Nation position; ‘we live in a democracy’ and ‘we have made a choice’ for both Thomas and Linda respectively. This is the I-Democratic position at work in that it considers the principles of democracy to be a higher priority than any personal reservations regarding the outcome.

I-Centrist
This position is one where the individual positions themselves between the left- and right-ideologies of the political spectrum. This is not a non-partisan position as both participants discuss how they will, ultimately, engage in partisan party support. The difference is one of intention; both start from the centre and move towards the relevant party rather than aligning automatically with a left or right ideology. This I-Centrist position is adopted by both participants when considering the, then, forthcoming 2019 UK general election. Thomas (extract 24) explicitly positions himself here (‘I am at the centre’) when discussing party policies.

Extract 24

Thomas
8….I do like to know about all the party’s policies and things like that, but I would definitely consider voting for other parties. I am at the centre, so ( . ) I could be on the right-wing of the Labour Party or the left-wing of the Conservative Party.

Linda (extract 25) implicitly does likewise with her considerations on policy selection. Indeed, Linda’s explicit rejection of partisan imperatives aligns with Thomas’ ability to move between political parties.

Extract 25

Linda
87….I know an election is a battle, but you felt you had to pick a side and there was no middle ground, while I feel like a lot of politics, people would happily pick some from one party, some from another party, and find the best policies. I think that it was really hard line; you are with us or you’re not.

As study two occurs during the UK-EU transition period, this position’s rejection of partisan interest could still be relevant beyond the election context in which the position was initially adopted.

6.4.4.2. Projected Polarising Moment: Low/No polarisation

As with Pairing C, the positions between Linda and Thomas do not indicate disagreement will emerge after they engage with the polarising materials. As discussed, the value here is to offer a comparative context to explore how differences in polarising contexts may influence dialogue and adopted positions.

6.4.5. Pairing E (high polarisation)

This pairing is between two Dundee residents who have, potentially, polarising positions on the 2016 UK-EU referendum campaign.

Joe

Joe is a 19-year-old who is studying Mathematics at Dundee University after re-locating from Crowborough in East Sussex.

Rhianna

Rihanna is a 26-year-old Dundonian who has recently returned to Dundee after residing in England (Newcastle Upon Tyne) for a number of years.

6.4.5.1. Shared Dialogical Positions

I-British

Both Joe and Rhianna adopt an I-British position in response to the 2017 Last Night at the Proms footage which depicts a performance of the national anthem. Joe (extract 26) adopts this position within the context of a core I-Union supporter position regarding his ideal relationship for both the UK and EU.

Extract 26

Joe
100. Yeah, so, like, err, obviously I feel very European and British as they are both unions in a sense, I wouldn’t say I say that English due to the, like, it seems to be excluding Wales and Scotland to say I am English, while I feel we are in a union. I prefer the term British and European as it encompasses more people, so more as a bigger umbrella, so (. ) these people I identify very much with, in a sense.

Whilst Joe’s position is aspirational in its belief in unity, Rhianna’s (extract 27) I-British position emerges as a rejection of Scottishness.

Extract 27

Rihanna
128. I am not really a flag waver to be honest, like. The weird thing is that I don’t feel Scottish at all! I don’t (. ) a lot of my family are not really, and I have never felt patriotic to be Scottish, I feel more towards the British side, to be honest.

This contrasting emphasis offers a distinctive context in which to explore if such differences impact on if/how they share positions.

I-Politically-Engaged

This position is adopted by Joe (extract 28), and Rhianna (extract 29) in responding to questions about their political affiliations. The term ‘politically engaged’ is likely adopted as a direct response to the interviewer, as the term is used in the question. That said, the substantive content of the responses is consistent with such a position. Indeed, this engagement manifests in activity with local political organisations for both participants.

Extract 28

Joe
4….I got really engaged. Err (. ) with Ed Miliband and, obviously, the Scottish Independence thing, which was quite a big, momentous thing to happen, so that, also, that engaged me politically. I would say I have been politically engaged (. ) like, by 2010, but more so by 2014/2015.

Extract 29

Rihanna
4. Yeah, I would say I am very politically engaged. I volunteer with the local, well not the local, but political party. I have been doing that since 2017, but I have been involved in politics as long as I can remember.
6.4.5.2. Projected Polarising Moment: Brexit Protest/ Campaign

Whilst the content of the participants’ responses is highly specific (i.e.: 2018 Brexit protest for both Remain- and Leave-voters), this could be indicative of wider, disparate views on the UK-EU relationship. Although neither participant adopts the we-position for either set of protestors, unambiguous critiques of those who reject the participants’ personal voting preference is evident. Joe (extract 30) rejects any claim of stronger patriotism by the Leave-protestors with a defiant ‘we-position’ as a British citizen. In contrast, Rhianna (extract 31) adopts the voice of a Remain-protestor to reject what she perceives as scare-mongering tactics about the consequences of leaving the EU. In microcosm, the participants’ rejection of the protestors echoes the referendum campaigns; be it the Leave-campaign’s overt patriotic signalling or the Remain-campaign’s repeated emphasis on worst-case scenarios.

Extract 30
Joe
116. A big contrast between the two groups (. ) err (.) you can quite clearly see that the, err, (.) sort of pro-Remainers are very much sort of concise and more appropriate in terms I how they are demonstrating, whereas the Brexiter appear quite boisterous and in a sense, loud, disruptive…When I see, sort of like, err, (.) a Brexiter waving it around and acting like an absolute lunatic and a fool, (.) a Brexiter waving it around and acting like an absolute lunatic and a fool, it is an attack on my identity because that representation of, like, uniform that we all wear in the UK, and when someone uses it, it loses all of that.

Extract 31
Rihanna
144. Hmmm (.), to be honest I would probably be more on the leave side. So, the same as well, even if you were not political, they are more enthusiastic, so (.) I think because they want to get things done (.) I think the remain side, they are just wanting to scare everyone, instead of education people about how they could grow within the EU, instead it is ‘This will happen and you’re going to lose this and that’. I don’t think it is right as young people could be very influenced by that.

The pairing’s disparate positionings on the UK-EU referendum protests could remerge after both participants engage with the similar polarising material in study two. Specifically, the footage depicting the ‘Brexit Day’ celebrations which involve many overt displays of English and Scottish patriotism.
6.5. Conclusion

To conclude, the dialogical analysis of study one offers an understanding of the participants’ adopted core positions and the context in which they emerge. In turn, this allows for the pairing of interviewees in a manner that considers the nuances which influence such core positions; be that internal self-world relations and/or the discursive context. As pairing interviewees based on core positions for political discourse is novel in both concept and method, this, potentially, offers new considerations for dialogical researchers. Firstly, understanding positions in a contemporary, real-world paradigm explores the ontological claims of dialogicality. Secondly, applying a top-down, categorising approach to dialogical positions offers an opportunity to consider the efficacy of this method. Specifically, to consider how, if at all, the interviewees re-adopt previous positions in a relevant discursive context. Understanding this further offers an additional voice to discussions on the value of dialogical research in the domain of political psychology. Considered in the broader field of social/political psychology, this dialogical approach offers the advantage of exploring disagreement beyond binary constructs (e.g.: Remain- and Leave-voters). Furthermore, these pairings align with the complexity of real-world political differences, which can sometimes be nuanced and contradictory. In addition, these different levels of polarisation offer an opportunity to explore if disagreement is an essential component in political discourse. The next chapter explores the findings from the paired discussions and if the participants did indeed sustain dialogue.
Part Three
Chapter Seven: Study Two’s Key Findings – How the Public Sustained Dialogue During Polarising Discourse

Introduction
The purpose of this chapter is to interpret the findings from study two to answer the following question: Are there I-positions which can sustain dialogue between interlocuters during polarising discussions on the UK’s global relations? The chapter opens (section 7.1) by briefly outlining the three-step dialogical analysis process for the paired discussions in study two. The subsequent sections (7.2 – 7.6) focus on how/if the pairs re-adopted and shared core positions from study one to sustain dialogue. This includes focusing on how the pairings engaged in polarising discourse during stage three, be it: (1) Independently-sustained dialogue, (2) Sustained dialogue, or (3) Supported sustained dialogue. A central focus of these sections is understanding the factors which influenced these different forms of dialogue. Of particular interest are the three conditions which created independently-sustained dialogue: (1) Shared core positions in stage one, (2) Shared-affective responses to relevant polarising footage, and (3) Adopted ‘distancing’ I-positions during the polarising discourse. In section 7.7, the chapter compares and contrasts the findings to answer the second research question and consider the implications.

7.1. Study Two: Analysis Process
As with study one, the three dialogical steps explored the following: (1) Social representations, (2) I-, We- & They- positions, and (3) Chronotopes (Spatial/Temporal). However, the process was more iterative between steps and focused on dialogical features shared between both interlocuters during dialogue (e.g.: common-sense understandings, etc). The first step offered an understanding of the participants’ social representations and any common-sense knowledge shared during discourse. This enables an understanding as to what extent the participants’ differences can be attributed to differing common-sense knowledge on an issue. The second step allows an understanding of what I-positions the participants are adopting in response to each other’s utterances. The We- & They- analysis shows who the interlocuters are aligning with or distancing themselves from during discursive interactions with one another. The third step affords an understanding of where in time and space the interviewees are positioning the discursive, and potentially polarising, topic. However, unlike study one, understanding the participants’ social representations, dialogical positions and chronotopes must be understood within two specific
contexts. The first is the expectation that the participants will re-adopt positions in stage one of the discussion. Another substantive difference is the discursive exchanges between participants and how (of if) they are able to sustain dialogue.

To explore the distinctive features of study two, extracts were selected which align with one of the following criteria: (1) Direct shared discursive exchanges with one another or, (2) Examples of core positions from study one remerging in response to relevant research questions or stimulus materials. These criteria were selected by the researcher as both afford an appreciation of a dialogical positions’ role in sustaining dialogue at different points in the discussion. Specifically, either the re-adoption of a core position at the beginning of the paired discussion or the interdependent dynamic created by participants sharing a position during polarising moments. As this pairing process for exploring polarising discourse is unprecedented in social psychology (Chapter Three, section 3.6), the criteria chosen by the researcher was entirely based on theoretical underpinnings of dialogically. Be that the idea that dialogical positions as meaning-making for both the self and other interlocutor (Gillespie, 2010; Veen, Dobber, and Oers, 2018), or Position Exchange Theory’s (Gillespie and Martin, 2014) assumption of positional interdependency in the social world.

As with study one (Chapter Five, section 5.2), the analysis of the paired discussions involved two sessions of co-analysis with Dr. Kesi Mahendran and Professor Nick Hopkins. This provided an additional opportunity for personal reflexivity on my initial analysis and role in facilitating the paired discussions. The iterative nature of these co-analysis sessions was especially important for study two, as the paired discussions inherently possess a greater level of complexity and variation (i.e.: the participants’ discourse with one another, relations with myself, etc). This increases the likelihood that an analysis entirely led by myself could miss a critical point in the discourse which explains the discursive dynamic between the pair. The focus now turns to discussing the findings from this analysis (table 7.1) to explore if/how dialogue was sustained and the factors influencing this process. The following three sections are divided to reflect how the pairs engaged in sustaining dialogue during stage three, be that either as: (1) Independently-sustained dialogue, (2) Sustained dialogue, or (3) Supported sustained dialogue. This first of these sections focuses on the factors which created a discursive context for two of the pairs to independently-sustain dialogue during a polarising encounter.
Table 7.1. *Study Two Findings*

<table>
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<th>Participant Pairings</th>
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<td>Angelina &amp; April</td>
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<td>I-Materialism-Rejector</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linda &amp; Thomas</td>
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<td>Rhianna &amp; Joe</td>
<td>I-British-Identity-Rejector</td>
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<td>I-Political-Commentator</td>
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7.2. Independently-Sustained Dialogue

This involved Pairings A & B, who were projected to experience a high level of polarisation based in their adopted positions in study one. To define terms, independently-sustaining dialogue is when interlocuters move beyond the remit of the interview questions entirely and begin their own distinct discussion on the polarising issue. Both pairs (A & B) engaged in such dialogue for sustained periods of time during stage three. For the purposes of clarity, the following analysis is presented to complement the discursive structure initially outlined in Chapter Six’s pairing process. Therefore, the data is presented in the structure of the paired discussions: (1) Stage One: Shared position exchanges, (2) Stage Two: Polarising material, and (3) Stage Three: Post-polarising discussions. This offers a structure for considering the following at each stage of the paired discussions: (1) Stage one: Did the pair re-adopt core positions from study one? (2) Stage two: How did the pair respond to the polarising material? and (3) Stage three: How (if at all) did the pair sustain dialogue?

Figure 7.1. Pairing A’s adopted I-Positions

7.2.1. Pairing A: Eevi and Bobby

Eevi (Dundee) and Bobby (Seaburn) were anticipated to experience a high level of polarisation on the issue of the UK’s post-Brexit future. Figure 7.1 offers an overview of the context relevant I-positions and/or shared positions Eevi and Bobby adopted at each stage of the discussion. In this
context, ‘relevant positions’ are those which align with the broader focus of the discourse (i.e.: issues relating to the UK’s future global relations).

7.2.1.1. I-Democratic (Stage One: Paired Discussion)

In the opening stage of the paired discussion, both participants readopted the I-Democratic position from study one. This position is defined as honouring the referendum outcome above other factors (e.g.: personal voting, wisdom of the decision, etc.). Whilst it may be the case that divergent definitions of democracy exist between the participants, this is not of paramount importance here. Rather, in the context of Brexit, the key element is to identify if the participants adopt this position when offered a context for doing so. This position is shared during stage one’s final exchanges (extract 01) when both agree that the outcome of the UK-EU referendum should be honoured. Adopting such a position shows both participants are aligning to an ideal greater than themselves.

Extract 01

AE

31. Thinking back to the Brexit Parliamentary stalemate last year, do you think the politicians showed themselves to be advocates of democracy?

Bobby

32. …so for me, democracy. The only thing they wanted to do was to frustrate the right, take away, frustrate the right rather than think about the referendum result, and that was how it was portrayed by Farage. Now don’t get me wrong, I disagree with his politics other than the fact that he is fighting for Brexit, I disagree with his politics, but he has been immensely successful on that issue. He constantly called people out who, y’know, said ‘I will respect the referendum’ …

Eevi

33. Yes, I agree, I agree. There has been a massive democracy problem here.

For, Eevi who is Finnish-born and a beneficiary of EU migration, honouring democracy in this manner is an especially challenging position for her to adopt. In contrast, Bobby voted remain on party political lines, but his ideological values align with Lexit support. That is the socialist argument that the EU is neo-liberal and state ownership can only be achieved by leaving the project (Guinan and Hanna, 2017). Despite such seemingly irreconcilable differences, both participants aligned with this core position in response to context-relevant questions. As discussed, (section 7.2.1.5) this position could have created a context for both participants to feel the other is invested in the discourse and the issues being discussed.
7.2.1.2. I-Politically-Engaged (Stage One: Paired Discussion)

In answering the questions, both participants adopt an I-Politically-Engaged position and share their ‘political engagement’ story (extract 02). They then adopt a shared position (extract 03) in direct response to a question regarding their potential for long-term political engagement.

Extract 02

Eevi
38. Well, I definitely, err, Brexit definitely galvanised *me…so I joined the Lib Dems because, for me, y’know, that was the, that was the party manifesto that appealed to me personally. I am now very active, err… Err, but, but it was difficult the first time I had to knock on a *door!* It was to deliver a newsletter, two newsletters actually, for the local party candidates. So, yes, it has galvanised me, yes!!

Bobby
44. I was coming up to retirement, and I watched the general election; obviously I voted labour, I voted the way my Grandad and Dad voted even though I was never a massive fan of Tony Blair, to be honest. But, I voted that way. I watching the election, Ed Miliband, it was like watching Game of Thrones!! To be honest, when I was watching it, I didn’t think there was much difference between the two parties… so, that is how I got into it. I am involved locally, and I am on the local panel for councillors, which means I am eligible to apply to get selected as a councillor.

Extract 03

Eevi
86. I am in for the long run because, first of all, I never thought that things can change quickly, you have to have a long-term game. I think that is the only way.

Bobby
87. Same here.

Also, both adopt Avant-Garde positions in response to their respective political parties. To reiterate, an Avant-Garde is a liberal, future-orientated position where the individual places themselves ahead of the public (Mahendran, 2018). Both seem to consider their political group limiting and themselves to be ahead of the majority. Bobby, in the process of critiquing any move towards the UK re-joining the EU, rejects the Labour Party’s recent political changes after four years of socialism (extract 04). Eevi both defends her political party and joins him in rejecting the Liberal Democrats’ policy of revoking article 50, which also aligns them both to the previously adopted I-Democratic position.
Bobby

10. For me, they spent four years trying to overturn Brexit in Parliament, and if they had spent have as much time trying to world a deal out, we wouldn’t be in this mess. You have this situation with the Lib Dems decided ‘Well, we are going to revoke article 50, and re-join the EU’. There are still people on the right of the party (Labour Party) now on Twitter, Andrew Adonis, and people like that, who are still talking about re-joining; a re-join campaign! Do they not think that we have lost half the seats, lost a lot of seats in the old heartland. We might lose the council next year!! People don’t realise how much trust the party has lost by doing this, it is a big thing.

Eevi

12. You mentioned the Lib Dems and that policy, the ‘revoke and re-join’, err, that has been totally acknowledged as a massive mistake, and err, I mean the national conference just last week, and that come up again, and people were so adamant, that y’know, ‘hello, wake up ’, that train has now left. We just, that was definitely a mistake, I even said at the time when the party launched it in the first place.

Shared positions in these related areas offer the participants a context for recognising the other as an equal in similar circumstances. Moreover, this exchange frames the other person as someone capable of discussing politically challenging topics.

7.2.1.3. I-Proportional-Representation-Supporter

A shared position which was not structured into the interview was the exchange on the I-PR-Supporter position (see Figure 7.1). This position was not adopted in direct response to the questioning, but during discourse on long-term political engagement. This position, alongside the I-Politically-Engaged exchanges, offers a context for further understanding the other’s shared commitment to change (extract 05).

Extract 05

Bobby

92… If we have proportional representation, I think it would be a lot different, and for me, that is the next goal.

