How do UK politicians respond to the climate emergency?

– A critical discourse analysis of the Party Leaders' Climate Debate

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Abstract

Climate change has become a significant political priority in modern day election campaigns in the United Kingdom. Environmental issues are being discussed more openly and directly within society. But how do politicians respond to the climate emergency? How do they communicate their political promises to the public on such a complex and multifaceted issue?

This research study analysed the discourse that is created between the interaction of the Channel 4 News presenter and five political party leaders during the first ever Party Leaders' Climate Debate. A Critical Discourse Analysis inspired by Norman Fairclough's framework was conducted to provide an insight into how party leaders present their rationale for what actions they believe are needed to address environmental issues. By using this Critical Discourse Analysis framework, the research showed how the leaders' constructed their responses to questions about climate change by protecting their party values, connecting economics with the environment in a positive way and reproducing mainstream media and political discourses. The leaders also produced a patriotic tone within their responses, which could reflect the societal attitudes at the time of the debate. The responses were ambiguous when it came to environmental responsibility, which highlighted the importance of transparency on this topic in the field of politics. By looking at how the party leaders communicate on the topic of climate change, this research study provides an insight into what solutions the leaders believe are needed to help alleviate the global environmental issues that we are facing today.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, political debate, Channel 4 news, media analysis, environment, climate change

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Abbreviations

CDA   Critical Discourse Analysis
COP   Conference of the Parties
IPCC   Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
SNP   Scottish National Party

1. Introduction

In November 2019, the UK parliament was one of the first organisations to declare a climate emergency in the world, which showed a willingness to mitigate climate change. It also conveyed a message that the people who are in positions of power are taking on responsibility for environmental issues. In the last 20 years, environmental responsibility has been pushed onto the individual (Diprose, Fern et al, 2018) and citizens are told to recycle, to eat less animal products, to stop flying and to live a 'low-carbon lifestyle' (Koteyko, 2012) which can be frustrating for citizens when the biggest polluters are corporations and industries (Faber, 2008). However, depending on the circumstances, citizens can pressure governments to act on climate change which can lead to improved environmental policies (Huber, 2020). Koteyko explains that due to the impact of these policies on companies, climate change began to "feature more prominently on the corporate agenda and particularly in corporate social responsibility reports" (2012, p.25). This shows governments and corporations taking more environmental responsibility and this thesis will explore how UK party leaders communicate about environmental issues, and how they make connections between who is responsible for environmental action.

This influence from citizens putting pressure on the government is evident in the UK December 2019 general election, which was dubbed by some commentators as the 'climate election' (Vaughan, 2019). In October 2019, Prime Minister Boris Johnson called for an election due to the inability of the government to make any decisions in regards to Brexit, and Brexit was a top political priority. However, environmental issues were also pushed to be a top priority in this election (Vaughan, 2019) and this could be due to pressure from the climate movement.

On November 28 2019, Channel 4 News hosted a Party Leaders Climate Debate which aimed to challenge the political party leaders on their environmental promises and also give them a platform to express their environmental goals to the nation. The host of the show opened the debate with this:

> "Everyone here has grand rhetoric on what we need to do about the climate emergency. Tonight we want to test what they will actually do in government for the next five years and beyond".

This statement informs the audience and the party leaders that the leaders will be held to account and that their 'grand rhetoric' will be tested by the host's questions. The following interactions between the host and the party leaders produced and reproduced various discourses, which will be the point of analysis in this thesis.

1.1. Problem Formulation

The research problem identified here is a lack of knowledge and understanding of how UK party leaders present their rationale behind what they believe are actions that are needed to address environmental issues. In addition, my perception of environmental responsibility discussions is that they can often be ambiguous and redundant. Therefore, an analysis of the first ever UK political debate dedicated to climate change could be helpful in understanding how the leaders construct responses to questions about climate change, and how they make connections between who is responsible for these actions.

While the Party Leaders' Climate Debate was new, debates and discussions by people in positions of power about the environment have occurred for decades (Dryzek, 2013). Dryzek, who specialises in political science, democratic theory and environmental governance, aims to make sense of the developments in environmental affairs over the past five decades in his book: *The Politics of the Earth* (2013). Dryzek explains that:

> "the whole environmental area is home to heated debates and disputes, ranging from the details of the implementation of policy choices in particular localities, to the appropriate construction of responses to global environmental change" (2013, p.3).

The Party Leaders' Climate Debate is a platform for this message to be communicated to the public on a governmental level. However, this research paper will not study the relationship between the public and the politicians, although this could be a point of further study evolving from this research. Its focus is on the discourses that are developed during the interactions between the host and the party leaders to create a deeper understanding of how they construct responses to the climate emergency.

This understanding can contribute to the field of environmental communication by providing a better understanding of the relationship between environmental communication and modern UK politics. Dryzek summarises the purpose of critically analysing environmental communication within politics:

> "It is hard to prove constructions right or wrong in a straightforward way. But one might say the same about scientific worldviews, political ideologies, or governmental constitutions. It is

still possible to engage in critical comparative judgement, to apply evidence and argument, and to hope that in doing so we can correct some errors, and so move toward better overall understanding of environmental issues and problems." (Dryzek, 2013, p.13)

This summary is a good explanation of the attitude I have as a researcher studying this topic. I understand that this topic is not straightforward, and I wish to keep in mind that I am not trying to find out if the leaders are right or wrong in the way they construct their responses but to understand whether there are opportunities to move towards better communication of environmental issues within politics. My focus is rather to get a deeper overall understanding of what actions the leaders' believe are necessary to address climate change by critically analysing how they construct their responses when questioned about environmental issues in the debate.

1.2. Research Aim and Questions

The aim of this research is to explore how UK politicians construct responses to environmental issues through the discourses created by the interaction with the host in the Party Leaders' Climate Debate. This analysis has the potential for readers to gain a deeper understanding of what actions the leaders believe are needed as solutions to climate change, and to what extent they take responsibility for these actions.

The analysis was conducted using a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and followed Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, explained more in the Methodology (Chapter 4). CDA is a useful tool for this thesis study because it can be used to understand the function of discourse as forms of social practices which reflect unequal power relations (Jørgenson & Phillips, 2002).

Research Questions:

How do party leaders construct responses to environmental change through interactions with the host during the Party Leaders' Climate Debate?

What are the dominant discourses produced in the debate and how do they relate to the party leaders' political values?

1.3. Personal Motivation

The motivation behind my thesis idea was inspired by my interest in politics, climate change and who should be held to account. After years of becoming concerned about the environment, I changed many of my lifestyle habits to have less impact on the environment, but I began to question who is responsible for taking care of the environment. People in power, such as politicians, have the agency and capability of making significant social changes, but have been very slow to do so. When Channel 4 News hosted the climate debate, it intrigued me as a British citizen because I have never before seen party leaders openly discussing environmental issues in a televised debate for an election campaign in the UK. I also have a background in journalism, during this time of my life I wanted to write about environmental issues, but they were not stories that would sell or be deemed newsworthy enough. That was only a few years ago, and now climate change is a hot topic of news. Therefore, this debate demonstrates a shift in attitudes that I would like to follow up on.

