What do young people in Southampton think about the European Union?

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Executive Summary

This report details the process and findings of research conducted into how young people in Southampton feel about the European Union and Britain's position within it. The rationale behind this study stems from the identification of the increasing importance of EU membership as a key area in British parliamentary politics. The recent successes of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in both local and parliamentary by-elections across the country and specifically in Hampshire stand as testament to this. This can also be witnessed in the promise of a re-negotiation of British membership within the EU and a possible referendum by the Conservative party. The primary research conducted for this study includes 187 valid anonymous self-administered surveys conducted in a non-random but intentionally representative fashion, as well as 8 in depth semi-structured interviews. Statistical analysis was carried out on the survey data in order to draw conclusions and this was supported by interview findings. Unfortunately, responses cannot be taken as entirely representative of all young people in Southampton, but were useful for identifying key trends nonetheless.

There were several interesting findings and conclusions from our sample of young people in Southampton:

- Young people were unlikely to rate the EU as an important issue and had a relatively low understanding of what it means for Britain to be a member, 74% believed that UK young people were not knowledgeable about the EU.
- When confronted however, young people thought that membership of the EU was an important issue with which people should be concerned and supported the opportunity to have a referendum.
- Young people in general felt positive toward the EU, especially in areas such as tourism and business but negatively when it came to immigration.
- If given the opportunity to vote at a referendum a large number would elect to stay in the EU (47.8%) but an almost as large proportion remain undecided (37.6%).
- Young people believed the media to be anti-EU however those who consumed news more often were more likely to be pro-EU.

Some key implications were drawn from this study: in particular, that in general a better education for both young people and others about the relationship between the EU and the UK would be preferable and likely to lead to a more pro-EU sentiment. Further to this, the need to conduct more research into how the media affects the preferences of voters with regard to the EU and perhaps conduct this study on a larger scale with more resources was identified.

Section 1: Rationale

The UK and the EU

The European Union (EU) has been part of British politics and culture ever since it joined the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973, a move that has been supported to varying degrees by successive British governments. However this is not to say that British integration into the EU has been a smooth transition. As Perisic (2010: 5) suggests, Britain's relationship with the EU has been complex and, at times, strained. Thus, Britain's membership within the EU has periodically become a central and controversial topic in parliamentary politics. Tensions arise over how economically and politically integrated people believe Britain should be which in broader terms may reflect debates of national identity. Britain has traditionally been recognised as a leading proponent of trade liberalisation both within Europe and internationally. Furthermore, Britain has repeatedly encouraged the expansion of the EU (Wallace, 2012: 540).

Yet recent events have led to the resurfacing of tensions surrounding Britain's membership within the European Union. The economic crisis has raised doubts over whether membership of the EU is the best way to achieve Britain's economic and political goals. These questions are frequently debated and highlighted in the media and Parliament, with commentators suggesting they will be key points at the next general election. These assertions however need to be tested to answer whether these issues are viewed as important and divisive amongst the general populace itself. This particular research will aim to do this for a target group in society, namely young people aged 18-25 in Southampton. Such a group represents a key portion of society that are less likely to have entrenched political affiliations and therefore likely to change their voting preferences on specific issues. Similarly they are some of the worst affected by the recent economic crisis which appears to have driven anti-EU sentiment. They are therefore a good target population for testing key assumptions. Southampton is chosen for the focus of this research for logistical reasons, but also due to its multicultural and politically diverse nature.

The importance of the EU as an electoral issue

The EU is seen as a divisive issue for the next general election, in particular the possible split of the right vote along these lines due to UKIP making inroads into the especially conservative voting electorate (Wallace, 2012:544). The growth of the UKIP can be witnessed in their claim that 40% of the electorate are considering voting for them in the next election (UKIP, n.d). UKIP's major policy has been to leave the EU altogether rather than just reduce EU integration, as the Conservatives are attempting to do. A major motivation for conducting this study comes from the nearby Eastleigh by-election that occurred on the 1st May this year. The results saw UKIP come a close second, gaining almost 28% of the votes (Rogers, 2013), which is astonishing compared to the 2010 election where they only received 4% of the vote (Kirkup, 2013). This may provide an example of how the EU has gained major influence and is becoming a topic that will shape the political landscape in the near future. They recently also performed very well at the local elections gaining 139 seats more than the 8 they previously held, with the majority of these gains coming from traditionally conservative areas (BBC, 2013).

It is for this reason that the Conservative party have put the re-negotiation of Britain's membership of the EU and the promise of an in/out referendum at the heart of their re-election plan in order to attempt to recapture euro-sceptic defectors. Hence it is necessary to find out whether the EU is indeed an important policy concern for young people. However, research conducted by Henn and Ford into 'Young people, political participation and trust in Britain' investigated where the policy concerns of young people lie, would suggest otherwise (2012: 49). It was found that 32% considered employment the most important issue, with the next most significant issue identified by 12% as the economy. In comparison to this only 2% of the sample considered foreign policy the most salient issue in the UK. Therefore, it is necessary that this research is geared toward finding out how salient an issue the EU is amongst our target population and specifically how it ranks against other policy areas.