Eevi

93. Yes, I agree with that… Oh yeah, oh yeah. It is the way forward. I mean, if you think that, as a Conservative MP you have to get about 52,000 votes, and as a Lib Dem you have to get twice as many *votes* in order to get though. But, I mean, it is not right. Err, no, definitely
This is not a core position in of itself, but rather a sub-position of the shared political engagement position. This is because someone is unlikely to adopt a niche position on the intricacies of the electoral system without a wider engagement in politics. Together, both these positions (I-Politically-Engaged and I-PR-Supporter) offer a paradigm of political engagement which allows for the participants to develop a mutual understanding (explored further in Chapter Eight, section 8.3.2).

7.2.1.4. Polarising moment: Brexit’s impact on the UK
Both participants experienced a shared-affective response to the polarising footage; namely, explicit anger. For Eevi, her anger is directed at the tone of the debate with a focus on the anti-immigrant rhetoric during the campaign and post-Brexit outcome. Bobby’s response (extract 06) complements these concerns in that he is angry at the prevalence of right-wing figures on the Leave-side of the argument.

Extract 06

Eevi
104…. The tone of the debate made me so angry, but, as I said, it is in the past, and we have to look forward, and sort of, try to make the best solution. I understand the anger about migrants coming in, and so on, but it was so upsetting, and so totally false, how that image of migrants coming in was used during the Brexit campaign.

Bobby
105. What made me angry about that video was the way they used the Union Jack! I am patriotic, but I don’t like to see it carried by a Nazi thug, carried on the end of a pole and used to whack a police horse, as happened when the EDL (English Defence League) marched through town. I don’t like to see people with ex-veterans throwing cans at babies in buggies! Now, for me, that is an awful side of what Britain is about, and, for me, it is like, how on earth did the left let those, can I use a swear word?

It could be the case that this shared response consolidates the previous shared position of I-Politically-Engaged. Indeed, this shared position may offer reassurances to each person that the other has an equal stake on important political matters. Thus, offering a context for both to comfortably express anger knowing that the sentiment (if not the details) will likely be understood. In essence, the shared positions adopted in the first stage could function as a conduit for developing a mutual respect for the political differences of the other. It is important to clarify that stage three’s discourse involved frequent moments of conflict between the two interlocuters. Bobby consistently positions Eevi as neo-liberal which, in the context of his argument for socialism, is unambiguously
negative. In response, Eevi dismisses his vision for the UK as unrealistic based on her mobility experiences (high – MMC 8) in different democratic-structures (embodied in her I-Mobile position).

The presence of the researcher offers the participants an opportunity to deflect any challenging questions or critiques from the other interlocutor. That is to say, re-direct their discourse towards the researcher rather than directly with the other participant during moments of heated discourse. The participants also have the option to merely ‘talk around’ the subject until time elapses as another means of avoiding direct interaction. However, neither option is taken by the interlocuters in stage three of the discourse. Instead, they engage in independently-sustained dialogue that bypasses the researcher’s questions to engage directly with one another for 30 minutes. To achieve this, it seems both exchange the shared position of I-Pragmatist (extract 07) to distance themselves from the polarising discourse and to find common-ground to ‘problem solve’ their differences.

Extract 07

Eevi
162. But Europe does have a system where the state does, err, has subsidies in a social democratic model. Y’know, where certain parts of society, and businesses, the economy is kept central, so there is government control in certain key areas, and, and, err, yet, I believe that kind of model can work, but here there has been this, err, total free-market belief, with globalisation (.), I don’t know, if people had been ready to explore different avenues, then maybe (.), well, anyway/

Bobby
163./So do you think it is a reaction to globalisation, it is kind of a fight back against globalisation?

Eevi
164. Yes, yes.

Bobby.
165. Do you think that’s the root (.), err, I am trying to find something that (.), if you look at it from your perspective, and look at it from my perspective. What do we think the root cause is? Is that cause globalisation? Is that what it is all about? I don’t know. I’m trying to take it from there/

Eevi
166. /I don’t know either, I don’t know either, but I mean, I mean, I mean, the thing is that there has to be a way, somehow, to find a middle way
Focusing on problem-solving seems to allow them to identify why, despite a shared belief in democracy, they diverge so starkly on how it can be achieved. This is an interesting development and seems to stem from the discourse in stage one which highlights a shared value in democracy.

7.2.1.5. Conclusion
This pairing between Eevi and Bobby did sustain dialogue in what, at times, was a highly polarising engagement. The analysis demonstrates Eevi and Bobby developed a mutual respect via sharing positions which highlight the importance of democracy. This was explicitly so with the I-Democratic position and their shared focus on honouring the outcome of the UK-EU referendum. An implicit focus on democracy is also evident with both the I-Politically-Engaged and I-PR-Supporter positions. For the former, it is the implicit assumption that engaging in democratic politics has an inherent value. For the latter, they both look to strengthen the democratic process with what they consider to be essential changes. Such positions indicate both participants possess a commitment to a cause greater than themselves and beyond political partisanship.

What is especially notable about the post-polarising interaction is the ability of the pair to engage in independently-sustaining discourse. That is discourse which moves beyond both the remit of the interview questions and the input of the researcher. They achieve this by adopting an I-Pragmatic position in an attempt to ‘problem-solve’ and locate the place where they diverge from one another. It could be that this functions as a ‘distancing’ I-position and offers both interlocuters a means of communicating within a heightened polarising context. Another important aspect here could be the sharing of core positions and shared-affective responses easier in the discussion. Principally, as this signals to both participants that the other is equally invested in the discussion. Therefore, both knew that they, in each other, had a receptive audience for a political exchange which could move beyond platitudes and pleasantries. The focus of this analysis now turns to the other pairing that independently-sustained dialogue and the factors which seems to have influenced this finding.

7.2.2. Pairing B: Bruce and Martin
This pairing involves two Dundee residents (Bruce and Martin) who were considered likely to adopt polarising positions on the future of the United Kingdom and Scotland’s EU future (e.g.: Bruce as independence-focused and Martin as a unionist). Figure 7.2 offers an overview of all of
the context relevant I-positions Bruce and Martin adopted and/or shared at each stage of the discussion.

Figure 7.2. Pairing B’s adopted I-Positions

17.2.2.1. I-Dundonian or We – Dundee-Community (Stage one: Paired Discussion)
The I-Dundonian is an adopted position in which a person aligns themselves to Dundee in order to state or respond to a particular point (in this context, on a political issue). The opening section of this paired discussion explored if questions about Dundee could create a context for adopting an I-Dundonian or We-Dundee position. Neither participant shared the I-Dundonian position but did have a shared moment with the We-Dundee position when discussing the global pandemic. Whilst they are to be considered separately, clearly both positions manifest an alignment to Dundee within the context of the discourse. In response to question one on how much Dundee means to them personally, Martin adopts a We-Dundee position (extract 08) when comparing the atypically friendly football rivalry in Dundee with another Scottish city (e.g.: Edinburgh). Bruce also adopts this We-Dundee position, but this is in direct response to the second question in this stage about Brexit’s impact on Dundee. Namely, the perceived inadequateness of the UK Government to focus on places such as Dundee. Indeed, Bruce frames this situation as a consequence of Dundee offering no electoral advantage to the Conservative party. Whilst the positions are not adopted directly in response to the same question or one another’s utterances, they indicate to each other both have a shared investment in the city.
Extract 08

Martin
16.…I think that is the type of place Dundee is. If you support city or united, you’ll give the other supporters grief and what not, but at the end of the day, we are all Dundonians and that’s fine. It is not like Edinburgh; it has a nice feel about it.

Bruce
40. Err, they’ll do nothing to, they’ll do nothing more than the minimum to look after places like Dundee because there is not political value in it, we don’t give them any political value.

In-between these separate moments of We-positioning, the discussion turns to COVID-19 in which both adopt (extract 09) a shared We-Dundee position in direct response to one another discussing the community’s response to the pandemic. It seems that both participants are exhibiting to the other that they are invested in the wellbeing of the city and coming together as a community.

Extract 09

Bruce
20. I think there are huge concerns that the local economy will take a beating, definitely in the short-term, possibly the medium-term. I think there is a limit to what you can expect anyone to do to stop that from happening, it is a world-wide pandemic. But, on the other side, I was fortunate enough to be a part of (xxx), and the work that was being done locally during the lockdown…we are all doing stuff like food distribution, or mental health support and that happened with the support of the council, but it wasn’t the council who done it, they provided structure, but it was all these independent organisations coming together, which was very reassuring

Martin
21. I think there are challenges for local businesses, and it is, err, (.), when the pubs close at 10 o’clock, I am concerned about that. Though I think Dundee has embraced the change aspect of COVID, so it has given us time to change…of course, it is challenging, but we just have to sit tight, and carry on.

Although identified as a core I-position in the pairing process, the discursive context (e.g.: global pandemic) was an issue the interview structure planned to avoid. Principally, as the concern was it would detract from discourse on the UK’s global relations. However, in this case, it seems to have been a relevant context for the pair to discuss their place-person relationship with Dundee.

7.2.2.2. I-Scottish or We - Scotland section
As with I-Dundonian, this position is one in which the individual aligns themselves to Scotland during a discursive exchange. The rationale here was to explore the role of different geographical
positions based on the place-person relationships explored in Chapter Five. Given the participants’ differences on Scottish independence, an inherent risk with the I-Scottish position is that the discourse would move into polarising areas prematurely. Early disagreement is problematic as it negates the opportunity for the participants to adopt shared positions prior to the polarising material. Indeed, this scenario is exactly what occurred as both participants moved to discuss Scottish independence. The analysis demonstrates that once this occurs (extract 10), the discourse in this section never transcends beyond this polarising topic.

Extract 10

Martin
82….but because Brexit is happening even though they don’t want it, a lot of people are thinking about becoming independent, a lot of people say ‘Yeah, I want to remain a part of Britain, but I don’t want this’, and then the constitution becomes a part of it, and the bread and butter issues that a party like mine is wanting to push to the forefront and say ‘Let’s get Scotland moving’ aren’t getting much headway or airtime because the constitution is a big part of that. If Brexit hadn’t have happened, it would not gone away but been a secondary issue.

Bruce
83. I think that, I am sure you’re aware, that every single issue in Scotland is seen through the Indy prism (referring to Scottish independence), everything. It doesn’t matter how silly that may seem for folk outside of Scotland, it doesn’t really matter, every party sees everything through the Indy prism.

Both adopt a shared distancing-they (extract 11) for the UK Government by positioning them as ‘English Nationalists’. As discussed in Chapter Two (section 2.4), this is a positioning in which the individual distances themselves from sections of the public (Mahendran, 2018).

Extract 11

AE
93. What would the best-case scenario Brexit deal for Scotland?

Bruce
94. I will say it first, there is no best-case scenario! This Westminster government will not deliver any best-case scenario, they dinnae care. It is narrow-minded English nationalism for them, they don’t care about anything else.

Martin
95. For me, the best-case scenario (2), I hope they are being extremely reckless in what they are doing as it is all part of a game to get a better deal…you have to support it, and even though, as Bruce said, they are all driven by English nationalism , and I agree, but, as horrific as it is to *say this*, you have to try and
hope, err, for a great deal because it is jobs, at the end of the day, and it is not my job.

The participants then proceed to adopt I-positions which align with their divergent views on the advantages/disadvantages of another independence referendum (extract 12). Bruce adopts an I-Democratic position during discourse about the polarising footage to support a pro-independence argument. Specifically, that the (then) forthcoming 2021 Scottish election results should be the metric for measuring support for another referendum. For his part, Martin adopts an I-Liberal Democrat position in rejecting the argument that his only hope for re-joining the EU is via Scottish independence. This is in direct response to a stage three question on the potential advantages of Scotland becoming independent.

Extract 12

Bruce
120. ...the important thing for me, as much as I want independence, the important thing for me, the first step is, who has the right, if the Scottish people decide to vote, in a majority, in a democratic election that they want an independence referendum, who has the right to deny that?

Martin
160. I wouldn’t say going back into the EU because, obviously as a Lib Dem, I want, I (.) I want Scotland back in the EU, but as a member state we would have less influence then as the UK, so I want that back, but I wouldn’t want it *without the UK!*
A high level of disagreement is evident between the interlocuters in both stage two and three of the paired discussion. Here (Extract 14), an explicit disagreement emerges on the England-Scotland relationship prior to the polarising content even being introduced.

Extract 14

Bruce
The fact of it is that, not only are they narrow-minded English nationalists, they are incompetent narrow-minded English Nationalists; these are not particularly clever people that are running the country. So, they cannæ get a good deal because they are incapable of knowing what a good deal is!

Martin
I completely disagree on that point. They are idiots, but not *stupid!* I think they don’t care about Scotland, and they don’t care about Scotland for one big reason; Boris and the Conservative Party, a lot of them think ‘If Scotland goes, so does the chance of Labour getting in’. If Scotland left the UK, there would be secret parties at Tory HQ behind people’s backs!

Indeed, disagreements between the pair regarding the union continue until the end of the discussion (Extract 15). In this instance, it seems they hold different social representations as to what constitutes an electoral mandate. This creates a divergence between the two on the validity of a second independence referendum.

Extract 15

Martin
Ah, November, (.) and my point was when we were talking about material change, I said, forty-five per cent of people voted for independence. If that same forty-five percent of people vote the SNP back into Holyrood, I don’t see that as a material change for independence…

Bruce
That would be a big enough majority to take us out the EU. If I remember that was fifty-two, to forty-eight.

However, in between this periodically polarising discourse, both were able to independently-sustain dialogue in a similar distancing manner to Pairing A. However, whilst Pairing A focused on pragmatism to problem-solve, Pairing B independently-sustained dialogue differently. A key position for stage three of this discussion was how both interlocuters adopted a *I*-Political Commentator position during discourse on the polarising issue between them (i.e.: England-Scotland relationship). This is a commentary as neither participant aligns themselves to their
respective parties (note Bruce’s SNP they-positioning in extract 17). Rather, they ‘step outside’ to consider the relational dynamic between the various political stakeholders in Scotland. The following exchange (extract 16) returns to the point in the discussion where the polarising issue initially emerged (extract 10). As the discourse continues, both offer a commentary on the impact of Brexit in the discussion around Scottish independence. Atypically given the independently-sustaining nature of the discourse, Bruce (line 82) addresses the researcher directly to offer a contextualising commentary (which is also shared by Martin).

Extract 16

Martin
81. Yep. So what Brexit has done it has lent (.), so, we had the Scottish Parliament elections in 2016 and that was all on independence, all on the constitution, and the Conservatives did really well up here because they were really clear and said ‘No’, and it was pretty much a referendum yes/no…I think what Brexit has done is, I think people wanted to end it but the two main parties are continuing on with the constitution, and the constitution is going to have a big bearing on this next election in Scotland, and the moderates are going to be squeezed…I think people want it away, but because Brexit is happening even though they don’t want it, a lot of people are thinking about becoming independent…If Brexit hadn’t have happened it would, not gone away, but been a secondary issue .

Bruce
82. I think that (addressing the researcher), I am sure you’re aware, that every single issue in Scotland is seen through the Indy prism, everything. It doesn’t matter how silly that may seem for folk outside of Scotland, it doesn’t really matter; every party sees everything through the Indy prism.

Martin
83. Yeah, I totally agree. I don’t think some folk have moved on from that campaign in 2014, especially after Brexit. In my opinion, I think this may have given an excuse to continue what wasn’t settled, I think there were some problems with (xxx), and Brexit just prolonged it, and will keep on prolonging it for a while.

Bruce
84. The bit I would disagree with is that I dinnae think most people needed an *excuse!*

Martin
85. *Yeah!*

Further commentary sharing (extract 17) occurs between them on the political climate of Scotland beyond Brexit which considers the political imperatives of the various parties.
Bruce
143. The unionist parties, soft unionist parties, like Labour and the Liberal Democrats have made glib comments about federalism, and stuff like that for a long, long time, and I dinnae think anybody, most of the SNP, believe it anymore. They just see it as a soft way of stopping the conversation. They don’t think Labour or Liberal Democrats have any intention of giving away powers, extra powers to Scotland because we have evidence from the Smith Commission after 2014 where, actually they went in the opposite direction because Cameron wanted more English votes, the evidence is there.

Martin
144. I think, as you say, it would have happened with or without Brexit. I think that Scotland, with the decline of the Labour Party, has changed politics almost overnight, it had been a long time coming. This is not a dig at the SNP, it is not meant to be, but I the two major parties don’t want to be part of the union. The conservatives see it as deadwood, and the SNP, well, the clue is in the *title*!. Those two parties benefit from this as they have created two blocks, and it becomes an issues at every election, the issues of independence, and those two benefit of that, despite what politicians may say.

This *I*-Political-Commentator position allows both participants to critique the other’s political party analytically. As with Pairing A, this distancing position serves to defuse the potential for heightened emotional retorts in what is a highly polarised pairing. This occurs at different points throughout the discourse and seems to be an important shared position for both participants.

7.2.2.4. Conclusion
This pair also engaged in independently-sustained dialogue in the post-polarising stage of the discussion. This is in spite of evident differences between the participants on the future of the England-Scotland union. In the first stage of the discourse, both adopted a We-position regarding the Dundee community when discussing the impact of COVID-19. Both possess a joint commitment to something greater than themselves which, in this case, is the local community. Therefore, potentially creating a sense of mutual investment between the interlocuters on the importance of their home city. This is likely salient to both participants given the uncertain circumstances in which the discussion is occurring (i.e.: in the midst of a global pandemic and Brexit negotiations). Bruce and Martin’s pairing is unique in that a heightened level of polarisation occurs between them in stage one of the discourse. This almost becomes a ‘rehearsal’ for the polarising discourse which follows subsequently in stage three.
The introduction of this stimulus material then creates a shared moment of dismay in their response to Brexit. At the invitation of the researcher, the pair then re-focus on the England-Scotland union when discussing the UK’s post-Brexit future. They both proceed to independently-sustain dialogue on this polarising issue without disengaging from the conversation during stark dissensus moments. Adopting this position evokes a ‘bigger picture’ commentary on the polarising issues in an attempt to ‘depersonalise’ their critiques of the other’s political beliefs. During these moments, both interlocuters attempt to ‘step outside’ the prism of their personal partisanship when considering Scotland’s current political climate. An important factor for this shared I-Political-Commentator position is that it serves as a ‘super-addressee’ for both participants. To reiterate (see Chapter two, section 2.2. for more details), a super addressee is considered sympathetic and understanding to the concepts being espoused by the speaker (Ahmad, 2020). In this case, the focus here is on the idea that both are ‘good faith’ commentators speaking neutrally on the current political climate. Whilst their success in achieving a ‘neutral commentary’ is questionable, the attempt to do so seems to offer them a means of engaging with one another during this vexed discussion.