2. Literature Review

The aim of this literature review is to provide a brief overview of studies in the environmental communication field that share a focus on politics, discourse and media's role. Most of these studies have used CDA or another form of discourse analysis. It will also highlight how this thesis study can contribute to the field of environmental communication.

DeLaurier and Salvador (2018) explain that the vast majority of communication theories exclude nature, which is why the field of environmental communication is vitally important. The exclusion of nature discourse can leave us close-minded and not able to understand the world beyond our words or learn from it (DeLaurier & Salvador, 2018). Communication theories need to include nature in order to be in a better position to speak about what we learn from nature and then how to act accordingly (DeLaurier & Salvador, 2018). Including marginalised or alternative voices, such as poorer communities who are affected by environmental degradation or even nature itself, can expand our understanding of the world beyond our words and beyond our representations of it (DeLaurier & Salvador, 2018). In addition, environmental politics can often come across as elite-driven when marginalised voices are excluded and public citizens are not involved in decision-making processes, which can make it difficult to convince the public to accept unpleasant alterations to their daily life (Huber, 2020). In the Party Leaders' Climate Debate, the leaders recognise this 'elite' attitude problem and in their responses to questions about climate change they often try to diminish this elite attitude and relate to the public.

It is important to delve deeper into the media's role in contributing to environmental discourse, especially considering that the political debate that this study analysed was organised and broadcast by major media organisation Channel 4 News. The media plays an extremely influential part in producing and reproducing discourses within society. Boykoff explains that:

> "media contribute to and often embody articulations of political identity and culture in society (Dittmer, 2005), and significantly influence ongoing public understanding of climate science and policy (Wilson, 1995)" (2008, p.550).

UK journalism continues to shape discourses on climate change (Boykoff, 2008) however, the discourses used could actually be more damaging to the cause. Foust and Murphy (2009) explore this in their study that critically analyses the US elite press coverage of global warming. The authors suggest that:

> "the press's power to constitute public interest, and serve the greater good, may be failing in the case of climate change." (Foust & Murphy, 2009, p.152).

They also highlight the use of 'apocalyptic framing', which they explain can:

> "stifle individual and collective agency, due to their persistent placement of "natural" events as catastrophic, inevitable, and outside of "human" control" (Foust & Murphy, 2009, p.153).

The consequence of using common apocalyptic discourses is the chance of creating an idea that the social order is beyond repair which makes it difficult to hold humans accountable for global warming (Foust & Murphy, 2009). This alleviates humans of responsibility for contributing to global warming and diminishes the range of human agency in influencing the inevitable destruction of climate change (Foust & Murphy, 2009). Foust and Murphy's (2009) research can be used to inspire approaches to communication about global warming that empower the public to overcome barriers associated with climate change.

Discourse analysis will be discussed further in the methodology section, however, I believe it is important to briefly explore how other environmental communication researchers view discourse analysis within the context of this research topic. Anabela Carvalho states that:

> "as discursive processes are key in the constitution and evolution of environmental matters as scientific, social, and political causes, those very processes ought to be examined" (2005, p.2).

Carvalho (2005) further explains that environmental discourse extends to those who do not consider themselves environmentalists, but may find themselves in positions where they have to handle environmental issues, such as politicians, lawyers, journalists, citizens and more. This highlights the relevance for analysing political debate around environmental issues, it is important to understand the evolution of political environmental matters by looking at the discursive processes behind them.

Environmental matters are complex, they range from specific and local to broad and global. This complexity has led to a variety of different opinions on how to handle these matters (Dryzek, 2013). To make the matter even more convoluted, environmental issues have evolved over the past 30 years, and this form of social practice has thus changed discourse and has also been changed by discourse (Jørgenson and Phillips, 2002). For example, if you asked the question 'what is

climate?' to different people and in different time periods, you could get different answers. Dryzek (2013) explains that once the climate was thought of as average weather, but today it has been conceptualised as a biogeophysical system which is highly vulnerable to human interference. The development of terminology can reflect the development of society. Another example offered by Carvalho (2005) is when the US administration insisted on replacing the term 'global warming' with 'climate change', because this sounds less alarming and 'climate change' is apparently more neutral. This is not just a US phenomenon and now the phrase 'climate change' has been changed to 'climate emergency' or 'climate crisis' to become more alarming. This rollercoaster of discourse development can be considered as a reflection of dominant societal issues at that time.

In summary, this literature review provides key concepts within the field of environmental communication that relate to this thesis study, such as the importance of including nature in environmental discussions, the power of media influence on discourses and the evolution of environmental issues within society. It is interesting to explore the connection between these concepts in the context of the Party Leaders' Climate Debate to further understand political environmental communication more deeply.

3. Background

The background will provide context and information relevant to understanding the material used in this thesis. This section will first explain what the Party Leaders' Climate Debate was and why is was produced, and will then map out who each party leader is and what political party they are associated with.

3.1. The Party Leaders' Climate Debate

The debate was broadcast by Channel 4 News, a major UK public broadcasting service. Channel 4 declared 'emergency on planet earth' and so replaced their usual 7pm news show with a one-hour debate focused on the climate crisis (inews.co.uk, 2019). The host, Krishnan Guru-Murphy, explains in the show that the purpose of the debate is for the leaders to "explain what they do about the emergency on planet earth". Channel 4 stated that the debate was produced because:

> "For many voters, the climate crisis is a key issue in this year's election: the five warmest years on record all took place in the last decade and with the UK currently set to miss its emissions targets in the 2020s and 2030s, many of the parties have made their green policies front and centre" (channel4.com, 2019).

There is a high chance that Channel 4 News was influenced by the increasing pressure from environmental activists and therefore, environmental activists have succeeded in getting politicians to use environmental discourse. Sian Berry, co-leader of the Green Party, says in the debate "credit to the movement, first of all, for getting this debate heard and getting climate change and new targets forward through so many motions". Robert Brulle's study on Environmental Communication for Civic Engagement supports this further:

> "social movements seek to spread familiarity and acceptance of the alternative discursive frame, and to generate political pressure to implement institutional change based on this new worldview" (2010, p.86).

It is important to recognise the influence of the climate movement in the context of an election campaign and through the discourses produced in the Party Leaders'

Climate Debate because this is something that the leaders and the host mention throughout the debate.

Despite the focus of the debate being new, the format of the debate is very typical of a UK political debate hosted by a major news broadcaster. The one-hour show started with a four-minute film consisting of different clips of environmental disasters around the world edited together with snippets from David Attenborough, Greta Thunberg, and other notable people in the climate change field. The host then explained to the audience and the leaders that he will ask one leader a question and then give everyone a chance to debate it before moving on to the next question. The host opened the discussion by asking each leader to give a brief opening statement and ended the debate by asking them what personal actions they are going to take to help improve the environment. The questions during the debate focused on net-zero emission targets, reducing emissions from homes, transport, biodiversity, agriculture, and aviation.

The show ended with a ten-minute section with three climate scientists; Emily Shuckborough, Rebecca Willis and Dr Natalie Sutton. These scientists were referred to as 'fact-checkers' and their purpose was to listen to the leaders and then provide their input and apply their scientific knowledge to what the leaders have discussed. This was an interesting element to add to the debate, because this social interaction also puts pressure on the leaders to stay truthful and factual and therefore produce discourses that would be interesting to analyse. However, for clarity and limitation of words the fact-checkers section will not be analysed or included in this study because it also not relevant to the research questions, which focuses on the interactions between the host and the party leaders.