The outcome of a possible referendum

It is also important to examine the awareness about and possible outcome of a referendum concerning Britain's membership with the EU. This referendum is of major political and economic significance: the possible implications could be as drastic as Britain terminating its membership of the EU entirely. Polls have already been carried out on such issues (although not specifically concerning young people) as there is obvious interest in this topic. For instance an Independent Communications and Marketing (ICM) poll was conducted for the Guardian in 2011 questioning participants on European Union membership. When asked whether or not a referendum should be held on membership of the EU it was found that 60% of respondents answered '*Should be'*, 29% answered '*Should not be'* and 11% answered '*don't know'*. The poll also questioned respondents on how they were likely to vote in the proposed referendum.

Subsequently respondents were asked how they would vote if an in/out referendum was held the following day. In response 39% of participants stated they would '*definitely stay*' whilst 25% stated they would '*probably stay'*. On the opposing side, 8% answered that they would '*probably leave*' and 20% stated they would '*definitely leave'*. The remaining 9% professed to be undecided. In this instance therefore, a majority of people appear inclined to vote to stay in the EU. This research aimed to build further upon these findings and to test them amongst the target population of the study. The aim therefore was to provide a more up to date and targeted study on how young people feel toward the EU and how they would vote in the proposed referendum.

The influence of the media

Lastly due to the significant media attention both the recent UKIP surge and the Conservative euro-sceptics have garnered, it seemed appropriate to test the role the media plays in determining preferences about the EU. Similarly an effort to understand how informed young people are, or at least feel they are, seemed an important avenue of enquiry into young people's relationship with the EU.

Hypothesis

The examination of previous research, current media output and personal experience lead to a hypothesis being reached that would appropriately guide this research. The hypothesis being: Young people in Southampton have little interest, knowledge or opinion about Britain's membership of the EU.

Section 2: Methodology

Linear model

When considering the methodology for this research, it was important to establish 'which research methods would provide the best test of the research hypothesis' (Burnham et al, 2004: 6). With this in mind, the research process followed the linear model, in which the different steps of the project were easily distinguishable, giving the project 'the virtue of clarity' (Burnham et al, 2004: 35). With the hypothesis in place, the second stage of the linear process consisted of the decision-making procedure regarding the methodology with which we would conduct the research, including the sampling frame used to gather participants. This step is referred to in the model as 'data specification' and requires the researchers to first outline the data available within the resource constraints.

Data Specification

As a result of financial and time constraints, it was not possible to gain access to the most recent electoral register as a sampling frame. However, while at first this posed a problem due to the political (and age defined) nature of the research task, a resolution was found through the discussion of other non-probability sampling methods – leading to the decision to move away from stratified random sampling (because there was not another complete list of our target population). Consequently, the research design adopted a combination of non-probability methods, namely: quota sampling, where participants are chosen in correspondence with fulfilling a pre-determined quota; snowball sampling, where participants are attainted through word-of-mouth; and convenience sampling, where participants are selected on the basis of their accessibility and suitability. Of course, with each of these methods come inherent advantages and disadvantages (to extensively detail these grounds is beyond the bounds of this article). In the case of this research project, the most significant limitation of non-random sampling was the hindrance imposed on analysis possibilities, as no statistical inference can be drawn from the quantitative data that was attained. Thus, the results cannot be applied to a wider population.

The research methods employed were preliminary surveys (appendix I) supported by a collection of face-to-face in-depth, semi-structured interviews (appendix II). By using the 'invaluable resource' of surveys, it became possible to 'measure the opinion of the population' (Burnham et al, 2004: 80-81), while gathering more in-depth information compared to an opinion poll. This meant that it was possible to support quantitative data with qualitative data, which in turn helped to gain a greater understanding of what young people in Southampton think of the EU and why they hold the views that they do: As Burnham et al (2004: 205) suggests a 'considerable contribution to the understanding of political phenomena' can be achieved through the use of interviews.

Distribution

With the methodology in place, the project design followed the third phase of the linear research procedure: the data collection. Prior to administering surveys to the wider population, it was important to first conduct a pilot-survey. Although it is unlikely that a small-scale pilot survey would yield a completely fair representation of the wider target audience, this stage of the research proved important insofar as it helped gain an

understanding of what data the surveys may produce; and whether, or not, this is appropriate for the purpose of answering our research questions. Following the pilot, limitations of the survey were identified and improvements made accordingly. Subsequently, a second pilot-survey was carried out after which it was clear that the structure and content of the survey was appropriate for the research hypothesis: in this instance, the structure and questions of the survey had been heavily deliberated, meaning that the second pilot study did not take an extensive period of time, and the final arrangements of the data collection process could be made.