7.3. Overview of the Factors Influencing Independently-Sustaining Dialogue

Analysis of these two pairings offers insight into the factors influencing how the interlocuters were able to independently-sustain dialogue. As these were the only two pairings which did discursively engage with one another in this manner, it is important to consider the potential influences on this finding. To this end, it seems both pairings shared three common features: (1) Shared core positions in stage one, (2) Shared-affective response to relevant polarising footage, and (3) Adopted ‘distancing’ I-positions during the polarising discourse. The latter is a key finding in that both pairings achieved civil disagreement via adopting ‘distancing’ I-positions which allowed them to ‘step outside’ the polarising discourse. For Pairing A, it was adopting a I-Pragmatic position which allowed a distance from the direct critiques of each other’s political positions by engaging in problem-solving. Pairing B also adopted a mutual position outside of their core positions (I-Political-Commentator) to allowed them to continue dialogue on the vexed issue of Scottish independence.
That both these highly polarised pairings were able to independently-sustain dialogue is somewhat counter-intuitive. The pair did not require any researcher input in the third stage of the discussion to facilitate discourse. Indeed, it could be the case that a heightened level of disagreement creates a certain type of discursive engagement. That independently-sustaining dialogue likely requires polarisation rejects the argument (Alnes, 2017; Einsiedel and Eastlick, 2000) that consensus is needed for political discourse. Instead, this finding aligns more with Brush’s (2020) proposal that an element of civil disagreement is essential for political discourse. The emphasis here being on the attempt to ‘achieve disagreement’ between politically partisan interlocuters to propel discussion. Therefore, a relevant polarising element between interlocuters is likely an important contributing factor for the pairings’ ability to independently-sustain dialogue.

It is curious to note that, in stage two, both sets of pairs experienced a shared affective response to what was intended to be polarising stimulus materials. The subsequent discourse by both pairings after this shared response contrasts with the argument that heightened emotional states are determinantal to reasoned political discourse (Gervais, 2017; Sobieraj and Berry, 2011). Indeed, both pairs were still able to articulate oppositional views to the other’s argument on the political issue in question. This finding does align with studies showing a visceral negative response increases engagement with both political content (Vargo and Hopp, 2020) and activity (Banks, White, and McKenzie, 2019; Ost, 2004). It could be the case that, after the shared positions adopted in stage one, this shared emotional response is a confirmatory indicator of mutual investment in the discussion. Therefore, fostering a willingness to engage with one another as both have the relevant ‘commitment signifiers’. The next step in this analysis is to consider the second key finding and the factors which influenced this outcome.

7.4. Sustained Dialogue

The second finding is that two of the pairs (C & D) were able to sustain dialogue with one another within the context of the questions asked in stage three of the discussion. The key difference between this and the pairings who independently-sustained dialogue is that Pairings C and D never engage in discourse which moves beyond the remit of the questions in stage three. Therefore, whilst both Pairings C and D also engaged directly with one another, the discourse was anchored by the question-answer structure of the discussion. This also differs from supported sustained
dialogue (see section 7.6) in that, within the context of the questions asked, both Pairings C and D sustained dialogue without further interjections from the researcher.

7.4.1. Pairing C: April and Angelina

Pairing C is between a Dundee (Angelina) and Sunderland (April) resident and was not projected to become a polarising interaction based on their dialogical positions. The following (figure 7.3) offers an overview of the context relevant I-positions April and Angelina adopted and/or shared at each stage of the discussion.

Figure 7.3. Pairing C’s adopted I-Positions

7.4.1.1. I-Politically-Engaged (Stage One: Paired discussion)

The I-Politically-Engaged position is understood to be where an individual expresses a commitment to a political party or movement. Typically, this involves engagement in politically-orientated activities. However, it is not a prerequisite as individuals can be engaged without participating in activities. Unlike Pairing A, the questions in this section did not offer a context for either person to adopt an I-Politically-Engaged position. This could be because of the generational divide expressed by Angelina, or the unfavourable social representations held by April on the issue of political engagement. April does accept the importance of political engagement as a concept and considers it beneficial to society (extract 18). However, rather than actively adopting this
position herself, she adopts an advocating-they position for those who feel disengaged due to the current political climate.

Extract 18
April
20. Personally, I think it is vital to be engaged in politics because there is no aspect of society that lies outside the realm of political influence, and if you (.) cut yourself away from engaging with that, on the basis that politics is not for you then you are cutting yourself from how society functions, so. Yeah, engagement with politics is vital, but then again, I do understand why people become disaffected, and (.) don’t feel that they want to spend their time engaging with politics because it is all such a dreadful mess at the moment.

In contrast, Angelina adopts the position of I-Elderly-Citizen (extract 19) and places any political engagement within a chronotopic context (i.e.: as occurring in the past tense). This position frames her level of political engagement within a generational context, which emphasises the age difference between her and April (88 and 68 respectively). The immediate position seems indicative of how she perceives her relevance to the question of political engagement. That is to say, she aligns with the idea that faith in political change via personal engagement is the domain of the young.

Extract 19
Angelina
8. I have, I am an old woman, of course. I am losing my faith in modern day politicians.

7.4.1.2. I-Environmentalist (Stage One: Paired Discussion)
An I-Environmentalist position is considered to be where the individual prioritises an imperative for protecting the environment against the impact of climate change. April adopts an I-Environmentalist position in direct response to the question about political priorities. That is to say, protecting the environment is at the top of her personal hierarchy of important political issues. A shared position occurs as Angelina also adopts this position and joins April in outlining the importance of this issue (extract 20).

Extract 20
April
36. Well, personally, it is, (.) the top of my list of concerns because without care for the environment, for the home that we live on, everything else is irrelevant. You have to have a planet which is functioning in a way that is sustainable if you want
to actually continue to have a human race existing on it. The current stance doesn’t seem to really be taking in that long-term prospect. I haven’t seen any evidence that the political parties who are in power the most are viewing that as a priority. They are paying lip service in many ways. There is a move to increase the profile of their environmental issues, but I don’t think, (.) it is as though it isn’t really there as priority number one, while it is for me.

Angelina
37. Well, I think, again, if you look at what is going on, worldwide, we have to look at with climate change, and that (.), that should be top of the agenda for all countries…

Furthermore, Angelina adopts a distancing-they position for climate change-deniers which creates a moment of consensus between the two interlocuters (extract 21). Considered together, these exchanges show that I-Environmentalist is a core position for both participants.

Extract 21
Angelina
37….But then you get countries that do not believe it is happening. I don’t know (.), maybe some education needed, showing examples of how environmental changes are on the move, but then they would still deny that, and claim it is all cyclical, and all that. I think they are so sadly mistaken about that.

April
38. Yes. me too.

7.4.1.3. I-Materialism-Rejector
A position which aligns with the core I-Environmentalist is Angelina’s adoption of I-Materialism-Rejector which also creates a shared moment between the interlocuters (extract 22). The position focuses on a shared critique of the UK’s consumerist culture and its impact on the environment. This is consistent with an I-Environmentalist position and further evidence this is a core position which influences their wider political views.

Extract 22
Angelina
52. I think materialism is at the root of the problem. People are going to realise that there is more to life then material values. All this making money. We have got everybody at it, I mean, the advertiser wants you to eat meat and bread, whether it is good for you or not.

April
53. That’s true.
Angelina
54. All to make money. Until we change that, err, (.) appreciate the other reasons why we are here on this earth, it, it, it is all to do with our economic situation is going to be dire! Whether that will make things worse or better, I do not know.

April
55. I think that you are right, Angelina. It is changing the priority about what is important in life. At the moment, y’know, people work long hours (.) to earn money to buy stuff that they don’t need, that they don’t enjoy because they haven’t got the time to do it! It, it is that materialistic focus that really does need to change.

7.4.1.4. Polarising moment: Low/No polarisation
The expectation with this pairing was that the materials would not create a context for polarising discourse. This proved to be the case as there were no moments of explicit polarisation between the pair. The interlocutors engaged in both frequent moments of consensus and also sustained dialogue when discussing challenging political content. As outlined in Chapter Six (section 6.2), moments of consensus do not equate to sustaining dialogue. Indeed, such moments can merely be performative or consensus-seeking acts. However, in this case, there does not seem to be any overtly performative aspects that would be associated with such consensus-seeking (Morrison and Matthes, 2011). A key point in the final section was Angelina’s frequent re-adoption of the I-Elderly-Citizen position when considering the UK’ future. Here (extract 23) Angelina evokes a temporal-focused chronotope between COVID-19 induced community changes and her childhood experiences of strong community bonds.

Extract 23

Angelina
90. Given the economic crisis we are in now, I just don’t see (.) I must say, I despair. I feel very sorry for the young people of this world we are leaving them.

April
91. Yes.

Angelina
92. That concerns me. I have grandchildren, and, err, (.) one (xxx), but I don’t know what the future holds for them at all. Whether it is in Europe or out of Europe I don’t know. I feel sad for them.

April
93. Yes, me too. I would, (.), I do think there may be a positive time to this as well. In the back of my mind there is a feeling of hope that, actually, you have to have a crisis which opens the cracks in society before you see them, and before society pulls back a little and looks and sees that there is something there that needs
changing, and something that must be done… though I think we have a lot of misery to and *hard stuff to go through first!*

Angelina
94.*Yes!* I actually thought when COVID came in and I mentioned earlier on about the kindness that I had been shown by people. I had never been on the receiving end of such kindness, and thoughtfulness, really. I, I think (.), my faith, I was brought up to believe to do kind things to each other and be kind to each other, that was our philosophy, how we lived ourselves. I honestly, thought that this pandemic, that things were beginning to be a bit more like I remember as a child, your neighbours were kind, people were friendly…I thought that was a nice side of Covid, people would appreciate what they already had, how we have been treating each other in this modern world. Sadly, I don’t think it is going to last.

April
95. Yeah.

Both participants share an I-Government-Critic position (extract 24) on the Government’s plans to break international law with the Internal Market Bill (Parker, Payne, Foster, and Pickard, 2020). Whilst positions responding to transitory news are not always substantive, here the issue in question highlights how they conceive the UK’s global position. Indeed, in both cases, the UK is framed as being a nation which once possessed a global status for honesty, but now is greatly diminished in this area. As Angelina evoked a temporal-focused chronotope regarding COVID-19 and community, a non-scripted question on COVID-19 was introduced by myself at this point (line 98). Although the intention was to avoid discussing the pandemic (section 6.1.2.1), this provided the opportunity to explore if a new context (i.e.: COVID-19) would change how they position the UK’s global status.

Extract 24
April
97. Well, personally, I think our status in the world has been damaged to a large extent by the willingness to break international law. We have shown ourselves to be untrustworthy, and that is not going to help us to maintain a position of being revered as we once were, as a fair nation, and that behaved in a proper manner, so. Hopefully, we might pass through that period, and be back on the world stage as somebody who wants to change things for the positive, but if things continue in this downward spiral that we seem to be in at the moment, I dread to think where we are going to be this time next year. I wouldn’t make a trade treaty with us at the moment!

AE
98. Do you think things may change given Covid?
Angelina
99. I really doubt it. Like April, I think that this latest faux pas, if that is what you can call it, with international law being violated. I, that, I mean, amongst other things, I think we did have some modicum of respect by other countries, but this is going to just show them…

April joins Angelina to address what they perceive as a troubling future ahead for younger generations (extract 25). However, she re-frames the issue to adopt an I-Hopeful position on the UK’s future which both share by the conclusion of the discussion.

Extract 25

April
102. *Which* is there is absolutely no point in abandoning hope. Hope is a thing you must always hold on to.

Angelina
103. Yes.

April
104. Even in the darkest place there is always hope.

Angelina
105. I think so as well.

7.4.1.5. Conclusion

Despite moments in which both sustain dialogue, there are interesting distinctions between this discussion and Pairings A and B. For example, whilst Pairing C did sustain dialogue, the discourse was maintained within the remit of the questions being asked. This contrasts with Pairings A and B who engaged in discourse which was independently-sustaining and moved entirely beyond the remit of the interview questions. As discussed at the outset, the purpose of having different levels of potential polarisation was to offer a comparator for any distinctive discursive features. This lack of an explicitly polarising issue could be one factor influencing this difference in how the pairings sustained dialogue. It is possible that a heightened polarisation on the issue in question offers an imperative for engagement. This is not to say that Angelina and April do not possess their own motivating values and positions. Indeed, the shared I-Environmentalist position clearly shows a strong, passionate commitment to a cause greater than themselves. However, it could be that, given Angelina’s uncertainty about voting Leave during the UK-EU referendum, that any potential polarisation between them on this matter was diminished. Thus, creating a context which, unlike Pairings A and B, did not demand the participants defend a political allegiance or perspective.
A novel aspect in April and Angelina’s pairing is the latter’s age (88) which may have been an influencing factor. It is unlikely to be the 20-year age gap per se, as Pairing D has an even greater discrepancy. Rather, Angelina is part of an age-group perceived as vulnerable which may have created a distinctive dynamic. This influence is apparent in Angelina’s rejection of the *I*-Politically-Engaged position and adoption of the *I*-Elderly-Citizen position. Indeed, the latter becomes pivotal in the final section of the discussion when Angelina articulates both participants’ current circumstances (i.e.: COVID-19) via the temporal concerns of an elderly citizen. As discussed in the final chapter, this influence could also have created a self-censoring on the part of April, given Angelina’s status as a vulnerable citizen in the context of a global pandemic. Another important interaction seems to be the shared *I*-Environmentalist position and *I*-Materialism-Rejector as a sub-position. This shared commitment to a cause greater than themselves aligns with the previous pairings core positions. Indeed, such positions could create a context in which both participants feel understood and share an issue of personal importance. The combination of this shared commitment alongside an absence of explicitly polarising moments could be key factors influencing this finding.

7.4.2. Pairing D: Linda and Thomas

Figure 7.4. *Pairing D’s adopted I-Positions*

Pairing D involves Linda (Seaburn) and Thomas (Dundee) and was also not projected to create an explicitly polarising discussion based on their dialogical positions. Figure 7.4 offers an overview
of the context relevant *I*-positions Linda and Thomas adopted and/or shared at each stage of the discussion.

7.4.2.1. *I*-Democratic (Stage One: Paired Discussion)

A moment of shared positioning occurs at the beginning of this section with Linda aligning with Thomas’ adoption of the *I*-Democratic position (extract 26). Thomas repeatedly adopts this position at various points throughout the discussion.

Extract 26

Thomas
4. Personally, I am delighted the Withdrawal bill passed through Parliament. I was hoping the last election would provide a majority, and at least get a deal through. It certainly couldn’t go on as it was. We are a democracy and should act accordingly

Linda
5. Yeah, I am the same. It is important for democracy. Although it was a small majority, it was what people voted…

Thomas’ social representation of democracy aligns with his perception of the UK as a country which honours previous agreements (extract 27), which is consistent with an *I*-Democratic position. Especially his focus on honouring the outcome of the UK-EU referendum despite his own personal voting behaviour.

Extract 27

Thomas
18….I also think that there is a very deep attachment to democracy in this country; we don’t wear it openly, but the fact is this country has been pretty democratic for a long time and is in the habit of mind to be democratic, so I don’t, I mean, I am really shocked!

The emergence of this shared position at such an early stage in the discussion could indicate consensus-seeking on the part of Linda. However, as the conversation progresses, Linda once again re-adopts the *I*-Democratic position (extract 28), which indicates the first instance was not consensus-seeking. Rather, her focus does indeed reside in honouring the outcome of the UK-EU referendum outcome above other personal factors.

Extract 28

Linda
37. Yeah, yeah. Again, it was voted for by a slight majority in the country and, err, (3) this is what we are doing so let’s think ‘right, how do we do this?’.
This early shared exchange between the interlocuters does seem to have created a context for them to openly offer their insights into the Brexit process.

7.4.2.2. I-Centrist (Stage One: Paired Discussion)

A shared position on the inherent value of political centrism is important to both participants when discussing the current political climate. A centrist position differs from non-partisanship in that the former still involves political imperative. Therefore, instead of aligning with a right or left ideology, the centrist incorporates both aspects into their political worldview. The interlocuters share this position (extract 29) when considering, within a centrist context, the determinantal impact of tribalism on the Brexit process.

Extract 29

Thomas

49. My default position in life anyway is the centre. I mean, I did history at university and it seemed like every essay; *‘well on the one hand and then on the other’!* I do truly think it is vital, and we were very bad and became very tribal in the Brexit period, err, so I don’t think it is important that we can get back to a calmer, more centred debate…

Linda

59. *!* Err, (. ) I think what you said there about tribal is sort of spot on! There is definitely a ‘you have to pick a side, you have to pick a side’ and the majority of the people are not always fully 100% one set of policies or 100% another set of policies, and in an ideal world you would be able to pick and choose, but you have got to go with that majority, you have to pick a side.

Linda re-adopts this centrist position (extract 30) when considering the advantages of selecting left/right policy options over political parties during an election. Finding the concept of policy selection appealing is not inherently the domain of a centrist position. However, in the context of this discourse, i.e.: a centralism which is consistent with radical centralist politics (Mouffe, 1998), a centrist positioning does seem to be evident.

Extract 30

Linda

65. Err, (. ) in an ideal world I would like to pick policies. In the last election, I think it was the first time I saw it, there was a questionnaire you could do on the BBC, and you sort of picked your policies and it told you who you should vote for, and I was a tad shocked when I saw the *result!*
In contrast, Thomas offers a chronotopic rejection of this position by depicting policy selection as the domain of a by-gone age disconnected from the realities of a modern electorate (extract 31). Hence, while the questions did initially create a context for a shared position, a focus on the realities of electoral options disengaged the interlocutors.

Extract 31

Thomas
73. Yes, I do listen to policies, but I always end up in the same place, the same result and where I vote really. I know, I mean there was a time in British history where the electorate were really those who read The Times, in the 1850s, but, y’know, it was manageable when you had a small electorate, but once you have a few million voters out there, you have to have the party system, and I believe we have to have it. I mean the parties have moved a lot in my lifetime (.) the policies they represent, so it is probably a very complex interaction indeed, to have all of us and the policies and how these interaction would occur, but I don’t think it is quite responsive...It is not like Britain where a load of old polices get dropped and new ones come in, it is pretty fluid, I think.

7.4.2.3. Polarising moment: Low/No polarisation

The expectation here (Chapter six, section 6.4.4.2) was this would not be a polarising pairing. Principally, as both participants share a chronotopic framing of the UK-EU referendum as a political event distant from their current realities (extract 32).

Extract 32

Linda
84. *It seems so long ago*.