3.2. The Party Leaders

For political context, I will briefly outline each party leader and their political party below:

Sian Berry: Co-leader of the Green Party

The Green Party focuses on environmental and social justice. The philosophical basis of the Green Party is:

> "A system based on inequality and exploitation is threatening the future of the planet on which we depend, and encouraging reckless and environmentally damaging consumerism. A world based on cooperation and democracy would prioritise the many, not the few, and would not risk the planet's future with environmental destruction and unsustainable consumption" (greenparty.org.uk, 2020)

Jeremy Corbyn: Leader of the Labour Party

Labour is the main opposition to the Conservative Party. It was formed as a result of years of struggle by the working class, trade unionists and socialists (labour.org.uk, 2020).

Adam Price: Leader of Plaid Cymru

Plaid Cymru is the main political party for Wales and the leader represents Wales in Parliament. Plaid Cymru aims to: "create an international policy for Wales that restores our position as a great trading nation" (www.plaid.cymru, 2020).

Nicola Sturgeon: Leader of the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP)

The SNP is the main political party for Scotland and the leader represents Scotland in Parliament. The SNP is a nationalist political party that has pushed for Scotland to be an independent state and stay in the European Union (Broughton, 2019).

Jo Swinson: Leader of the Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats are the third main political party in the UK and they are a central liberal political party focused on social democracy (libdems.org.uk, 2020).

It is also significant that the Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party, Boris Johnson, did not accept the invitation to join this debate. Neither did the leader of the Brexit Party, Nigel Farage. In their place, Channel 4 News decided to place two ice sculptures of the earth on their podiums which melted during the debate. This symbolised global warming, and the lack of care from these two leaders. This was an antagonistic and direct message from Channel 4 to the absent leaders, and also to the audience. Environment Correspondent, Fiona Harvey, wrote in The Guardian:

> "The Tories' decision not to engage on this vital issue shows they are just not interested in pitching to younger voters, who rate the environment as a leading concern. They have decided that the leave voters they are after won't be basing their votes on this, and their climate plans don't stand up to scrutiny" (Harvey, 2019).

Harvey is highly critical of the lack of engagement from the Conservative Party, and highlights that the Conservatives care more for the people who want to leave the EU ("leave voters") and believe that the environment is not a political priority for these voters.

4. Methodology

The methodological approach used to analyse the data was a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), inspired by a framework developed by Norman Fairclough, which offers a way to analyse relations between discourse and social practice. Jørgenson and Phillips (2002) provide an explanation of CDA in their textbook 'Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method' and describe how the method is a "critical approach which is politically committed to social change" (2002, p.64), and thus is an approach that fits well into the theme of this study, which focuses on political commitments and social change in regards to environmental issues.

CDA is connected to the extensive field of discourse analysis, and this field has developed over many years and has many different theories and methods connected to it. Jørgenson and Phillips (2002) explain that the word 'discourse' is,

> "the general idea that language is structured according to different patterns that people's utterances follow when they take part in different domains of social life, familiar examples being 'medical discourse' and 'political discourse'. 'Discourse analysis' is the analysis of these patterns" (2002, p.1).

This study used Faiclough's approach to discourse analysis and therefore uses his explanation of discourse to guide the analysis. Fairclough explains that:

> "Discourse, and any specific instance of discursive practice, is seen as simultaneously (i) a language text, spoken or written, (ii) discourse practice (text production and text interpretation), (iii) sociocultural practice" (Fairclough, 2010, p.131).

These factors make up Fairclough's three-dimensional conception of discourse, and is the framework that is used to analyse the material. This framework was chosen due to it being well-developed and constructed (Jørgenson & Phillips, 2002). Furthermore, Jørgenson and Phillips (2002) explain that the aim of CDA is "to shed light on the linguistic- discursive dimension of social and cultural phenomena and processes of change in late modernity" (2002, p.61). This can be related to my research aim of studying how UK politicians construct responses to environmental change, which is a constantly developing social and cultural phenomena in modern history.

Jørgenson and Phillips (2002) explain that discourse analysis is not a sufficient tool for analysis of the wider social practice because the latter encompasses both discursive and nondiscursive elements and therefore social and cultural theory is needed in addition to discourse analysis. As a result of this, concepts from John Dryzek's book, 'The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses' (2013) was also used in addition to Fairclough's CDA framework to help guide the analysis. Dryzek explains that:

> "a discourse is a shared way of apprehending the world. Embedded in language, it enables those who subscribe to it to interpret bits of information and put them together into coherent stories or accounts" (2013, p.9).

The interpretation of information and production of stories and accounts is relevant to the Party Leaders' Climate Debate, because this is how I believe the leaders create their discourses. Dryzek's (2013) work is relevant to this thesis study to a great extent, his book aims to make sense of the last fifty years of environmental concern by mapping the development of discourse in relation to politics.

The motivation for using CDA as an analytical tool was partly inspired by Steven Sarasini's research on constituting leadership via policy (2009). Sarasini uses CDA to examine how Swedish climate and energy policies attend to the emergent issue of climate change. In his research article, Sarasini (2009) explains that policymakers face problems in constructing credible responses to environmental problems and the use of concepts that gratify different interests are vitally important. He adds that CDA was a useful method to examine how policy seeks to balance diverse factors that could otherwise hinder a pioneering approach to mitigating climate change. I believe that this fits well into the context of my research topic and is an appropriate method for my research aim. However, there are limitations to using Fairclough's CDA framework. Despite the framework being well-developed, the method is vague and can be applied in a variety of different ways depending on the research aim, questions and material.

4.1. The Material

The material is a selected section of a recording from the Party Leaders' Climate Debate. The section involves all interactions between the host and the leaders, starting from when the host opens up the debate and finishing when the host closes the debate. This section was chosen due to the relevance to the research aim and questions. The discarded sections are the four-minute film at the beginning and the seven-minute discussion from the fact-checkers at the end for clarity and simplicity.

The party leaders' 2019 election manifestos were also used as a source of further information and a tool for relating back to the party leaders' values.

The material was separated into seven sections based on the topic of conversation: opening statements, net-zero targets, agriculture, aviation, homes, biodiversity and personal resolutions. The analysis was then conducted by looking at each of the three dimensions, outlined in figure 1, seperately and presenting the findings in a spreadsheet. This separation was done as an organisational technique to make the analysis process easier for me, rather than analysing the whole text in one section, where important findings could get lost in a very long spreadsheet.