As the research task was to survey young, Southampton voters, target locations for survey distribution were identified on a map in accordance with the list of Southampton wards. The aim for this was to collect data reflective of the population spread of Southampton. Each member of the research team was then designated different locations across Southampton to conduct the surveys, with the task of attaining a quota of 20 completed surveys per member. This was deemed a sufficient total number of participants from which to draw analysis, because having a fairly large number of participants also helped improve the representativeness of the data, given the circumstances. With this is mind, the team set about conducting face-to-face surveys. To combat any interviewer bias, the research team were instructed to only make clarifications on the survey when needed, whilst not guiding the respondents in a particular direction. The survey was also made available online, which was advertised by the research team through personal accounts on social networking websites (unfortunately, once again, an online sampling frame of young people was unattainable).

The interviews were conducted with those individuals who made themselves available throughout the survey process and were held at a time and place convenient to the participants (who were provided a small incentive for participation). The interviews were designed to bolster information attained through the surveys, and so questions were designed accordingly – with the structure of the interview running from less demanding questions through to more thought-provoking questions. The interviewer was asked to remain neutral throughout the interviews, whilst making an effort to build report and ask probing questions following a basic interview plan. The interviews were video-recorded for evaluation purposes. Of course, throughout the entire project full consent was attained from participants prior to them partaking in any aspect of the project and it was made clear that they could withdraw from the study or withhold any information at any time.

Section 3: Results

Data

In total the data collection yielded 187 valid survey responses and 8 successful in depth interviews providing a wealth of quantitative and qualitative data. Though the quantitative data could not be used inferentially it is still useful to draw some conclusions about how the respondents represented themselves in the areas of interest. The qualitative data provided by the interviews was analysed retrospectively and used to add depth and context to the survey data.

Respondents and population

Though the sample cannot be representative of the population and so data obtained could not be used inferentially, there was an aspiration that sample makeup should reflect the population as best possible in terms of age, gender, area of Southampton, education and employment. In this regard participants are measured in terms of relation to population (where population data exists) and more generally even distribution amongst a number of categories. Thus, it is important to consider the demographic makeup of the target population in regards to gender division. Utilising figures provided by the Office for National Statistics in the form of their 2011 mid-year estimates those aged 15-24 in Southampton can be roughly described as 51.4% are male and 48.6% female (ONS 2011). The participants in the survey were 42.3% male and 56.7% female (1% unanswered) which is a rough approximation but not too far from the actual values. In terms of geographical area the 16 wards of Southampton contain roughly similar numbers of residents. However, 40.6% of respondents to the survey inhabited the SO17 postcode making the sample unrepresentative geographically.

For the other categories the population data was unattainable. Thus, given the circumstances, the aim was to provide as great a distribution as possible. In terms of age this was partially successful, in that all ages in the range were represented, although the majority of respondents were 20 or 21 years old (appendix III, *figure* 1). In terms of highest level of education attained there was less of a distribution, which might be reflective of the population as the majority of respondents (58.8%) had finished sixth form or college. In terms of occupation a large number of respondents, perhaps unrepresentatively of Southampton as a whole, were in full time education or training (68.4%) as opposed to only 25.1% in full time employment. These figures unfortunately indicate that the results attained are not as representative as was desired by the study nevertheless the large numbers of results attained allow for some interesting conclusions.

Importance of EU membership as a political issue

A number of interesting findings emerged when attempting to gauge whether, or not, EU membership was an important issue for young people. Firstly, when asked to rate the importance of the EU and foreign policy it was revealed that 41.6% respondents regarded the EU as either important (27%) or very important (14.6%), as opposed to 7% saying it was very unimportant and 23.8% that it was unimportant. When ranked against other UK policy issues, however, the EU and foreign policy placed relatively lowly. Indeed in a comparison of 10 UK policy areas respondents on average rated the EU and foreign policy at 7th most

important ahead of the debated topic of immigration, at 8th. Unsurprisingly, given the young target population, the topics of housing and pensions placed 9th and 10th respectively. Similarly education and employment rated most highly at 1st and 2nd respectively. Indeed this trend is further backed by 55.7% of respondents strongly agreeing with or agreeing with the statement that there are more important issues in the UK right now than EU membership, with another 30.5% neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. However when confronted with the statement "it does not really matter if the UK stays in the EU or not" an overwhelming 77.3% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly 55.6% disagreed (strongly or otherwise) that the EU does not affect young people and 58.3% felt that it was important for young people to engage with the EU. This appears to show that young people do not rate the issue of EU membership very highly when related to other issues, perhaps because other issues are deemed to affect them more. Nonetheless, in response to the question of whether or not the UK should be a member of the EU, 63.2% of respondents agreed that a referendum would be a useful mechanism for determining whether or not British citizens wish to remain in the EU.

