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**University
of Glasgow**

School of Social and Political Sciences

**"Have Traditional Forms of Political Participation
Increased in Scotland Following the 2014 Independence
Referendum?"**

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Abstract

It has been said that the 2014 Independence Referendum has changed politics in Scotland forever. So far, however, it would seem that this assertion has been made largely on the basis of the great public engagement witnessed over the course of the referendum campaign, and little work has been done to ascertain whether this has carried over to the present day. Thus, this paper sought to fill an important gap in the existing literature by conducting a study to discover whether traditional forms of political participation - for example, electoral participation and identifying/becoming involved with political parties - have increased in Scotland following the Referendum. The decision to focus on traditional political participation is arguably more important than ever given its considerable decline in recent decades, while non-traditional forms - including public demonstrations and the signing of e-petitions - continue to grow in popularity. Using data gathered by The Electoral Commission and The Hansard Society, and using a series of graphical depictions and Independent Samples t-test analyses, this three-part longitudinal study sought to measure whether electoral turnout had increased, whether the Scottish people had become more attached to political parties, and finally whether more people were taking an active part in a political party's election campaign in the years following the Referendum. In all three cases, evidence was found to suggest that an increase had occurred, but not all increases were found to be statistically significant. Nevertheless, given the short time that has lapsed since the event, it the argument of this paper that the findings need not prove statistically significant to make a positive contribution to the field. Rather, they invite further studies to discover whether a causal relationship can be identified between the Referendum and the increase in participation, as well as whether we can expect the effect to be part of a long-term trend or merely prove a momentary blip.

Table of Contents

Title Page	i
Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Figures	iv
List of Tables	v
List of Abbreviations	vi
Dedications	vii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Literature Review	5
* <i>How Should Political Participation be Understood?</i>	5
* <i>Do Referendums Affect Political Participation?</i>	8
* <i>Placing This Study: The Scottish Case and Important Gaps in the Literature</i>	12
Chapter Three: Methodology	16
* <i>Deciding What to Measure</i>	16
* <i>Research Questions and Hypotheses</i>	18
* <i>Research Design: Data, Participants, Materials and Procedure</i>	20
Chapter Four: Results	23
* <i>Hypothesis One</i>	23
* <i>Hypothesis Two</i>	28
* <i>Hypothesis Three</i>	30
Chapter Five: Discussion	34
* <i>A Critique of the Methodological Approach</i>	34
* <i>The Results: Can Any Valid Conclusions be Drawn?</i>	36
* <i>How Does This Work Relate to Existing and Future Literature?</i>	39
Chapter Six: Conclusion	41
Bibliography	45
Appendix A	A
Appendix B	B
Appendix C	C
Appendix D	D
Appendix E	E

List of Figures

Figure 1 -	Electorate Size and Number of Votes Cast by Type of Election	Pp.23
Figure 2 -	Electoral Turnout for Each Election in Scotland by Election Type	Pp.24
Figure 3 -	Average Electoral Turnout Before and After Referendum by Election Type	Pp.25
Figure 4 -	Evolution of Eligible Electorate Size and Total Votes Cast by Election Type	Pp.26
Figure 5 -	Trends in Strength of Attachment to Any Political Party: Very and Fairly Strong vs. Weak and Not At All	Pp.29
Figure 6 -	Percentage of Respondents Who Had Taken an Active Part in a Political Party's Election Campaign, 2005-2015	Pp.31
Figure 7 -	Percentage Change in Turnout from Previous Election by Election Type	Pp.37
Figure 8 -	Evolution of Number of Non-Voters by Election Type	Pp.37

List of Tables

Table 1 -	A Comparison of Means for Electoral Turnout by Election Type	Pp.27
Table 2 -	Independent Samples Test for Electoral Turnout by Election Type	Pp.28
Table 3 -	A Comparison of Means for Participation in a Political Party's Election Campaign Before and After the Referendum	Pp.32
Table 4 -	Independent Samples Test for Participation in a Political Party's Campaign Before and After the Referendum	Pp.32

List of Abbreviations

UK	The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
EU	The European Union
SNP	The Scottish National Party
Brexit	The UK's withdrawal from the EU: a portmanteau of 'Britain' and 'exit'
FOI	Freedom of Information
IBM	International Business Machines Corporation
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SP	The Scottish Parliament
GE	UK General Election
EP	The European Parliament
AAPE	Annual Audit of Political Engagement Survey

*For Mum and Dad,
For your invaluable help and support,
For your nagging,
For caring,
For believing.*

I can never repay you.

Thank you.

Chapter One: Introduction

On the 18th September 2014, voters in Scotland were asked to participate in a referendum intended to settle the long-debated issue of Scottish independence. They most certainly obliged, turning out at the polls in record numbers - the official turnout of 84.7% is the highest recorded in the UK for any democratic vote since the introduction of universal suffrage (Tierney, 2015: 226) - and it has been argued that the Referendum should be lauded as the greatest triumph of democracy in modern times (Gilbert, 2014). The Referendum itself was preceded by a long and passionate campaign contested by two opposing parties, with Yes Scotland campaigning for a 'Yes' and Better Together for a 'No' vote. Over the course of this campaign the general population became ever more engaged with the issues being debated and with Scottish politics more generally (Featherstone, 2015: 193). Politics became a widespread topic of conversation, and as opinion polls continued to swing to and fro right up until voting day, people remained engaged and in anticipation of the final result.

Ultimately, a 55% majority of voters decided that Scotland should retain her position within the Union. It was widely cited beforehand by both 'Yes' and 'No' supporters alike that the Referendum, regardless of its outcome, would settle the issue of independence for at least a generation; however, it would prove impossible to argue that this is the reality we now face today, and politics in Scotland would appear as divided now as it was immediately before the Referendum. In the immediate aftermath, both sides of the debate appeared to come together, agreeing that the UK Government must deliver without delay the 'Better Together' promise of extensive new powers for the Scottish Parliament, but this unity soon dissipated as 'Yes' campaigners became disgruntled that these powers were seemingly not being delivered as

promised. Ever since, the political landscape in Scotland has remained largely characterised by the issue of independence, the very issue it was said would be resolved definitively over two years ago; and in the aftermath of the UK's vote to leave the EU despite a majority of Scots voting to remain, we are now facing the real possibility of a second referendum on independence being called in the coming weeks (Forsyth, 2017). Quite simply, it would appear that the Referendum has brought about a fundamental and irreversible change in Scottish politics (Keating, 2015: 89) - and it is with this final point that this paper will interest itself.

Much has been made of the increased political engagement and participation witnessed over the course of the Referendum campaign, but research into any possible lasting effects has so far proven scarce. If we accept that both the deep division and colourful debate which characterised the campaign and so energised the electorate continue to dominate the country's political climate (McGarvey, 2015: 34), as this paper has already suggested, it would therefore seem conceptually sound to at least consider it possible that the Referendum has too had a positive and lasting effect on political participation in Scotland. Certainly, even a brief investigation unearths figures which suggest that such an effect has been felt - for example, the much publicised surge in SNP membership, with a fourfold increase in the weeks after the Referendum followed by a continued increase to current numbers of approximately 125,000 (McLaverty *et al.*, 2015: 18). Of course, people can participate in politics in a number of ways, and the burgeoning SNP membership illustrates how people in Scotland have opted to participate by joining a political party, a more traditional act. However, much of the analysis on political participation during the Referendum campaign has focused on the importance of new, perhaps even unconventional, methods of political participation (Featherstone, 2015;

Keating, 2015; McGarvey, 2015; Tierney, 2015; McLaverty *et al.*, 2015): for example, signing petitions and attending organised political rallies.

Early literature on political participation in all Western democracies has drawn a distinction between conventional electoral participation – voting in elections, becoming a member of a political party - and the unconventional means of participation noted previously. It will be argued later in this paper, however, that these categories should be renamed traditional and non-traditional participation respectively. The literature has highlighted the tremendous decline of traditional participation in democracies across the world (Mahendran and Cook, 2007; Gibson and Cantijoch, 2013; Sheppard, 2015) – and, furthermore, it has been argued that this shift has been as a direct result of people opting alternatively to become involved in politics in the new and modern ways available (Quaranta, 2012: 251; Dalton, 2002: 33).

While it is undeniable that there has been a trend towards decreased traditional and increased non-traditional participation in recent times – perhaps most noticeably here in the UK, with a 15% decline and 15% increase respectively between the years 1980 and 2002 (Goroshit, 2016: 27) – there is as yet no evidence to suggest that the decline in traditional participation is necessarily *because* of the increase in non-traditional forms. It must not be forgotten that the desertion of traditional modes of political participation has been considered a problem since long before the internet or other new means became prevalent (Kalaycioglu and Turan, 1981: 124).

Rather, it is the argument of this paper that we could see high levels of both types of political participation simultaneously, and we must consider that the decline in traditional participation could just as likely be down to consistently low levels of trust in political institutions, for example (Houses of Parliament, 2015: 1). While it is true that we witnessed record levels of

participation in non-traditional ways during the referendum, it is also true that electoral turnout for the event was the highest in recorded history – and yet academic focus has so far been almost solely on the long-term effects of the Referendum on unconventional participation. This paper will fill an important gap by aiming to discover whether the Referendum has also increased traditional participation in Scotland.

Firstly, the paper will conduct a more thorough review of the literature on this subject. The literature review will in turn analyse the debate surrounding the measurement of political participation, the theory behind the effects of referendums on participation, and identify important gaps in the literature in the Scottish case. Next, the methodology section will outline the paper's research questions, detailing how this paper intends to achieve its aims through the use of quantitative statistical analysis, and the subsequent results section will present the study's findings. The discussion section will analyse in greater detail the study's findings, aligning them with the theory outlined in the literature review. Finally, the paper will argue that there is clear evidence of a positive effect on traditional participation in Scotland following the Independence Referendum; however, due to the little time that has passed since the event, many of the findings did not prove to be statistically significant.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

How Should Political Participation be Understood?