4.2. The Three Dimensions

The analysis of the text using Fairclough's CDA framework (figure 1) was conducted in order to fulfil the aim of this research study. Here I will explain how the analysis was done, and what is required of each dimension.
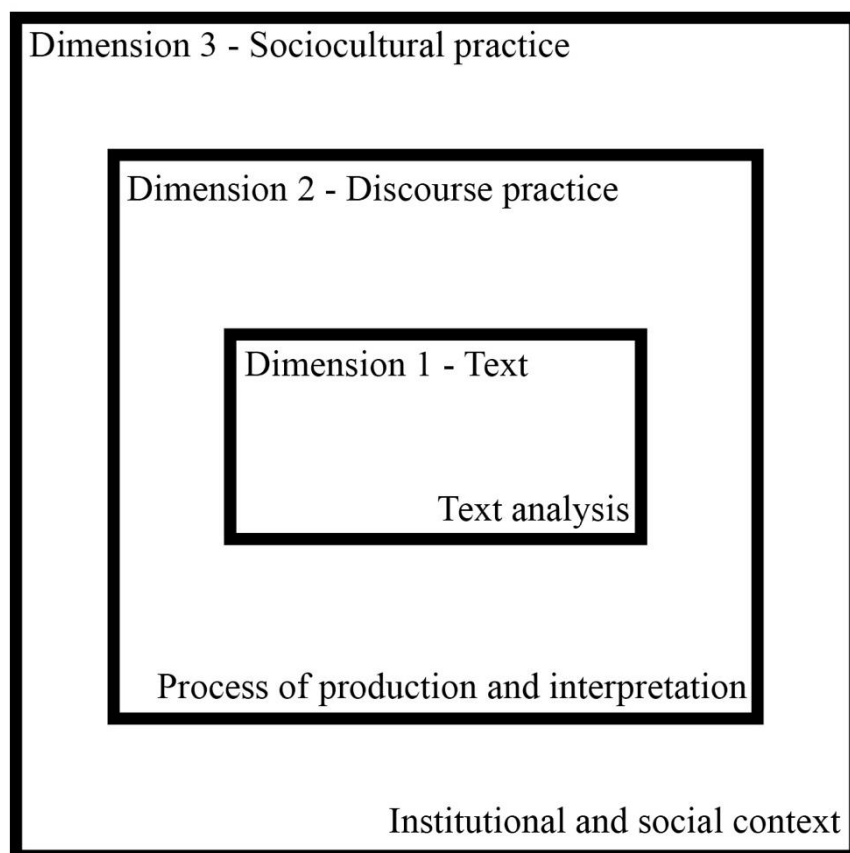

Figure 1 Three dimensions of CDA (Own production inspired by Fairclough, 2010, p.134)

Dimension 1 required a linguistic description of the language in the chosen text. To do this, Jørgenson and Phillips (2002) recommend that the researcher should concentrate on the formal features from which discourses and genres are realised linguistically, such as vocabulary, grammar, syntax and sentence coherence.

Dimension 2 is then an interpretation of the relationship between the discursive processes. Jørgenson and Phillips explain that Dimension 2,

> "focuses on how authors of texts draw on already existing discourses and genres to create a text, and on how receivers of texts also apply available discourses and genres in the consumption and interpretation of the texts" (2002, p.69).

Jørgenson and Phillips (2002) give the example of how TV news is a news genre that can convey different discourses, such as welfare discourse or a neoliberal discourse and have different genres, such as 'hard news' or 'soft news'. Analysis of Dimension 2 was conducted by looking at how the chosen text drew upon existing genres and discourses.

Dimension 3 is an explanation of the relationship between the discursive processes and the social processes which can be referred to as a sociocultural practice (Fairclough, 2010). To explain this in more detail, Fairclough (2010) offers the example of a conversation between a doctor and their patient. The wider sociocultural practice within which the nature of discourse production occurs in this example can be viewed at an institutional level and can also be placed in the global level. For instance, the doctor is part of a minority oppositional group within official medicine which is open to the practices of alternative medicine and counselling, however, this mix of medical discourse and counselling discourse is an example of a global feature of the modern societal order of discourse; "the colonisation of institutions in the public domain by types of discourse which emanate from the private domain" (Fairclough, 2010, p.134). These different societal levels can be applied to any material when using CDA and is the basis of how Dimension 3 was used to analyse the Party Leaders' Climate Debate.

Finally, the analysis focused on the relationships between the dimensions, which was made easier by separating the material into the sections explained above. Fairclough explains that a special feature of this approach is,

> "that the link between sociocultural practice is mediated by discourse practice; how a text is produced or interpreted, in the sense of what discursive practises and conventions are drawn from what order(s) of discourse and how they are articulated together, depends upon the nature of the sociocultural practice which the discourse is a part of" (2010, p.131).

Connecting the 'links' between the dimensions, as explained here by Fairclough, enabled a cross examination of dimensions which led to the findings which are mapped out in the next chapter.

Results

This results section will explore the main findings from the Critical Discourse Analysis including; (i) patriotic discourses (ii) values (iii) environmental/economic discourse and (iv) the reproduction of mainstream environmental and political discourse. These findings were a result of applying Fairclough's CDA framework, as shown in figure 1 and discussed in the methodology chapter.

4.3. Patriotic discourse

A common phrase or choice of wording that was used by all the leaders throughout the debate was "world stage" and "global stage". This choice of words emphasised the leaders' perceptions of the UK as a powerful country, and therefore produced patriotic discourses. It also relates to Fairclough's third dimension of sociocultural context as the leaders map the UK on a global level, while also highlighting institutions which hold the UK government to account.

An example of patriotic discourse being used is when Adam Price responds to the host's question about how the leaders want to cut emissions from homes, which produce one third of the UK's emissions, by investing in renewable energy. He added this statement:

> "if we solve the world's problems first then we have actually created a new global industry which is economically useful for us as well as helping us meet our environmental responsibility earlier than anyone else."

Here his language conveyed to the audience that there is a race to be the first country to be environmentally responsible, rather than a race against climate change itself for the wellbeing of the planet. To 'solve the world's problems' sounds good, but Price oversimplified a very complex and broad topic in his statement, he does not explain *how* to solve them, but he recognised his *motivation* to solve them: economics and competition. My perception of this is that Price used typical political discourse to answer a question vaguely but also used strong language to appear confident and knowledgeable.

This patriotic tone could be a reflection of the current political climate. There has been a significant rise in right-wing traditional politics and values across Europe (bbsnews.com, 2020) and the leaders could be influenced by this. The leaders used language that reflects these patriotic attitudes and portray the UK as a world leader in environmental action, whether that is factually correct or not. In response to the host's question about what the leaders' emissions target of net-zero are, Jeremy Corbyn defended his target of becoming net-zero by 2030 and he also added:

> "We also have to work on the global stage because at the moment it's going to be well into the end of this century before there's anywhere near to sustainability on the global stage and by that time temperatures would've gone up by three degrees centigrade, so we wanna host COP26 next year to go further than Paris so that we can be leaders on the world stage in setting an agenda of achieving this degree of sustainability by 2030."

Corbyn conveyed to the audience that the UK could be "world leaders" which would appeal to many British voters. The reference to COP and the Paris agreement highlights the different institutional levels that exist within the discourses of the debate and also within the sociocultural context outside of the debate, which was found by analysing the material from Fairclough's third dimension. Other institutions such as the Committee for Climate Change and the IPCC were also mentioned by other leaders in the debate, and similarly put the UK in a lesser position of power. Despite the language the leaders used to put the UK in a powerful position, there are institutions which hold the UK's environmental actions to account. Swinson also used the example of other countries who are perceived as being very environmentally friendly: "they've been doing it in Scandinavia for years", to show that the UK is not actually leading the way but it has the potential to improve by following established models from countries who are perceived as being environmentally conscious.

