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"If the people vote for square circles, it's gonna be a problem for the politicians to deliver it": A longitudinal discursive analysis of broadcast political discourse as the UK left the European Union.

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Abstract

In recent years, the field of Longitudinal Qualitative Research (LQR) has become of increasing interest to social scientists. The development of this field has been pivotal in demonstrating that issues of change through time need not only to be a quantitative concern. Instead, LQR highlights that change and stability is a key component of talk and should therefore be of interest to qualitative researchers. Despite growing engagement with this field from other qualitative methods, Discursive Psychology (DP) has largely failed to systematically address the issue of change and stability within discourse. This is surprising, and somewhat disappointing, as the practice of DP has the tools to make a meaningful contribution to the development of this methodology. The aim of this thesis is therefore to make the case for a longitudinal discursive approach towards data analysis by building upon the methodological tools and social constructionist principles that DP has at its disposal. This is accomplished through the longitudinal discursive analysis of broadcast political debate as the UK left the European Union. In this analysis, I examine how key issues relating to Brexit were constructed and challenged by speakers. Issues selected for analysis include leadership, advocacy for a second referendum, and Labour's Brexit policy. The key finding of this analysis is that the strategies speakers used when constructing these issues were situated within a temporal context. This means that the strategies speakers employed changed (or remained stable) through time to respond to developing contextual and rhetorical factors. These findings illustrate that the presence of change, stability, and temporality within talk are central to our understanding of political phenomena. This has wide-reaching implications for the 'traditional' practice of DP. From this, I provide a conceptual and methodological framework for the practice of longitudinal discursive research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The decision made by voters in the United Kingdom to leave the European Union has been described by historian Lord Peter Hennessy as marking an unprecedented shift in geopolitics (Hennessy, 2016). Once taken-for-granted assumptions about the UK's relationship with the global community have become increasingly challenged due to the changing landscape of Brexit. Clarke and Newman (2019) note that researchers analysing this topic have struggled to come to terms with this new paradigm and subsequently fall into the trap perpetrated by the media and political establishment. Here, Brexit and the issues surrounding it are essentialised and treated as binary phenomena. People are either 'Leavers' or 'Remainers'. Brexit is a consequence of neo-liberal politics, *or* rising populism, *or* prejudice against immigrants. The apparent reluctance to grapple with the complexities and nuance of this topic has led to some social psychologists questioning the existing frameworks they have at their disposal. For example, Andreouli, Kaposi, and Stenner (2019) argue that it may be inaccurate to treat Brexit as simply a disruption of 'politics as usual.' Instead, they draw upon Mead's (1932) et theory to propose that it should be viewed as a new 'object' that emerged through the underlying conditions of the individual and environment and the patterns and processes of social interaction. Through this discussion, they raise an important question: 'what conceptual and methodological tools can social psychologists employ to better understand the emerging political realities associated with Brexit?' (Andreouli et al., 2019, p.1).

One such tool that has been at the forefront of such research is Discursive Psychology (DP). Since the 2016 referendum, DP has been employed to analyse various issues relating to Brexit. This includes identity management (Meredith & Richardson, 2019), immigration discourse (Goodman, 2017), and contested political 'facts' (Burke & Demasi, 2019). This approach effectively avoids the 'trap' outlined by Clarke and Newman (2019) due to its conceptualisation of discourse as something that constructs rather than reflects reality. For example, the categories of 'Leaver' and 'Remainer' are not fixed identities stemming from observable mental processes but socially constructed actions that

are 'worked up' through a variety of interactional practices (Antaki, Condor, & Levine, 1996; Meredith & Richardson, 2019). Researchers are instead interested in examining the form and function of the discursive strategies speakers invoke in their accounts. From this perspective, there is not one 'true' account of Brexit but multiple competing versions. Therefore, in response to the question raised by Andreouli et al. (2019), the methodology of DP has shown itself to be an effective tool for understanding how these new political realities are constructed and reproduced through talk. This focus on discourse is vital for understanding Brexit, as it is only through the social world that political phenomena are made manifest (Billig, 1996)

Here, I continue this tradition of research by employing the principles of DP to analyse broadcast political debate as the UK exited the EU. This thesis aims to build upon this methodological tool to make the case for a longitudinal discursive approach towards data analysis. Whilst this approach is particularly well-suited to the analysis of Brexit, in part due to the lengthy timescale of this process, my advocacy for longitudinal research is not confined to EU discourse. Instead, I seek to make an appeal to the field of DP and raise a question of my own: why have discursive psychologists largely failed to systematically address the conceptual and methodological questions of change over time by using the tools of longitudinal research? This lack of engagement is particularly concerning due to the growing field of Longitudinal Qualitative Research (LQR), and the subsequent response from other methodologies, such as Conversation Analysis (see Deppermann & Doehler, 2021; Neale, Henwood, & Holland, 2012). If DP is unwilling to similarly address this topic, it risks falling behind its qualitative counterparts in its ability to contribute towards the development of this emerging methodological framework.

However, the purpose of this thesis is not simply to argue that because other perspectives have adopted longitudinal approaches, DP should follow suit. Similarly, I am not trying to 're-invent the wheel' when it comes to the discursive analysis of talk. In fact, my case for longitudinal discursive research (LDR) rests on the claim that the methodological and conceptual tools required for this approach are already in our toolbox. If we accept that talk is subject to change due to its situated nature, it is also reasonable to expect that talk will change through time. Discourse is situated in time

and social space, meaning that the resources and strategies drawn upon by speakers will be shaped by the rhetorical demands of each situation (Potter, 2011). Whilst DP has been effective at examining these differences across accounts, there has been very little focus on how these same accounts change through time. As a result, DP is missing an essential perspective on how the forms and functions of arguments develop on a scale larger than the moment-by-moment scale which is typically the focus of discursive research (Condor, 1996). From this, this thesis aims to demonstrate that DP both can and should engage with longitudinal analysis. This will be achieved by conducting a longitudinal discursive analysis of broadcast political debate as the UK left the European Union.