Thomas
85. Yeah, I, I it was sad, but it does seem an awfully long time ago. For me, it is a bit like your side has won a football match, of course you celebrate (3) I assume by the next day that it doesn’t have much meaning anymore.

Likely this is a response to the dominance of COVID-19 as headline news at the time of the interview. Such an all-consuming event may have created a pre- and post-COVID-19 delineator which distorts the public’s perceptions on the passage of time (Holman and Grisham, 2020) Consequently, for Pairing D, the UK-EU referendum may have seemed topically irrelevant at the time of the discussion, despite its ubiquity in the UK news cycle since 2016. That being said, the moments where both interlocuters sustained dialogue were specifically on issues relating to Brexit. This indicates the issue remained politically salient to both, despite the media’s focus on the global
pandemic. Alongside Pairing C, both participants here share an I-Government-Critic (extract 33) on the inherent illegality of the proposed Internal Market Bill (a prevalent news story at the time of the interviews).

Extract 33

Thomas
97… I am really worried by the invention of this recent thing, whatever it is about the treaty break. This is not what is in the realm of reasonable negotiation and you can see some British, Conservative party leaders saying this is completely unacceptable/

Linda
98./Yes.

Thomas
99. /this is not how Britain has behaved and I don’t feel we have the moral right to highjack our own traditions, so I am really, really concerned…for Britain to threaten and ignore its own signature and to say openly in Parliament that is breaking the law is just astonishing to me!

Linda
100. I know.

AE
101. In terms of the UK/ EU relationship, what are you like to see happen before the end of the transition agreement?

Linda
102. Err, (.) well I wouldn’t want to break international law, for a *start!* I wouldn’t’ want to (. ) err, I just think that they will just do it and the arrogance to just break international law, then we deserve huge consequences.

Discussing the Brexit deal negotiations, Thomas and Linda sustain dialogue (extract 34) sharing an I-Mediator position to rebuke what they consider to be antagonistic negotiations.

Extract 34

Thomas
118. … I would just love to see it toned down a bit. There is open talk about distrust and breaking word and stuff like that. We have always said, ‘well, these are our closest friends and our closest neighbours’, and if we cannot reach an agreement, the two sides, this has just so shocking and really shows that we are not close as friends and neighbours.

Linda
119. I was just going to say that, alongside that as well, I would, y’know, talking about compromises and I would hate us to compromise on policies that, as a country, we have already committed to…

This is not ‘distancing’ political commentary (as with Pairing B) as they align themselves to the UK with the use of ‘we’ and ‘us’. Rather the focus is on the UK maintaining integrity and modifying what they consider to be an overly accusatory tone for negotiations. This shared position aligns with a higher ideal of integrity which, this case, relates to the UK’s conduct in its global relationships.

7.4.2.4. Conclusion

Alongside Pairing C, Pairing D was designed to offer a relevant comparator in a low/no polarisation context. In the first stage of the discussion, both adopted an I-Democratic position when presented with the opportunity to do so. This involved endorsing the ‘greater good’ of honouring the UK-EU referendum outcome over personal preferences. Thus, creating a context of mutual understanding between both participants. Although both initially shared an I-Centrist position, it did not prove to be galvanising as the conversation continued. This could be that a centrist position is more susceptible to contextual factors then other positions. That is to say, the parameters of the ‘centre ground’ can be sharply redrawn depending on an individual’s personal politics. As expected, the Brexit stimulus materials did not create a polarising moment between the pair. The UK-EU referendum itself was framed by both participants in the context of chronotopic meaning-making. Specifically, as an event which felt distant to their current lives as a result of COVID-19. That said, both were clearly invested in the outcome of the UK-EU transition period as the discussion continued. The interlocuters’ shared positions (I-Government-Critic and I-Mediator) created moments in which they sustained dialogue on a controversial political issue. These third-stage shared positions seem to aspire for the UK to engage with integrity on the global stage.

7.5. Overview of the Factors Influencing Sustained Dialogue

As with the pairings who independently-sustained dialogue, these two pairings (C & D) also adopted core shared I-positions in the first stage of the paired discussions. However, beyond that commonality, there seems to be distinctive differences between the pairings which sustained dialogue and those who independently-sustained dialogue. Pairing D sustained dialogue within the parameters of the interview questions, as opposed to shifting the discourse to their own context.
There could be two key differences which are influencing these divergent forms of dialogue. Firstly, the level of polarisation between the pairings could be impactful here as those who sustained dialogue within the remit of the questions did not have to engage with heightened discursive conflict. Secondly, shared affective responses to the stimulus materials were not evident among Pairings C and D, which could also be relevant. Specifically, as these two pairings lacked a shared experience on an important emotive issue. Given the differences in how the pairings sustain dialogue, this adds to the idea that a shared affective response and the level of polarisation are important influences. The final pairing was, alongside Pairing A and B, projected to be a high polarising pairing. However, a distinctive finding was found which fits into neither of the previous forms of dialogue.

7.6. Supported Sustained Dialogue

Supported sustained dialogue is considered to be discourse that requires frequent, explicit support from the researcher to create a context for the participants to sustain dialogue. This is distinct from the previous finding (i.e.: sustained dialogue) in that Pairing E required substantial input even after the questions were asked. Specifically, input which involved frequent interventions with questions (either repeated or new) to support the interlocuters in their discursive interaction. To be clear, these were not ‘follow-up’ questions prompted by the interlocuters’ discourse, but further inquiry to explore the initial research questions.

7.6.1. Pairing E: Rhianna and Joe

Rhianna and Joe are both Dundee residents who were projected to have highly polarising discourse on the 2016 UK-EU referendum campaign. The following (figure 7.5) offers an overview of the context relevant I-positions Rhianna and Joe adopted and/or shared at each stage of the discussion.

7.6.1.1. I-British (Stage one: Paired Discussion)

Both participants explicitly reject the opening context for re-adopting I-British positions in the first stage of the discussion. However, in the process of doing so, both Rhianna and Joe adopt an I-British-Identity-Rejector position (extract 35). This is the first shared position in the study that emerged from an explicit rejection of the questions asked. Given the outcome of this section, a rejection-orientated, non-core position does not seem to offer meaningful engagement for the interlocuters.
Extract 35

Rhianna
16. Not really, I don’t really identify as British or Scottish, but if I had to pick one I would say more British.

AE
17. Okay. What yourself, Joe?

Joe
18. Err, I mean, I feel more British than English or Scottish, but really, like, specifically, being an Englishman in Scotland, it is frustrating because people identify you as ‘Oh, you’re from the south of England, you got us involved in all of this business!’ (Reference to Brexit). Err, again like, if I had to choose then British, but it doesn’t really mean anything to me.

A variety of factors could be influencing this shared rejection of the I-British re-positioning opportunity. The first is simply that the questions asked did not create a comprehensible context for re-adopting this position. However, the fact both explicitly reject the context for this position implies the questions were, at some level, relevant to an I-British position. Indeed, the very act of rejecting this concept implies some inherent understanding of the questions being asked. A second factor could be that an I-British position was relevant at the time of study one (November and December 2019) but is no longer the case by study two (September 2020). Recent polling does show evidence of a slow disintegration of British identity among UK citizens (Shipman and
Allardyce, 2021). However, whilst it is the case that political party allegiances are transitory (as Rhianna demonstrates in the next section), this is not quite the same with nationality-based positions. For it is highly unlikely the participants adopted a new dual-nationality in the months between the two studies. A more likely scenario is that study one’s analysis and pairing process mistakenly identified I-British as a core position. That is to say, a position which is central to both individuals within the context of the discourse.

7.6.1.2. I-Politically-Engaged (Stage One: Paired Discussion)
In contrast with the I-British position, Rhianna did initially adopt this position in response to a question on political engagement. However, given her subsequent comment (extract 36), this does not seem to be a true indication of her dialogical positioning. A factor here is that both participants seem to consider that political engagement must manifest via organised party activity.

Extract 36

Rhianna
52. Err, (3), well yes, and no because I am no longer a part of the SNP anymore. It is something I had to take a step back from, as I feel like it was taking over my life a little bit. So, (2), but I am still engaged in it, I am still interested, I still follow things that are going on.

Rhianna
72. Yeah, I will definitely be more engaged by that point. At this stage, I do not which party I would support, as I don’t feel that any represent me or my views…

Unlike the I-British position, circumstantial changes seem to have been influential here in creating different positions. Both reported a change of circumstances regarding their political party affiliations. For Rhianna, this involved entirely disassociating herself from the SNP or any type of organised political activity (I-Ex-SNP member and I-Political- Outsider, respectively). In contrast, Joe remains a member of the Labour Party (extract 37), however, he adopts an I-Politically-Disengaged position when discussing his personal politics. Somewhat surprisingly, his political engagement has decreased since his favoured candidate (i.e.: Keir Starmer) become elected as leader. It seems his antagonism for the previous leader was highly motivating, and, to a certain extent, powering his engagement. These changing circumstances explain the participants’ resistance to re-adopt an I-Politically-Engaged position.

Extract 37

Joe
60….err, I kinda just lost a lot of steam. I mean, I think a lot of it is obviously because I was so, like, centrist in the Labour party and so against Corbyn, and now Corbyn has gone, and Kier Starmer has become leader, I have lost the fire. I don’t need to focus on that anymore, so, y’know, I am a lot less engaged now after that disaster. I find it quite difficult, especially in this environment to be engaged and I have lost interest.

7.6.1.3. Polarising moment: Brexit protestors/campaign

This pairing was considered to have a high potential for polarisation given the inherent differences previously expressed regarding Brexit protestors and the campaign itself. However, whilst the polarising footage depicted content exposing the differences between them (e.g.: public expressions of patriotism), this did not produce any moments of dissensus. Instead, both confounded expectations by adopting an I-Campaign-Critic to malign what they consider a campaign of misinformation by both sides (extract 38).

Extract 38

AE
Finally, on the other side of that coin, the remain campaign criticised the false promises of the leave campaign; do you think these criticisms are justified when reflecting on the transition period?

Joe
139. Yeah, y’know, I think there were some very, y’know, heavily optimistic claims by the leave campaign, again, I think that there was some heavily pessimistic claims by the remain campaign, I mean that’s just politics in general though, it is the same with referendums, sorry, I mean the same with general elections, y’know…

AE
142. Do you have any thoughts on this, Rhianna?

Rhianna
143. Yeah, there was definitely a lot of false promises, and I do think the leave campaign were being too optimistic, they seemed like they had left reality a bit, so. Yeah, definitely, a lot of false promises made. But that was the problem with both sides, nobody really found the middle. I think that sometimes the general public need a middle, yeah.

In microcosm, this outcome highlights the importance of contextual factors in influencing how individuals adopt certain positions. A key factor here could be that the circumstances for the second study were notably different. Study one interviews were conducted in the context of an impending General Election. This was instigated after a political party stalemate over how, or if, a UK-EU deal could pass through Parliament. This was a period of high stakes uncertainty in which the
public had the opportunity to engage once more in determining the future of the UK. In contrast, study two occurred in the mid-point of the UK-EU transition period and after an election outcome which effectively ended any possibility that Brexit would be avoided. Indeed, it could be this shift in the political climate which re-contextualises the events of 2016 for both participants. That is to say, any imperative to continue the arguments of the 2016 campaigns may have felt surplus to requirements given the inevitability of the outcome. Therefore, creating a discursive space in which partisanship was not relevant to either participant. Based on the findings from Pairings A and B, this also seems to have created a discursive dynamic which limited the pairs capacity to engage in independently-sustaining dialogue.

7.6.1.4. Conclusion

This third form of dialogue was the most reliant on interventions from the researcher to maintain a discursive dynamic between the pair. Indeed, it required a constant level of support from the researcher to create a context for the dialogue to be sustained. Another distinctive aspect of this pairing was that Rhianna and Joe did not re-adopt and share any of the expected positions in stage one. The I-British position was actively rejected by both participants as neither considered Britishness relevant to them in that context. This was a unique occurrence across the five pairings and indicates that the initial analysis inaccurately assigned this as a core position. Moreover, both unexpectedly adopted a shared position which explicitly rejected this Britishness. It transpired that the I-Politically-Engaged position was also irrelevant to both participants due to changing circumstances since study one. Rhianna had since left the SNP and Joe considered the change of Labour leader reason enough for a period of disengagement. Both of these examples show the importance of contextual relevance for a position to be re-adopted in new circumstances.

In stage three of the discourse, the presumed polarising moment did not actually create any polarisation between the pair. Rhianna and Joe confounded expectations by adopting an I-Campaign-Critic when discussing the UK-EU referendum campaign. Stark differences in the political climate between the first and second study were likely impactful here. Indeed, a dialogical assumption is that individuals are dynamic and historically situated. Therefore, these macro-circumstantial changes (e.g.: political events) can substantially alter the contextual relevance of a particular position. Unlike the previous pairings, the dialogue between Rhianna and Joe was only sustained with support from the researcher. This distinctive outcome further suggests that
variances in how pairings sustain dialogue was likely impacted by sharing context-relevant positions and a shared-affective response to the polarising materials.

7.7. Study Two: Key Findings
The results of study two offer three key points for answering if/how I-positions can sustain dialogue during polarising discussions on the UK’s global relations. The following is a brief overview of each point ahead of a comprehensive exploration in the final chapter.

7.7.1. Shared Positions influence how dialogue is sustained
This study has identified key shared dialogical positions which allowed the pairings to sustain dialogue during vexed political discourse. For the pairs that independently-sustained dialogue, ‘distancing positions’ seem to offer a means of defusing the combustible topic and create the space to sustain dialogue. For example, Pairing A’s I-Pragmatic offers a means of ‘problem-solving’ differences between the interlocuters on how to achieve a better democracy. For Pairing B, an I-Political-Commentator position creates a context for both participants to foreground analytical discourse over passionate rhetoric. Whilst the positioning is different, the move to distance themselves from the polarising discourse is shared by both pairings. In contrast, the low/no polarising pairs (C and D) shared positions in stage three that related directly to their stage one positions. This is likely due to both interlocuters engaging in discourse which had a low potential for polarisation. Therefore, it was less challenging to sustain dialogue due to the reduced risk of dissensus between the participants.

Alongside the positions adopted in the stage three, it is important to consider the other factors which may have influenced the different findings. Among the pairs that were able to sustain dialogue without support, all shared positions that they had adopted previously in study one. These shared positions had the common characteristic of aligning with their core concerns in the context of the discussion; be it embodying an ideal (I-Democratic), a greater political/moral imperative (I-Environment) or supporting their local community during a crisis (We-Dundee-Community). When individuals share core positions, it seems to offer a sense of mutual investment in political discourse. That this occurs at an early stage in the discussion is likely important for creating a context which increases the likelihood the pair could sustain dialogue. For doing so at an early-stage grants both participants ‘permission’ to express themselves freely to an invested audience (i.e.: the other person) when discussing polarising topics later.
It is notable that the two pairings who engaged in independently-sustaining dialogue adopted shared positions which distanced themselves from the polarising issue. This study’s process of creating shifting conditions (e.g.: sharing positions before the polarising moment) offers a distinct process for exploring how dialogue could be sustained among political actors (explored fully in the next chapter). It is important to note that such positions are context-dependent and part of a series of dynamic discursive interactions. Therefore, it would be inaccurate to present any one shared position as a ‘magic bullet’ for sustaining dialogue in any given situation. None the less, the value in adopting core shared positions to sustain dialogue is a novel finding and one which requires further exploration on the implications and potential applications.

7.7.2. Variances exist in how the pairs sustain dialogue

On the surface, this is a self-evident point as it is to be expected that each pairing will have variances in how they engage in discourse. However, the differences in how the pairings sustain dialogue seemed to be influenced by the level of polarisation. For example, the highly polarised pairings (A & B) that experienced a shared-affective response to the footage were also the only two engaging in independently-sustaining dialogue. To dissect this outcome more clearly, these two factors will be considered separately in the first instance. It is interesting to note that both Pairings A and B experienced a shared-affective response to the polarising stimulus materials. The subsequent discourse by both pairings contrasts with the argument that heightened emotional states are determinantal to reasoned political discourse (Gervais, 2017; Sobieraj and Berry, 2011). However, this finding does align with studies showing a visceral negative response increases engagement for both political content (Vargo and Hopp, 2020) and activity (Banks, White, and McKenzie, 2019; Ost, 2014). It could be the case that, after the shared positions adopted in stage one, this shared emotional response is a confirmatory indicator of mutual investment in the discourse.

Regarding the polarising moments, the two highly polarised pairings were also the only ones independently-sustaining dialogue. This was in stark contrast to the other three pairings which did not have a ‘polarising moment’ in response to the Brexit materials. Whilst the focus of study two is in exploring if there are I-positions which can sustain dialogue, understanding how the pairings are doing so is also important. Given this clear distinction between the pairings, it could be the case that a heightened level of disagreement creates a certain type of discursive engagement. That
disagreement from polarisation creates a context for independently-sustaining dialogue rejects the argument (Alnes, 2017; Einsiedel and Eastlick, 2000) that consensus is needed for political discourse. Instead, this outcome aligns with Brush’s (2020) proposal that an element of civil disagreement is essential for political discourse. The emphasis here being on a pragmatic attempt to ‘achieve disagreement’ between partisan political actors. Whilst somewhat counter-intuitive, a certain level of polarisation could be an important contributing factor to creating a context for engaging in independently-sustaining dialogue during political discourse.

7.7.3. Core political I-Positions can be re-adopted with different stimulus

Moving beyond the specific findings, the concept that core positions can be re-adopted in a real-world context is potentially insightful. Indeed, this aligns with Position Exchange Theory’s (Gillespie and Martin, 2014) assumption that core positionings can be re-adopted given a salient interdependent context. The findings show that, with relevant questions, individuals have the capacity for adopting positions in a different temporal context. The first stage of each discussion offered the opportunity for the interlocuters to re-adopt two previously adopted positions from study one. These were deemed to be core positions based on the previous political discourse in study one. The opening stage in each discussion successfully created an opportunity for the interlocuters to re-adopt at least one of these positions (with the exception of Pairing E).