There was a strong patriotic tone of voice throughout the debate, however, there were occasions when this discourse was challenged. This was evident when the host shone a negative light on the UK when he asked the leaders about the issue of biodiversity. He said that biodiversity "is something that Britain is surprisingly bad at" and that "we are one of the most nature depleted countries on earth". This forced the leaders to reflect on their own choice of language and look beyond the achievements that the UK has made. This change in tone was effective at influencing the leaders' answers because the interactions that followed changed in tone. For example, Corbyn changed from talking about the UK being a world leader in previous questions to then later saying that "we have the lowest level of tree cover in almost any country in Europe". Similarly, Sian Berry responded with "we're very, very behind on biodiversity and nature… People have been very, very careless of our natural world and I have too much trouble getting councils off of

pesticides". Berry was more critical of the UK government's actions or inaction regarding environmental issues, which is most likely what the audience would expect from the Green Party, who is "a party of social and environmental justice" (greenparty.org.uk, 2020).

Overall, patriotic discourse was fairly dominant throughout the debate, which reflected the social issues at the time, such as Brexit and the rise in popularity of traditional values among voters. It is an interesting language tool to use to address environmental matters because these issues are not limited to one country, but need to be addressed by the whole world, however in this debate the leaders' patriotic language gave a competitive tone to the debate. Not just with each other, but with the rest of the world.

4.4. Values

The leaders are experienced politicians, they know that their underlying purpose of the debate is to gain support from the audience, no matter what the topic is, and they know what discursive practices to draw upon to relate to their audience and be 'liked'. This can be seen in the patriotic language as explained earlier, but there are other political discourses that the leaders reproduce. Dimension 1 from Fairclough's framework showed how the leaders use anecdotes, persuasive language and examples of previous successes to relate to the audience and convey their political party's values throughout the debate. This section of the results will explore how each party leader used different discourses to relate to the audience and reproduce their party's political values.

Swinson and Nicola Sturgeon both talked about growing up in the 1980s in an effort to relate to their key audience age group, who also would have grown up in the 1980s and understood the different society they grew up in compared to now. For example, Swinson said "when I was growing up in the 1980s, the big challenge that we were thinking about was the hole in the ozone layer" and then explained that due to regulation and action, the ozone layer is now repairing. She used this example as a way to provoke the audience to share a memory with her. My interpretation of this language use was that she used this example to show that 'we' have solved environmental issues in the past, and therefore there is hope that we can solve environmental issues for the future.

Sturgeon used passionate language and political discourse to relate to the SNP's values. The core value of the SNP is for Scotland to become a 'prosperous country'

(snp.org, 2020). Sturgeon uses strong Scottish patriotic language in her speeches, such as:

> "others could look to some of the work we are doing here in Scotland and to some extent learn from, as we continue to go further," and "Scotland is already leading the way" and "Well firstly Scotland already produces 75 percent of its electricity from renewable sources".

The repetition of Scotland's successes throughout the debate emphasised that the SNP is serious about environmental issues because Scotland is 'leading the way' and Sturgeon provided evidence of how this has been done to gain support from the audience. There is also an underlying message of political values in these statements, because the UK is made up of four countries, each country has different policies and power, and Sturgeon expressed that she is already using this power to improve the environment. This political system also relates to Wales, however, Price used the system as an example of the lack of power he has a Welsh party leader, in comparison to leaders of bigger parties, such as the Conservatives and the Labour Party. Price explained that:

> "we need the power to do that, you know, so that we can actually use the huge advantages that we have in terms of the green jobs revolution, fantastic marine energy resources that we have all over our coastline, but of course, at the moment we don't have the power to tap into that potential, we want to see that happen, we want to see that investment."

This highlights the important ecological resources that Wales has while also using the example of the political system to show that it is a barrier to utilising those resources.

A significant sociocultural and political process that was talked about to some extent in the debate was Brexit. The December 2019 election campaign was strongly focused on Brexit, however the host did not ask any questions about Brexit or connect it to the environment. Despite this, Swinson brought up the topic of Brexit throughout the debate because the Liberal Democrat's main political stance during this election was that they were going to push for a second referendum and stay in the European Union (libdems.org.uk, 2020). In her opening statement she said:

> "The climate crisis is even more important than Brexit. But Brexit is a climate crime. It is morally wrong to leave our seat at the table and give up our influence to create the change we need right across the world."

This discourse draws upon mainstream political discourse regarding Brexit. The phrase 'leave our seat at the table' and 'give up our influence' are commonly used by politicians and the media when Brexit is being communicated. This is similar to the language that the Liberal Democrats used in their manifesto:

> "The importance of the UK's membership of the EU has never been clearer. Working together through the EU, the countries of Europe have achieved peace and prosperity on a continent historically wracked by war and division" (libdems.org.uk, 2020).

This is evidence that Swinson used language that is consistent with her party's ideologies and core values. There is also significance in the fact that the other party leaders did not discuss Brexit or relate to Brexit in the whole debate. This lack of recognition to Brexit conveyed a message to the audience that they believe that environmental issues are more important than Brexit in this debate. However, Swinson connected Brexit with environmental issues by calling it a 'climate crime' and used this statement to justify her argument for staying in the EU in a climate change debate.

The Green Party's core values are to protect the environment and this could be a reason why Berry focused less on persuading the audience of her commitment to tackling environmental issues and more on why the audience should vote for the Green Party. With the current divides in politics and society, the Green Party recognised this need for change and therefore offered the public the opportunity to vote for change by voting Green. Berry used language that paints the picture of a new, modern and exciting party:

> "We're not about making money, we are about changing how things happen and so we want the industry to change, we don't want any of those taxes to reach people's plates. We want the industry to produce the greener, healthier choices and make those the cheapest choices for everybody. That's how the green values always work on these kind of things."

Here she starts by emphasising what the Green Party does not value (money) and compares this to what they do value (change). She is also explicit in explaining what she means by 'changing how things happen', she brings in the topic of industry, taxes and people and show that these three factors need to connect in a different way. She has recognised that the problem for people who want to choose the greener, healthier option is that these options are often more expensive, so she is including people from poorer backgrounds into the discussion, and also shows the public that this is how the Green Party "always" works.

Berry also used personal anecdotes to convey the Green Party's values and the support she gives to the Green Party. When she said "I have spent years trying to argue against road schemes which are going to go straight through sites of scientific interest", she was not trying to relate to the audience here because the majority of the audience have not argued against road schemes, rather she strengthened her connection to her party's values. The use of the first-person narrative highlighted her personal passion and integrity for environmental causes, which also relates to

the core messages of the Green Party. The Green Party's top proposal in their 2019 December manifesto was a "comprehensive ten-year plan ambitious enough to tackle climate and ecological breakdown at the scale and speed set out by science" (greenparty.org.uk, 2020). Thus, being bold and giving top priority to environmental issues.

In addition to talking about the environmental actions she has taken she also focused on why the Green Party is different to the other parties. Or she used language that does both, an example of this is when she says:

> "Now at the moment, more than half the emissions from the UK are from our buildings and our homes and the reason for that is each successive government we've had has neglected this issue of the homes that already exist because it's not sexy going around and putting insulation in people's homes."