1.1 Overview of Chapters

Having set out the broad aims and purpose of the thesis in this brief introduction, Chapter 2 will provide a more detailed overview of the history, principles, and practices of discursive psychology. Here, I will discuss the philosophical perspectives which inspired the 'turn to language' movement and review the contribution other qualitative methods, such as Conversation Analysis, have made towards the development of the field. This chapter will also summarise the Social Constructionist worldview and highlight how this epistemology has informed the practice of DP. The core principles of DP will be identified, and I will explain how these principles shape its conceptualisation of talk as action. By setting out this information, I seek to foreground the key argument of this thesis by demonstrating that the current longitudinal analysis is still grounded in a 'traditional' discursive approach.

Once I have established the methodological and epistemological orientation of this thesis, in Chapter 3, I will contextualise the current analysis by providing an account of the circumstances surrounding Brexit. This will lead to a discussion regarding the nature of political discourse and how it is approached from a discursive perspective. I summarise how DP has previously engaged with the political sphere. This includes examples of how constructs such as populism and leadership are employed in talk. In this chapter, I also consider the role of debate within political discourse and outline how this type of interaction differs from other forms of communication, such as campaign speeches.

This will be followed by an overview of Longitudinal Qualitative Research (LQR) in Chapter 4. Here, I discuss the key principles underpinning the emerging field of LQR and consider how the principles of this approach align with DP. This will include a review of the relevant literature that has examined time and change within discourse and a summary of how other related methodologies, such as conversation analysis, have approached longitudinal research.

Chapter 5 provides an overview of the methodology, in which I discuss how I approached the longitudinal discursive analysis. This includes a summary of the data, which was drawn from televised political debates related to Brexit during 2019, and an outline of the key analytic decisions I made when conducting this research. This will then lead into Chapter 6, my first analytic chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how longitudinal research can approach stability through time. Through a critical engagement with social identity theory, this chapter compares how speakers challenge and resist the leadership of Theresa May and Boris Johnson, the two UK Prime Ministers who held office during the time period covered by the dataset. The findings of this analysis illustrate the importance of 'followership' in constructing leadership. While previous research has focused on how leaders seek to engage followers, there has been little exploration of how (potential) followers construct leaders.

Chapter 7 then provides a longitudinal analysis of how Labour's Brexit policy was constructed throughout the course of 2019. The key finding of this analysis is that the discursive strategies speakers used to justify this policy developed in response to the challenges they faced from their opponents. Chapter 8 also uses a longitudinal discursive approach in order to examine how speakers justify and challenge support for a second referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union. This analysis identified both stable and changing features of accounts which are concerned with the 'will of the people' and the 'national interest'.

Finally, in Chapter 9, I summarise my analytic findings and consider their implications for our understanding of political discourse. I will discuss the benefits of LDR and provide a framework for future analyses.

Chapter 2: Background and Theory

The discipline of DP evolved from the 'turn to language' of the 1980s, in which preconceived notions about how best to approach the analysis of talk were challenged (Gralewski, 2011). While language has traditionally been viewed as a medium through which researchers can access an individual's internal world, this perspective has now been criticised for reducing psychological phenomena to simply the workings of cognitive processes (Edwards, 1997). Discourse analysts instead proposed taking a pragmatic approach to language in which the practicalities of what individuals say and do are central, and idealised presuppositions are rejected (Billig, 2009). This pragmatism is central to the practice of DP, the form of discourse analysis employed in the current thesis. Before discussing the specific principles of DP, I will first review the philosophical, sociological, and psychological traditions underpinning this approach.

2.1 Philosophical Underpinnings

The anti-cognitivism of the 'turn to language' movement was influenced by the earlier work of philosophers Ludwig Wittgenstein and Gilbert Ryle, both of who questioned how language relates to an individual's internal and external world (Wiggins, 2017). (Ryle, 1949/2009) challenges what he refers to as the 'official doctrine' that the mind and body are two fundamentally distinct entities that interact and influence each other's functioning. Ryle criticised this 'doctrine' of Cartesian dualism for including the category error that mental and physical processes can be analysed in the same way (Nath, 2013). He labelled the notion that the mind exists as an independent operating system separate from the body as 'the ghost in the machine', believing that such processes are not distinct from observable external behaviour (Ryle, 2009). From this, Ryle concluded that there are no invisible mental acts that precede speech and action, thereby making it impossible to gain true insight into cognitive function through the analysis of language alone (Hallam, 2012). This perspective is reflected in DP, in which the primary analytic concern is social practices rather than psychological states (Wiggins, 2017).

Like Ryle, Ludwig Wittgenstein challenged traditional assumptions regarding the relationship between language and mental states. In 'Philosophical Investigations', Wittgenstein (1953) rejected the existence of a 'private language' in which descriptions of inner worlds are wholly severed from the external reality they reside in (Lin, 2017). He argued that such a phenomenon would make talk incomprehensible to both the speaker and those around them due to the lack of shared meaning attributed to unobservable internal states (Billig, 2009). From this, Wittgenstein concluded that speech does not communicate thoughts, making an individual's inner reality inaccessible to others through this medium (Wiggins, 2017). He instead proposed that rather than passively representing the world, language is in fact a 'toolbox' (Wittgenstein, 1953, para 11) which is actively engaged in several different functions. To demonstrate this, Wittgenstein drew upon the metaphor of a 'language game', in which each interaction is said to have unique aims and rules. Speakers act as 'players' in such games by performing roles such as giving orders and reporting events (Potter, 2001). In this context, language is therefore viewed as being flexible and dependent on the social context, with this highlighting conversation as an area for analytic focus (Wiggins, 2017).

Wittgenstein's (1953) work can be said to have informed the principles of DP in two keyways. First, it rejects the cognitive notion that language can be used to gain insight into the inner 'truth' behind language. As stated by Wiggins (2017), actions such as thoughts and feelings are public events and should therefore only be understood through that lens. Next, Wittgenstein emphasised that language is 'doing something' in that rather than simply describing an object, speakers are instead performing myriad social functions (Billig, 2009). This perspective influenced the development of John Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory, an essential precursor to the development of discourse analysis (Potter, 1996). I will next provide an overview of Austin's work and consider its relevance to the practices of DP.