For as long as there has been democracy, there has been a need for political participation. Indeed, the very theoretic foundation of democracy necessitates the rule of the people, whether that be directly or through elected representatives, and without active participation democracy would cease any longer to exist. One might be forgiven for assuming that there would therefore be a comprehensive and universally accepted definition of political participation; however, this could not be further from the truth. For some, political participation should simply be understood as "all citizens' activities that aim at influencing political decisions" (Institute for Social Research and Analysis, 2004: 18); for others, a definition acknowledging only the intention to influence political decisions fails to grasp that people often participate as an act of commitment to social order, to do what they believe is required of a good citizen (Dalton, 2008: 78).

Many other competing definitions have also been offered, and as such it has become difficult to understand what one really means when talking about 'political participation'. What is clear, however, is that participating today is simply not as straightforward as casting your vote, and people can and do choose to participate in a variety of others ways. Nevertheless, it has proven difficult for political scientists to conceptualise political participation in such a way that the multitude of participatory means currently available can be accommodated, and many definitions have proven to be heavily contested (Sheppard, 2015: 1).

Before we can understand the nature of political participation today, it is important to track the historic development of the concept, to analyse the contestations offered against traditional definitions of political participation as electorates evolved and what these suggest about how it can be defined today. If we take the moment when Anthony Downs (1957) published his renowned 'An Economic Theory of Democracy' as the start point for this analysis, it becomes possible to see how quickly our understanding of political participation has changed over the past sixty years. Downs' understood participation in politics to centre on the act of turning out to vote, in line with the general consensus in the years before 1957 and for several years afterwards. However, traditional interpretations of what it meant to participate in politics were soon challenged significantly in the work of Verba and Nie, who noted that people had evolved and, more than simply voting, were increasingly looking to become involved in political demonstrations and to contact public officials. Participation was now considered multipurpose, "more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take" (Verba and Nie, 1972: 2).

This argument was later expanded on by Barnes and Kasse (1979), who suggested that the various political activities people were engaged in should be placed in two separate categories: conventional and unconventional. Conventional participation, it was said, should constitute traditional activities such as voting and becoming a member of a political party, and unconventional participation should encompass activities such as petition signing, attending demonstrations and industrial strikes. Barnes and Kasse also suggested that political participation was no longer taking part exclusively within the realms of political institutions, or to influence political actors alone, but rather had evolved in such a way that people were now looking to apply political pressure on other institutions, including large private corporations.

Recent conceptualisations of political participation have opted to abandon this distinction, arguing that 'unconventional' is a term which has become obsolete in light of many of the activities it has been used to describe now appearing very commonplace amongst electorates (Talo and Mannarini, 2015: 801). Instead, recent conceptual frameworks have amalgamated conventional and unconventional means of participation into a unitary category in order to draw attention to a new category of participation which has until recently been largely neglected (Fatke, 2016: 671). Two such studies were conducted by Teorell, Torcal and Montero (2007) and by Ekman and Amna (2012).

In the first study by Teorell and his colleagues, the category 'visible participation' was suggested (comprising conventional electoral participation and party activity, as well as unconventional consumer participation, protest activity and contact activity) alongside a new category of invisible participation, such as reading newspapers or other means of gathering political knowledge. The second study by Ekman and Amna sought to build upon this work by suggesting a further dimension: anti-political participation. Until recently, typologies of political participation had failed to realise that disengagement could take two forms: passive and active. Citizens who have no interest in politics and fail to participate can be said to be exhibiting apolitical behaviour, while citizens disgusted by politics and actively avoiding participating can be said to exhibit anti-political behaviour. It is certainly important to consider this behaviour within a framework of political participation, as this disengagement can often lead to violent protests in financially disadvantaged areas, such as those which broke out across England in August 2011, most definitely a form of political participation (Talo and Mannarini, 2015: 802).

While this paper commends recent work seeking to establish a single conceptual framework for understanding political participation, it argues that the new framework is weakened by its neglecting completely the conventional-unconventional dichotomy first introduced by Barnes and Kasse. It may be true that what was once considered unconventional political participation may now be far more commonplace - and for this reason this paper proposes that the terms traditional and non-traditional be utilised instead - but 'visible participation' must continue to be divided into two distinct categories. Indeed, we are living in a time when traditional forms of political participation are in great decline but non-traditional forms continue to become more widespread; and as it would seem what impacts on one does not necessarily impact on the other (Pattie and Johnston, 2009: 262) it is arguably imperative to continue studying each separately. It is the aim of this paper to investigate whether the 2014 Independence Referendum has increased electoral participation in Scotland, and so it will continue to categorise visible political participation in terms of traditional and non-traditional means.

Do Referendums Affect Political Participation?

The first section of this literature review sought to analyse the ways in which we understand political participation: the varying dimensions that must be considered when attempting to measure it, the difference between traditional and non-traditional methods of participation. So far, however, the paper has not considered what influences political participation amongst citizens: why some are more inclined than others to participate; why certain forms of participation might prove more widespread than others at certain points in time; how different factors have different impacts on different means of participation; and how we might see increases or decreases in political participation in the future.

Several different studies have investigated which factors influence levels of political participation. Conducted by Morris Rosenberg, perhaps one of the earliest studies came at a time when the focus of political participation studies was primarily voter turnout. Rosenberg (1955: 350) argued that turnout would depend on how futile the electorate found the political activity, for example in a constituency where it was deemed to be a safe seat in a first-past-the-post electoral system. Eulau and Schneider (1956: 130) soon expanded on the work of Rosenberg, firstly by introducing the now widely used term 'political efficacy'. Political efficacy should be understood as the feeling that one's political action can or has had an impact on the political process. Participation can suffer not only when citizens feel powerless within themselves but also when they feel defiant but blame politicians, viewing them as aloof and elitist. This distinction has proven significant in paving the way for further work in this field, as it has highlighted that the answers to trends in political participation lie not only with the electorate but also in the ways political institutions are structured and political actors conduct themselves.

Indeed, studies have provided a clear indication that there is growing dissatisfaction with representative democracy and its political institutions across the world (Dalton, Burkin and Drummond, 2001: 141; Belotti, 2015: 650; Burnside, Herbert and Curtis, 2003: 9) - and particularly in the recent UK context, the Eurobarometer (2014: 649) found that 68% of respondents had little confidence in their national governments. It is of little wonder, then, that political participation has dwindled. Recent studies have found that where political elites can create an environment in which citizens feel central and important to the political process, for example through the use of invitation to participate schemes and campaigns to increase social engagement on social media (Pattie and Johnston 2009: 261), non-traditional political participation can be observed to increase noticeably (Williamson, 2010: 15). While

it is clear that the literature on this topic has progressed the study of political participation, correctly arguing that both the electorate and the political environment can impact upon the general level of participation, recent contributions have focussed too much on the case of non-traditional participation and neglected traditional forms. Any study today should acknowledge that, although significant, the growing prevalence of non-traditional methods of participation must not prevent us from analysing too the trends in traditional methods - in the case of this paper, the factors which increase and hinder electoral participation and involvement with political parties.

Understanding the factors which influence electoral participation is of course important, but it is simply not enough if we are unsure of how to do anything about it. Building upon these studies, political scientists have since sought to examine what measures can be put in place to boost political participation, to determine instruments of use to political actors. Of particular interest to this paper, an investigative study into the impact of the Independence Referendum on Scotland's subsequent levels of electoral participation and searching for an underlying theoretical justification, is the works of several academics which have found evidence for the positive effects of direct democracy, particularly referendums (Freitag and Stadelmann-Steffen, 2010; Smith and Tolbert, 2007; Reilly, 2010; Kriesi, 2005; National Centre of Competence in Research, 2013).

Referendums can be defined as "procedures which give an electorate a direct vote on specific political, constitutional or legislative issues" (IDEA, 2008: 10). A cynic may view referendums as just another vote amongst many, but many observers have found that voters have reacted positively to their growing use. In particular, it has been argued that the deliberative environment which accompanies a two-sided referendum campaign encourages

engagement with the issue at hand, improves voter knowledge and encourages long-term participation (Tierney, 2012: 285). The campaign offers greater opportunities to become involved and, arguably allowing voters to develop a political consciousness, creates an active and informed electorate (Tolbert, McNeal and Smith, 2003: 23-24).

Moreover, it has been suggested that referendums have a great impact on the factors which are the biggest indicators of levels of electoral participation – that is, political efficacy and faith in political institutions and actors. Referendums counteract the feelings of uselessness felt by many voters because their decisions are believed to carry direct weight and influence a policy outcome (Mendelsohn and Cutler, 2000: 686), and voters faith in institutions is increased because the direct vote provides governments the mandate to rule on behalf of the people (House of Lords, 2010: 13). Furthermore, they are said to have a similarly positive effect on both identification and involvement with political parties, again a more traditional method of political participation. Parties become more visible over the course of a referendum campaign, particularly smaller parties who gain a bigger platform than in ordinary elections (Fatke, 2014: 249); and the generally increased political activity, it is argued, will inevitably result in increased party participation alongside other forms of participation (Donovan, Tolbert and Smith, 2009: 101).

Literature scoping provides a convincing argument to suggest that referendums have a positive influence on political participation, but not all political scientists agree. Rather, it has been noted that referendums can too have a negative impact on participatory levels, firstly due to its overly simplified structure to produce only a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ outcome. It has been argued that this structure is too limited, and as such encourages a polarisation of the

electorate which would not generally be witnessed in a general election, discouraging non-aligned voters from participating (Mendelsohn and Cutler, 2000: 685).