Here she started with a negative environmental fact and then damages the current government by blaming them for this negative impact, she then implied that the Green Party would not act the same way and is willing to do the 'unsexy' work that is needed. She followed this up with this:

> "I know how annoying it would be if we went round to everyone's house and said, 'we need to change your radiators as well as your boilers, so we do think about things more deeply."

This relates to the audience and shows that the Greens have not only thought about the environment but also how environmental actions will affect people, and she implies that they consider this factor more than the other parties do.

In the last question in the debate the host asked the leaders what their personal actions to reduce their own environmental impact are, and the leaders interpreted this question in different ways. Berry used this opportunity to express her frustration with the political system when she said: "I'm sorry I've spent a lot of my life listening to politicians list green things that they want to do and even list green policies" and used the metaphor: "so many of these pledges end up on a dusty shelf after we've stopped shining a light on them". This metaphor was used to criticise politicians' behaviour of promising actions that never happen. Dryzek explains that:

> "Metaphors are rhetorical devices, deployed to convince listeners or readers by putting a situation in a particular light… appeals can be made to deeper pasts, such as pastoral or even primeval idylls, as a way to criticize the industrial present" (2013, p.19).

This is exactly how Berry used this metaphor, to appeal to the past examples to criticise the current system. This interaction between the host and Berry here is also

significant because she refused to answer the question properly to highlight that the problem is not with personal actions, but with the political system.

Overall, the party leaders constructed their responses to environmental questions in different ways, but all shared a common theme of relating to their party values to build an image of integrity for the audience. This connection could also signify an underlying motive for the leaders: perhaps they do not care as much about environmental issues as they say they do, but they rather use this environmental debate to push their own agendas – such as political system power imbalances or Brexit.

4.5.
The environment versus the economy

In capitalist society the main focus, and the focus of the politicians, is to do things in a way that are economically beneficial. The biggest barrier to environmental action is the economic disadvantage connected to it. Economical interest is a high political priority for the majority of voters, therefore, the discourses often clash. Dryzek offers an example of the effect of governmental environmental decisions:

> "If governments make investors unhappy - through (say) tough antipollution policy - then they are punished by disinvestment, which in turn means recession, unpopularity in the eyes of voters, and falling tax revenues" (2013, p.10).

However, rather than expose this clash of interest, the leaders focused on solutions over barriers. Their responses portrayed environmental solutions as being beneficial to the economy which produced a new form of discourse that connected these two factors (environment and economics) in a positive way. The underlying motive for the production of this discourse could be for the leaders to show that they can overcome this barrier and change the audience's attitudes towards environmental solutions as expensive and see them as 'cheaper'. They did this by proposing solutions that help the economy and, at the same time, the environment. The problem with this more positive discourse is that the audience may perceive it as unrealistic. The host often interrupted the leaders which questions such as "So who is going to pay for this?", which emphasised the different discourse the leaders were producing by forcing them to be more transparent and realistic.

Compared to the other leaders, Sturgeon recognised that some environmental actions can have a negative effect on the economy to the greatest extent. She related it to an example she herself has experienced:

"I grew up in the West of Scotland in the 1980s and I saw the effects of deindustrialisation and leaving people behind and the legacy of that is still there to many of our communities and we can't make the same mistake again".

Sturgeon is aware that for society to change in order to benefit the environment, industries need to drastically change, which could have a damaging effect on people's lives. Sturgeon recognises that this would be a big concern to many of the audience members, so she reassured them that she does not want this to happen.

The industrial revolution is a sociocultural factor that is mentioned a few times by the leaders in response to the host's questions. Price said: "We were the cradle of the last industrial revolution and we could be there at the start of this new industrial revolution as well". The industrial revolution is a significant historical event, and it is not common for it to be mentioned in modern political debate as heavily as it did in this one. This could be due to the fact that the leaders recognise the need for a drastic systemic change, and the need for industries to change. Dryzek explains that:

"Industrialism may be characterized in terms of its overarching commitment to growth in the quantity of goods and services produced and to the material wellbeing that growth brings." (2013, p.14).

Corbyn recognised this growth and blamed industry for producing the majority of the world's emissions:

"Just 100 companies are responsible for 70 percent of emissions and you at home must not pay the price for the transition to a net-zero economy. Labour will kickstart a green industrial revolution bringing new wealth to all parts of the country."

Here Corbyn used 'imaginative departure', which is when environmental problems are seen as opportunities rather than troubles (Dryzek, 2013). The promise of a new green industrial revolution can be related back to the Labour Party values which are very much focused on jobs and employment. In their manifesto they state:

"As part of our plan to usher in a Green Industrial Revolution, Labour will create an innovation nation, setting a target for 3% of GDP to be spent on research and development (R&D) by 2030…Our Green Industrial Revolution will create at least one million well-paid, unionised jobs in the UK" (labour.org.uk, 2020).

This proposal can be viewed as 'imaginative departure' as industrial development often makes you think about jobs, growth and economy, however, adding the word 'green' to this phrase gives an illusion of not only economic opportunity, but also environmental opportunity. The details of how this will be achieved is more ambiguous and not explained in the debate, but the message to the audience is clear:

the leaders have recognised the clash between economics and environment and propose solutions to this issue.

The economic/environmental interdiscursivity was also prominent in the discussion of renewable energy. This was found from analysing the text with dimension 2 of Fairclough's framework, which focuses on discursive practices. Swinson draws on a historical political discursive practice to show how attitudes have changed towards wind power. She credited this change to the work of the Liberal Democrats, to promote her party's successful environmental history:

> "if we were having this debate six or seven years ago, people were saying 'renewables, they're really expensive, they won't be so reliable'…there was no offshore wind, we are now in the UK a leader, a world leader, in offshore wind, it is now the cheapest way to generate electricity, because of the support for that industry that was put in by the Liberal Democrats when we were running the climate change department that created a Great British industry".

This text uses contrasting language to highlight the change in attitudes, 'expensive' and 'won't be so reliable' turned into 'cheapest', 'world leader' and 'Great British industry'. This example of changing attitudes strengthens the new positive environmental/economic discourse, while also supporting the Liberal Democrats with evidence of past actions they have completed to help the environment.

Relating environmental action with economic benefits can be perceived as an anthropocentric ideology. The lack of communication about environmental action for the sake of the environment adds to this anthropocentric view. Jo Swinson said:

> "This is something which makes people's lives better, of course it's good for the environment, it's good for us in the longer term, but so many measures that we can take will make the places we live better places to be".

An anthropocentric ideology is not uncommon in politics, because the majority of people are concerned with their livelihood and their living situations when they choose who to vote for. As mentioned in the introduction, environmental concern is a rising political motivation for voters, and so the leaders promise a world which benefits humans and the environment:

> "if we don't do this then we're all damaged, our plant life is damaged, our natural world is damaged and eventually we are all damaged as a result of that" (Jeremy Corbyn).

It is difficult to assess whether the leaders have created a new discourse in this debate without exploring this specific factor further. However, the analysis shows that the leaders reproduce this environmental/economical discourse by connecting the two interests together in a positive light. This is a significant step forward in the

political environmental field and could signify further developments in this area in future political campaigns.

4.6. The reproduction of mainstream environmental & political discourses

This political debate is the first to focus entirely on environmental issues in the UK, and the analysis of the text provides evidence that the interactions between the host and the party leaders reproduced existing discourses within society to a large extent. Most notably is the media discourse which was guided by the host, and the leaders also reproduced mainstream environmental discourse and political discourse.