Attitudes toward the EU

In answering the primary research question about how young people in Southampton feel about the EU, it became evident that respondents are predominantly in favour of the UK's membership but also with a large number remaining undecided. When asked, 52.7% of respondents said they were either 'mainly for' or 'for' UK membership and only 20.4% said that they were against (or mainly against). Yet, over a quarter of respondents (26.9%) claimed to have no strong feelings one way or another. To further interrogate these attitudes respondents were asked if they felt the UK is better with or without the EU over a full spectrum of policy areas. An over whelming majority felt that tourism (72%), business (67.9%), agriculture (62.2%) and culture (52.4%) were all better if the UK remained as a member of the EU. In addition there were plurality responses in regards to emigration (48.1%), the economy (45.5%) and the environment (40.1%), saying that these too were better with EU membership. Employment was split with 31.6% saying it would be better with and 31% saying that it would be better with the EU. Education was an issue which most seemed unsure on, with 38.7% saying there would be no difference and 22.6% saying that they simply didn't know though more felt it would be better with the EU (23.7%) than without (15.1%). From this we can gather that, with the exception of immigration, young people in the UK feel that the EU is either beneficial for or has no impact on all aspects of UK domestic politics.

When it comes to voting on EU membership, however, people are somewhat less decisive. Given the option to vote at a referendum, 47.8% said they would vote to stay while 13.4% said they would vote to leave. A large proportion of 38.8% remained undecided, which is a key observation in young people as the number is enough to swing the results either way. Interestingly when confronted with the statement "The UK would be better off leaving the EU" 26.2% said they strongly agreed or agreed while 45.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed. A lower figure of 27.8% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement; this evidently shows a disparity between how individuals feel about membership of the EU and the way they would vote. Perhaps this is because when faced with a referendum the respondents felt a sense of pressure and civic duty to make the best decision for society rather than reflect individual opinion.

When considering reasons for why respondents felt that the UK should leave the EU or alternatively were undecided it is worth considering the results obtain via the interviews conducted. These results suggested that a majority of interviewees perceived that EU law having precedence over UK law was a negative, as it infringed upon the constitutional sovereignty that Britain should retain to the fullest. Furthermore most interviewees did not feel that the UK needed to be in the EU, stating that Britain was 'strong' enough as an individual nation, and – although many also noted some positives in 'linking up' with other countries – they simultaneously felt that greater involvement in the EU was undesirable. In particular, there appears to be a consensus amongst our interviewees regarding the UK retaining the pound sterling. Many of the participants understood that there were some benefits that can be derived from joining the single currency; despite the fact nearly all participants felt the UK should not change its currency.

Information, the media and the EU

It is possible that this lack of certainty in regards to whether or not to remain in the EU is to do with a deficiency of education in the area, as well as a dearth of interest. This notion is reflected in the findings of *Political Participation of Young People in Europe – Development of Indicators for Comparative Research in the EU (Vienna Institute for Social Research and Analysis, 2005)* and supports the hypothesis behind this research. A staggering 74% of those asked felt that young people in general were not well informed on EU affairs, which to a large extent may reflect how they felt about their own level of knowledge. During the interviews an attempt was made to gain a greater understanding of the extent to which interviewees were informed on EU policy and its inner workings. It was discovered that most possessed only a basic level of understanding, gleaning sound bites from headlines, consequently forming their opinions around those. As a result, many also retained inaccurate knowledge on the EU, with one participant stating that there was a strong anti-EU bias present in the media, calling it a 'poor representation'. The participant went on to say that they felt there was a causal link between the portrayal of the EU and a nationalist agenda behind certain news sources.

Seemingly in contradiction to this, a strong positive relationship between the frequency of which participants consumed news and being in favour of British membership of the EU was observed in the survey data (Appendix III, *fig*ure 2 and 3). In fact in general, participants appeared to be relatively well in-formed in terms of news uptake with 73.2% consuming news twice or more a week from a range of sources. As is to be expected in this young population 73.8% listed the internet as their primary source of news. Also it was established that those who read more news were more aware of the upcoming referendum. 71.4% of those who said they never read the news were unaware of a potential referendum as opposed to 22.6% of those who professed to read the news twice or more a week. While this last figure is somewhat unsurprising the remainder lead to confusion over the role of the media in the opinions of young people on the EU. Perhaps what can be said is that the primary difference is not the frequency of news uptake but the sources, in that those who are likely to be consuming more news are more likely to be interested and actively seek out 'respectable' sources. Whereas those who are less interested and use sources inadvertently are more likely to glean anti-EU sentiment.