Moreover, reducing such complex issues as constitutional structure to a simple ‘yes-no’ dichotomy produces severe implementation issues for governments following the vote (Dalton, Burklin and Drummond, 2001: 150) - One only has to look at the outrage following the recent EU referendum in the UK and the subsequent debate surrounding the timescale of the exit, as well as whether ministers should negotiate a ‘soft’ or ‘hard’ Brexit to see this point in action. In these circumstances, when voters feel their democratic voice is being ignored, political efficacy can decrease, reducing participation. Detractors of referendums have also pointed to the damaging effect it can have on voters who find themselves on the losing side, the minority whose views become overridden by the majority sentiment and can become despondent with politics (Matsusaka, 2005: 186). Certainly, the literature proves divided on this matter, and it would seem that each individual case must be studied on its own merit to determine whether a positive or negative effect on participation will be found.

Placing This Study: The Scottish Case and Important Gaps in the Literature

So far, the literature reviewed here on referendums and how they affect political participation has merely provided arguments and evidence to suggest that these effects could be both positive and negative, but shown little in the way of identifying what effects one might expect to find at any given time. In order to commence a study into the positive effects of the Scottish Independence Referendum on political participation, a convincing theoretical argument underpinning it would need to be identified.

Referendums can vary greatly in type and scale, from deciding on relatively small and mundane local government issues to national and constitutional issues (Qvortrup, 2015: 37), and since 1987 referendums have been used in 44.3% of the 194 instances of constitutional change worldwide (Widner, 2008: 1525). Given the widespread use of referendums to resolve constitutional issues, much study has been conducted on them, including their impact on political participation. It has been found that referendums on ordinary issues tend to have lower turnout and fail to engage voters to the same extent as referendums on constitutional issues, which prove more often to have high impact and turnout (House of Lords, 2010: 16). Similarly, studies into the use of direct democracy in the Swiss Cantons have found evidence of the negative effect of referendums which occur very frequently (Freitag and Stadelmann-Steffen, 2010: 479), argued to be attributable to such effects as voter fatigue, decreased significance, overload of participatory avenues and the extreme pressure such regular votes put on the electorate to gather adequate enough knowledge to vote responsibly (Cebula and Coombs, 2011: 2825). Moreover, a high volume of referendums can potentially create an unstable political environment, whereby decisions are never easily made and much hinges on the outcome of polarising referendum campaigns (IDEA, 2013: 45).

This analysis begs the question: how might the Scottish Independence Referendum have impacted on political participation? Certainly, it sought to determine the constitutional setup of the UK, and based on the analysis previously discussed it might be anticipated that the event has had a positive effect on political participation. In addition, while some may draw attention to the fact that almost immediately following the Scottish Referendum another UK-wide vote on the country's membership within the EU was held, referendums remain relatively scarce in modern Britain, and before the vote in 2014 voters in Scotland had only been asked to participate in 3 different referendums since the 1970s (Tierney, 2015: 227). It

would prove difficult, therefore, to argue that voters in the Independence Referendum could possibly have suffered from voter fatigue as a result of an abnormally high frequency of referendums. As such, there would appear to be a sound theoretical basis for the paper's prediction that the Independence Referendum will have increased traditional political participation in Scotland.

The Referendum received much coverage over the course of its campaign, and there has been a considerable volume of work published in its aftermath. Much of the work supports the prediction that the Independence Referendum would see increased political activity, particularly due to the emotive issue it aimed to address, and documents the evidence witnessed during the campaign. Commentators have drawn attention to the high turnout at the polls and the high levels of engagement witnessed online and offline amongst citizens (Featherstone, 2015; Tierney, 2015; Mahendran and Cook, 2007; National Collective, 2014). Some have even gone beyond the campaign itself, and suggested that the Referendum would appear to have had a lasting impact on political engagement and participation, citing the large percentage of the 1607 petitions the Scottish Parliament has received since September 2014, and much of them by individuals (The Scottish Parliament, 2016: 4). Other studies have looked at the impact of the Referendum on the political behaviours of young people using social media (McGarvey, 2015).

However, while the record numbers of people who turned out to vote in the Referendum have been lauded as a tremendous achievement for democracy, and while one study by the Electoral Commission (2014a: 65) suggested that 97% of first time voters in the Referendum aged 16-17 felt strongly that they would vote again in the future, no studies have yet looked at how electoral participation may have been impacted in the long-term. Similarly, no studies

have assessed the Referendum's impact on activity attached to political parties, another traditional form of participation.

This paper will therefore aim to fill a gap in the current literature on the Referendum's effect on political participation in Scotland by analysing particularly its effect on traditional participation. It is the argument of this paper that studies on traditional participation have been scarce due to the abandonment in the academic community of the distinction between 'conventional' and 'unconventional' political participation, and studies have been directed towards non-traditional areas where participation has been growing. Traditional participation remains fundamental to the functioning of democracy, and we must understand the reasons for its decline and the ways in which we can hope to improve it. It may be only three years since Scotland decided to remain part of the UK, and the true effects of this monumental event may likely not have been fully felt yet, but this paper's findings should contribute to the study of both Scottish politics and of political participation.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Deciding What to Measure

As the literature review conducted in the previous chapter has demonstrated, the study of political participation can be extremely complex, for citizens can take part in politics in a variety of ways, many of which have changed over the years. Having analysed the work of Ekman and Amna (2012), it is the argument of this paper that ‘visible’ forms of participation would be best understood if divided into ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional activities. This study wished to analyse the effects of the Independence Referendum on traditional political participation, which for so long has been in decline.

It was initially thought that a side-by-side comparison of the relative levels of traditional and non-traditional participation would be most appropriate, with a focus on traditional participation and how we could expect future levels to reach that of non-traditional methods, but data collection for this type of study soon became problematic. For example, attempts were made to garner data on the number of legally organised political demonstrations before and after the Referendum. An initial email enquiry was made to Police Scotland, enquiring whether this information was either available in the public domain or was obtainable subject to a FOI request. This initial enquiry was referred to another department. A Police Inspector, who did not wish to be named but confirmed I could use his reply, advised that this information was not recorded in a reliable form because public demonstrations and rallies were rarely recorded as being 'political' in nature. Due to historical difficulties in gaining police support for policing ‘political’ demonstrations, campaigners opt to declare a different purpose and it would prove almost impossible to make sense of any available data.

Similar issues became apparent when efforts were made to gather data on contact made with elected representatives, as the information they hold in connection with their constituency and political activities is not subject to FOI legislation (Parliament UK, 2017). As such, it was decided that the only conceivable way to conduct this study would be to analyse traditional political participation in isolation. To do this, two separate measures were chosen: electoral participation (the act of turning out to vote) and attachment/involvement with political parties.

Measuring electoral participation, it was decided, would involve an analysis of electoral turnout figures for all Scottish Parliament, General and European Parliament elections conducted in Scotland since the inception of the Scottish Parliament in 1999. For the second measure, it was thought initially that the analysis would be of political party membership figures in Scotland pre and post-Referendum, but reliable figures on party membership would seem not to exist. They are under no legal obligation to publicly disclose their membership figures, and although some parties choose to do so, like the SNP (Ramsay, 2014), other parties such as the Conservatives are less forthcoming and the most recent estimates on their membership figures are from late 2013 (Keen and Audickas, 2016: 3-4). Furthermore, there exists no uniform definition of what it means to be a 'party member', and different parties view membership in different ways: some make distinctions between 'party members', 'party supporters' and 'members of the party's volunteer network', while some consider any person signed on their ranks within any of these capacities a fully fledged member (Bennie, 2013: 7).

For all these reasons, it would not be possible to conduct a reliable study of party membership in Scotland. It was decided that this variable could be measured, however, by assessing the strength of the attachment Scottish voters had to political parties and by

monitoring the amount of voters who recently participated in a political party's election campaign. The remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to explaining how this study was carried out.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Having decided broadly what to study, it was next imperative to decide exactly what it was the paper would look to find out. The initial overarching research question decided upon for this study was:

1. Has the referendum on Scottish independence increased traditional political participation in Scotland?

In order to answer this question, two further research questions had to be devised:

2. Has the referendum on Scottish independence increased electoral participation in Scotland?
3. Has the referendum on Scottish independence increased both the electorate's strength of association with political parties and its involvement in their activities?

Having now decided the research questions which would be the basis of this study, it was important to identify what the expected answers to these questions would be. Ultimately, underpinned by the theoretical basis as uncovered during the literature view, it was the prediction of this paper that the Referendum would cause a significant increase in the level of

traditional political participation in Scotland. In order to test this prediction, the following testable hypotheses and null hypotheses for the study were drafted:

Hypothesis 1 = A statistically significant increase in electoral participation will be observed in Scotland following the referendum on Scottish independence.

Null Hypothesis 1 = No statistically significant increase in electoral participation will be observed and any difference will be due to chance factors.

Hypothesis 2 = A substantial increase will be observed in the proportion of Scottish respondents in the Audit of Political Engagement Survey who feel either a strong or fairly strong attachment to a political party following the referendum on Scottish independence.

Null Hypothesis 2 = No substantial increase will be observed in the proportion of respondents with a very strong or fairly strong attachment to a political party, and any difference will be due to chance factors.

Hypothesis 3 = A statistically significant increase will be observed in the proportion of Scottish respondents in the Annual Audit of Political Engagement Survey who report having taken an active part in a political party's election campaign in the previous twelve months following the referendum on Scottish independence.