2.2 Speech Act Theory

In his formation of Speech Act Theory, Austin (1962) was initially concerned with the formation and function of statements. While it had traditionally been assumed that statements were straightforward

descriptions of the world, Austin noted that this is not always the case. Some utterances categorised as 'statements' were observed to be either nonsensical and meaningless, or not intended to be factual reports of information. From this, Austin (1962) developed a distinction between two types of utterances he labelled as constative and performative. Constative utterances were defined as descriptions relaying information which could then be judged by the listener as either true or false. On the other hand, performatives refer to acts of speech that are doing something. This distinction can be demonstrated by comparing the sentences 'you are married' and 'are you married?' (Wiggins, 2017). While the first simply provides information, the second performs an action by asking a question that requires a response. Unlike constatives, performative utterances are not judged on their facticity but rather on their success. For performatives to be successful, Austin (1962) states that they must fulfil at least three felicity conditions. These conditions include criteria such as the context being appropriate, conventional talk procedures being followed, and all participants subsequently engaging with the required action (e.g., following an order).

Austin (1962) then drew a further distinction between types of performatives, labelling them either 'explicit' or 'implicit' utterances. Explicit performatives are defined as such due to their use of definitive verbs which emphasise the action being performed by the speaker. In comparison, implicit utterances are often vague and context-based, making it difficult to interpret the speaker's true intention. Because of this distinction, the force behind explicit utterances is less likely to be misunderstood by listeners (Lyons, 1981). For instance, listeners are more likely to act upon the explicit performative 'I order you to leave' than the implicit question 'Will you leave?' (Thomas, 1995). However, despite working to establish separate categories for constative and performative utterances, Austin (1962) concluded that such an unequivocal distinction does not truly reflect the nature of language use. The key reason for this is that, contrary to his initial proposal, it was observed that some performatives can be assessed as true or false, and some constatives can perform action (Potter, 2001). From this realisation, Austin (1962) went on to construct Speech Act Theory, a general account of language that provides a framework for discursive acts.

In this theory, Austin set out three components through which a speech act can be produced. These centre around the notion of 'force', meaning that the same words will have different meanings depending on the function of the utterance (Potter, 2001). One component of this model is referred to as a locutionary act, which is defined by Austin (1962) as "the act of saying something" (p.94). This highlights the grammar, syntax, and meaning of an utterance as being a concern for analysts investigating speech acts (Austin, 1962). While locutionary acts are concerned with the actual words used by the speaker, illocutionary acts instead focus on the force behind an utterance. This distinction can be demonstrated through the sentence 'I am going to do it' (Searle, 1968), which despite having the same syntax and meaning, can have the force of a threat, promise, or statement of intention. This notion of force is central to Austin's theory and provides an account for how all forms of language perform functions in talk. Finally, perlocutionary acts are the consequential effects of an utterance. This force is only considered successful if the intended action is performed by the listener (Austin, 1975). For example, if exclaiming 'fire' convinces others to leave a building, the speaker has performed a perlocutionary act. Therefore, perlocutionary acts can be said to be a consequence of illocutionary force (Potter, 2001).

Austin's (1962) Speech Act theory, alongside Searle's (1969) later development of it, has informed the principles of DP. First, this theory emphasised the importance of analysing the function of language rather than just the form. Related to this, Austin presented a functional approach to talk in which actions can be classified (Wiggins, 2017). Finally, speech act theory also provides a framework for discursive analysts to understand how statements are formed in order to create a meaningful and coherent sequence (Brown & Yule, 1983). However, DP departs from Austin's work in multiple ways. Citing Searle's (1969) review, Potter (2001) criticises this model for assuming that language is socially homogenous and for failing to explain the distinction between the 'force' and 'sense' of talk. In addition to this, Potter (2001) also notes that the theory's over-reliance on made-up examples has problematic implications for the reliability and applicability of its findings. Finally, Derrida (as cited in Potter, 1996) suggests that Austin overstates the intentional nature of language and neglects to account for non-serious acts such as jokes and sarcasm.

Despite these critiques, Austin (1962) provided a preliminary insight into the relationship between language and action which has informed how discursive analysts approach social interaction. Speech Act theory also influenced ethnomethodology, another theoretical tradition that serves as a foundation for DP (Cooren, 2015). To better understand how this approach has informed DP, I will next examine its claims regarding the nature of language.

2.3 Ethnomethodology

The study of ethnomethodology provides an alternative sociological approach to understanding the methods and procedures which govern everyday life (Garfinkel, 1974). Pioneered by Garfinkel (1967), this perspective treats practical activities, circumstances, and reasoning as areas ripe for analysis. From this, researchers are primarily concerned with examining the features of talk in mundane day-to-day interactions (Garfinkel, 1967). Two key tenets underpin this approach. The first tenet is the notion of social order, which refers to Garfinkel's (1974) proposal that the rules of a society are established and upheld by those who participate in it. This stands in opposition to Durkheimian theories in which cultural norms are viewed as objective and existing independently from the actions of the individual (Martinez-Guzman, Stecher, Íñiguez-Rueda, 2016). Related to this, the second tenet of ethnomethodology is the notion of social action, in which language is viewed as a tool that is used by speakers to structure, organise and situate societal order (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). In his book 'Studies in Ethnomethodology', Garfinkel (1967) provides an overview of the characteristics he identified as being primary functions of talk, including accountability, reflexivity, and indexicality. The term accountability is used to explain how actions are constructed to have a meaning that is both desirable and recognisable to others. Expanding on this, reflexivity refers to how individuals in turn display that they have understood the meaning of these actions (Heritage, 1984). Finally, indexicality explains how the intelligibility of utterances is dependent upon the context in which they are situated (Maynard & Clayman, 1991). Therefore, ethnomethodology is not interested in analysing the motivations behind talk but rather in exploring how language is produced to sustain social order in everyday interaction (Heritage,1995).

To illustrate this perspective on language and action, Garfinkel (1967) instructed his students to carry out 'breaching experiments' with members of the public. The aim of these experiments was to observe the reactions to unexpected, rule-breaking behaviour in order to reveal the social structures from which they emerge (Rafalovich, 2006). From this research, Garfinkel (1967) identified various common-sense practices which govern day-to-day interaction. These practices were found to be taken for granted and, therefore, unnoticed until the point at which they were disturbed. For example, actions such as erasing and moving a competitor's mark during a game of noughts and crosses were met with indignant and furious reactions from subjects (Garfinkel, 1967). It was proposed that such responses were a result of participants having their fixed understanding of social order challenged by rule-breaking behaviour. In addition to this, as it is assumed that all members have a shared understanding of the interactional context they are in, evidence of misunderstanding causes confusion amongst the group (Scott, 2009). These findings therefore demonstrate the importance of accountability, reflexivity, and indexicality for constructing mutual meaning in talk.