Attempts were made to interrogate this relationship further, specifically investigating perceived anti-EU papers such as the Daily Mail, but the number of surveys and quality of responses to the question aimed at this section failed to yield any significant results. As such it is impossible to make any serious claim concerning whether or not there is a link between specific news sources and a certain opinion: the limited findings yield no correlation between Daily Mail readership and EU opinion, with the same number of Mail readers being both for and against. Here we are perhaps limited as stated above by the lack of a representative sample of the population. Though few conclusions can be definitively drawn from this section on how young people views on the EU are affected by the media there is a certainty that young people feel the media can be quite uninformative and biased when it comes to the topic of EU membership.

Section 4: Implications

Research implications

On the basis of results obtained in this research, some policy based recommendations can be put forth. Such policy alterations may benefit the topic at hand.

Firstly, when asked '*If given the option of a referendum would you vote for the UK to stay in the EU?*' 38.8% of respondents stated that they were 'undecided'. Given the potential implications of a lack of awareness of a referendum, as illustrated by the impartiality of individuals, the government may wish to consider measures through which a greater awareness of the subject can be achieved. This may take the form of more marketing campaigns, which may increase education among the public as a whole. Furthermore when considering the attention televised debates garner in the run up to an election, it may be of interest for Parliament, alongside other experts, to invest in a debate regarding the advantages and limitations to remaining in the EU. Such action may also enhance public exposure to the occurrence of the referendum. This is arguably necessary as 30.6% of respondents said that they were not aware of an upcoming referendum.

Another implication of these results is that, when considering the specificity regarding the age of the target sample, a policy change could be introduced. This policy would encourage a more comprehensive curriculum, which includes information regarding the implications of being a member of the EU. This would enable individuals that are either impartial or alternatively ignorant of the consequences of the EU on the UK, to make a well-informed decision. This suggestion is further supported by the statistic that 74% of respondents felt that young people were not well informed on EU matters including foreign affairs. Of course, in the case of introducing EU into the curriculum, issues may arise concerning how the subject is taught and whether or not the material covered provides an unbiased portrayal of the EU.

An additional suggestion based on the implications of the research conducted relates to the media. The internet was the main source of information for 73.8% of respondents, whilst television was favoured by 16.6%. As such, when considering the cyber-generation and ease of access to information via the internet, one may look for innovative ways of informing young people of the EU through the internet. This information could be made accessible in the form of essential news websites, whilst also becoming available via social networking to encourage the target population of this research. As the possibility of a referendum draws closer, such measures may encourage a greater turnout for the referendum as well as enhancing the chances of a well-informed decision being made.

Moreover it is worth considering the implications of this research on debates regarding the lowering of the voting age. It is apparent from the data collected that a significant number of young people do not feel that they are well informed enough to make decisions of such a magnitude. As such, it could be suggested that the responsibility of voting should not be lowered until the suggestions made above have been implemented to ensure a more educated electorate.

Evaluation of the research methods

It is of the upmost importance while evaluating a study to acknowledge the inherent strengths and weaknesses so as not to be blind to the implications they may have on the findings, for no research design is perfect, thus neither is any data. For this research a path of non-probability sampling was utilised, limiting the inference that could be drawn from the results; had the electoral register been available, the research design, and consequentially the results, may have been greatly improved. However, by recognising the limited resources, it was concluded that non-probability sampling would accordingly yield a variety of results with which implications could be made. This is evident when considering that in the distribution the survey across the city, the aim was to overcome the restrictions within the research design and capture a diverse range of individuals, thus increasing the representativeness of the participants (yet, because the data cannot be extrapolated beyond the respondents, it does lack in representation). Beyond this, the circulation of the pilot study meant that the results yielded from the surveys were of greater use had this task not been undertaken. Without the responses from the pilot study, the surveys would not have been direct enough to have tested the research hypothesis effectively.

Recommendation for further research

Lastly let us deliberate upon further research that could be conducted on the foundations of this research. For example, it is evident from this research that the internet is the most widely referenced resource among young people. As such it may be worth investigating if there are any differences in attitudes towards policies and the EU amongst those who access the news in the form of different mediums. Another avenue that could be investigated is that of a more qualitatively rich data collection to question 'why' young people in Southampton feel the way they do about the UK and EU. Whether this is in relation to the justification for how they have chosen to prioritise policy areas or in reference to how they have decided to vote in the future referendum. This is to provide more data and consequently information as to which areas of public education needs the greatest aide.

An alternative to interviews, and a way in which such qualitative data could be gathered, could be through the use of focus group discussions. Krueger (1994:150) defines a focus group as 'a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment.' In comparison to face-to-face interviews, enlisting a group to discuss a particular topic may reduce interviewer bias. In allowing participants to share their thoughts and perceptions in the form of a discussion, focus groups can 'enable new strands of thought to emerge', and as such unanticipated, but relevant, issues may arise. Furthermore 'unlike structured interviews, increasing the sample size requires minimal time and resource investment'.