Null Hypothesis 3 = No statistically significant increase will be observed in the proportion of respondents who report having taken an active part in a political party's election campaign, and any difference will be due to chance factors.

Research Design: Data, Participants, Materials and Procedure

In order to test the three experimental hypotheses, it was decided that a three-part quantitative statistical analysis would have to be carried out. This study took the form of a longitudinal design. A longitudinal study allowed for the impact of the Referendum to be examined, as it is effective in determining variable patterns over time. To conduct the statistical analysis, IBM's SPSS Software was utilised. In addition, the Tableau Business Intelligence and Analytics Software was used to draft figures and diagrams which were not possible in the SPSS programme.

The first test analysed data gathered by The Electoral Commission on electoral turnout in each SP, General and EP election conducted in Scotland since the inception of the inaugural SP in 1999. This includes: the SP elections in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2016; the GEs in 2001, 2005, 2010 and 2015; and the EP elections in 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014 (See **Appendix A**). Local Council elections were not considered for this statistical analysis, as no such election had occurred in Scotland since the Independence Referendum and no potential impact could be observed, the next elections not being held until May this year (Curtice, 2017). The data collected consisted of the number of eligible voters in the electorate, the number of voters who turned out to vote, the number of voters who failed to participate, the overall turnout as a percentage of the eligible electorate, and the change from the previous election as a percentage.

The independent variable in this study was the Independence Referendum, and the dependent variable the electoral participation in each election. In order to test Hypothesis 1, elections were separated into two groups: those which occurred before the Referendum and those which came after. It should be noted here that while the 2014 European Parliament election took place on the 22nd May, before the Referendum in September, for the purpose of this test it was grouped with those elections which took part after due to the potential impact its campaign would have had on the election at the time. An Independent Samples t-test was conducted to test turnout levels before and after the Referendum.

This paper also wished to measure political party activity before and after the Referendum. This would require two separate statistical analyses, both using data acquired from the same source. Survey data was acquired from The Hansard Society's AAPE from the years 2006-2016 inclusive. Each year's publication provides survey data gathered in the final months of the previous year; and so for the purposes of both statistical analyses the figures were imputed to represent the year prior to the year of publication. The surveys were carried out by the expert polling company Ipsos MORI from 2006-2011 inclusive, as well as in 2014 and 2016, by TNS BMRB between 2012-13, and by GfK NOP in 2015 (The Hansard Society, 2016a: 51). Nevertheless, the requirements set out for the polling contractor remained constant for each Audit survey: 1,000 face-to-face in-home interviews with a representative quota sample of GB adults aged 18+ and weighted to the national population profile (The Hansard Society, 2016a: 52). Each of these tests were interested in the responses of Scottish participants only (see **Appendix B**).

The first test analysed the responses of Scottish respondents to the question 'would you call yourself a very strong, fairly strong, not very strong, or not a supporter at all of any political

party?' from 2013-2015 (see **Appendix C**). This was the only years in which this question had been asked. In order to conduct this analysis, these responses were condensed into only two categories: very or fairly strong attachment, and not very strong or not at all (see **Appendix D**). The independent variable for this study was again the Independence Referendum, and the dependent variable was the responses of Scottish participants to the aforementioned question. Due to the limited data available here, no in-depth statistical analysis was conducted using the SPSS programme, but instead a series of figures and diagrams were used to demonstrate the general trends in support for political parties in the years following the Referendum compared with immediately before it in 2013.

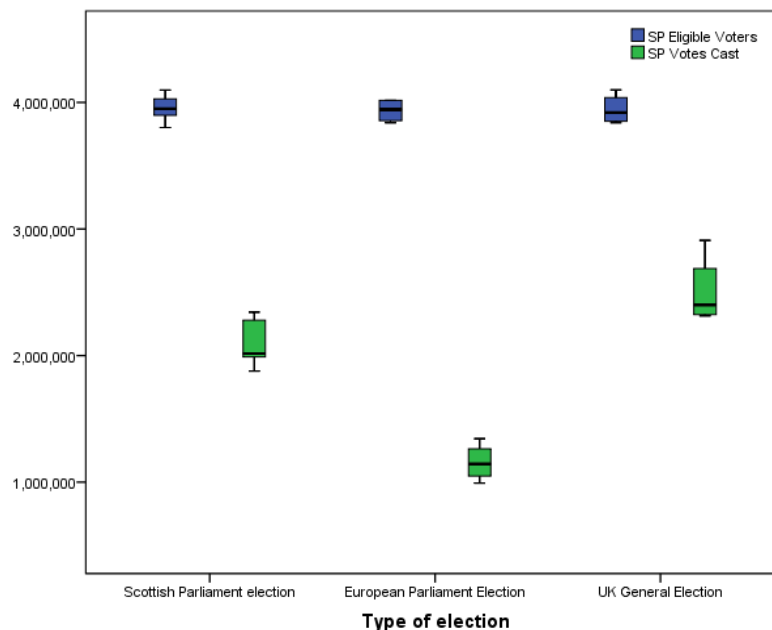
For the final test, the responses of Scottish respondents who confirmed having 'taken an active part in a political party's campaign' in the Audit when asked the question 'In the last 12 months have you done any of the following to influence decisions, laws or policies?' for the years 2005-2015 (see **Appendix E**). Again, the level of participation in the years following the Referendum was compared to the level of participation in the years before it. The independent variable was also the Independence Referendum, and the dependent variable was the proportion of Scottish participants who confessed to taking an active part in a political party's campaign in the past twelve months. As was the case in the first test of this study, an Independent Samples t-test was conducted to test for any increase in participation following the Referendum. The following chapter will chart the results of these tests, in each case referring back to the hypotheses laid out in this chapter.

Chapter Four: Results

Hypothesis 1

The first part of this study sought to assess levels of electoral participation following the Referendum in Scotland. Rather than statistically analysing the findings immediately, a better understanding of the data can be obtained if it is displayed in a variety of different graphical formats. **Figure 1** below demonstrates first why each type of election in Scotland must be studied separately.

Figure 1 - Electorate Size and Number of Votes Cast by Type of Election

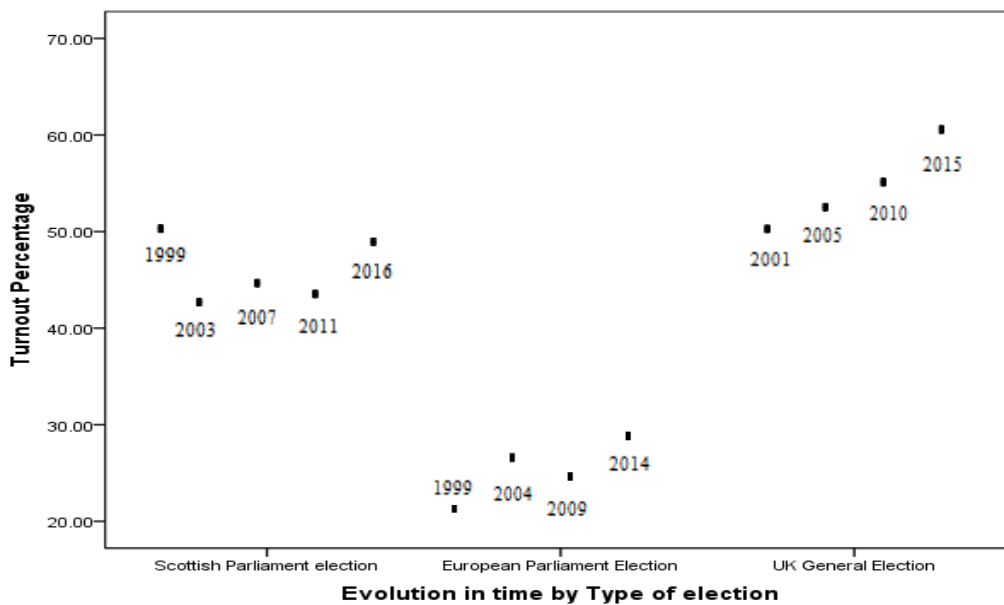


Indeed, **Figure 1** demonstrates that while the available electorate tends to remain fairly stable across election type, the number of voters who turn out at the polls varies greatly - from this sample, as low as 991,804 in EP elections and as high as 2,910,465 in GEs. Therefore, with

such variance in turnout, it is evident that no reliable study on trends in electoral participation in Scotland could be conducted unless each type of election be analysed in isolation.

The first hypothesis to be tested was: a statistically significant increase in electoral participation will be observed in Scotland following the referendum. The accompanying null hypothesis was: no statistically significant increase in electoral participation will be observed, and any difference will be due to chance factors. Taking the measure of electoral participation as the overall turnout as a percentage of the eligible electorate, **Figure 2** below begins to help us see whether any such effect can be felt for any of the three election types.