Ethnomethodology has been influential in the development of DP. One reason for this is that the ethnomethodological notions of reflexivity and indexicality provide a basis for discursive analysts to argue that language constructs, rather than represents, our social reality (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Like DP, this approach conceptualises talk in terms of its use and functions and seeks to analyse these concepts in the context of mundane and institutional settings (Wiggins, 2017). Furthermore, DP's aversion to imposing theoretical categories upon participants' interaction can be said to have been inherited from ethnomethodological researchers who are careful to ensure that their analysis emerges from within the dataset rather than as a result of preconceived judgements (Martinez-Guzman, Stecher & Íñiguez-Rueda, 2016). However, despite these similarities, Rodrigues and Braga (2014) argue that the two methods diverge in part due to differences in their respective analytic concerns. Whilst ethnomethodology is primarily focused on identifying how the social context facilitates the function and meaning of talk, DP is more concerned with analysing the function and form of discourse itself (Rodrigues & Braga, 2014).

For this reason, it can be said that the method of ethnomethodology shares many similarities with the work of conversation analysts such as Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), who are also concerned with the organisation of everyday talk. Wiggins (2017) notes that more recent developments in DP have drawn upon the workings of conversation analysis (CA) in order to inform analytic practices. To explore this further, I will next provide an overview of the principles of CA with a particular focus on those aspects that have been influential in the development of DP.

2.4 Conversation Analysis

Conversation analysis was developed from a growing linguistic tradition of using mundane everyday interaction to investigate the social organisation of talk (Wiggins, 2017). The primary aim of this method is to identify the resources employed by speakers to manage a range of procedural problems, such as turn-taking distribution and misunderstanding (Ten Have, 2006). From this perspective, language is viewed as actively shaping social interaction, meaning that the performance of actions such as blaming or forgiving are also considered critical areas for analysis (Peräkylä, 2004). Related to this, pioneers of conversation analysts such as Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) also sought to investigate the sequential organisation of discourse. This is due to the assumption that for actions to be performed successfully, speakers must first demonstrate that their utterances are appropriate for the social context in which they are produced (Potter, 1996). For example, 'adjacency pairs' refers to a form of conversational sequence in which the first part of an utterance typically requires a particular response. If a question is responded to with a greeting, this may indicate that the speaker has not fully understood the interaction, making their utterance redundant (Sacks et al.,1974). Analysing sequential organisation through participant orientation is important as it enables researchers to validate their findings without making interpretative claims on the speaker's behalf (Sacks, Schegloff et al.,1974). Conversation analysis is therefore underpinned by the notion that the properties of talk are systematically organised and ordered to perform action (Wooffitt, 2005)

The principles of conversation analysis have been highly influential in informing the practices of DP. Firstly, the CA development of Jeffersonian transcription notation (Jefferson, 2004) has been

essential for investigating properties of talk, such as pitch, tone and pauses, which provide researchers with greater insight into how language is organised (Wiggins, 2017). Next, Wooffitt (2005) highlights that both CA and DP view talk as an area for analysis in and of itself. This marks a radical departure from traditional studies of interaction in which speech is seen as being reflective of broader systemic issues (Wooffitt, 2005). Related to this is the work of early conversation analysts (e.g., Sacks et al.,1974), which reinforced Garfinkel's (1967) assertion that language is doing something in talk. The notion that talk is action-orientated is at the core of DP and is reflected in its epistemological stance and methodological procedures (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Finally, the CA focus on the sequential organisation of speech enables researchers to investigate the accountability practices that speakers employ in everyday interaction. For example, identifying turn-taking procedures provides insight into how actions such as avoiding a request are performed (Wiggins, 2017).

As both conversation analysis and discursive psychology developed out of the 'turn to language' which incorporated the work of researchers such as Austin (1962) and Garfinkel (1967), it should come as no surprise that the guiding principles of the two approaches overlap. However, it is the analytic focus of CA which distinguishes this method from the practices of discursive psychology. Features of interaction, such as sequential order and turn-taking procedures, are central to the work of conversation analysts. In contrast, discourse analysts are typically more concerned with the broader functions of talk (Wooffitt, 2005). Likewise, DP-informed discourse analysis typically prioritises the identification of discursive actions such as blaming and positive self-presentation. This divergence in analytic focus can be used to explain existing differences between the two methodological procedures. Conversation analysis can be said to provide consistent guidelines for researchers due to the various analytic resources it draws upon to investigate sequential organisation (Wooffitt, 2005). In contrast to this, commentators have often noted the difficulty in producing formal procedures for conducting discursive research (Wiggins, 2017). Therefore, whilst sharing a similar conceptualisation of language, the two approaches differ in their approach towards analysis.

To better understand the practices of DP, I will next discuss the epistemological orientation in which this approach is grounded.

2.5 Social Constructionism

The principles of discursive psychology are informed by social constructionism, a theoretical approach which underpins various psychological and sociological traditions (Burr, 2003). Due to this multidisciplinary use, the specifics of social constructionism can be difficult to define. However, Gergen (1985) identified multiple key characteristics which typify this epistemological position. One such characteristic is the adoption of a critical stance towards the taken-for-granted nature of knowledge and reality (Burr, 2003). Social constructionism challenges the empiricist view that observations of the world can be unproblematically used to reveal objective facts and universal experiences. This approach instead proposes that our understanding and knowledge of the world is bound to the prevailing culture and current time period. From this perspective, accepted facts about the nature of reality are relative and are therefore the product of societal consensus rather than reflective of an objective long-standing 'truth' (Burr, 2003). This process involves the content of everyday interaction in which individuals' accounts and experiences are shared and reinforced by others to establish a seemingly objective version of reality. These social processes can therefore be said to be action orientated as they work to construct and reproduce knowledge and understanding (Burr, 2003).