As such, a focus group study comprising 5-8 groups with 6-10 participants per group would provide a setting in which a number of areas – for example, the influence of different news and media providers on participants – could be examined in depth and the rationale behind opinions could be explored using a group dynamic. This may reveal a greater depth of detail across a number of perspectives. Furthermore, the group dynamic might enable participants who feel disinterested or feel they lack understand of the subject matter (poignant

considering the percentage of respondents in the research who professed lack of understand; 74% of those asked felt that young people were not well informed on EU affairs) to take part as the discursive format of group setting, alongside the mediation of conversation by a researcher, may encourage participation.

An experimental design could also be integrated into a research design alongside focus group discussions: a number of groups could be given a fact sheet prior to their discussion, or during their discussion, while other groups would be withheld this additional information. The impact of this information could then be measured. This would provide for an interesting evaluation of whether increased knowledge changes the views people hold on the EU, and if so, in what ways. This would also ensure that participants are tested both on what they think about the EU, as well as what they know about the EU. Subsequently, more qualitatively rich data may be produced. Therefore we would recommend that further research consider the use of focus group discussions, as well as experimental designs.

Conclusion

This research set out to investigate what young people in Southampton think about the European Union, with the hypothesis that young people in Southampton are unconcerned with, and have little knowledge of, the EU. Throughout the research process a number of issues were encountered, with the greatest issue lying with the lack of inferential statistics that could be drawn from the gathered data. Nonetheless, as a result of the surveys answered, and interviews accomplished, some interesting findings emerged that led to the failure to entirely reject the hypothesis, in that as 47.8% of the respondents would vote to remain in the European Union, it appears the young respondents may in fact be concerned with the EU. This is further evident as 41.6% of participants suggesting that the EU was important, while 30.8% advocated it was unimportant implying that of those surveyed, young people in Southampton do regard the EU as important and thus are concerned about the issue. Yet, the data that was gathered does indicate that young people in Southampton lack knowledge of the EU – with 74% of those asked suggesting that young people were not well informed on EU affairs. This was supported by the interviews conducted, through which it was discovered that most participants possessed only a basic level of understanding of the EU, gleaning sound bites from headlines to form their opinions. Finally, this research has opened up many areas of inquiry and as such could be utilised as a foundation for future research. We would therefore suggest that further research be conducted in a manner which allows the sampling limitations that were faced throughout this research to be overcome. This suggestion is based upon the evidence gathered throughout the research process which provides empirical proof that young people in Southampton are in need of greater information regarding Britain's membership in the UK in the EU.

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<u>**Appendix I - Survey**</u>

Surveying the attitudes of 18-25 year olds in Southampton toward the EU

By completing the following survey you are taking part in a study of the attitudes of 18-25 year olds in Southampton towards the EU for the University of Southampton and Karen Woods Journalism and Communications. This research is intended to measure these attitudes and how they may affect future voting preferences in the Southampton area with regard to the EU for local media outlets and academic pursuits. All information collected is strictly confidential and the respondent may withdraw from the survey or refuse to answer any questions if they so wish.

<u>**Section A – News and Media**</u>

1) **How often, on average, do you read/watch /listen to the news?**

    1 ☐ Daily

    2 ☐ Twice or more a week

    3 ☐ Once a week

    4 ☐ Rarely

    0 ☐ Never

2) **Which of the following sources of information do you regularly use? Please tick all that apply and name your sources.**

    1 ☐ Newspapers _____

    2 ☐ Magazines _____

    3 ☐ Online _____

    4 ☐ TV _____

    5 ☐ Radio _____

3) **Which of the above would you say is your main source of information?**

    1 ☐ Newspapers 2 ☐ Magazines 3 ☐ Online 4 ☐ TV 5 ☐ Radio

Section B – UK policy

What are the main policy areas that particularly concern you in the UK?

Please rank the following issues in terms of their importance to you by circling the appropriate number, where 1 is not important at all and 5 is very important to you.

$_1$Employment/ Unemployment	1	2	3	4	5
$_2$Crime	1	2	3	4	5
$_3$Economy	1	2	3	4	5
$_4$Education	1	2	3	4	5
$_5$Foreign affairs/ EU	1	2	3	4	5
$_6$Immigration	1	2	3	4	5
$_7$Environment	1	2	3	4	5
$_8$Housing	1	2	3	4	5
$_9$Pensions	1	2	3	4	5
$_{10}$Health	1	2	3	4	5

Section C – The EU referendum

1. **On a scale from 1 to 5 are you for or against the UK's membership of the EU? (Circle the appropriate number)**

    FOR   1   2   3   4   5   AGAINST

2. **Are you aware there may be a referendum concerning the UK's membership within the EU?**

    $_0$ ☐ No $_1$ ☐ Yes

3. **If given the option of a referendum would you vote for the UK to stay in the EU?**

    $_0$ ☐ No $_1$ ☐ Yes $_2$ ☐ Undecided $_3$ ☐ Prefer not to answer

Section D – EU policy

Do you think the UK is better within or without the EU in the following policy areas?