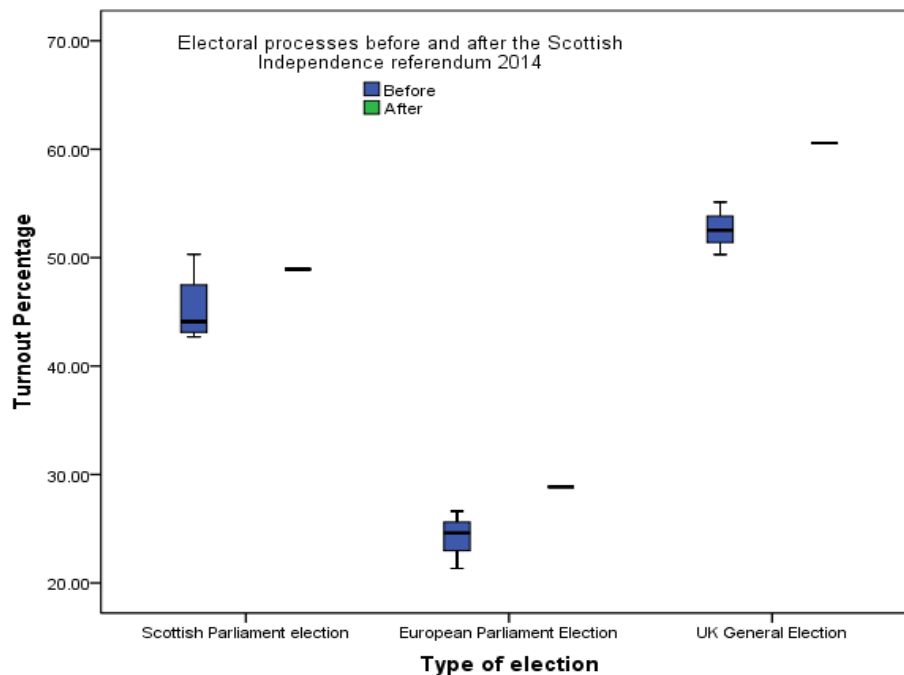
Figure 2 - Electoral Turnout for Each Election in Scotland by Election Type



From **Figure 2**, we can see that electoral turnout in the 2016 SP Election, two years after the Independence Referendum, had increased by over 5% compared to the previous election in 2011, and was in fact higher than in every other year with the exception of the SP's inaugural election in 1999. Furthermore, both the 2014 EP and the 2015 GE produced a higher turnout as a proportion of the eligible electorate than any election that had taken place before them –

they each saw a 4.9% and 6.3% on the election immediately before respectively. This would suggest that evidence may have been found to support the experimental hypothesis. To illustrate this effect even more clearly, **Figure 3** below makes a comparison between the average electoral turnout as a percentage of the eligible electorate before and after the Referendum for each election type.

Figure 3 – Average Electoral Turnout Before and After Referendum by Election Type

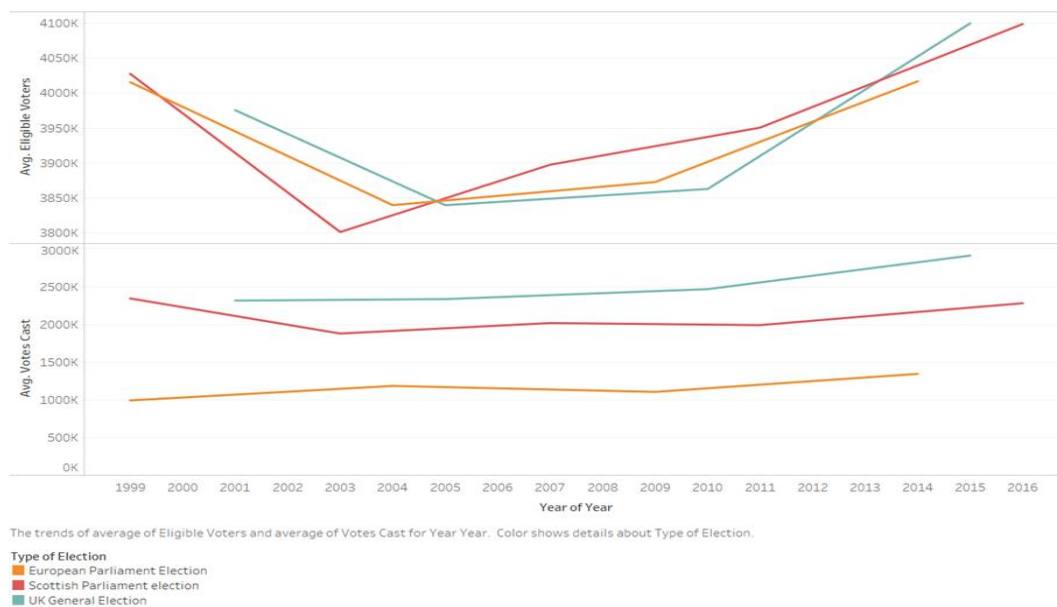


In **Figure 3**, it is clear that the average turnout in both EP and GEs which occurred after the Independence Referendum proved higher than in the elections which occurred before it. However, while electoral turnout in SP elections after the Referendum has proven higher than the average turnout in elections before it since 1999, unlike in the cases of EP elections and GEs where electoral turnout after the Referendum was higher than *any* case prior, in SP elections the highest individual turnout can be observed in 1999, long before the Referendum. It is important to note, however, that this was the first ever election for the SP, and as such

could be argued to sit as an outlier result in this sample. All things considered, again it would seem evidence may have been found to support Hypothesis 1.

Before conducting any form of statistical analysis using the SPSS programme, it was important to consider that more could be understood about the trends in electoral participation in Scotland by observing more than just voter turnout as a percentage of the eligible electorate. Rather, **Figure 4** displays the overall evolution of the size of the eligible electorate in Scotland and also the number of votes cast by election type.

Figure 4 – Evolution of Eligible Electorate Size and Total Votes Cast by Election Type



The bottom segment of **Figure 4** charts the general trend in total votes cast for election type since 1999. While remaining relatively stable until around 2012, in line with the announcement of the Independence referendum and the commencement of its associated campaign, the number of votes cast has increased substantially in recent times. Similarly, the number of eligible voters has increased significantly this decade, particularly since 2014.

This could potentially suggest that more people are making the choice to register to vote, and

this could be associated with the positive political engagement experienced over the course of the Referendum campaign. To test the validity of the evidence set out over the course of the previous four figures, an Independent Samples t-test was carried out using SPSS. **Table 1** below displays the results of the first part of the analysis.

Table 1 – A Comparison of Means for Electoral Turnout by Election Type

Group Statistics						
Type of election	Electoral processes before and after the ...	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Scottish Parliament election	Eligible Voters	Before	4	3919331.00	94863.665	47431.833
		After	1	4098462.00	.	.
	Votes Cast	Before	4	2056515.50	199827.580	99913.790
		After	1	2279154.00	.	.
	Turnout Percentage	Before	4	45.2975	3.43312	1.71656
		After	1	48.9400	.	.
European Parliament Election	Eligible Voters	Before	3	3909442.00	93235.154	53829.342
		After	1	4016735.00	.	.
	Votes Cast	Before	3	1093158.33	96181.408	55530.362
		After	1	1343483.00	.	.
	Turnout Percentage	Before	3	24.1900	2.66118	1.53644
		After	1	28.8600	.	.
UK General Election	Eligible Voters	Before	3	3892791.00	72497.691	41856.562
		After	1	4099532.00	.	.
	Votes Cast	Before	3	2371122.67	82594.653	47686.045
		After	1	2910465.00	.	.
	Turnout Percentage	Before	3	52.6433	2.42199	1.39834
		After	1	60.5700	.	.

Table 1 provides a comparison of means for the number of eligible voters, the number of votes cast and voter turnout as a percentage of the valid electorate. The mean is the average of the figures, a calculated central value, and allows researchers to compare effects and relationships between variables. Once again, the distinction between elections ‘before’ and ‘after’ is made in order to test whether any increase in electoral participation can be observed following the Independence Referendum. **Table 1** shows that in every type of election, in seeming support of the experimental hypothesis, the mean value of eligible voters and number of votes cast both increased following the Referendum; however, the numbers involved are so large that it proves difficult to draw any conclusions regarding the scale of the change. Perhaps the effect of the referendum is most visible in the percentage turnout of

voters in each of the election types – the mean after the event proving 3.65% higher in SP elections, 4.67% higher in EP elections and 7.93% higher in GEs. In order to test whether this evidence was statistically significant, the second part of the t-test had to be analysed, displayed in **Table 2** below.

Table 2 – Independent Samples Test for Electoral Turnout by Election Type

Type of election		Independent Samples Test ^a									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper	
Scottish Parliament election	Eligible Voters	Equal variances assumed	.	.	-1.689	3	.190	-179131.000	106060.802	-516663.807	158401.807
		Equal variances not assumed	.	.	.	.	.	-179131.000	.	.	.
	Votes Cast	Equal variances assumed	.	.	-.997	3	.392	-222638.500	223414.026	-933641.641	488364.641
		Equal variances not assumed	.	.	.	.	.	-222638.500	.	.	.
	Turnout Percentage	Equal variances assumed	.	.	-.949	3	.413	-3.64250	3.83834	-15.85782	8.57282
		Equal variances not assumed	.	.	.	.	.	-3.64250	.	.	.
European Parliament Election	Eligible Voters	Equal variances assumed	.	.	-.997	2	.424	-107293.000	107658.683	-570510.926	355924.926
		Equal variances not assumed	.	.	.	.	.	-107293.000	.	.	.
	Votes Cast	Equal variances assumed	.	.	-2.254	2	.153	-250324.667	111060.724	-728180.394	227531.061
		Equal variances not assumed	.	.	.	.	.	-250324.667	.	.	.
	Turnout Percentage	Equal variances assumed	.	.	-1.520	2	.268	-4.67000	3.07287	-17.89149	8.55149
		Equal variances not assumed	.	.	.	.	.	-4.67000	.	.	.
UK General Election	Eligible Voters	Equal variances assumed	.	.	-2.470	2	.132	-206741.000	83713.123	-566929.498	153447.498
		Equal variances not assumed	.	.	.	.	.	-206741.000	.	.	.
	Votes Cast	Equal variances assumed	.	.	-5.655	2	.030	-539342.333	95372.090	-949695.318	-128989.348
		Equal variances not assumed	.	.	.	.	.	-539342.333	.	.	.
	Turnout Percentage	Equal variances assumed	.	.	-2.834	2	.105	-7.92667	2.79667	-19.95978	4.10644
		Equal variances not assumed	.	.	.	.	.	-7.92667	.	.	.

a. No statistics are computed for one or more split files

Assuming $p < 0.05$, **Table 2** indicates that the only statistically significant result in this test can be found in the increase in the average number of votes cast in GEs after the Referendum than before it. In all other tests, no statistical significance was found. As such, the experimental hypothesis must be rejected, and support for the null hypothesis has been found.