These findings also align with previous research (Da Silva, Fernández-Navarro, Gonçalves, Rosa, and Silva, 2020; Mahendran, 2013) showing individuals have the capacity for a positioning repertoire relative to the discursive context. In this regard, the thesis offers a novel contribution to the field’s understanding as to how individuals may adopt a particular position. Specifically, it shows that questions can be created which offer a context for individuals to re-adopt a specific I-position. It is valuable to consider why specific questions are effective (or ineffective) in creating a context for re-adopting previous positions. One factor seems to be devising questions which capture the ‘essence’ of the previously adopted position. Therefore, creating a relevant context for re-adopting a position initially adopted in response to different stimulus materials. This shall be explored further in the next chapter (section 8.3.1) as it offers a number of different considerations for future dialogical research.
7.8. Conclusion

This research offers key steps towards understanding how interlocuters engage in sustaining dialogue during vexed political discourse. This analysis offers three relevant findings for answering the following research question: Are there I-positions which can sustain dialogue between interlocuters during polarising discussions on the UK’s global relations? Firstly, shared positions do seem to create a context which contributes towards individuals sustaining dialogue when discussing polarising political topics. In this regard, shared core positions that are relevant to the discursive context seem especially important in establishing a connection in the first instance. Furthermore, among the pairs who independently-sustained dialogue, shared distancing positions provided a means of continuing to engage during moments of dissensus. Both of these are novel findings and shall be explored further in the next chapter when discussed within the wider dialogical literature.

The study’s second finding shows that there are variances in how individuals sustain dialogue. The analysis found that the main factor influencing this could be the level of polarisation between the two interlocuters. The third finding from this study contributes to the dialogical field by showing that core shared political positions can be re-adopted using different stimulus materials. Considered together, the findings have wider implications for the emerging field of dialogical research in political psychology. Specifically, that a dialogical approach may offer an alternative to mainstream social psychology theories when exploring the issue of political polarisation among the public. The next, and final, chapter contextualises the findings from both studies within a wider literature to explore the implications for dialogical and political psychology. In doing so, the chapter also considers the parameters of this research and explores various theoretical and methodological implications.
Chapter Eight: The I-Positions Between Us – How the Public can Sustain Dialogue on Politically Polarising Issues

Introduction

The preoccupation of this thesis has been to explore whether understanding dialogical positions offers insight into how politically polarised interlocuters can sustain dialogue. This final chapter reiterates the key findings from study one by initially focusing on the connection between migration-mobility experiences and the chronotopic connections evoked when discussing the UK’s colonial past (section 8.1.1). The influence of place-person relationships and how this offers an understanding of differing threat-perceptions on the UK’s changing global relations is also discussed (section 8.1.2). After a summary of study two, (section 8.2), the chapter offers a detailed treatment of the factors which created a context for the interlocuters to sustain dialogue. Firstly, section 8.3.1 discusses the novel evidence that dialogical positions can be re-adopted in a different context within the wider literature. Section 8.3.2 focuses on how re-adopting shared core positions allows interlocuters to feel mutually invested in the discussion. Finally, section 8.3.3 considers the importance of distancing positions in allowing interlocuters to sustain dialogue during polarising political discourse. The focus then turns to the other factors influencing differences in how the participants sustained dialogue. Namely, a relevant polarising issue (section 8.4) and a shared affective response (section 8.5). The chapter then considers the parameters of this research (section 8.6) before discussing the broader theoretical (section 8.7) and methodological implications (section 8.8) of these findings.

8.1. Study One: The Influence of Migration-Mobility & Place-Person Relationships – Findings & Implications

This opening section offers a summary of the findings and its wider implications in answering the first research question: (1) Do either (A) Migration-mobility or (B) Place-person relationships, influence how individuals position the UK’s global relations?

8.1.1. The Influence of Migration-Mobility on Positioning of the UK’s Global Relations

Study one indicates differing degrees of migration-mobility could be an influencing factor on how individuals position the UK’s global relations. As acknowledged in Chapter Five (section 5.2), it
is important that the analysis between individuals focus on discursive responses to the same specific stimulus materials (e.g.: the UK-EU referendum footage, map selection or jigsaw map configuration tasks). This offers a relevant comparator when considering the potential influence of an individual’s migration-mobility experiences on how they position the UK. Specifically, any distinctions between individuals on their social representations, dialogical positions and/or chronotopic representations when discussing global relations. In response to footage depicting 2017’s Last Night at the Proms, the generationally non-mobile (MMC 1) embraced a ‘glorious past’ social representation and adopted an I-Patriotic position. In contrast, responses from those who have encountered migration-mobility (i.e.: personal experiences, mobile partner, etc.) rejected this ‘glorious past’ representation and adopted an I-Patriotic-Rejector.

It could be the case that the generationally non-mobile here could be equating the British Empire with a sense of security. That, from their perspective, the British Empire offered, other countries an opportunity to experience the positive aspects of UK values and social norms. Despite this finding, it would be overly simplistic to conclude that the generationally non-mobile are all proponents of the British Empire. Indeed, in responding to the map configuration task (i.e.: creating the ‘ideal’ UK global relations), the influence of migration-mobility experiences was more complex. Indeed, individuals with varying migration-mobility experiences adopted I-Advocator and I-Atoner positions when discussing the UK-Africa relationship. In the context of study one, an I-Advocator position involves a person advocating for a nation or continent they perceive to have a low global status. The I-Atoner position is one in which the UK is positioned as a nation owing Africa a great debt due to its colonial past. For these positions, a key influencing factor seems to be the individual’s status as a UK citizen.

Indeed, these attempts to elevate Africa on the global stage could be to reconcile a UK-African relationship fraught with negative historical legacies. Given the relevant crossover between the two issues (i.e.: British Empire and UK-African relations), a key consideration is why non-mobility was not a factor for the latter. An important distinction in this regard is the differences between the positions adopted when discussing the UK’s Empire past and the UK-African relationship. Such differences indicate a tension between those who align with the symbolic appeal of the empire and those who focus on the real-word consequences. For the generationally non-mobile who responded to the patriotic footage of the Proms, it is possible that the symbolic power of the British Empire negates a focus on the consequences. In contrast, focusing on the UK-Africa
relationship during the map configuration task has a ‘dark past, diminished present, atoning future’ representation. This research method (e.g.: using patriotic or map-based stimulus materials for individuals with different migration-mobility experiences) does seem to offer insight into how they position the UK’s global relations. Moreover, the distinctions between the generationally non-mobile and mobile individuals offered a context for pairing individuals in study two on both shared and contrasting dialogical positions.

8.1.1.1. Theoretical Findings
A key finding is that migration-mobility differences exist between those who align with the symbolic appeal of the empire and those who focus on the real-word consequences. Considered in the context of other research, this offers a different understanding of how the UK public discursively engage with symbols of the British Empire. Specifically, the factors which influence these interactions beyond political ideology (Mols and Jetten, 2016) or identity (Manners, 2018). Indeed, it seems that focusing on migration-mobility experiences offers a different analytical lens for understanding how UK citizens engage with their national past and symbolic representations of colonial power. Specifically, how the generationally non-mobile engages with temporal connections between a nation’s previous global relations and its current status.

The publics’ chronotopic relationship with its historical past in the context of different migration-mobility may have implications for research on temporal narratives. That is to say, exploring if specific migration-mobility narratives create distinctive meaning-making chronotopes on their nation’s global past. Moreover, the combined influence of patriotism with generational non-mobility is another relevant consideration based the findings from study one. For example, do generationally non-mobile individuals engage with their nation’s past in a comparable manner outside of a patriotic context? If, as proposed in the Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model, chronotopes are an important part of an individual’s political narratives, then additional migration-mobility insights could be beneficial here. Specifically, in understanding how those with different migration-mobility experiences engage with their nation’s past and its implications for the present. Alongside migration-mobility, a resident’s place-person relationship also offered an initial step in understanding if this influences how the UK is positioned.
8.1.2. The Influence of Place-Person Relationships on Positioning of the UK’s Global Relations

The second part of the first research question explored if place-person relationships influenced how individuals position the UK’s global relations. In this regard, the place-person relationship did seem to have some influence here. Specifically, in the positioning the UK’s new (i.e.: post-Brexit) global relations as a potential threat to their community. To reiterate, the focus here was on long-time residents with a high place-identification (e.g.: high PIS score – see Chapter Five, section 5.2.4) to their urban or coastal geographical environment. The Dundee urban residents tended to discuss the UK’s European relations within the context of the English-Scottish union. Be it either as chronotopic representations of England as a diminishing global player negatively impacting Scotland or by emphasising the power of unity between the nations. For coastal residents, a clear division was present between Seaburn-born, higher-identifiers on how they positioned UK’s relations with Europe.

Indeed, for the Remain-supporting residents, they focused on the impact to their local community with an I-Community-Member position. Specifically, to position the UK’s new relations with Europe as a substantive threat to the local community. In contrast, the Brexit-supporting residents with high place identification positioned the UK’s changing European relations as reducing threat (e.g.: creating a context for UK sovereignty and modified immigration rules). As with the urban residents, this split between the high-identifying coastal residents aligns with the Remain/Leave divisions of the 2016 referendum. Clearly these divisions align with prior political commitments on Scottish independence. That said, this finding does offer insight into how residents with a strong place-person relationship engage with the UK’s global relations in a post-Brexit context.

8.1.2.1. Theoretical Findings

These findings offer additional insight into understanding the importance of place-person relationships for how residents make sense of political events impacting the UK. Specifically, how this relationship may influence perceptions of potential threat to their community based on the UK’s changing global relations. This community-based finding is notable among high-identifying coastal residents who supported remaining in the EU. Indeed, this coastal-based finding offers novel insight when considered within the context of previous Brexit research in the north-east region (Abrams and Travaglino, 2018; MacDougall, Feddes, and Doosje, 2020). Principally, as the importance of community to coastal residents has been considered exclusively within the
domain of Brexit-supporters in these North-East coastal areas (Bromley-Davenport, MacLeavy, and David Manley, 2019).

Whilst other psychology-based, geo-political research has explored threat, a key UK-based focus has been on cross-party NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard) responses (Batel and Devine-Wright, 2020; Davison, Dovey, and Woodcock, 2012; Devine-Wright, 2009). A more recent political focus has been on who is more willing to engage in pro-environmental behaviour in response to threat between rural and urban residents on various different metrics. Be those pro-environmental attitudes (Carrus, Bonaiuto, and Bonnes, 2005), the prioritization of water-conserving behaviour (Bonaiuto et al. 2008), or the importance of place identity in this context (Aguilar, 2002; Uzzell, Pol, and Badenas, 2002). This research’s focus offers a small, but distinctive step towards reconsidering the dynamic between coastal residents and their place-person relationships in a political context.

Unlike migration-mobility, the methodology used to explore the residents’ place-person relationship involved a unique dialogical-identity approach. Specifically, a three-step dialogical analysis with the contextualising measure of both place identity and attachment in a concurrent nested design. As outlined (Chapter Four, section 4.1.1), a dialogical approach can (and is) used in a variety of different methodological contexts (Ligorio, Loperfido, and Sansone, 2013). The assumption here is that place-person relationships are not an endpoint, but an on-going process of negotiation in response to changing personal or political circumstances. It is valuable to consider the efficacy of this dual approach (i.e.: dialogical identity) and the implications of applying this in a real-world context. For this research, Hernández, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplacea, and Hess’ (2007) place identity and attachment measures offered a means of understanding if the geographical environment was a part of their identification.

The proposal here being that, in conjunction with a dialogical analysis, these measures would offer insight into ambiguous interview responses. This concurrent nested design was advantageous for differentiating between attachment and identity to understand if the place-person relationship was important. That is to say, important to the person’s sense of self and as an influence on how they view the world. This allowed a context for understanding how the participants positioned the UK and the potential relevance of their place-person relationship. Moreover, this process afforded a comparative context between the urban and coastal residents regarding how they interacted with
the relevant stimulus materials. Given the novelty of this design, the outcome should be considered as an initial step in understanding place-person relationships with a dialogical-identity paradigm. The focus of this chapter now turns to consider how pairing individuals together on both shared and conflicting positions on the UK’s global relations offered insight into sustaining dialogue.

8.2. Study Two: Overview and Findings - The Role of Dialogical Positions in Sustaining Dialogue

After exploring the factors which could be influencing how the public position the UK’s global relations, the challenge was to pair individuals together to answer the second research question: (2) Are there I-positions which can sustain dialogue between interlocuters during polarising discussions on the UK’s global relations? This was achieved by applying the Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model’s assumptions on the importance of dialogical positions. Specifically, how adopting positions during discourse indicates an individual’s social representations (i.e.: how they are making sense of the world). Sustaining dialogue is not a binary proposition here (i.e.: a pair either ‘did or did not’ sustain dialogue), but, rather, a spectrum in which discourse can be sustained in varying discursive dynamics. Analysis of study two indicates that shared dialogical positions did contribute towards individuals sustaining dialogue during the polarising section of the discussion. However, it is important to reiterate that the pairings sustained dialogue at different levels. Two pairings independently-sustained dialogue (i.e.: moved beyond the remit of the interview questions entirely), two sustained dialogue within the remit of the research questions, and one pair required support to sustain dialogue (i.e.: additional interventions from the researcher).

Regarding the importance of dialogical positions to facilitate sustaining dialogue, two key findings emerged from study two. The first was that those who independently-sustained dialogue did so by adopting ‘distancing positions’ (e.g.: I-Pragmatic and I-Political-Commentator) to defuse the potentially polarising content of the discourse. Therefore, allowing both interlocuters to engage in dialogue despite the high likelihood of disagreement and dispute. Another important finding here is that all four pairings who sustained dialogue without any support re-adopted core positions during the first stage of the paired discussions. Core positions being those that are contextually relevant and important to the individual. For example, they did so by embodying an ideal (I-Democratic), supporting the local community in a crisis (We-Dundee-Community), or endorsing
a political/moral imperative (I-Environment). It could be that case that adopting these shared dialogical positions creates a context for individuals to acknowledge the other is invested in the discourse.

For the two pairings (A & B) that engaged in independently-sustaining dialogue, both adopted shared positions which engaged with the polarising issue. For example, the I-Pragmatic position adopted by Pairing A allowed them to problem-solve their differences on the UK’s future global relations. The I-Political-Commentator position adopted by Pairing B allowed them to prioritise analytical discourse over passionate rhetoric. These shared positions seem to offer a means of defusing a combustible discursive context and creating space for both to sustain dialogue with one another. This is a highly novel finding which, alongside the initial analysis in Chapter Seven, requires further exploration and contextualising with further study. Alongside the shared positions, the level of polarisation between the pairings was seemingly a factor in how the participants sustained dialogue (i.e.: if they engaged in independently-sustaining dialogue or not).

For the pairings in which polarisation between participants was low or non-existent, a different discursive dynamic emerged. Specifically, that these pairings did not sustain dialogue beyond the remit of the questions. Furthermore, among these participants, the discursive dynamic for Pairing E was distinctly different in how they shared dialogical positions in the first instance. Alongside the level of polarisation, experiencing a shared affective response to the polarising stimulus material also influenced how individuals sustained dialogue. Both Pairings A & B experienced a shared affective response to the stimulus material which may also have contributed to the sustainment of dialogue. Considered together, it seems a triad of influences created a context for independently-sustaining dialogue: (1) Shared core positions in stage one, (2) Shared-affective responses to relevant polarising footage, and (3) Adopted ‘distancing’ I-positions during the polarising discourse. The challenge here is to further explore the implications of these findings within the context of the literature. That is to say, understand the counter-intuitive combination of polarising disagreement and shared factors which created a context for sustaining dialogue.

8.3. How I-Positions Sustain Dialogue During Political Discourse

Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model (DSTM) was the foundation for exploring the dynamic discursive interplay between participants during political discourse. This was achieved by focusing on the following three components: internalised (political worldviews), interactive (dialogical
positioning), and dimensional (temporal/spatial chronotopes). This offered both a means of pairing participants on shared/contrasting dialogical positions and identifying moments of consensus and dissensus during the political discourse. The following sections explore the factors found to create a discursive context for individuals to sustain dialogue. The factors influencing the variations in how the pairings sustained dialogue (e.g.: independently-sustained, sustained or supported sustained) shall also be discussed. Given the variations in how the pairings sustained dialogue, a challenge here is to consider the specific factors which influenced these differences. To achieve this, the first section (8.3.1) focuses on DSTM’S initial assumption that dialogical positions can be re-adopted in a different discursive context. Section 8.3.2 then focuses on the ‘dialogical foundation’ from which all the pairings who sustained dialogue without support began. The specific focus here is on how they re-adopted core positions in stage one of the paired discussions to create a sense of mutual investment. The third section (8.3.3) then considers the positioning strategies adopted by the participants during the polarising section (stage three) of the discussions and its implications for the thesis. Given study two’s findings, this section inevitably focuses on the pairings who independently-sustained dialogue during politically polarising discourse.

8.3.1. The Potential to Re-Adopt Core Positions in Different Discursive Contexts
This research’s approach was based on the dialogical assumption that core positions can be re-adopted in a relevant context. To reiterate, core positions are both highly important to the individual and contextually relevant to the discourse. As discussed in the previous chapter (section 7.7.3), evidence from stage one shows this to be the case as the paired participants re-adopted core positions in a relevant discursive context. This is certainly not novel in that Silvia, Fernández-Navarro, Gonçalves, Rosa, and Silvia’s (2020) two-study research on life histories found this when reengaging with interviewees in a different period. However, what is novel is the evidence to indicate a context can be created for individuals to re-adopt a core dialogical position relevant to the discursive context.

As the second stage of DSTM (e.g.: interactive) is based on the assumptions in Gillespie and Martin’s (2014) Position Exchange Theory (PET), it is important to consider the implications here. To reiterate, these assumptions are: (1) Social positionings are context dependent and interdependent on another position, (2) Social positions influence action and thought, and (3) Social positions are constructs moved between by individuals in relation to context. For the most
part, the pairs’ position exchanges entirely align with PET’s emphasis on the contextual importance of discursive interactions. Specifically, that an individual’s dialogical positions can only exist and be understood within a broader context (e.g.: historically, socially, etc.). That this research’s findings support PET in a real-world context offers an additional step forward for the ontological assumptions inherent in the theory.

An important caveat to this discussion is Pairing E (Rhianna and Joe) as they did not create a context for re-adopting core positions. This is worthy of further discussion as the outcome has implications for this thesis’s assumptions. Rhianna and Joe’s rejection of both the I-British and I-Politically-Engaged positions in stage one of the discussion are an intriguing departure from the other pairings. For the former position, both participants actually adopted a shared position rejecting this British identity. This was a unique outcome and one which offers various different considerations for the role of dialogical positions during political discourse. Indeed, what this thesis had not considered was the value in shared positions which explicitly reject political-based propositions (be they real-world or symbolic) as an ‘anti-position’.