	[1] Better without EU	[2] No Difference	[3] Better with EU	[0] Don't know
Business	☐	☐	☐	☐
Agriculture and Food	☐	☐	☐	☐
Culture	☐	☐	☐	☐
Education	☐	☐	☐	☐
Economy	☐	☐	☐	☐
Employment	☐	☐	☐	☐
Environment	☐	☐	☐	☐
Emigration (people going out of the country)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Immigration (people coming into the country)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tourism	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other _____	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section E – EU and Young People

What is your opinion about the relationship between the EU and 18-25 year olds? Please read the following statements and select the option which best reflects your level of agreement/disagreement.

1) The EU does not really affect young people.

[1] ☐ Strongly agree   [2] ☐ Agree   [3] ☐ Neither agree nor disagree   [4] ☐ Disagree   [5] ☐ Strongly disagree

2) It is important that young people engage with the EU.

[1] ☐ Strongly agree   [2] ☐ Agree   [3] ☐ Neither agree nor disagree   [4] ☐ Disagree   [5] ☐ Strongly disagree

3) Young people in Britain are well informed about the EU.

[1] ☐ Strongly agree   [2] ☐ Agree   [3] ☐ Neither agree nor disagree   [4] ☐ Disagree   [5] ☐ Strongly disagree

Section F – The EU and the UK

What is your opinion about the UK's membership of the EU? Please read the following statements and select the option which best reflects your level of agreement/disagreement.

1) The UK would be better off leaving the EU and making decisions for itself.

1 ☐ Strongly agree   2 ☐ Agree   3 ☐ Neither agree nor disagree   4 ☐ Disagree   5 ☐ Strongly disagree

2) It does not really matter if the UK stays in the EU or not.

1 ☐ Strongly agree   2 ☐ Agree   3 ☐ Neither agree nor disagree   4 ☐ Disagree   5 ☐ Strongly disagree

3) The UK has no choice but to stay in the EU.

1 ☐ Strongly agree   2 ☐ Agree   3 ☐ Neither agree nor disagree   4 ☐ Disagree   5 ☐ Strongly disagree

4) There are more important issues right now in the UK than the possibility or not of staying in the EU.

1 ☐ Strongly agree   2 ☐ Agree   3 ☐ Neither agree nor disagree   4 ☐ Disagree   5 ☐ Strongly disagree

5) A referendum would be good to understand if British citizens really want to stay in the EU.

1 ☐ Strongly agree   2 ☐ Agree   3 ☐ Neither agree nor disagree   4 ☐ Disagree   5 ☐ Strongly disagree

Section G – About you

1) **Age:** _____

2) **Gender:**   0 ☐ Male   1 ☐ Female   2 ☐ Rather not say

3) **Occupational Status:**   1 ☐ Employed

2 ☐ Self-employed

3 ☐ Unemployed

4 ☐ In full time education or training

5 ☐ Rather not say

6 ☐ Other _____

Section G – About you cont.

4) **What is the highest level of education you have <u>completed</u>?**

$_1\square$ Primary education

$_2\square$ Secondary education

$_3\square$ Sixth Form/College

$_4\square$ Undergraduate degree programme

$_5\square$ Post-graduate degree programme

$_6\square$ Other _____

5) **What is your Southampton area Postcode?** (E.g. SO16)   SO_____

6) **Are you eligible to vote in the UK?** $_0\square$ No $_1\square$ Yes $_2\square$ Don't Know

Interview

Would you be available to participate in a face-to-face interview about the EU and young people's opinions about it? It won't take more than 20-30 minutes and your personal information will be again strictly confidential. We can arrange for a time and place to best suit you and will be able provide light refreshments for interviews held at campus. If you would like to participate, please leave your email address and/or mobile number.

Email _____

Mobile number _____

Thank you for helping us with our research!

FOR RESEARCHER USE ONLY

DATE: TIME: PLACE:

RESEARCHER: SURVEY NUMBER:

Appendix II – Interview Structure

Interview question guide:

1. INTRODUCTION – ask name etc.

2. What do you know about the EU?

3. Do you have an interest in the EU and the functions performed by the EU?

4. Would you like to be better informed about the EU and its purpose?

5. What are your experiences with the EU, if any? Do you think the EU affects you in your day-to-day life?

6. What do you feel are the positives of being part of the EU, if any?

7. What do you feel are the negatives of being part of the EU, if any?

8. What are your views on the Euro; do you feel the UK should join the currency?

9. What are your views on the financial crisis in Europe?

10. Do you think it is an issue that EU law overrides UK law?

11. Are you concerned about the EU's effect on immigration?

12. Do you feel that the UK is better equipped to tackle global issues such as climate change, when part of the EU?

13. Do you think being part of the EU means that the UK's influence on the international stage is enhanced or diminished?