The host of the programme is expected to manage and stimulate the debate in a balanced and time-constricted format. He is an experienced news presenter and seems to follow the format very closely which results in a well-balanced and informative programme. He gives every leader the chance to speak and interrupts them if they are talking for too long to give other leaders their chance to speak. He also provides context and further explanation for the audience to fully understand what it is they are discussing, for example he said "that means the amount of greenhouse gases we are putting into the atmosphere will be balanced by the amount we are taking out" within his question about net-zero carbon emissions. This added information further confirms his role in the debate to make sure the audience understands the communication involved.

The host also provides balance when he brings up the Conservative Party's proposals in his questions. The Conservative Party leader, who was the current Prime Minister at that time, was not at the debate and the host, or more likely Channel 4 News, felt it was important to include them in the debate in some way. An example is when he asked the leaders what their target for reaching net zero emissions is "the Conservatives are committed to reaching the emissions target of net zero by 2050". Here the host was drawing on discourses from the Conservative Party's manifesto and as a baseline for opening the question of net-zero targets to the other leaders. This also provides some context for the audience, the host does not comment on whether this is too ambitious or not ambitious enough, as he does to some of the other leaders, which may be due to the Conservative leader not being present to defend himself.

The host also challenged the leaders to expand their narrative when they are avoiding his questions, this also reproduces typical debating discourse: "yeah, it's

what you're going to do about it is what I want to know" and he is not afraid to be blunt and direct with his comments: "so you're less ambitious?" to provoke a deeper answer from the leaders. He also used language such as: "you all talk big on cutting that with insulation and zero carbon homes…", which actually highlights that the leaders are using typical political language techniques of 'talking the talk', and the host is pushing them to show that they can also 'walk the walk'. The response in this interaction showed that the host is successful at provoking the leaders. For example, the hosts provocation led to Corbyn constructing this response: "We can and do retrofit homes, we can generate electricity from solar, wave and wind". Corbyn used 'can' and 'do' to emphasise actions over words and show he is not just 'talking big'.

The host directed specific challenging questions to the party leaders to provoke a discussion around a topic that they may have been avoiding. For example, Wales has a big agricultural industry, and farming is very important to many Welsh people. Rewilding projects have caused a conflict with the farmers and this has become a problem for the Welsh politicians to act upon (Wynne-Jones, Strouts and Holmes, 2018). The host asked: "Adam Price, are you prepared to say to some of your farmers in Wales that they may have to change their farms to have more woodland?". Using the word "prepared" highlights that the host knows that this is not an easy action for Price to take because it insinuates that this is something that Price will need to prepare himself for this challenging conversation, but wants to bring it into this debate to show that it is important and cannot be ignored. Price responded with positive language:

> "Well yeah I think our farmers are very, very keenly engaged with this question and indeed of course actually there is a lot of evidence of the positive benefit of farming because, look, the ecology of much of Wales has grown up with farming."

Despite saying there is 'a lot of evidence' and repeating the word 'very', he failed to explain further what this evidence is, which might be a result of being caught off guard from the direct question.

This Party Leaders' Climate Debate was focused on the environment, and therefore resulted in the reproduction of mainstream environmental discourses. The party leaders are not scientists or experts in environmental issues, however, their job is to understand what societal issues are happening in their country and come up with ways for how to deal with these issues and convey this to the public. This leads to language around environmental issues to be practical but vague. Most environmental issues are based on scientific evidence and scientific language, but as mentioned before, the leaders are not scientists and the majority of the audience are not scientists. Dryzek explains that:

"Environmental discourse is broader than environmentalism, extending to those who do not consider themselves environmentalists, but either choose or find themselves in positions where they are handling environmental issues, be it as politicians, bureaucrats, corporate executives, lawyers, journalists, or citizens" (2013, p.11).

Thus, the leaders draw upon environmental discourses, which is the most dominant discourse throughout the debate, however, they do not alienate their audience by using scientific discourse. An example of this is when Swinson said:

"the important thing is not only when we get to net zero it's how quickly we cut emissions right now, how much carbon we take out of the atmosphere right now, that is what is going to give us the best chance to save our planet right now".

Here she is defending her motivation towards her target of getting to net zero by 2045 by including an explanation of what she means when she says 'cut emissions' which makes her statement more understandable, however rather than explaining how she aims to do this she ends with the vague but familiar phrase "that is what is going to give us the best chance to save our planet right now".

Similarly, Berry used a rhetorical question that is familiar to mainstream environmental discourses:

"the key thing about a 2050 target here is that it leaves us a 50 percent chance of tipping over into runaway climate chaos. Now would you cross a bridge with those odds of getting to the other side?".

Rather than using scientific language and evidence to support this statistic, Berry simplifies her message into a single question that shows that the scientific evidence does not matter as such, it is now what we do that is 'the key thing'.

There is a lot of discussion around biodiversity and deforestation in the environmental field and the leaders draw upon familiar discourses relating to this topic. However, there are also newer discourses that the leaders reproduce, such as how to reduce air travel, a frequent flyer tax and also the discussion of climate anxiety in children. These are all topics that have been discussed by scientists, politicians, the media, activists and others in the past few years but are still relatively new.

At the end of the debate, the host strayed away from the usual debate questions and asked the leaders:

"Huge numbers of people, especially children, are personally alarmed by the climate emergency and genuinely scared for their futures. I want to ask you all now, what is your personal climate change resolution to cut your carbon footprint?".

He introduces the question by talking about climate anxiety, which is a relatively new discourse that has emerged out of the increasing awareness of climate change and the effects it is having on the younger generation. This interaction resulted in the leaders using mainstream environmental discourse practices which the audience will be familiar with. The leaders answered with a mixture of personal action and political action, but their language choice gave the perception that they were more comfortable when talking about political action. An example of this is through this interaction between the host and Swinson:

> "Host: Your personal resolution, Jo Swinson?
>
> Swinson: Well, I try to do all of these small things as well, whether it's taking your KeepCup, making sure you are doing the recycling, my campaign bus for this election is the first electric political campaign bus.
>
> Host: But we all need to do a lot more, don't we? That's the point of this…
>
> Swinson: We do, and I will say that the most important thing that politicians can do is to put in place the policy frameworks. Whether it's in terms of getting rid of single use plastics much sooner, the regulations that are going to make it easier because what we want to do is to make it easier and cheaper for everybody to do the right thing so, so that the obvious decision to make is the one that is good for our climate."

Swinson started answering the question with two small, familiar environmental actions that she has been doing (using a reusable coffee cup and recycling) but then moved quickly on to political action such as her electric campaign bus. Despite being provoked by the host to explain more about her personal actions, she still replied with what political actions she believes need to happen and she draws upon environmental discourses like single use plastics. She also places responsibility on the government in regards to regulations.