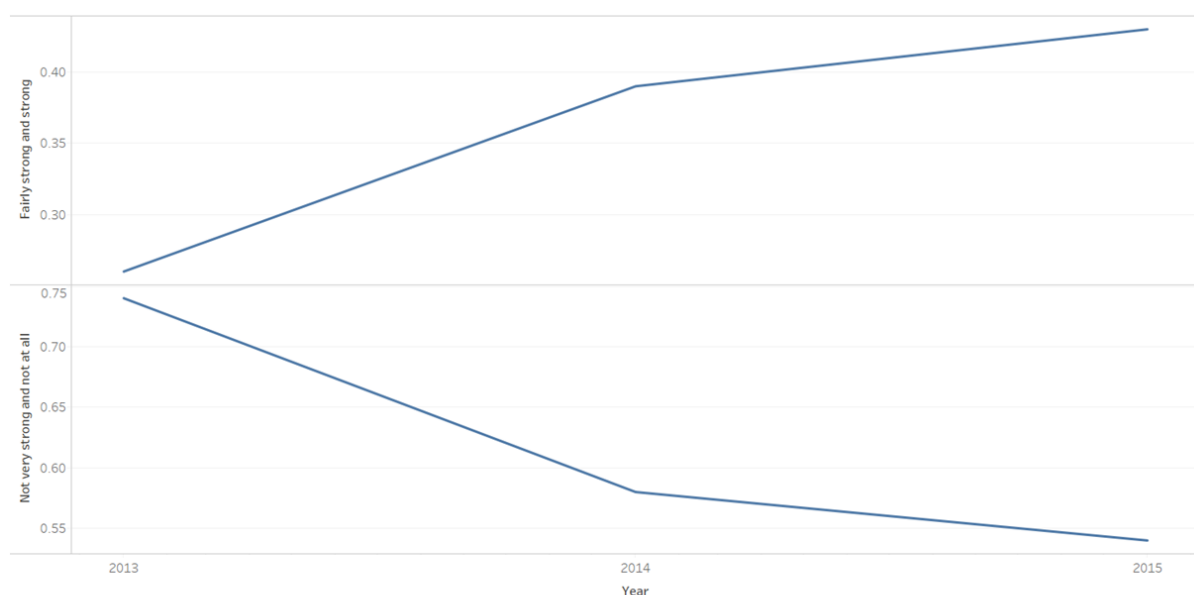
Hypothesis 2

Parts two and three of this analysis involved analysing political participation within the context of political parties. Involving much less data than in test three, this second test involved no Independent Samples t-test for statistical significance, but instead interpretation

of the data through graphical displays. The purpose of this second test was merely to identify whether a change in the electorate's association with and strength of attachment to political parties in Scotland can be observed following the Referendum, comparing data for the two years following the event to the year immediately prior. If a trend could be identified, it was the purpose of the third test in this study to identify whether increased strength of attachment to political parties had subsequently translated into increased activity associated with political parties.

The experimental hypothesis was: a substantial increase will be observed in the proportion of Scottish respondents in the AAPE Survey who feel either a strong or fairly strong attachment to a political party as a result of the referendum on Scottish independence, and the null hypothesis was that no substantial increase would be observed, and any difference would be due to chance factors. **Figure 5** below charts the trends as indicated by the available data.

Figure 5 - Trends in Strength of Attachment To Any Political Party: Very and Fairly Strong vs. Weak and Not At All



The trends of average of Fairly strong and strong - attachment with a political party and sum of Not very strong and not at all - attachment with a political party for Year Year.

Figure 5 illustrates that, in the year prior to the Referendum, some 74% of respondents claimed to have either a weak attachment to a political party or did not possess one at all, compared to the 26% of respondents who claimed to have either a very or fairly strong attachment. However, in 2014, only three months after the Referendum vote in September, a substantial swing could be observed towards the 'very and fairly' strong category, and the gap between the two had reduced to 19%. Moreover, the following year the gap had reduced yet further to only 11%.

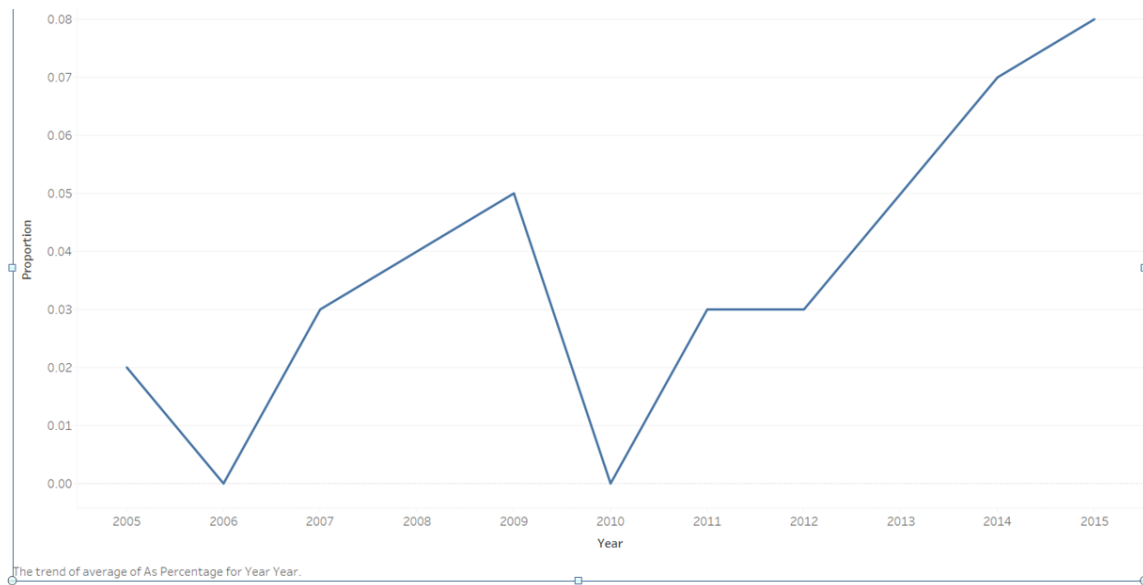
These increases in the number of Scots professing to have a very or fairly strong attachment to a political party are substantial, and support Hypothesis 2. The greatest increase was observable in the immediate aftermath of the Referendum, but the trend continued the following year also. Of course, only so much can be deduced from the available data, and the trend cannot be analysed any further back than 2013. It is for this reason that no test for statistical significance was performed; but nevertheless, such an increase in positive sentiment towards political parties in Scotland arguably justifies a further test to discover whether this has translated into increased activity within the context of political parties amongst the general electorate. The final part of this chapter will be dedicated to the results of this test.

Hypothesis 3

The third and final hypothesis of this study was: a statistically significant increase will be observed in the proportion of Scottish respondents in the AAPE Survey who report having taken an active part in a political party's election campaign in the previous twelve months as a result of the referendum on Scottish independence. The null hypothesis stipulated that no statistically significant increase will be observed and any difference will be due to chance

factors. In this case measuring participation as the percentage of Scottish respondents who confirmed having taken an active part in a political party's election campaign, Figure 6 below charts the trend in participation from 2005-2015 inclusive.

Figure 6 - Percentage of Respondents Who Had Taken an Active Part in a Political Party's Election Campaign, 2005-2015



At first glance, it might seem that there is little to deduce from the data. The level of participation appears to vary greatly from year to year, and while about 5% of respondents report having participated in a party's election campaign in 2009, this drops back down to zero the following year. However, in looking at the figures for 2014 and 2015, after the Referendum, the two highest percentages by far can be observed of the entire ten year period. This would suggest evidence may have been found to support the experimental hypothesis, but statistical analysis would again have to be conducted using SPSS to test these findings. **Table 3** below displays the results of the first part of the Independent Samples t-test conducted.

Table 3 - A Comparison of Means for Participation in a Political Party's Election Campaign Before and After the Referendum

Group Statistics					
	Electoral processes before and after the ...	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Involvement with a political party (%)	Before	8	2.63	1.923	.680
	After	2	7.50	.707	.500

It is shown in **Table 3** that, splitting the data into two groups (before and after the Referendum), the average percentage of respondents who had taken an active part in a party's election campaign was almost 5% higher in the two years after the Referendum than in the 8 years before it. When traditional forms of participation such as activity through political parties has been in decline for so long, and with the average rate of participation languishing under 3% in the 8 years prior to the Referendum, that the rate of participation more than doubled in such a short period of time would seem a substantial increase, and would support the experimental hypothesis. To test the statistical significance of these results, the results of the second part of the Independent Samples t-test had to be analysed, displayed in **Table 4** below.

Table 4 - Independent Samples Test for Participation in A Political Party's Campaign Before and After the Referendum

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Involvement with a political party (%)	Equal variances assumed	1.394	.272	-3.396	8	.009	-4.875	1.435	-8.185	-1.565
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.777	5.452	.002	-4.875	.844	-6.991	-2.759

Under the 'Levene's Test for Equality of Variances' column, the Sig. Figure was 0.272. As this is larger than 0.05, there was an equal level of variance in the data before and after the

Referendum, and the t-test had to be analysed using the information from the top line of **Table 4** (equal variances assumed). As $t = -3.396$ and $p = 0.009$, the results indicate a statistical significance in the mean percentage of respondents who had taken part in a political party's election campaign after the Referendum compared with before. Support for the experimental hypothesis was found, and the null hypothesis could be rejected.