In their book 'The Social Construction of Reality', Berger and Luckmann (1966) propose that social phenomena are constructed and maintained through everyday interaction. This happens through three social processes: externalisation, objectivation and internalisation. Externalisation refers to how individuals share their knowledge and understanding of the world with others. This is achieved through social action such as talk. This information is then reinforced through further interaction to attain the status of objective knowledge which exists externally to the self (objectivation). The final stage of this process is internalisation in which this view of the world is assimilated into the consciousness of other social group members (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The relationship between knowledge and these processes is reciprocal in that individuals must both construct and respond to versions of reality (Burr, 2003).

This epistemology underpins the key principles of DP, which seeks to identify how these versions of reality are constructed and maintained through talk.

2.6 Discursive Psychology

The principles of what came to be known as discursive psychology first emerged from the analytic procedures outlined in Potter and Wetherell's (1987) seminal book 'Discourse and Social Psychology'. Here, Potter and Wetherell advocated an alternative approach towards conceptualising attitudes, categories, and social representations within talk. Central to this approach is the notion that language works to construct, rather than represent, reality. Because of this, discourse analysts argue that there are no 'true' accounts, only versions of the same event (Potter, 1996). From this, researchers analysing talk should seek to identify variations in how language is used and constructed (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Although the form of discourse analysis outlined by Potter and Wetherell was fundamental in developing the principles of DP, the two approaches have divergences in their methodological conventions (Wiggins, 2017).

Firstly, Potter and Wetherell (1987) were concerned with identifying the organisational resources employed by speakers in talk. Building on the work of Gilbert and Mulkay (1984), the use of interpretative repertoires was identified as an area of interest. In discourse analysis, an interpretative repertoire refers to a collection of accounts which share the same consistent and recognisable tropes. These repertoires are then selectively drawn upon to perform action (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). However, as noted by Potter (2012), much contemporary discursive research has moved away from identifying interpretative repertoires. This is due to increasing analytic interest in not just how language is used to build social action but also in the action itself. A further methodological difference between the two approaches is that the form of discourse analysis proposed by Potter and Wetherell (1987) was largely developed through examining open-ended interviews. Studies employing discursive psychology have largely moved away from such methods in favour of analysing more naturally occurring data (Wiggins, 2017). The form of discourse analysis introduced

by Potter and Wetherell was later refined by Edwards and Potter (1992) to establish and formalise the principles of discursive psychology.

Edwards and Potter (1992) identified three key features of language which inform the practice and principles of discursive psychology. First, discourse is situated in various ways. One way it is situated is sequentially within the organisation of interactional activity. This relates to the conversation analytic concept of turn-taking procedures, in which the meaning of an utterance is orientated to by its sequential position in talk (Edwards & Potter, 2001). These turns work continually throughout talk to both respond to the previous utterance and provide context for what is said next (Kent & Potter, 2014). However, it is important to note that the sequential order of an utterance does not determine its response. For example, although a question may orientate towards the normative response of an answer, it could instead be met with avoidance or refusal (Edwards & Potter, 2001).

Next, discourse is situated institutionally to be relevant to the social needs of the specific interactional context. Here, speakers orientate their utterances towards performing and constructing their institutional roles and identities. This process occurs in both mundane and elite discourse. For example, everyday instances of workplace 'small talk' are situated in the social context. The rhetorical tools hairdressers utilise to build rapport with their clientele are likely to be distinct from the approach employed by driving instructors due to the differing social expectations of these roles (Stefani & Horlacher, 2018). Likewise, within parliamentary debate, politicians will orient towards their institutional role through actions such as the form of address they use to refer to other speakers (e.g., 'The Right Honourable Gentleman'). These forms of address are in turn informed by convention regarding 'parliamentary language', with this suggesting talk both shapes and is shaped by the interactional setting (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996).

Furthermore, discourse is also situated rhetorically in that speakers construct their descriptions to provide a persuasive account of events. This works to undermine the credibility of alternative claims by presenting them as being false, misleading, or otherwise biased and interested (Kent & Potter, 2014). From this, Edwards and Potter (2001) proposed that descriptions are both offensive and defensive in that they cannot simply be categorised as being responsive to an

individual's experiences and opinions. These accounts are instead shaped by the existence of potential counterarguments. Discursive psychology is therefore concerned with analysing how discourse is situated sequentially, institutionally, and rhetorically.

The second key principle of discursive psychology is that talk is orientated towards performing action. Here, language is viewed as a resource which is drawn upon by speakers in order to accomplish various social tasks. This can take the form of practices such as blaming, persuading, and refusing orders (Edwards & Potter, 2001). The concept of action as proposed by DP is distinct from Austin's (1962) notion of 'speech acts' as it emphasises that all utterances, even ostensibly factual statements, are doing something in talk. From this perspective, analysts are not concerned with identifying the cognitive processes underpinning discourse but rather examining how these cognitions are constructed and orientated to. For example, rather than treating attitudes as a mental state that drives talk, discursive psychology instead analyses how such evaluations are formed and maintained in social interaction (Edwards & Potter, 1992). This approach explains the variability across people's talk, as accounts are seen not as pre-formed objective entities but as occasioned practices designed to produce action in the moment (Edwards & Potter, 2001). Discursive psychologists therefore seek to examine how actions are produced in social interaction in order to identify what function they perform and how they are subsequently understood and responded to by others.

Finally, discursive psychology is also informed by the principle that language is both constructed and constructive of the world (Edwards & Potter, 2001). It is constructed in the sense that speakers draw upon various cultural and rhetorical resources such as words, metaphors, and descriptions in the construction of their accounts. These resources in turn work to perform particular actions dependent on the social context. For example, descriptions may be formulated to present the speakers' conduct as a natural response required by external circumstances or as disorderly and motivated by intrinsic factors (Edwards, 1997). Discourse is also conceptualised as constructive in that it is used to build and maintain versions of reality (Potter & Hepburn, 2005). From this perspective, talk does not work to passively represent objective truths about the world, but instead actively engages in producing its facets and features. This lack of one 'true' reality leads speakers to

construct their own versions of history, social structures and mental states to perform and accomplish specific actions. Discursive psychology treats this action as being the primary function of talk, with reality and cognitive factors being secondary in the system of language production (Edwards & Potter, 2001). Analysts are therefore interested in examining how versions of reality are constructed, how they are adopted or rejected by others, and what purpose they serve in social interaction.