Another notable reproduction of discourse in the debate is when the leaders draw upon climate activism discourse. Climate activists have been protesting and raising awareness for decades and the recent rise in protests by Extinction Rebellion, Greta Thunberg and others, resulted in a significant rise in media reporting on the movement. This 'climate activism discourse' thus transferred into the debate and was briefly discussed by the host and the leaders. Berry acknowledged the work of the climate movement and how it has influenced Channel 4 to host this debate: "credit to the movement, first of all, for getting this debate heard and getting climate change and new targets through so many motions." Here she is not drawing on climate activism discourse, but she is reproducing the media discourse around the movement by recognising their significance. Berry also compared herself to Greta Thunberg when she says: "Greta Thunberg is only a teenager and she is already

sick of hearing broken promises, think of how I feel at my age", to show how dedicated she is to the cause. She also draws upon the climate activism discourse when she says, "If not now, when?" in her opening statement, which is a popular Extinction Rebellion slogan and also gives the Green Party a more 'activist' image.

This can also be seen in the terminology the leaders use instead of the phrase 'climate change'. The climate movement inspired The Guardian to update the language in their style guide;

> "instead of 'climate change' the preferred terms are 'climate emergency, crisis or breakdown' and 'global heating' is favoured over 'global warming'" (Carrington, 2019, p.1).

This language shift from the media may have influenced the politicians' environmental discourses. Corbyn used the term 'environment emergency', Price used 'climate crisis', Sturgeon used 'global climate emergency' and Swinson used 'climate crisis' and 'climate crime'. The interesting factor here is the use of a different phrase to the more popular and recognised 'climate change'. Interestingly, as discussed in the literature review, the US government decided to use 'climate change' as a more neutral and less alarming phrase (Carvalho, 2005). Now, the media and politicians have decided that this term is too neutral and we need to use terminology that is more alarming. I believe this is the leaders' efforts to show that they take climate change very seriously, especially when paired with other phrases such as 'scale and urgency' and 'our last chance', for example.

Overall, mainstream environmental discourse is highly dominant in the debate, which is to be expected. The leaders use language that the audience will be familiar with, which is a way of including the public in the debate in some small way.

5. Discussion

The aim of this thesis study is to explore how UK politicians construct responses to environmental change through the discourses created by the social interactions in the Party Leaders' Climate Debate. The results produced from using a critical discourse analysis allow for this aim to be fulfilled by providing answers to the research questions which will be discussed in this chapter.

The first research question posed in this thesis study was 'how do party leaders construct responses to environmental change through interactions with the host during the debate?'. The results revealed an interesting interdiscursivity between environmental discourse and economic discourse which was produced from the leaders' responses to questions about environmental issues in the debate. This positive connection between economics and environmental issues could signify a change in attitudes within society which has developed over time with the help of the climate movement and increased awareness. This shift in attitudes would be an interesting topic to research further by looking back at the history of the discourse and tracking the changes to the way it has been used. This could be a positive sign that politics in the future will be more focused on the solutions to climate change, and not the barriers. However, it is also important to recognise that this positive tone could have been a political tactic to show that they are confident and reliable in an effort to gain votes, which is the underlying motive for all the leaders during this debate, and should not be forgotten.

The economic/environmental discourse can also be related back to concepts discussed in the literature review regarding the exclusion of marginalised voices and unequal power relations. As seen from the findings in Chapter 5.3 there are times in the debate when the leaders attempt to include marginalised voices, such as poorer communities, into the discussion. The host also prompted the leaders to be more transparent by asking them 'who will pay for this?' because he recognised that the public are not included in this debate, and therefore the leaders constructed their responses to acknowledge their 'elite-agenda' and include marginalised voices into the discussion. This is significant because transparency leads to the leaders taking responsibility for the economic impact of environmental issues, while also recognising that some people and homeowners will have to also make changes for

the benefit of the planet. Perhaps a more inclusive study would be to include perspectives from marginalised voices for a more varied and diverse overview by interviewing members of the public with different social backgrounds on their perceptions of the debate.

Has the climate movement changed political discourses forever? My perception is that it has. Jørgenson and Phillips explain that: "orders of discourse are particularly open to change when discourses and genres from other orders of discourse are brought into play" (2002, p.72) and from my experience of following politics over the past decade, I certainly recognise a change in attitudes for climate change. I believe that the environment is starting to be recognised as a vital political priority and that politicians are making better connections between economics and environment, rather than not doing anything because it is too expensive.

The second research question, 'what are the dominant discourses produced in the debate and how do they relate to the party leaders' political values?', revealed how the leaders reproduce mainstream environmental discourse and mainstream political discourse. This is not so surprising given the context of the debate, however, these dominant discourses highlight the lack of recognition for other discourses, such as scientific discourse. Although the leaders' responses do follow scientific evidence, such as the IPCC recommendation of keeping global temperatures below 2 degrees, there is a significant lack of scientific language. This could also be a communication strategy to keep the audience informed without alienating them with discourse that they may not understand.

The leaders also used popular political language techniques such as anecdotes, metaphors and repetition to relate to their audience, whether it is about growing up in the 1980s or providing for their children to show that they not only understand the needs of the environment but also their target audience. This relates to the anthropocentric nature of politics and the lack of empathy directed towards the environment for the sake of the environment. This could also be a signifier for the future of environmental political debate. It can be assumed that it is too early for people in positions of power to recognise the need to include nature into the debate without being related to human need, however, as discourses are open to change, I predict that this could be a possibility for future political discussions.

The leaders also strengthened their ties to their political party's core values to highlight to the audience what their party stands for and what they could achieve if they were to become Prime Minister, which again implies the underlying motive for the debate being to gain popularity. Furthermore, patriotic language was also used as a way to appeal to the British public, and this reflects the societal attitudes

at the time as politics was heavily focused on Brexit, and traditional, right-wing politics was rising in popularity.

6.   Conclusion

This was the first UK election campaign to focus so heavily on climate change and this could indicate a shift of focus that may occur in campaigns all over the world. This exploration into how UK party leaders construct responses when asked about climate change has given an insight into how party leaders communicate about what solutions they believe are needed to help alleviate the global environmental issues that we are facing today. This is critical as it could offer a glimpse into what political campaigns and debates could look like in the future and what policies could be developed in response to these discussions, such as a green industrial revolution and a more positive attitude towards costly environmental changes. It is also important to recognise the influence of the climate movement and individuals who pressurised the government to act and take on more environmental responsibility (Koteyko, 2012).

Overall, the issue of who should take responsibility for climate change resulted in mixed messages. As predicted in the problem formulation of this thesis, the leaders' responses on this topic were often ambiguous. I do regard that climate change is a complex issue and affects everyone in different ways, and therefore responsibility should not lie on one person or organisation. However, I do think that politicians need to be more explicit when it comes to the discussion of responsibility as they have the agency to make policies and create significant change. To some extent, the leaders take responsibility when they explain that it is not the people at home who should be dealing with this. The results of CDA showed that some leaders put the blame on industry and corporations, such as Corbyn and Berry, and others express that environmental action is a collective effort, such as Sturgeon. This area of environmental responsibility has various strands and implications attached to it, however, from studying the Party Leaders' Climate Debate, I believe that environmental responsibility needs to be discussed more specifically and transparently in order for environmental progress to be made.

This thesis study could be developed further to include alternative perspectives to deepen and expand the findings. A focus on the audience's opinion of the debate could offer an understanding of the influence or impact the debate had on the public

or on the election outcome. Comparative studies on similar debates from different countries could also bring in a wider outlook on this global issue of climate change.

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