Previous dialogical research in real-world contexts tends to focus on adopted positions which are, typically, external subject positions (I-Parent, I-Citizen) (Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021a). That is to say, the individuals involved are positioning themselves affirmatively in a particular discursive context. In contrast, the ‘anti-position’ outcome from Pairing E is unexpected, but, potentially, insightful for future dialogical research. Specifically, as it offers an additional element from which to understand if a ‘hierarchy’ of shared positions exist. That is to say, exploring if there are shared positions which stand in opposition to a political identity or draw on alternative social representations and can still offer a context for sustaining dialogue. If so, are these more effective in achieving a context for sustaining dialogue when compared with ‘proactive’ positions? The answer is beyond the scope of this initial finding but does suggest a potential avenue for future research.

In focusing on how the participants may re- evoke a specific position, other dialogical practitioners may reject this preoccupation as limiting in its understanding of the public. Such a rejection would align with the ontological assumptions inherent to dialogicality on the multi-voiced capacities of the individual (Richardson, Rogers, and McCorroll, 1998). However, as discussed in Chapter Four (section 4.2), this research aligns with Linell’s (2009) argument that there are contexts involving
political discourse in which a singular voice is the ideological aim. That is to say, a singular voice could be adopted in order to achieve a specific politically-motivated aim. In the case of the paired discussions, that aim would be to present the best case for their side of the argument when discussing vexed political questions with an opposing other.

A key part of the second study was to explore how creating a context for participants to re-adopt and share core dialogical positions would influence discourse. It seems that a key feature in achieving this outcome was to identify the specific components which constituted a participant’s core dialogical positions. In this regard, the DSTM-based three-step analysis on social representations, dialogical positions and chronotopes offered a context for achieving this level of specificity (Chapter Five, section 5.2). To this end, Pairing B’s core position of I-Dundonian offers a salient example (see Chapter Six, section 6.4.2.1 for details). For both Bruce and Martin, their social representation of Dundee is of a highly valued home city and their dialogical positioning within that is a core I-position. The discursive space/time context in which this positioning occurs is during discussions on the covid-induced threat to their community. Considered in the context of Pairing E, a lack of context-relevant specificity may have been a factor in their resistance to re-adopting a previous position. That is to say, the proposed core positions for Pairing E were not meaningful to them in a different space/time context.

8.3.2. The Role of Core Dialogical Positions in Sustaining Dialogue

The next important consideration is to understand the ‘types’ of positions shared during the initial stages of the discussions and how this influenced the discourse. In this regard, core positions seem to have been a key feature for most of the pairs, especially those who were able to sustain dialogue without support. To reiterate, core positions are defined here as both important to the individual and to the discursive context. For instance, positions that involve a greater political imperative (I-Environment) a democratic ideal (I-Democratic), or the disregarding of partisan interests to support their local community in a crisis (We-Dundee-Community). In the context of these political discussions, such core positions seem to be ‘public-facing’ in that they are adopted to speak for a ‘greater good’. This aligns with the argument (Dewey, 1954; Mahendran, 2018) that individuals speak for the public in non-oppositional terms given a relevant discursive context. Considering the shared position exchanges which occurred in stage one, it seems these positions
offer a sense of mutual investment in the discussion. Thus, granting both interlocuters ‘permission’
to express themselves freely when discussing vexed issues latter in the discourse.

Another key consideration here is the role of these shared core positions on the participants’
capacity for sustaining dialogue. For example, how important is the accumulative impact of
sharing core positions during discursive exchanges? It seems that, potentially, these shared core
positions offer a foundation from which other related positions can emerge. For example, Pairing
A’s shared I-PR-Supporter and I-Politically-Engaged positions relate to the ideal embodiment of
the I-Democratic position. Specifically, honouring the UK-EU referendum outcome above other
factors (e.g.: personal voting preferences, implications for the UK, etc.). The I-PR-Supporter
position seeks to modify the democratic voting system and highlights the value they both place on
democracy. For the I-Politically-Engaged position, it is the implicit assumption that engaging in
democratic politics has an inherent value which also aligns with a I-Democratic position. Together,
this continued sharing of core and complementary positions may have created a sense of mutual
investment in the discussion.

However, merely sharing a particular number of dialogical positions may not be inherently
valuable for sustaining dialogue. Indeed, it is not difficult to envisage a context in which
interlocuters exchange a number of contextually irrelevant positions that do not result in sustaining
dialogue. That said, perhaps it is more likely that the accumulative impact of sharing dialogical
positions is, on one level, related to how meaningful the positions are to both interlocuters and the
broader discursive context in which they are existing. Therefore, shared positions can create an
accumulative impact if they are, in the context of the dialogue, core positions relevant to the issue.
Indeed, the I-Democratic position (Chapter Seven, sections 7.2.1.1- 7.2.1.3) offers a meaningful
example of how a core position can create complementary positions that accumulate during
discourse. This position highlights another question regarding the function of social
representations and how shared core positions are adopted. For example, in the case of I-
Democratic, is it the case that both individuals must possess an identical social representation of
democracy to share this dialogical position? This is potentially problematic as the term democracy
can offer a variety of different interpretations to different groups and societies (Loughlin, 2019;
Sullivan and Transue, 1999).
In the analysis of Pairing A (Chapter Seven, section 7.2.1), the participants focus on direct democracy in relation to the 2016 UK-EU referendum and honouring the outcome accordingly. Given that Eevi and Bobby possess different political ideologies (liberal and socialist respectively), it could be the case that they have differing meta-representations on the concept of democracy. However, as the analysis found, this is not an obstacle to a shared understanding because the discursive context focuses on a shared representation of direct democracy. This aligns with intersubjectivity research (Gillespie and Cornish, 2010; Mori and Hayashi, 2006) on the importance of implicitly agreeing on a shared definition of an object between those with differing perspectives. Therefore, creating a term of reference which possesses a clarity regarding the issue both interlocuters are discussing. Thus far in the chapter, the focus has been on the dynamic between those who shared positions during stage one of the paired discussions. However, of equal importance here is to focus in greater detail on the positions adopted in the polarising context of stage three.

8.3.3. The Role of Distancing Positions in Sustaining Dialogue During Polarising Discourse

The third, and final, section focuses on the role of dialogical positions to sustain dialogue during polarising discourse. Specifically, the role distancing positions played in allowing two of the pairs to independently-sustain dialogue. The discursive context between these two pairs shared three common features: (1) Shared core positions in stage one, (2) Shared-affective responses to relevant polarising footage, and (3) Adopted ‘distancing’ I-positions during the polarising discourse. For Pairing A, stage three discourse was highly polarised on the issue of the UK’s post-Brexit future with both critiquing the other’s ideological positions. However, the interlocuters adopted a shared I-Pragmatic position which seemed to allow them the space to engage in mutual problem-solving. Therefore, creating a context for them to work together to engage in ‘reasonable disagreement’ on the differences between them.

Pairing B (Bruce and Martin) adopted a different position when engaging in polarising discourse but achieved the same outcome. In this case, they shared an I-Political-Commentator position as a means of distancing themselves from the explicit political divisions between them. This position allowed them to adopt a ‘bigger picture’ commentary and present a less partisan interpretation of the other. The pairs’ success in actually achieving this non-partisan interpretation of the other is
somewhat debateable. Nevertheless, this shift towards a position which distances themselves from polarising discourse also seems to offer a means of engaging in reasonable disagreement. Whilst the specific positions adopted by these two pairs were qualitatively different, they both served to function as a means of sustaining dialogue. This is a novel finding which highlights the potential value in exploring political discourse with a dialogical ontology. One which foregrounds the public’s potential for multifaceted, context-dependent engagement with others on vexed political questions.

As discussed in the next section (8.4), the influence of a shared affective response to relevant polarising issue was also an influencing factor on these two pairings. However, the positions adopted among the pairs who were not polarised (e.g.: Pairings C and D) also offers insight. For both of these pairings, the participants sustained dialogue within the remit of the interview questions. So, whilst they may have expanded on the initial question during discourse with one another, both return to the interviewer-interviewee dynamic of question and answer. It is not the case that either Pairing C (Angelina and April) or D (Thomas and Linda) lacked political commitments, but rather that the discursive dynamic between them did not require a robust political defence. Indeed, a potential limitation here is the similarity in discursive topics between these two pairs in stage three of the discussion. As highlighted, an issue with real-world research is that the availability and interest of the participants fluctuates between study one and two. Consequently, the pairings in study two were not entirely representative of the public’s political endorsements at the time. To achieve this would have required a higher proportion of conservative and/or Leave-supporting participants. The limitation here is not the representation per se, but, rather, the potential limiting impact on the topics discussed in both studies. Indeed, there was a substantial number of shared positions critiquing the Government’s actions during that period, which may not have occurred with a greater diversity of political views.

8.3.3.1. Consensus-seeking and Self-Censoring Behaviour

In considering potential differences between how the pairings sustained dialogue, an important factor here could be the extent to which consensus-seeking or self-censoring influenced the interactions. Regarding consensus-seeking behaviour first, could it be the case that those who did not sustain dialogue independently engaged in consensus-seeking behaviour? Considering both Pairings C & D, there does not seem to be any utterances which would be associated with
consensus-seeking (Morrison and Matthes, 2011; Siedlecki, Szwabinskil, and Weron, 2016). Moreover, the participants were not primed to modify their own political perspective in order to convince another, which has been shown to instigate consensus-seeking behaviour (Felton, Crowell, and Liu, 2015). However, it could be the case that self-censoring was a substantive influencing factor on discourse between the pairs who did not engage in independently-sustaining dialogue.

To define terms, self-censoring is broadly defined as an act in which the person intentionally withholds information, even in the absence of external pressures (Bar-Tal, 2017). Research on this concept during online political discourse (i.e.: posting comments on current issues) has shown that impression management (Hoffman and Lutz, 2017) and the threat to their identity as civic actors (Powers, Koliska, and Guha, 2019) were meaningful reasons for self-censoring. In the context of Pairings C and D, self-censoring could have been a factor which inhibited their discursive interactions, even in the mediating context of low polarising discourse. As discussed in the analysis of Pairing C (Chapter Seven, section 7.4.1) Angelina adopted an I-Elderly-Citizen position to contextualise her response to the global pandemic and the UK’s current political circumstances.

In the context of a global pandemic, Angelina’s age (88) certainly located her as a vulnerable citizen which may have had an impact on April’s discursive interactions. It is possible that April was self-censoring any potential moments of dissensus to engage with a person who, at the time of the interaction, was part of a group who were considered especially vulnerable. As this pairing was projected to be low/no polarising, this may not have been a substantive influence on the overall interaction. However, this is a limitation with the study in that it did not engage with the potential for this to be a factor at all. As outlined at the beginning of the section, there were three key differences between those who independently sustained dialogue and the other pairings. Alongside context-dependent dialogical positions (e.g.: core shared positions and distancing positions) the shared affective responses to the polarising stimulus materials also seem to have been an important factor. The following two sections explore the influencing relevance of both the polarising issues and the participants’ shared affective responses.

8.4. The Importance of a Relevant Polarising Issue

Alongside the influence of shared dialogical positions, another important factor here is that the polarising issues were salient to the pairings. Somewhat counterintuitively, the two pairs (A & B)
that independently sustained dialogue were also the pairings that were highly polarised. This contrasts with social media research (Buder, Rabl, Feiks, Badermann, and Zurstiege, 2021; Gorodnichenko, Pham, and Talavera, 2018) showing heightened disagreement does not create a context for sustaining dialogue. However, as discussed, the study two findings indicate that civil disagreement, rather than simply consensus, could be important for sustaining political dialogue. This is a positive outcome in that ‘achieving disagreement’ is, arguably, a more realistic goal for creating a discursive space between polarised political positions (Brush, 2020). If this is the case, then it is important to consider how much disagreement is required to allow individuals to sustain dialogue before it becomes detrimental.

In this regard, there seems to be a number of factors which contribute to creating a polarising political issue that engages with both interlocuters. In contrasting the two pairs who were polarised with Pairing E, a chronotopic distinction emerges in how the polarising issue is framed. Both Pairings A and B engaged in a polarising issue with was future orientated (e.g.: conflict over Brexit’s future impact on the UK or a disagreement on the future England-Scotland relationship). In contrast, Pairing E’s polarising issue (e.g.: 2016 UK-EU referendum campaign) was past-orientated, which may have been a factor as to why this was not considered a salient polarising issue. This outcome is the result of a strategic limitation in the pairing process as there is evidence to indicate that a future-orientation on issues relating to a specific location can be particularly polarising. For example, Carling (2008) found that changes to the UK’s immigration policy created a polarising impact on how local residents’ perceived Bradford’s future. Indeed, this polarising element has also been found in the broader context of discussing mainland Europe’s future (Pausch, 2021). The proposal here is not that only political issues with a future-orientation can be polarising. However, in the context of this research, it seems to have been a substantive influencing factor. Indeed, the combination of future-orientated political issues with high stakes (either perceived or real) was important in creating a context which was polarising to both interlocutors.

This thesis proposed that polarising public discourse on Brexit was a combination of both affective and ideological polarisation. Indeed, as outlined (Chapter One, section 1.1), public discourse was polarised due to an easy alignment with Brexit-based identities (Murray, Plagnol, and Corr, 2017; North, Piwek, and Joinson, 2020) alongside an ideological polarisation on the impact of this political issue (Abswoude and Vries, 2021; Andreouli, Greenland, and Figgou, 2019). The findings from study two indicate that both of these influences were relevant to creating a dynamic in which
certain pairings become polarised during the discourse. Indeed, it was the case that, for the two pairs who were highly polarised, both had indicators of ideological and affective polarisation in their discursive interactions. For example, Pairing A’s division along Liberal Democrat/Labour Party lines was evident as both criticised the other’s group and associated political imperatives as a part of the problem.

Indeed, both considered the other to be viewing the UK’s post-Brexit global relations through a limiting political lens. To reconsider the critique of shared identity in Chapter One (section 1.4.1), could a superordinate identity have offered a meaningful point of connection in such circumstances? Specifically, to depolarise the interlocuters by evoking a discursive context which highlights their ‘left-wing’ credentials in a post-Brexit era. It seems unlikely either would possess the relevant ‘identity signifiers’ (Hopkins, Reicher, and Rijswik, 2015) given that the ideological differences between them (e.g.: the ‘myopic neo-liberal’ or the ‘unrealistic socialist’) were considered by the other person to be the problem. However, an interesting outcome from these ideological differences could be that they create the context for relevant polarisation. For example, these ideological differences could offer the ‘raw material’ to fuel polarising discourse in circumstances where they are also able to share core positions.

It could be the case that the ideological differences between them provide the conceptual context in which to exchange polarising ideas. Indeed, this aligns with Gillespie and Martin’s (2014) Position Exchange Theory on the interdependent nature of dialogical positions. As proposed in this thesis’s introduction, sustaining dialogue in political contexts could rely, to a certain extent, on opposing forces interacting. The findings from study two show that the salience of the polarising issue in question did have a substantive impact on how the pairs engaged with one another. Considered together, it seems that a future-orientated issue with relevant polarising features (i.e.: affect and ideology) could create a context for ‘essential’ polarisation. That is to say, a type of polarisation which is essential to create a context for interlocuters to independently-sustain dialogue. Alongside the polarising material itself, it is also important to consider how the participants responded to the content and its impact on sustaining dialogue.
8.5. The Influence of Shared Affective Responses on Dialogue Sustainment

It seems that a shared affective response may have contributed to independently-sustaining dialogue. For Pairing A, it was anger at the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the Leave-campaign, whilst Pairing B shared a response of dismay at Brexit’s future implications for the UK. Considered in the context of the polarising influence described above, this indicates the multifaceted capacities of the public on vexed political issues. That is to say, the pairings can be both polarised on an issue relating to Brexit, yet also share affective responses on materials depicting the event. This contrasts with the idea that heightened emotional states are detrimental to reasoned political discourse (Gervais, 2017; Sobieraj and Berry, 2011). An important caveat here is that these shared affective responses occurred only once for both pairings when engaging with the stimulus materials (Chapter Seven, sections 7.2.1.4 and 7.2.2.3). Therefore, it is important not to over interpret the findings, but consider that they may have been a factor given both pairs independently-sustained dialogue. If this was an influencing factor, it indicates that affective responses may not be an entirely negative influence on political discourse.

Another consideration here is that shared affective responses could provide indicators that the other person is invested in the political issue in question. In this regard, the ‘type’ of affective response (e.g.: anger and dismay for pairings A & B respectively) could be an influencing factor. Research in various different political contexts found that anger can be an initiating influence for political activism (Ost, 2004) and solidarity (Eslen-Ziya, McGarry, Jensen, Erhart, and Korkut, 2019). It could be the case that this anger offered a meaningful shared experience. A challenging consideration here is that the affective responses were simply affective impression management strategies. That this was an individual’s attempt to convey to another (be it a person or group) that they are experiencing a specific affective state. This occurs typically for the purposes of offering what is considered to be the most salient response to the discourse (Kelly, Iannone, and McCarty, 2014). Although certainly a possibility for both sets of participants, it is unlikely in either case. Principally as, given the heightened level of polarising discourse between both pairings, there is no other evidence to indicate affective impression management. Moreover, research (Chi, Chung, and Tsai, 2011) on this phenomenon indicates such responses typically occur when a person is adopting a ‘professional role’, rather than in a political context.
Another important consideration here is to explore if affective-led responses alone were driving the dialogue sustainment. Previous research in a political context (Banks, White, and McKenzie, 2019; Vargo and Hopp, 2020) indicates that a visceral negative response increases engagement. Whilst greater engagement with political content does not create a context for dialogue sustainment, it could have influenced how the pairings sustained dialogue. Indeed, the shared affective responses were only found among the two pairings (A & B) who independently-sustained dialogue. Therefore, it could the case that a direct connection between shared core positions and shared affective responses consolidate the sense of mutual investment in the discourse. Consequently, this may create a context for allowing both interlocuters to express heightened affective-led responses atypical among two people meeting for the first time.

At present, it is uncertain to what extent shared dialogical positions and a shared affective response interact (if at all) to create the context for sustaining dialogue. Understanding if these two factors are essential dual-influences in creating independently-sustaining dialogue would be valuable moving forward. To speculate, it could be the case that the shared dialogical positions create a discursive context for sustaining dialogue, whilst the affective responses influence how the interlocuters do so. Whilst this interaction has been explored within the context of counseling (Hermans, 2014), it has not been a prevalent focus in political dialogical research. So, whilst the relevance of shared dialogical positions (either core or distancing) is apparent in how interlocuters sustained dialogue, the impact of shared affective responses requires further research to understand this new knowledge further.