These principles underpin the current longitudinal analysis of broadcast political debate as the UK left the European Union. Due to Brexit being the focus of this analysis, in Chapter 3 I will provide an overview of the DP approach to political discourse. Whilst still being grounded in these core principles, the specific nature and demands of political discourse require some additional consideration.

Chapter 3: Political Discourse and Brexit

Chilton (2004) defines politics as "a struggle between those who seek to assert and maintain their power, and those who seek to resist it" (p. 4). This occurs at both a micro and macro level. At a micro level, political context. Politicians orientate their talk to fulfil the needs and expectations of individuals and groups using techniques such as persuasion, manipulation and threats in their struggle for dominance or efforts towards cooperation (Jones, 1994). At a macro level, individuals and groups employ the power of the state in order to assert their dominance. Here, professional politicians and interest groups use established processes to achieve their aims (Chilton, 2004). Hague, Harrop and Breslin (1998) critique traditional studies of political rhetoric for failing to recognise and analyse the function of these micro- and macro-level behaviours. Micro-level behaviours function as rhetorical actions that produce and establish various political effects such as authority, legitimacy and consensus (Chilton, 2004). Similarly, discourse at a macro level works to situate these actions in the appropriate social environment. For example, different actions will be performed in a cabinet meeting compared to a public campaigning event due to distinct aims and target audiences. From this perspective, the nature of talk and the context in which it is received mutually define each other (van Dijk, 2008).

Discourse analysts therefore seek to examine the actions and practices performed in political discourse.

It is important to note that professional politicians and established institutions are not the only participants in political discourse. Discursive psychology is also concerned with the response of those who are the intended recipients of such communication – the public at large (Edwards & Potter, 1996). It can be argued that the nature of this communication between politicians and members of the public has changed in recent years due to the intertwinement of entertainment and politics (van Zoonen, 2005). As political rhetoric is now most often shared through the media of television, newspapers, and online sources, this has resulted in a diversification of potential audiences (Condor, Tileagă & Billig, 2013). van Eemeren (2010) drew a distinction between the two types of audiences toward which political discourse is directed. The first is a mixed audience, which includes individuals with a heterogeneous understanding of the issues being communicated. The second is a multiple audience which consists of those individuals with differing, and often irreconcilable, views and commitments. This diversity means that politicians are required to perform multiple actions in talk to appease and appeal to multiple audiences which hold incompatible expectations in regard to the topic being discussed (Condor et al., 2013). This collapse between the private and public aspects of political discourse has also led to further changes in how politicians construct their speech. For instance, Thompson (2011) discussed the rise of self-expressive and personalised communication in the political sphere. The current analysis therefore also seeks to examine how the recipients of political communication construct their talk and how in turn, politicians orientate their discourse towards the audience's expectations.

The medium through which the interaction between politicians and the public occurs is relevant to this thesis due to my analytic focus on broadcast political discourse. The dataset used for this analysis consists of episodes of the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) *Question Time*, a programme in which live studio audience members can pose questions on the week's events to a panel of politicians and other public figures. Whilst I delve more into the particularities of *Question Time* in

Chapter 4, it is worth highlighting here the features of broadcast political debate that have been identified as influencing the way in which talk is constructed.

3.1 Broadcast Political Discourse

As previously discussed, political discourse is now most commonly shared through various media platforms (Condor, Tileagă & Billig, 2013). Bull and Fetzer (2010) identified three distinct forms of political discourse which are most prominent within the media. These include politicians addressing an audience, interviews with journalists or other professionals, and debates with other politicians. The way in which speakers construct their accounts will be shaped by the differing expectations and intended audiences of each format. For example, in the UK, parliamentary debate is subject to strict guidelines which must be observed by participants. Members of Parliament (MP) are expected to abide by conventions regarding 'parliamentary language', such as formally addressing other speakers, refraining from making personal accusations, and following the allocated turn procedure (van Dijk, 1997). In order to attend to their 'positive face', they must adhere to these rules. The term 'positive face' is used by Brown and Levison (1987) to describe the desire to be seen favourably by others. Speakers with parliamentary debate therefore seek to present a positive face by maintaining the appearance of cordiality and demonstrating respect for protocol. However, in order to score 'political points' from the public, they must engage in adversarial conduct with the aim of embarrassing or insulting their opponents. As identified by Harris (2001) in her analysis of Prime Minister's Questions, a weekly parliamentary session in which MPs can pose questions to the Prime Minister has led to the development of discursive strategies which meet these competing demands. One such strategy includes MPs constructing their questions with a built-in proposition that works to implicitly criticise the Prime Minister ("Will the Prime Minister promise straightforwardness and honesty in future health announcements?", p.459). This is in line with DP's conceptualisation of talk, as the production of political discourse can be seen to be situated within its institutional setting (Edwards & Potter, 2001).

The second form of broadcast political discourse identified by Bull and Fetzer (2010) is interviews. Interviews have proved popular in British political broadcasting due to the ease with which they can be used to gain commentary from politicians regarding current events (Clayman & Heritage, 2002). Previous research has explored the various functions interviews can perform, such as gaining information, holding politicians to account, and facilitating debate between opposing sides (see Montgomery, 2011). Like parliamentary discourse, interviews are also governed by similar rules and expectations towards which speakers orientate. A key feature of this format is that the interviewer is required to assume a neutral stance towards the topic being discussed (Ekström, 2001). Because of this, they must work to ensure that the challenging questions they ask of politicians do not appear to reflect their own personal bias. One discursive device which can be used to mitigate this risk is what Goffman (1981) refers to as 'footing'. This is an interactional strategy which speakers employ to manage their relationship to the utterances they are producing. Goffman proposes that in talk, speakers can adopt one of three roles. These include the 'principle' whose position is being represented, the 'author' who is responsible for the content of the utterance, and the 'animator' who produces it (Levinson, 1988). To maintain the appearance of neutrality, the interviewer can shift their footing to that of the 'animator', allowing them to ask questions that represent a certain perspective without being seen to necessarily endorse it themselves. For example, they may ask the interviewee to respond to a criticism that unspecified 'people' have levied at them (Clayman, 1992). This demonstrates that political discourse is influenced by all those participating in the interaction, not just the politicians themselves. From this, the way in which the listener or intended audience responds to a politician is also of interest to discursive researchers.