14. Do you have any fears concerning the United Kingdom's (U.K.) involvement with the EU?

15. Do you have any fears concerning any other country already involved with the EU?

16. Do you have any fears concerning any other country joining the EU that is not already part of the EU?

17. Do you feel there is a lack of democracy within the EU?

18. What sort of impact you say the EU has on your politic views?

19. How would you alter the UK's membership in the EU?

20. Are you aware of 'opt-out' clauses and what impact, if any, do you think they may have on the UK's membership within the EU?

21. The government has announced a referendum for 2015; do you have any idea on how you might vote?
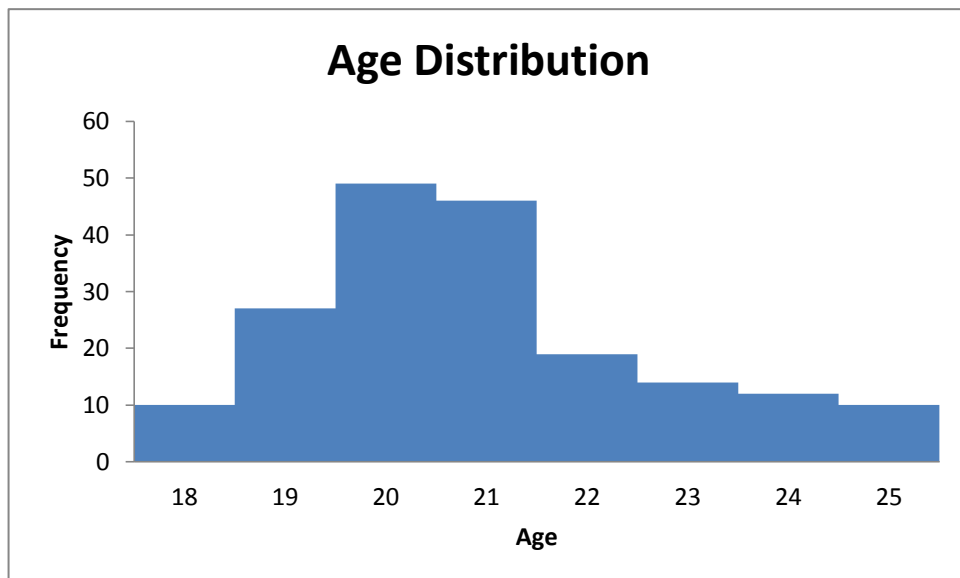
Appendix III – SPSS relevant output

Fig.1

Age Distribution

Fig.2

Average frequency of news uptake * Referendum vote: UK to stay/leave EU Crosstabulation

			Referendum vote: UK to stay/leave EU				Total
			No	Yes	Undecided	Prefer not to say	
Average frequency of news uptake	Never	Count	4	1	2	0	7
		% within Average frequency of news uptake	57.1%	14.3%	28.6%	0.0%	100.0%
	Rarely	Count	1	6	13	1	21
		% within Average frequency of news uptake	4.8%	28.6%	61.9%	4.8%	100.0%
	Once a Week	Count	1	8	11	1	21
		% within Average frequency of news uptake	4.8%	38.1%	52.4%	4.8%	100.0%
	Twice or more a week	Count	5	24	24	0	53
		% within Average frequency of news uptake	9.4%	45.3%	45.3%	0.0%	100.0%
	Daily	Count	14	50	20	0	84
		% within Average frequency of news uptake	16.7%	59.5%	23.8%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	25	89	70	2	186
		% within Average frequency of news uptake	13.4%	47.8%	37.6%	1.1%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	36.346[a]	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	32.474	12	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.389	1	.011
N of Valid Cases	186		

a. 10 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .08.

Fig.3

Average frequency of news uptake * Aware of a referendum concerning the UK's membership of the EU Crosstabulation

			Aware of a referendum concerning the UK's membership of the EU		Total
			No	Yes	
Average frequency of news uptake	Never	Count	5	2	7
		% within Average frequency of news uptake	71.4%	28.6%	100.0%
	Rarely	Count	11	10	21
		% within Average frequency of news uptake	52.4%	47.6%	100.0%
	Once a Week	Count	10	11	21
		% within Average frequency of news uptake	47.6%	52.4%	100.0%
	Twice or more a week	Count	16	37	53
		% within Average frequency of news uptake	30.2%	69.8%	100.0%
	Daily	Count	15	69	84
		% within Average frequency of news uptake	17.9%	82.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	57	129	186
		% within Average frequency of news uptake	30.6%	69.4%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.461[a]	4	.001
Likelihood Ratio	18.984	4	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	19.016	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	186		

a. 2 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.15.