8.6. Parameters of the Research

Whilst the limitations of this novel research have been briefly discussed throughout, it is important to consolidate these points to consider the implications further. The following sections address the limited number of right-wing voters in both studies, the small sample size in study two, the complexity in differentiating between urban/coastal and England/Scotland influences, and the impact of changing historical circumstances on the fieldwork. Finally, the issue of generalisability for the findings in study two and its implications for future research is also addressed.

8.6.1. Limited Political Narratives

As previously mentioned, (section 8.3.3) the small number of participants with socially conservative and/or Brexit-endorsing voters limited the potential for a broader range of dialogical
positions. This resulted in paired discussions which, whilst still polarising in some cases, did not offer a direct confrontation between a right-wing Leave-voter and a Remain-voter (e.g.: Pairing A’s polarisation centred on the ‘Lexit’ argument for leaving the EU). Circumstantial factors were certainly influential here; be that the diminished participation in study two due to COVID-19, or one Conservative-voter rejecting Brexit between the two stages of fieldwork. That said, a lack of participants who would likely have engaged in the polarising narratives identified in Chapter One (section 1.3), e.g.: distrust of experts or Remain-voters as saboteurs, limits the plurality of political narratives. A related issue here is the sample size for study two and it implications for generalisability. Whilst the sample size for study one certainly meets the threshold for data saturation (Braun and Clarke, 2019; Fugard and Potts, 2014), the number of pairings in study two is a limiting factor for extrapolating applicable knowledge. Specifically, as only two of the pairings engaged in independently-sustaining dialogue during polarising political discourse.

8.6.2. Influencing Factors on UK’s Global Positioning

Another consideration here is the participants’ place-person relationships and its influence on how they position the UK’s global relations. Whilst the dialogical three-step analysis and place identity/attachment measures offer insight into an individual’s relationship with their geographical environment, other factors could also be influencing the outcome. The differences found between the participants may also involve complex interactions between urban/coastal and Scottish/English political culture which requires additional exploration. Furthermore, the questions and measures for identifying where each participant located themselves (i.e.: urban or coastal) was entirely reliant on self-declaration. Therefore, if, as occurred in Seaburn, a participant located themselves in an ‘urban’ area (despite other local participants describing the place as coastal) the subsequent questions adhered to this self-declaration. Such ambiguity in how a geographical environment is defined is not entirely captured in the data collection due to the measures’ urban/coastal dichotomy. This is limiting in terms of creating a context in which participants were obliged to select from a binary choice when aligning themselves with a geographical location.

8.6.3. Changing Historical Circumstances

The changing historical circumstances (e.g.: COVID-19) impacted on how relevant the participants considered Brexit at the time of study two. Indeed, research indicates the emergence of a global pandemic certainly had an impact on polarisation in the UK (Chapter One, section 1.2).
Initially, as a means of unifying the public (Juan-Torres, Dixon, and Kimaram (2020) before also becoming a polarising issue (Atay, Carr, Lasko-Skinner, and Mackenzie, 2020) which aligned with previous Brexit-based divisions (Dennison and Duffy, 2021; Sturgis, Kuha, and Jackson, 2020). Consequently, the original intention of the research (e.g.: an exclusive focus on discussing the UK’s global positions in a Brexit-context) was, to some extent, compromised by this seismic event. There was an attempt (Chapter Six, section 6.1.2.1) to factor this into the design of study two by creating a discursive space for the participants to exchange their pandemic experiences prior to the paired discussions. However, despite this attempt, it was perhaps inevitable that the discourse between the participants would focus on this important event. Therefore, the shifting circumstances in which the fieldwork was conducted did not align entirely with the initial intentions of the research.

8.6.4. Generalisability

Whilst study two produced highly novel findings, these two real-world examples occurred in a highly specific discursive context (i.e.: discourse between two strangers and a moderator). The risk here is that the findings cannot be generalised to social media which, as identified in Chapter One (section 1.3.2), is a key influence in increasing polarising discourse in the UK. It is likely that the researcher’s role as an ever-present audience impacted on how the participants interacted with one another in study two (Kirsch, 2005). The risk here is that the participants may have felt the need to engage in ‘performative discourse’ to meet the perceived expectations of the researcher (e.g.: to be interesting, controversial, etc.). A counterpoint to this is that study two’s pairing structure does offer similarities to social media interactions in that these discursive exchanges also involve both a moderator and audience (of varying sizes).

Indeed, research (Kissas, 2019; Wilson, 2011) indicates that political discourse is becoming increasingly performative as more occurs in the public sphere. That said, the structure of study two does still provide a challenge for how this research’s claims (e.g.: shared dialogical positions allow polarised individuals to sustain dialogue) can be applied in different political contexts and cultures. It could be the case that certain polarising political issues are more suitable than others when considered within the context of dialogical positions (discussed in section 8.8). However, even considered within the context of these limitations, this research offers a first step in understanding how polarised political actors could dialogically sustain dialogue. Both in terms of offering an
applied theoretical model and a highly novel methodology for exploring dialogue sustainment. The following two sections consider both the future theoretical and methodological implications from this research.

8.7. Theoretical Implications

The discursive dynamic between those engage in political discourse is multifaceted in its complexity (Carson and Schecter, 2017; Elstub, 2014). The Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model clarifies the underlying processes involved in a discursive dynamic between two politically polarised individuals. Specifically, the model offers insight into the three components which, if aligned together in a complimentary dynamic, allow participants to sustain dialogue. These three components are: (1) Internalised (political worldviews), (2) Interactive (dialogical positioning), and (3) Dimensional (temporal/spatial). Figure 8.1 offers a visual representation of the DSTM and how it is applied in a real-world example to offer insight into the discursive dynamic between two interlocutors. The figure details Pairing C’s shared dialogical position in responding to a question on what they both feel are the most important political issues of our time (Chapter Seven, section 7.4.1.2). This is not a predictive model, but a preliminary step in exploring the discursive dynamic between participants when discussing polarising political issues. As noted in English and Mahendran (2021), the aim with this model is to explore these ideas in real-world context so that they may become applied knowledge. The model offers the potential to understand both the factors which create moments of sustained dialogue and the misalignments (e.g.: differing social representations, conflicting positions, divergent chronotopes) that produce dissensus between interlocutors.

The internalised component offers an understanding of when interlocutors share common-sense assumptions about the world. The value here is that it affords potential insight into any moments of consensus/dissensus based on these shared assumptions. Specifically, by offering insight into the pairings’ shared (or contrasting) social meta-representations, be it their hegemonic representations (shared by group or nation) or polemic representations (symbolising societal controversies) on the discussed issue. The former offers insight into the interlocuters’ shared expectations of the political social world (O’Dwyer, 2020), whilst the latter indicates when their common-sense understandings are not aligning with one another (Höijer, 2011). Focused on the interlocutors’ self-world relations also offers an understanding of Gillespie’s (2008) alternative
representations (i.e.: a competing representation to one held by an individual or group). This is highly salient in the context of political discourse as alternative representations could function as a simplistic version of the counter argument to the political issue being discussed. Therefore, offering a means of identifying if polarising political exchanges are due to different representations of reality (be that a misunderstanding, a bad faith interpretation or self-deception). Study two’s outcomes also have implications for intersubjectivity research (Gillespie and Cornish, 2010; Mori and Hayashi, 2006) as the results highlight the necessity for shared definitions. Principally because an implicit shared definition of a concept acts as the foundation from which sustaining dialogue begins in the first instance.

Figure 8.1. Applying the Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model (Pairing C)

The interactive component offers an understanding of how these social representations manifest during discourse as dialogical positions. Specifically, how shared positions which are relevant to the issues being discussed can shift the discursive dynamic towards sustaining dialogue during polarising exchanges. Be that shared core positions adopted in the first instance or distancing positions which allow discourse to continue during polarising moments. As discussed, it could be the case that shared core dialogical positions create a discursive context in which related positions can then emerge (section 8.3.2), which increase the connectivity between interlocutors. Moreover, as evidenced by study two, these core positions can then be re-adopted at a later period in time.
given a relevant discursive interaction. This has theoretical implications regarding a potential ‘hierarchy of positions’ that may exist which are not based entirely on contextual factors. That is to say, they are core to the individual’s political sense-making process and will likely emerge habitually in response to salient political discourse. This aligns with previous dialogical theorising (Hermans, 2002; Valsiner, 2005) on the multi-faceted capacity of the individual via hierarchical semiotic control systems (i.e.: a person’s self-organising capacity for self-growth and the scaffolding involved in that process). However, study two offers novelty in providing insight into how this multi-faceted capacity emerges at different points in time (i.e.: study one and two) and in the context of specific political positions.

Understanding the distancing positions individuals adopt during polarising political discussions also has broader theoretical implications. Adopting such distancing positions during polarising moments supports previous research (Bryzzheva, 2008) on the role of the super-addressee during challenging discursive interactions (Chapter Two, section 2.2). This implies polarising circumstances may offer a context in which a super-addressee acts as an ‘ideal listener’ (Ahmad, 2020; Bryzzheva, 2006) to serve an important psychological function. Namely, it offers individuals the capacity to speak to an imagined listener who can appreciate their attempts to engage reasonably with someone who is on the ‘wrong side’ of the argument. The DSTM’s second component also offers a means of understanding the individual’s multifaceted capacity for political ‘sense-making’ (Kinnval and Lindên, 2010). Namely, the potential they have for adopting different positions and advocating for a public they disagree with (e.g.: advocating-they position). This moves beyond the binary in-group/out-group paradigms of social identity models to support the theoretical assumptions of Gillespie and Martin’s (2014) Position Exchange Theory (PET). That is the assertion that dialogical positions are interdependent and are moved between in relation to context, which was a key principle for developing the DSTM in the first instance (Chapter Three, section 3.7.2). Study two’s real-world results align with PET’s theoretical assumptions on the interconnectivity of dialogical positions both to each other and the wider discursive context. Understanding these shared dialogical positions offers a distinctive insight into moments of consensus/dissensus and its subsequent impact on discursive exchanges among the politically polarised.

The final component (dimensional) affords a chronotopic understanding of temporal/spatial boundaries and its importance to individual meaning-making (Marková and Novaes, 2020; Zittoun
et al. 2013). This offers insight into where each person is ‘locating’ the issue being discussed both temporally (e.g.: golden past, future-oriented, etc.) and spatially (e.g.: open or closed boundaries between the UK and other nations). This is important as research (Brescó de Luna, 2017; Mahendran, 2019; Molls and Jetten, 2014) shows political meaning-making requires individuals to participate in time/space contextualisation when engaging in political narratives. Indeed, the UK-EU referendum’s spatial focus on borders and belonging (Cassidy, Innocenti, and Bürkner, 2018; Georgiadou, 2019) offers a highly relevant political issue in which to consider the explanatory potential of chronotopic thinking. The implications from the DSTM’s third component indicate that individuals do evoke meaning-making chronotopes when discussing political issues. That is to say, seismic political issues (Brexit, global crisis, etc.) are framed within a temporal/spatial context during discourse. This aligns with recent research (Holman and Grisham, 2020) on COVID-19 which suggests that seismic national events do influence an individual’s relationship with the future.

A final consideration here is to identify the political contexts which are most relevant for applying the Dialogue Sustainment Theoretical Model. The political context for this research aligned with long-standing national debate on the UK’s future relationship with the European Union. However, it could be the case that sustaining dialogue is not inherently valuable in every political context. For example, some issues could be so niche or unintrusive that a co-existence between polarised individuals can be maintained without the need to engage with the opposing argument. It seems that political issues which are high stakes and impactful on large amounts of people (e.g.: the UK’s future global relations, US’s longstanding debates on healthcare reform, etc.) are the most relevant for interventions seeking to sustain dialogue. Principally, as such issues require solutions to complex, multi-faceted issues among a plurality of, often polarised, voices. As discussed in section 8.3.1, core dialogical positions that can be re-adopted at different points in time were important for how the pairs initially sustained dialogue. It could be that long-term political issues which require individuals to re-adopt core positions during different discursive encounters are best suited to a DSTM intervention. Specifically, as the model focuses on self-world relations which are likely to remain consistent over sustained periods of time; assuming they are not ruptured with new concepts or experiences (Jovchelovitch, 2019). In such political contexts, the DSTM offers the potential to understand the public’s creativity for adopting positions and its implications for sustaining dialogue.
8.8. Methodological Innovations and Implications

Alongside theoretical implications, the methodological design for both study one and two had innovative aspects which are important to consider further. Study one’s novel design used map projections as dialogic stimulus materials for exploring the first research question. This provided insight into the social representations, dialogical positions and chronotopic thinking which determine how participants position the UK in a global domain. Thus, creating a context in which to pair together participants to explore the second research question. Study two’s design had various innovative aspects, such as the use of stimulus materials to polarise (rather than depolarise), questions which (in some cases) created a context for the re-adoption of core I-positions, and pairing participants together to explore sustaining dialogue. These three aspects were all highly novel and were fundamental to the process of exploring and answering the research questions. The following considers these methodological innovations and the implications for future research.

In contrast with other dialogical researchers (Silvia, Fernández-Navarro, Gonçalves, Rosa, and Silvia, 2020; Zittoun et al. 2013), the use of stimulus materials in study one was not intended to focus explicitly on life narratives. Rather, the materials were designed to offer insight into the participants’ self-world and self-other relations and what dialogical positions emerge as a consequence. Therefore, aligning with recent dialogical research that uses stimulus materials to capture positions in relevant real-world contexts (Coultas, 2020; Mahendran, English, and Nieland, 2021a; Mahendran, Magnusson, Howarth, and Scuzzarello, 2019). Whilst the intended purpose of stimulus materials in this context is not novel, the use of map projections does offer innovation. The map selection task (Chapter Four, section 4.5.2.4) was designed to disrupt participants’ social representations of the UK’s global position with alternative projections (e.g.: Mercator, Gall-Peter, and Authagraph). This intervention was successful in creating a discursive space in which individuals tended to either evoke their current assumptions about the UK’s global position or re-consider them in response to this new information. The jigsaw map reconfiguration task (Chapter Four, section 4.5.2.5) then offered an additional opportunity to consolidate these common-sense assumptions about the world or explore new representations of the UK. The use of maps in political/social psychology is an underused stimulus material when compared with geopolitical research (Vujakovic, 2019). The design for study one offers psychologists novel examples of how these materials could be incorporated into a design exploring assumptions about global relations.
As discussed, (Chapter Four, section 4.1.2) study two’s quasi-experimental design to pair together participants on shared positions is highly novel. A particular advantage with the pairings is that it affords researchers a greater understanding on the impact of any planned interventions when compared with the complex discursive dynamics of focus groups. Moreover, the limited number of variables involved in paired discussions offers researchers a greater capacity for identifying group conformity, self-censoring, or consensus-seeking behavior which are common in political discourse research (Anderson and Hansen, 2007; Hoffman and Lutz, 2017; Siedlecki, Szwabinskil, and Weron, 2016). In essence, the design offers researchers the potential to pair individuals together on specific political issues to develop a detailed understanding of the discursive exchanges which occur. Regarding the relevance of this design to other dialogical researchers, a further consideration here is the use of interview questions in study two.

As discussed throughout the thesis, an important focus for this research has been to explore how dialogical positions could be re-adopted in different discursive contexts. A key design feature of study two was to create a discursive space with questions which would allow participants to re-adopt core dialogical positions. Thus, offering an insight into the core dialogical positions relevant for that individual within a political discursive context (e.g.: I-Democratic, I-Politically Engaged, etc.). This is the first example showing that questions can be asked which create a relevant discursive context for re-adopting previous positions. Alongside supporting the ontological assumptions of the dialogical self (section 8.7), this also had methodological implications. Namely, it aligns the concepts the dialogical self to a methodological design which could be replicated by future researchers. Specifically, the idea that questions can be designed which, if they embody a core position in a relevant context, capture the multi-faceted capacity of the individual.

A novel aspect with the stimulus materials in study two was the attempt to increase, as opposed to decrease, political polarisation between participants. This is atypical when compared to other social psychology research that explores political polarisation (be it ideological or affective) (Chu and Yang, 2018; Huddy and Yair, 2019). Clearly there are ethical considerations with such a design that must prioritise the welfare of the participants above other factors (Chapter Six, section 6.2). Assuming these key ethical concerns are addressed, then the use of stimulus materials offers political researchers exploring polarisation another tool for understanding dialogue sustainment. A key feature which increased the polarising capacity for study two’s stimulus material was that the footage used captured, in microcosm, the macro-issues fundamental to the Brexit debate.
Specifically, populist narratives promoting the importance of national sovereignty (Davies, 2021) and a singular focus on increasing controls for all EU immigration to the UK (Wasowicz, 2018). The insight here for future researchers is that, to increase the potential salience of stimulus materials, they must be designed to capture the macro-issues which fundamentally divide the public. Therefore, presenting a political context which increases the likelihood such materials will produce an affective shift or ideological defence when the participants engage in discussion. Given the novelty of this intervention’s purpose (i.e.: to polarise participants) and the polarising nature of the Brexit debate (e.g.: both ideologically and affectively polarising), it could be the case that this type of intervention is most impactful on political issues which possess both of these elements. That said, given that politics is itself built around oppositions and dissensus (Alnes, 2017), this design’s focus on increasing polarisation may also have wider applications in other political contexts.

8.9. Final Thoughts

This thesis explored how individuals sustain dialogue on the vexed issue of the UK’s global relations in the shadow of a polarising referendum. To achieve this, an essential first step was in understanding how the UK’s global relations were understood within the context of migration-mobility and place-person relationships. It was found that divergent mobility experiences influenced a differing emphasis on the historical legacy of the UK’s colonial relationships. For coastal residents with high place-person relationships and different political positions, divergent threat-perceptions on the UK’s post-Brexit global relations were evident. In dialogically pairing together polarised individuals to discuss the UK’s global relations, a number of key factors, approaches, and considerations towards understanding dialogue sustainment emerged. Specifically, support for the ontological assumption that the public have a dynamic, multi-positional capacity for engaging in political discourse. This research has produced some novel findings regarding how dialogical positions allowed individuals to independently-sustain dialogue. Namely, that sharing core and distancing dialogical positions at relevant points in the discussion offers a means of sustaining dialogue. This outcome offers an important step in re-considering how individuals could potentially sustain dialogue on a polarising political issue. It could be that focusing on how individuals engage in reasonable disagreement, rather than consensus, can foster new insights into politically polarising discourse. For political issues which would benefit from
less partisanship and a greater openness to differing voices, this research offers some potential insight on a way forward for public discourse. Of course, for a healthy democracy, a certain level of polarisation in public discourse is an essential element. However, to be able to sustain dialogue on polarising issues offers a means of collective collaboration which allows a society to face future challenges together.
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Appendices
Appendix A

Study One: Semi-Structured Interview

Interview Structure:

Five sections: (A) Political Engagement, (B) Migration Mobility Continuum, (C) 2016 UK-EU Referendum timeline footage, (D) Map Selection Task, and (E) Jigsaw Map Reconfiguration Task.