Chapter Five: Discussion

A Critique of the Methodological Approach

The Scottish Independence Referendum took place less than 30 months prior to the time of writing this paper. A study seeking to identify whether a real increase in traditional forms of political participation can be observed following the event, some might argue, would prove futile given the short time since the event (making it difficult to draw any significant conclusions) and the lack of data which would be available for analysis. Indeed, these factors could threaten the validity of the entire study.

This study was carried out in full awareness of these potential drawbacks. It was felt that the positives of conducting the research far outweighed these issues. Waiting until an arbitrary period of time had come to pass since the Referendum could arguably result in valuable insight into its effects on political participation being lost and potentially prevent any possibility of harnessing these effects, of maximising them. It was not the purpose of this study to draw any definitive conclusions regarding the state of political participation following the Referendum, but rather to find whether there exists any early indications that predictions of a 'fundamental change' in Scottish politics and levels of political participation may be justified. Of course, whether this change would prove to be enduring could not be within the remits of any study at this early stage. Subsequent research requires a comparable starting point, and this study aimed to provide this.

For each test, the data used was obtained second-hand. While second-hand data is often easiest to access and the least costly to acquire, it was also felt here that the data selected was

the best to answer the research questions of this study. Indeed, taking into consideration the time available to complete this project, it was felt that any primary data which could be garnered would prove unlikely to be representative of the general population, something imperative to answer the specific research questions in this study. Criticisms levied against second hand data often include: the difficulty in ascertaining the quality of the research, in determining whether the research meets the requirements of the study, and in ensuring that the data includes all the information required (Bell, 2005: 118). Some of these difficulties were experienced in this study, particularly when testing Hypothesis 2, as the AAPE Survey had only gathered information on this topic for three years, and it made drawing any pertinent conclusions particularly difficult.

Nevertheless, this paper maintains that the use of second-hand data was the best option available for this study. The electoral data used was gathered officially by The Electoral Commission and represented the most reliable data available, as often surveys on electoral turnout report a significant gap between those who claim to have voted and those who actually voted, sometimes in the region of 12-13% (Roos and Grant, 1985: 293). Similarly, given the lack of reliable figures available in the public domain regarding the membership of political parties both in Scotland and in the UK as a whole, it was deemed that the AAPE Surveys represented the best option available. The survey ensures a weighted sample is gathered, and interviews are conducted face-to-face to ensure a high response rate. Given the time available, this would not have been possible in any attempts to gather primary data, and the data would have proven too localised given geographical constraints and thus would not have been as reliable.

The study itself was longitudinal in nature and comprised both statistical analysis in the form of a series of Independent Samples t-tests and detailed graphical depictions of the data and trends. Some may criticise this approach for being overly simplistic and lacking in other forms of statistical analysis. However, given the available data and nature of the study (comparing the relevant data before and after the Referendum) it was most appropriate to choose a test which allowed a comparison of two samples in terms of their mean. Other tests would have failed to answer the research questions at hand.

The Results: Can Any Valid Conclusions be Drawn?

This paper sought to test three separate hypotheses. Although evidence was found of an increase in electoral participation following the Referendum, the findings were not statistically significant. Despite having to reject Hypothesis 1, much can be drawn from this study on electoral participation. Indeed, while it was hoped that statistically significant results would be unearthed, it was suspected beforehand that the short amount of time which had elapsed since the Referendum and the limited amount of reliable/representative data available would mean that this would not be the case. A clear increase can be observed in electoral participation following the Referendum, all visible through a variety of different measures.

In the previous chapter, the increase was shown through electoral turnout as a percentage of the total electorate and in the size of the increase of the eligible electorate and number of votes cast. **Figures 7 and 8** below show the increase through a further two different measures.

Figure 7 - Percentage Change in Turnout from Previous Election by Election Type

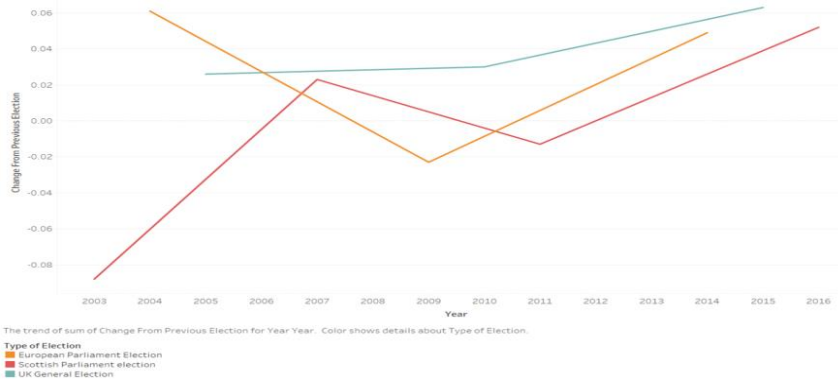
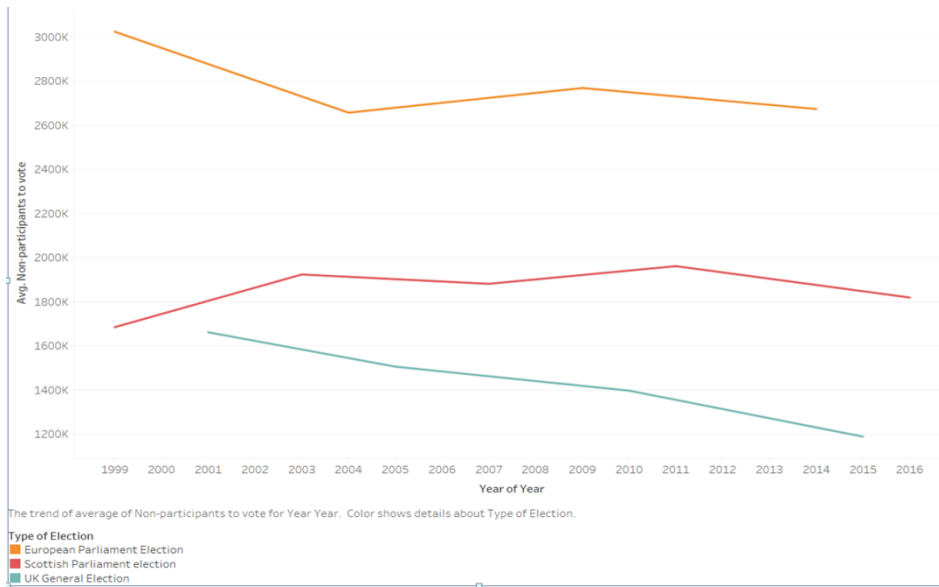


Figure 8 - Evolution of Number of Non-Voters by Election Type



No matter the measure, a trend towards electoral participation can be observed following the Referendum. **Figure 7** illustrates the percentage change in turnout experienced compared to the previous election, and in all three election types there was a sharp increase in the election which came after the Referendum; and in every election type other than SP elections, the increase in the election immediately the after the Referendum was greater than in any previous election. The reason for this is an abnormally high turnout for the inaugural SP

elections in 1999, as with this data omitted SP elections follow the same trend as all other election types. **Figure 8** demonstrates the decrease in the number of non-voters following the Referendum for all three election types, indicating an increase in participation.

Hypothesis 2 was found to be supported in the study, but no test for significance was conducted given the limited data available. The findings remain important, however, in demonstrating just how quickly people's attachments to political parties in Scotland grew both in number and in strength. In the testing of Hypothesis 3, a statistically significant increase *was* found in the number of people who reported having taken an active part in a party's election campaign over the previous twelve months in the two years following the Referendum. As previously mentioned, although desirable, it was thought unlikely that any statistically significant results would be found, and that even one was found is arguably indicative of how large and irrefutable the increase in traditional forms of political participation has been.

It is important to note here that this paper argues it can only be concluded that the results of this test indicate there has been an increase in traditional forms of political participation *following* the Scottish Independence Referendum. On the basis of this investigation, it is not possible to conclude definitively that traditional participation has increased *because* of the Referendum, as direct causation has not been identified. Multiple factors can have an influence over citizens' political behaviour, and it can be difficult to isolate the relative effects (Anduiza, Font, Mas and De Maya, 2008: 476).

How Does This Work Relate To Existing and Future Literature

One could be forgiven for thinking that we remain in the midst of a referendum campaign in Scotland. Even after the country voted to remain a part of the UK, the issue continues to dominate daily reports in the media, and in the aftermath of the EU Referendum last year the issue of yet another referendum on Scottish independence being called looms large. It might come as a surprise, then, that little work has been carried out regarding the effects of the Referendum following the event. This paper has arguably created a base upon which future studies into the effects of the Referendum on long-term political participation can build.

It has been shown that there has been a noticeable increase in traditional political participation in Scotland following the Referendum in 2014. Of course, it must be stressed that this does not necessarily indicate a relationship of causality. This paper has identified the theoretical basis for arguing that the Referendum has increased political participation, but any future research in this field should attempt to identify whether or not the relationship truly exists, or whether the effects identified in this paper are merely circumstantial. Moreover, attempts must be made as time lapses to track the effects identified in this paper in order to determine whether they are part of a long-term trend or simply a momentary blip following the Referendum.