The final form of political discourse identified by Bull and Fetzer (2010) further highlights the role of the listener in constructing politicians' accounts. Here, they discuss how politicians address and interact with an audience through speeches. Montgomery (2011) argues that all forms of broadcast political discourse are typically scripted and rehearsed in that speakers pre-empt and prepare for certain questions. However, a unique feature of political speeches is that they are often word-for-word scripted and delivered as an uninterrupted monologue (Bull, 2015). Because of this,

the audience's interaction with the speaker is confined to non-verbal actions such as applause and laughter. The function of these actions is to demonstrate approval or disapproval towards what is being said (Atkinson, 1984). Analysing the language of political speeches therefore allows researchers to explore how these accounts are constructed to invite an affiliative response from the listener.

Atkinson (1984) proposes that a speaker is most likely to receive applause when a certain point is emphasised in contrast to their previous utterances or when they are seen to have completed their message. Audience management devices such as three-part lists signal when speakers are going to end whilst still being articulated, with this acting as a prompt for applause to begin (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). If such prompts are unsuccessful in receiving the desired response, speakers can employ alternative strategies to pursue applause, such as reiterating their previous point (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986). The analysis of speeches therefore highlights the importance of non-verbal actions in informing how politicians present their arguments to an audience.

The format of *Question Time* can be said to take key elements from all of these forms of broadcast political discourse. The panel is chaired by Fiona Bruce, who has hosted the programme since the beginning of 2019 and whose role is to facilitate debate between panel members and between the panel and the audience. Because of this, politicians have to manage both arguments from their political opponents and the response from the live studio audience. This direct interaction between the panel and the audience is one of the most analytically interesting features of *Question Time.* Having discussed one form of audience interaction (applause), I will next outline the role of laughter within political discourse.

3.2 Humour and Laughter

Like applause, laughter also serves the function of a non-verbal social action. Although it might be assumed that laughter is used to mark something as humorous, Potter (2005, p.13) notes that there are actually 'various kinds of serious business being performed' through this act. Much of DP's understanding of laughter draws on the work of conversation analysts, who have sought to identify how this action unfolds in talk (Potter & Hepburn, 2010). This involves examining how laughter is

employed, why it occurs at a certain point in time, and the communicative signals it follows (Glen, 2003). From this perspective, there is no expectation that laughter necessitates humour. The concept of humour itself is treated as an interactional practice rather than a theoretical concern (Demasi & Tileagă, 2021).

While acknowledging that there is no intrinsic association between laughter and humour, Partington (2006) uses the term 'laughter-talk' to refer to accounts that are designed to elicit laughter. Within political discourse, this device can work to both attend to the positive self-presentation of politicians and to construct a negative characterisation of opponents. One way in which it can attend to positive self-presentation is through 'conversationalising' institutional discourse (Saftoiu & Popescu, 2014). That is, politicians can insert humour into what is otherwise viewed as 'serious' discourse to foster an image of relatability with the public. For example, former US President Donald Trump was found to employ crude and inappropriate humour in his speeches in order to reinforce his status as an anti-establishment figure (Hall, Goldstein & Ingram, 2016). Laughter-talk can therefore be beneficial for breaking down barriers and creating a sense of camaraderie between politicians and the general public.

However, what is most notable about the use of humour in political discourse is the way in which it is used to attack opponents. Billig (2005) argues that researchers have tended to wrongly ascribe positive motives and outcomes to the use of humour in talk. He suggests that forms of humour, such as ridicule, are often employed with the intention of 'disciplining' those who stray from social norms or challenge institutional power. In political discourse, speakers have been observed to make bigoted claims about marginalised groups under the proviso that they are 'only joking' (Wodak, Culpeper, & Semino, 2020). Whilst providing an avenue for speakers to 'retract' their jokes and therefore avoid accusations of prejudice, this strategy also works to discursively reinforce negative stereotypes (Tannen, 1992). It is important to note here that from a discursive perspective, the content of jokes is analysed to understand their form and function rather than to gain insight into the attitude of the speaker.

In addition to re-producing prejudice, humour in political discourse is also used to demonstrate contempt towards those with different views (Demasi & Tileagă, 2021). For example, Weaver (2018) highlights the role of this strategy in undermining the former leader of the far-right UK Independence Party (UKIP), Nigel Farage. His analysis of televised political satire identified the use of comedic tropes such as comparisons and hyperbole in constructing a disparaging caricature of Farage ("he lowered the level of political debate in this country to somewhere between Donald Trump and Mein Kampf", p.18). Weaver (2019) suggests that humour has become a staple in Brexit discourse due to the incongruency of this event and its transgression of taboos regarding what is and is not appropriate to speak about in public, such as race and xenophobia. The way in which humour is used to construct key issues relating to Brexit is therefore of interest to my analysis.

As previously discussed, laughter is not necessarily a response to a humorous utterance. However, one function this action performs is marking something as 'funny'. Like with laughter-talk, laughter itself can serve either an affiliative or disaffiliative purpose (Clayman, 1992). Laughter in response to a speech can indicate that the listener found humour in what was being said, with this suggesting a level of agreement. Through analysing the discourse of US Presidential debates, Clayman (1992) identified that the audience frequently employed affiliative laughter in response to a candidate providing a negative characterisation of their opponent. This response worked to validate the speaker's assessment and signal affinity with their political views. In this research, Clayman also highlights how affiliative laughter so often transitions into applause, with this further suggesting that affiliative laughter primarily denotes appreciation rather than amusement. The audience is therefore laughing 'with' the speaker and laughing 'at' the target (Glenn, 2003).

In contrast, Demasi and Tileagă (2021) analysed the use of derisive laughter in EU discourse. Derisive laughter performs a disaffiliative function in that it frames the utterance being responded to as being 'laughable' despite the serious intentions of the speaker (Clift, 2016). In this analysis, this device was identified as a tool used for argumentative purposes. Primarily, it worked to position some ideologies and political actions as existing beyond the domain of 'serious' and 'reasonable' engagement (Demasi & Tileagă, 2021). For example, in response to an opponent presenting a

disparaging assessment of his character, Nigel Farage was found to employ persistent laugh particles so to interrupt the construction of this account. Through this, he signalled to this audience that this characterisation is laughably untrue and therefore not worth listening to. From this, Demasi and Tileagă suggest that laughter serves both an interactional and ideological function. This is because it downplays the legitimacy of competing accounts whilst also making an implicit claim about who has the 'facts' to speak authoritatively about the matter under discussion.