(A) Political Engagement

1. Are you a regular voter? (general and local)
2. Do you follow the news? Where do you follow the news and local events?
3. Are you active in political / social issues? If yes, which ones?

(B) Migration Mobility Continuum

4. How long have you been settled in your current city/ town?
5. Could you describe the reasons why you have stayed in this place?
6. Have you ever moved away from current city/ or home city?
7. Have you ever planned to leave your country of birth – if not, why not?
8. What countries did you consider/ would you consider?
9. Where do you consider yourself to reside; an urban/rural/coastal environment?
10. Have you always lived in (state answer) type of environment?
11. How has the urban/rural/coastal environment influenced your sense of identity and your outlook on the world?
12. Is there anything that would make you leave your current home or are you settled?

EU Referendum Timeline

Present three clips showing the following events: (1) 23rd June 2016, Sunderland – Local result declaration, and (2) 9th September 2017, London – BBC Proms, and (3) 23rd June 2018, London – Pro-Brexit and Pro-Remain street protests.

13. First four words that come to mind watching this clip?
14. How does this clip fit with your sense of self-identity? Do you see yourself in this clip?
15. Do you think this clip represents the UK at the moment?
16. Some have considered that coastal towns voted a specific way in the 2016 EU referendum, when compared to urban environments, do you think this could be true, and, if so, why?
17. Have you ever felt as passionate about a political/social issue as the people in this clip?

Maps

18. What are the first few words that come to mind looking at all of these maps?
19. Are these maps familiar to you?
20. What are the main differences you notice between the maps?
21. Do you have preference? If so, why?
22. What do the different images suggest about the UK’s position in the world?

Jigsaw Map

23. Why did you decide to create the world in this way?

Interview Conclusion
Appendix B

The Rachael Webb Political Psychology Studentship: Exploring and understanding public decision-making on the UK’s relationship with the rest of the world.

Participant Information Sheet

Who are we?
The Open University is the academic institution involved in this research. The study is being conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines stipulated by the British Psychological Society.

Principal Investigator
Name: Anthony English
Email: Anthony.english@open.ac.uk

Supervisors
Name: Dr. Kesi Mahendran
Email: Kesi.mahendran@open.ac.uk

Name: Dr. Agnes Czajka
Email: Agnes.czajka@open.ac.uk

Name: Prof. Nick Hopkins
Email: n.p.hopkins@dundee.ac.uk

What is the purpose of this project?
The purpose of this study is to explore how individuals make political decisions via sharing their perceptions with both the principal researcher and another participant. The topics discussed shall include perceptions of the UK, the UK’s relationship with the rest of the world and the role of local influences.

Do I have to participate?
Not at all, participation is completely voluntary.

May I change my mind about participating in this study?
If you agree to participate then decide to withdraw your consent, you may do so without stating a reason; simply email the principal researcher, Anthony English, stating your intention to withdraw consent. However, after 30 days of the final interview, the option to withdraw consent will not be possible as the data will have been transcribed and processed.

**What will happen if I take part?**
Participation will involve two activities, occurring on two separate occasions:
1) One to One interview: October 2019 - Feb 2020.
2) Paired Discussion (with another participant, moderated by the researcher): October 2019 - February 2020.
Please note that the aim of the research is to explore your personal opinions, and no right or wrong answer exists for any of the questions posed.

**How long will these two activities take?**
One to one interview: 60 – 90 minutes.
Participant paired discussion: 60 – 90 minutes.

**Will my participation in the study be confidential and anonymised?**
Yes, the information collected during this study will be securely stored in a password locked computer for a maximum of five years. Furthermore, the names of all the participants involved and the location of the interviews/discussions will be anonymised.

**Are there any risks involved with my participation?**
There are no risks involved in your participation in this study. However, if you find conversing with either the principal researcher or another participant distressing for any reason, you are free to withdraw at any point. If you have concerns regarding the study, please contact any of the researchers listed.

**When does this research project conclude? What will happen then?**
The information you have shared with us will be transcribed and stored for future analysis. This information will be shared with interested persons within the academic/research community for a period not exceeding five years. To reiterate, all data will be confidential and anonymised to ensure all information can never be traced back to the original source.

This research has been reviewed by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee and been approved. HREC reference number: HREC/3184/English (http://open.ac.uk/research/ethics/).
Consent form for persons participating in the following research project:

The Rachael Webb Political Psychology Studentship: Exploring and understanding public decision-making on the UK’s relationship with the rest of the world.

Name of participant: __________________________

Name of principal investigator: __________________________

1. I consent to participate in this second study, the details of which have been explained to me with a written statement outlining the aims of the research.

2. I understand my participation will involve an interview (one to one with the principal investigator), and a discussion with one other participant (conducted on another occasion and moderated by the principal researcher).

3. I acknowledge that:

   A) The possible effects of participating in the study have been explained.

   B) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw my consent at any point during the interview and/or discussion phase of the research.

   C) I have been informed I am free to withdraw my consent until the data has been transcribed and anonymised 30 days after the final interview. In the event of such a request before that time, the data will be destroyed.

   D) I understand this project is for the purpose of research within an academic context.

   E) I have been informed that, with my consent, the data will be stored in a password protected computer and destroyed after 5 years.

   F) I have been informed that anonymised data will be made available to other members of the research community for a period not exceeding five years.

   G) In the event of publication, a pseudonym will be used to protect both the identity of myself and the location in which the interview was conducted.
H) I have been informed that a summary of the research findings will be provided, should I so request.

I consent to the one to one interview being audio-taped:

☐ Yes   ☐ No

I consent to the follow-up discussion being audio-taped:

☐ Yes   ☐ No

I wish to receive a summary of this project’s findings:

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Participant signature: ____________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________________________
The 2016 referendum on whether to continue the UK’s European Union membership produced highly polarised public opinions on a variety of related issues. The purpose of this research is to develop an understanding of how to depolarise public opinion on contentious issues with high levels of uncertainty.

This first year of study aimed to answer the following three questions:

1. Which, if any, I-positions* produce consensus during discussions among individuals with contrasting political perspectives? Furthermore, can productive dissensus be achieved by finding shared I-positions among individuals who disagree?

2. Does an individual’s place-person relationship influence how they perceive the UK’s relationship with Europe and the wider world.

3. Does an individual’s migration-mobility (the amount they have travelled, relocated, or if they possess a migrant history) influence how they perceive the UK’s relationship with Europe and the wider world.

*An I-position is a voiced position with a specific perspective either on its own terms or in response to an external situation. For example, if a person is a parent, the position of I-Parent may be the perspective from which an individual speaks when discussing social/political issues relating to children.

A better understanding of these questions will allow us to develop the second year of this research project; principally, devising effective discussion materials for focus groups who will be debating polarising issues.

Thank you again for your participation - Any further questions?

Please contact: Anthony.english@open.ac.uk or kesi.mahendran@open.ac.uk

This research has been reviewed by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee and been approved. HREC reference number: HREC/3184/English (http://open.ac.uk/research/ethics/).
Appendix C

Participant Survey

1. I like living in this coastal environment.
   - [ ] Not at all
   - [ ] Slightly
   - [ ] Moderately
   - [ ] Very much

2. I feel attached to this coastal town.
   - [ ] Not at all
   - [ ] Slightly
   - [ ] Moderately
   - [ ] Very much

3. I would regret having to move to another coastal town.
   - [ ] Not at all
   - [ ] Slightly
   - [ ] Moderately
   - [ ] Very much

4. When I am away for long, I want to come back.
   - [ ] Not at all
   - [ ] Slightly
   - [ ] Moderately
   - [ ] Very much

5. I feel at home in this coastal town.
   - [ ] Not at all
   - [ ] Slightly
   - [ ] Moderately
   - [ ] Very much

6. When I am away, I miss this coastal town.
   - [ ] Not at all
   - [ ] Slightly
   - [ ] Moderately
   - [ ] Very much

7. This is my favourite coastal town to live in.
   - [ ] Not at all
   - [ ] Slightly
   - [ ] Moderately
   - [ ] Very much
8. When I have been away, I am glad to come back.

- [ ] Not at all
- [ ] Very Much

Part Two

1. I identify with this coastal town.

- [ ] Not at all
- [ ] Very Much

2. This coastal town is part of my identity.

- [ ] Not at all
- [ ] Very Much

3. I feel that I belong to this coastal town.

- [ ] Not at all
- [ ] Very Much

4. I feel that I am from this coastal town.

- [ ] Not at all
- [ ] Very Much

This research has been reviewed by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee and been approved. HREC reference number: HREC/3184/ENGLISH (http://open.ac.uk/research/ethics/)
Appendix D

Pairing A

Interview Opening:

- **INTRODUCE INTERVIEWEES:**
  enquire as to well-being in current situation. This offers them the opportunity to discuss and share COVID-19 experiences and the changes which have occurred since our last meeting.
- **INTERVIEW PURPOSE:**
  9-month follow-up exploring public perceptions on political decision-making during the UK-EU transition period.
- **ETHICS:** If, for any reason, you feel you need to take a break, please do say.
- **INTERNET CONNECTION:** If it drops out for any of us, we shall just pause and reconvene ASAP.

**Stage One**

**I-Democratic**

From the last time we spoke, you both mentioned the importance, and value you placed on democracy.

1. Do you think that honouring the EU referendum outcome has been a good thing for maintaining people’s belief in democracy?
2. Do you think it is important that people can put aside their own personal preferences and support what might be the best for democracy? Or is that not possible?
3. Thinking back to the Brexit Parliamentary stalemate last year, do you think the politicians showed themselves to be advocates of democracy?

**I-Politically Engaged**

Since the 2016 EU referendum, evidence has emerged suggesting the British are more engaged in politics than they have been for some time.

1. Do you feel personally feel more engaged in politics at the moment, if so, why? If not, why?
2. Do you think people engaging in politics in a good thing? If so, what are the benefits to society?
3. Could you ever foresee circumstances which you wouldn’t be engaged in politics?
Stage Two
Ask the interviewees to view the polarising footage.

Stage Three
Impact of Brexit on the UK
1. Do you think the UK-EU transition period has been a success so far? If so, why? If not, why?
2. Are you concerned leaving will have a negative impact upon the UK after the transition period is over?
3. Do you think the reported risks to the UK after it departs from the European Union are exaggerated? If so, why?
4. This is hypothetical, but do you hope that the question of UK’s EU membership will come around again soon?

Conclude Interview:
• Debrief participants about study and reveal real reason.
• Offer the opportunity to ask any further questions about the study
• Gift vouchers
• Well wishes/future plans.
Interview Opening:

- **INTRODUCE INTERVIEWEES:**
  enquire as to well-being in current situation. This offers them the opportunity to discuss and share COVID-19 experiences and the changes which have occurred since out last meeting.
- **INTERVIEW PURPOSE:**
  9-month follow-up exploring public perceptions on political decision-making during the UK-EU transition period.
- **ETHICS:** If, for any reason, you feel you need to take a break, please do say.
- **INTERNET CONNECTION:** If it drops out for any of us, we shall just pause and reconvene ASAP.

**Stage One**

I-Dundonian / We – Dundee Community

I know from speaking with you previously, Dundee is important to you both. So I wanted to talk about Brexit in that context.

1. First of all, what do you personally find to be some of the best things about Dundee?
2. Do you think Dundee has a distinctive community when compared to other Scottish cities?
3. Given the withdrawal period concludes in December, do you have any concerns about how this could impact on Dundee?

I-Scottish

I wanted to focus now on Scotland as a whole, during this transition period.

4. What are some of the best things about being Scottish? What does Scotland mean to you?
5. Given the transition period concludes in December, do you have any concerns about how this could impact on Scotland?
6. What would the best-case scenario Brexit deal for Scotland?

**Stage Two**

Ask interviewees to view the polarising material

**Stage Three**

Future of England-Scotland union

Reflecting on the footage, I wanted to ask you some questions about what you both just viewed. Specifically, I would like to focus on the future of the UK within the context of Brexit.
7. Given the change in circumstances caused by Brexit, do you feel it is the right time to question the relationship between England and Scotland?
8. What would be the benefits if Scotland were to become completely independent?
9. What would be the losses if Scotland were to become completely independent?
10. Do you think the end of the union is inevitable?

Conclude Interview:
- Debrief participants about study and reveal real reason.
- Offer the opportunity to ask any further questions about the study
- Gift vouchers
- Well wishes/future plans.
Pairing C

Interview Opening:

- **INTRODUCE INTERVIEWEES:**
  enquire as to well-being in current situation. This offers them the opportunity to discuss and share COVID-19 experiences and the changes which have occurred since out last meeting.

- **INTERVIEW PURPOSE:**
  9-month follow-up exploring public perceptions on political decision-making during the UK-EU transition period.

- **ETHICS:** If, for any reason, you feel you need to take a break, please do say.

- **INTERNET CONNECTION:** If it drops out for any of us, we shall just pause and reconvene ASAP.

**Stage One**

*I-Politically Engaged*

Since the 2016 EU referendum, evidence has emerged suggesting the British are more engaged in politics than they have been for some time.

4. Do you feel personally feel more engaged in politics at the moment, if so, why? If not, why?
5. Do you think people engaging in politics in a good thing? If so, what are the benefits to society?
6. Could you ever foresee circumstances which you wouldn’t be engaged in politics?

*I-Environmentalist*

I have been discussing with people how Brexit may have pushed other issues off the agenda. The issue I would like us to explore today is the UK’s role in environmental issues.

1. First of all, how important are environmental issues on your list of political concerns?
2. What do you make of the UK’s approach to environmental issues?
3. Do you have a specific environmental issues you would like to see implemented?

**Stage Two**

Invite the participants to view the polarising footage

**Stage Three (non-polarised)**

Reflecting on the footage, I wanted to ask you some questions about what you both just viewed.

1. What are your initial thoughts or impressions of the footage?
2. Do you think this UK-EU transition period has been successful so far? If so, why? If not, why?
3. In terms of the UK/ EU relationship, what are you like to see happen before the end of the transition agreement? (i.e.: any particular agreements).
4. Finally, after the transition period is over, what do you think the UK’ global status will be?

Conclude Interview:

- Debrief participants about study and reveal real reason.
- Offer the opportunity to ask any further questions about the study/ speak to me in private
- Gift vouchers
- Well wishes/future plans.
Pairing D

Interview Opening:

- INTRODUCE INTERVIEWEES:
  enquire as to well-being in current situation. This offers them the opportunity to discuss and share COVID-19 experiences and the changes which have occurred since out last meeting.
- INTERVIEW PURPOSE:
  9-month follow-up exploring public perceptions on political decision-making during the UK-EU transition period.
- ETHICS: If, for any reason, you feel you need to take a break, please do say.
- INTERNET CONNECTION: If it drops out for any of us, we shall just pause and reconvene ASAP.

Stage One

I-Democratic

From the last time we spoke, you both mentioned the importance, and value you placed on democracy.

4. Do you think that honouring the EU referendum outcome has been a good or bad thing for UK democracy?
5. Do you think it is important that people can put aside their own personal preferences and support what might be the best for democracy? Or is that not possible?
6. Thinking back to the Brexit Parliamentary stalemate last year, do you think the politicians showed themselves to be advocates of democracy?

I-Centrist

Perhaps it is not a controversial comment to say that the 2016 EU referendum produced polarisation in the UK among those who voted.

1. Reflecting on that period, do you think it is important for people to be able to see both sides of the argument or is discord just the reality of politics?
2. Do you think there is a value in adopting a centre-ground during these times or is that just sitting on the fence?
3. If you had the change, would you choose different policies from different political parties when voting during an election?

Stage Two

Invite the participants to view the polarising footage
Stage Three

Reflecting on the footage, I wanted to ask you some questions about what you both just viewed.

5. What are your initial thoughts or impressions of the footage?
6. Do you think this UK-EU transition period has been successful so far? If so, why? If not, why?
7. In terms of the UK/EU relationship, what are you like to see happen before the end of the transition agreement? (i.e.: any particular agreements).
8. Finally, after the transition period is over, what do you think the UK’ global status will be?

Conclude Interview:

- Debrief participants about study and reveal real reason.
- Offer the opportunity to ask any further questions about the study
- Gift vouchers
- Well wishes/future plans.
Pairing E

Interview Opening:

- **INTRODUCE INTERVIEWEES:**
  enquire as to well-being in current situation. This offers them the opportunity to discuss and share COVID-19 experiences and the changes which have occurred since our last meeting.

- **INTERVIEW PURPOSE:**
  9-month follow-up exploring public perceptions on political decision-making during the UK-EU transition period.

- **ETHICS:** If, for any reason, you feel you need to take a break, please do say.

- **INTERNET CONNECTION:** If it drops out for any of us, we shall just pause and reconvene ASAP.

**Stage One**

*I-British*

First of all, I wanted us to discuss patriotism during the transition period.

1. Do you think it is important to be patriotic? If so, why?
2. In our previous discussion, you both talked about being British; How important is that to your sense of self?
3. Do you think that people are not as patriotic as they used to be? If so why aren’t they?

*I-Politically Engaged*

Since the 2016 EU referendum, evidence has emerged suggesting the British are more engaged in politics than they have been for some time.

7. Do you think more people engaging in politics in a good thing? If so, what are the benefits to society?
8. Do you feel personally feel more engaged in politics at the moment, if so, why? If not, why?
9. Could you ever foresee circumstances which you wouldn’t be engaged in politics?

**Stage Two**

Invite the participants to view the polarising footage
Stage Three

Brexit Protestors/ Referendum

1. What are your initial thoughts on the footage?
2. Reflecting on the Brexit Day celebrations footage, both in London and Edinburgh, do you feel the patriotism on display there is a positive thing?
3. During the referendum, the leave campaign talked about how the remain voters were spreading unfounded fears over Brexit (‘Project fear’ as it was called); now we are in the transition period, do you think these fears are justified?
4. The remain campaign criticised the false promises of the leave campaign; do you think these criticisms are justified when reflecting on the transition period?

Conclude Interview:

- Debrief participants about study and reveal real reason.
- Offer the opportunity to ask any further questions about the study
- Gift vouchers
- Well wishes/future plans.