This paper has arguably contributed to the study of political participation more generally too, not simply to the Scottish case. A review of the existing literature has identified that although recent attempts to establish a single typology which captures the many different dimensions of political participation have proven to be extremely valuable to the field, in many ways demystifying the concept, there has been a tendency to abandon an old distinction in the study of political participation: to acknowledge the unique categories of conventional

and unconventional forms. This paper has argued that this distinction should be reinstated, but using the names traditional and non-traditional respectively, to recognise firstly the growing prevalence of what were once thought 'unconventional' political activities but also to acknowledge that traditional forms of participation have long been in dramatic decline while non-traditional forms continue to become ever more widespread. It is hoped that any future work on political participation will incorporate this distinction into its framework.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

It has been said many times, in the media and by academics alike, that the 2014 Independence Referendum has 'fundamentally changed' Scottish politics forever (Keating, 2015: 89).

Proponents of the viewpoint often cite the record number of Scots who turned out to vote on polling day or the perceived increase in public engagement with the campaign that was waged in the run up to the event. As yet, however, this change has remained unquantified, undefined. Has the Referendum changed Scottish politics for the best? In what ways? Has the Referendum reconnected the electorate with politicians? Has it increased the demand for direct democracy? Besides sweeping generalisations and statements, these are questions which the literature has so far failed to answer adequately.

This paper has attempted to fill an important gap in the literature and address one of these very questions: have traditional forms of political participation increased in Scotland following the Independence Referendum? Traditional forms of political participation - that is, voting in elections and participating with a political party - have now been in considerable and alarming decline for decades in Western democracies, while newer forms of participation such as protesting and signing petitions have increased greatly in recent times. Much attention has been paid to the increased level of non-traditional forms of political participation during the Referendum campaign, and much speculation has been made regarding its lasting impact. It must be noted, though, that some 84.7% of the Scottish electorate also turned out to vote on the 18th September 2014 - more than in any other democratic vote since the introduction of universal suffrage across the entire UK - which might suggest that there still remains hope for traditional political participation.

Before conducting any study, this paper had to establish whether there indeed existed a theoretical basis for the assertion that referendums can increase political participation in the long-term. A thorough review of the key academic literature so far was conducted, firstly on the issue of participation - how to understand it, how to measure it. As a concept, political participation has undergone many revisions over the course of the previous sixty years, originally from definitions which focussed solely on the issue of voting in elections to more comprehensive typologies which attempt to accommodate the many diverse political activities citizens now take part in today, such as contacting representatives and joining political societies online. It has been the argument of this paper, however, that modern characterisations of political participation wrongfully neglect a distinction in political participation first introduced by Barnes and Kasse (1979): the conventional and the non-conventional forms. This terminology may no longer be appropriate, given the growing prevalence of what were once considered non-conventional political activities; but the distinction remains relevant, as traditional forms of participation have long been in decline, in contrast to non-traditional forms.

Secondly, the literature on the issue of referendums and their effect on political participation was reviewed. Arguments were presented for both a positive and negative effect of referendums on political participation, and it was suggested that circumstance would dictate what type of impact to expect. Indeed, referendums have been observed to boost political efficacy amongst voters and improve their trust in political institutions, thus increasing political participation, so long as referendums were not overused and presided over issues of high importance, such as constitutional matters. However, it has been argued that referendums can have the opposite effect on political participation, particularly when voter fatigue develops as a result of an extremely high instance of direct democratic measures. The

paper considered the Scottish case within this context of this analysis, and it was argued that due to the relative scarcity of referendums conducted since the 1970s, and due to the issue of high salience it was intended to resolve, there was a theoretical basis for hypothesising that the Independence Referendum had since increased traditional forms of political participation in the country.

In order to test this hypothesis, a longitudinal quantitative research study involving the use of a series of Independent Samples t-tests and graphical depictions was conducted. Traditional political participation was measured in this study as electoral participation in every election conducted in Scotland since the inception of the SP in 1999, the strength of attachment to a political party from 2013-2015 and the act of having taken an active part in a political party's election campaign in the previous twelve months from 2005-2015. Each of these three effects were tested in isolation. Electoral data was collected from the official records of The Electoral Commission, while survey data for the final two measures was collected from the House of Commons' supported AAPE Survey. This paper found evidence of an increase in the level of electoral participation following the Independence Referendum, but the increase was found to be statistically insignificant. Furthermore, a substantial increase was found in the number of people who reported having either a very or fairly strong attachment to a political party compared with those who reported having either a weak attachment or none at all. Statistically significant evidence was found also of a large increase in the percentage of people who reported having taken an active part in a party's election campaign following the Referendum.

While a statistically significant increase in traditional political participation was not found in every case, the results of this study do arguably provide reason for optimism. Firstly, it is

important to note that finding statistical significance in any of these tests was unlikely given the short time since the Referendum and, thus, the limited data available to compare. That one test did produce statistically significant results is, in fact, indicative of how large and irrefutable the increase in political participation has been.

The main purpose of this study was to find evidence, statistically significant or otherwise, to support the assumption that we have witnessed a fundamental change in Scottish politics, in this case in the form of an increase in traditional political participation. Further research, however, would be required to determine the exact reasons for the increases reported here, and about what this might mean for the study of political participation and direct democracy for the rest of the world. It remains unclear whether the effects of the Referendum here in Scotland could be replicated elsewhere. Furthermore, it remains to be seen whether the increases witnessed in traditional political participation are part of a long-term trend or simply a momentary blip following the Referendum. Any future search, it is the recommendation of this paper, should seek to find out the answer. Indeed, for all who hope for a strong and prosperous democracy in Scotland for years to come, this will remain the pressing question of our generation.

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Appendix A

Below is the electoral data which was used in the study, as collected from The Electoral Commission, who officially publish data on each individual election held in the UK. The individual sources have been acknowledged in the Bibliography section of the dissertation.

Scottish Parliament Elections

Year	Eligible Voters	Votes Cast	Difference	Turnout Percentage	Change From Previous Election
2016	4,098,462	2,279,154	1,819,308	55.60%	5.20%
2011	3,950,626	1,989,232	1,961,394	50.40%	-1.30%
2007	3,897,675	2,016,357	1,881,318	51.70%	2.30%
2003	3,801,590	1,877,985	1,923,605	49.40%	-8.80%
1999	4,027,433	2,342,488	1,684,945	58.20%	n/a

UK General Elections

Year	Elegible Voters	Votes Cast	Difference	Turnout Percentage	Change From Previous Election
2015	4,099,532	2,910,465	1,189,067	70.10%	6.30%
2010	3,863,042	2,465,780	1,397,262	63.80%	3%
2005	3,839,900	2,333,887	1,506,013	60.80%	2.60%
2001	3,975,431	2,313,701	1,661,730	58.20%	n/a

European Parliament Elections

Year	Elegible Voters	Votes Cast	Difference	Turnout Percentage	Change From Previous Election
2014	4,016,735	1,343,483	2,673,252	33.40%	4.90%
2009	3,872,975	1,104,512	2,768,463	28.50%	-2.30%
2004	3,839,952	1,183,159	2,656,793	30.80%	6.10%
1999	4,015,399	991,804	3,023,595	24.70%	n/a

Appendix B

Below is the weighted and unweighted number of Scottish participants who took part in the Hansard Society's Annual Audit of Political Engagement for each year from 2005-2015. The individual sources are cited in the Bibliography section of the dissertation.

The Number of Scottish Respondents In Each Year 2005-2015

Year	Unweighted Respondents	Weighted Respondents
2005	124	95
2006	85	124
2007	182	91
2008	139	94
2009	157	102
2010	99	105
2011	169	111
2012	179	101
2013	202	113
2014	181	99
2015	181	113

Appendix C

Below is the data collected by The Hansard Society in the Audit of Political Engagement Survey 2006-2016, which was used in the study for the purposes of testing Hypothesis 2. It shows the responses of Scottish participants to the question 'would you call yourself a very strong, fairly strong, not very strong, or not a supporter at all of any political party?' from 2013-2015. All individual sources are cited in the Bibliography section of the dissertation.

Scottish Strength of Attachment to Political Parties 2013-2015

Year	Unweighted Respondents	Weighted Respondents	Very Strong	Percentage	Fairly Strong	Percentage	Not Very Strong	Percentage	Not At All	Percentage	Dont Know	Percentage	Refused	Percentage
2013	202	112	8	7%	21	19%	36	32%	47	42%	0	0%	0	0%
2014	181	99	14	14%	25	25%	28	28%	29	30%	2	2%	1	1%
2015	181	113	11	10%	38	33%	39	34%	22	20%	3	3%	0	0%

Appendix D

Below is the two new categories that were devised using the data collected from The Hansard Society, as shown in Appendix C. 'Very Strong' and 'Fairly Strong' attachments were amalgamated to create one category, while 'Weak' and 'Not at All' were joined to create the other. Again, all sources are cited in the Bibliography section of the dissertation.

Two Categories of Scottish Strength of Attachment to Political Parties 2013-2015

Year	Very Strong and Fairly Strong Attachment	Weak Attachment or None At All
2013	26%	74%
2014	39%	58%
2015	43%	54%

Appendix E

Below is the data collected by The Hansard Society in the Audit of Political Engagement Survey 2006-2016, which was used in the study for the purposes of testing Hypothesis 3. It shows the responses of Scottish participants to the question 'have you in the last twelve months taken an active part in a political party's election campaign?' for the years 2005-2015. All individual sources are cited in the Bibliography section of the dissertation.

Scottish Rate of Participation in a Political Party's Election Campaign 2005-2015

Year	Unweighted Respondents	Weighted Respondents	Taken An Active Part	As Percentage
2005	124	95	2	2%
2006	85	124	0	0%
2007	182	91	3	3%
2008	139	94	3	3%
2009	157	102	6	5%
2010	99	105	0	0%
2011	169	111	3	3%
2012	179	101	3	3%
2013	202	113	5	5%
2014	181	99	7	7%
2015	181	113	10	8%