The presence of laughter and humour in broadcast political discourse is therefore of analytic interest to researchers, as this form of programming is typically not designed to elicit humour among its participants (Demasi & Tileagă, 2021). Because of this, it can be assumed that these actions are used to perform a broader range of argumentative functions, one of which is fact construction. To expand on this, I will next provide an overview of the relationship between argumentation and fact construction from the perspective of DP.

3.3 Fact Construction

The construction of arguments in adversarial political discourse has been of great interest to researchers due to debate and discussion being the primary means through which politicians seek to persuade the public regarding their ideology and policy decisions (Kane & Patapan, 2010). Billig (1991) suggests that the same principles underlie both human thought and public debate. This is because when adopting a stance, the individual must internally and externally debate and in turn, negate all sides of a potential argument (Billig, 1991). In political discourse, categories such as 'equality' and 'democracy' are the subject of consistent dispute. Because of this variability across speakers, accounts employing and defining such categorisations cannot be validated through appeals to empirical evidence alone (Gray, 1978). Instead, speakers have been found to use flexible categorisations that address and undermine competing descriptions (Condor et al., 2013). For example, in Australian debates regarding the Lesbian and Gay Reform Act, politicians supporting and opposing the bill presented issues such as human rights and child welfare as fundamental to their argument (Summers, 2007). Using this understanding of argumentation, discursive psychology seeks

to examine the seemingly contradictory ways in which different groups evaluate political categories and events to advocate for their own position.

However, this flexibility in categorisation is not evident throughout all political discussions and debates. It is equally likely that individuals and groups who have adopted a particular stance will continue to consistently define the world in these terms (Billig, 1996). This relates to the proposition that every argument regarding a contentious issue must have an alternative, and therefore equally viable, side. For example, it would make little sense to declare oneself in favour of multiculturalism if an opposing stance did not exist. From this, when constructing an argument, speakers may implicitly or explicitly set out and then reject the 'anti-logoi' to their position (Condor et al.,2013). It is this rejection of opposing arguments which works to build the internal consistency of accounts, with this in turn lending credibility to the speakers themselves. The consistency and reliability of a stance does not, however necessarily exclude speakers from flexibly orientating specific aspects of their position to suit the social and political context. This can be seen in Billig's (1992) analysis of the discourse surrounding British attitudes towards the Royal Family. The father of one family, a strong republican, was found to ground his opposition to royalty in either conservative patriotism or radical leftism, depending upon the content of the argument he was countering. For example, when accused of being a communist, the speaker would declare his allegiance to the UK (Billig, 1992). This demonstrates how discourse can be used flexibly to perform a persuasive role which is relevant to the needs of the context.

Within politics, there is a constant dispute between speakers regarding "who-knows-what and who-knows-better" (Demasi, 2019, p.5). Debates between opposing ideologies largely consist of attempts to establish an authoritative and accepted categorisation of issues and events (Edelman, 1977). This relates to Habermas' (1984) theory of communicative action in which certain conditions labelled 'validity claims' must be fulfilled for an utterance to be deemed valid and rational. These validity claims centre around two key notions. First, accounts must be constructed as being truthful representations of reality which stand up against factual scrutiny from competing descriptions. In addition, the speaker producing the account must be seen to be unbiased, sincere, and as holding the

'right' to speak about such issues. When these claims are successfully achieved, this leads to the construction of factual discourse (Habermas, 1984). This is reflected in Edwards and Potter's (1992) research which examined the production of competing accounts in a political dispute between then Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson and ten political journalists. The key finding of this study was that participants in the conflict provided alternative methods for fact-checking their claims. Whilst the journalists presented their corroborating notes as evidence for their description of events being accurate, this consensus was used by Lawson to suggest that the journalists had colluded together in order to fabricate a story. This accusation was justified by the implication that the nature of their career would naturally lead the reporters to conspire together to create a more sensationalised story (Edwards & Potter, 1992). These findings provide insight into how the factuality of accounts can be constructed and attended to in adversarial political discourse.

An alternative lens through which fact construction in political discourse can be conceptualised relates to the cultural 'norm against prejudice'. To avoid accusations of racism or prejudice, speakers are careful to present their views on controversial topics as grounded in an objective reality (Billig, 1989). Augoustinos and Every (2007) provide an overview of the techniques used by speakers in immigration discourse in order to construct their anti-migrant accounts as fair and objective. One such strategy is discursive deracialisation, where the role of race in negative evaluations of a minority group is de-emphasised in favour of factors such as nationality and economic status. This device is also evident in discussions of terrorism, in which opposition to asylum seekers is attributed to religion and the associated risk of terrorist acts (Goodman & Burke, 2010). Related to this, a further device identified by Augoustinos and Every (2007) is the construction of positive self and negative other presentation. Here, speakers present themselves and those who they represent as being rational and tolerant, whereas the outgroup is marginalised. A similar strategy can be seen in debates surrounding the Iraq war, in which countries joining the 'war on terror' were constructed as altruistic freedom fighters in contrast to the dangerous and uncivilised 'other' (Husband, 2015). Previous research surrounding these topics is particularly relevant to the present

analysis due to the issue of prejudice being central to both the EU referendum campaign and its aftermath (Hutchings & Sullivan, 2019).

Demasi (2019) analysed the argumentative function of 'facts' in broadcast political debate regarding the relationship between the EU and the UK. From this, he identified three strategies speakers employ to undermine factual counterclaims. The first strategy involves challenging the essence of an argument by questioning its relevance to the matter at hand. For example, speakers may claim that their opponent is avoiding answering their question or is straying too far from the current topic. This allows them to avoid being held accountable for the facticity of their account whilst also neutralising the legitimacy of their opponent's arguments (Demasi & Burke, 2019). A second strategy identified is the introduction of a new 'fact' which either disproves or recontextualises the previous claim. Demasi (2019) highlights an instance of this in his dataset, in which Nigel Farage claims that the UK makes a nine-million-pound net contribution to the EU each year. Instead of challenging the facticity of this statistic, Liberal Democrat Graham Watson introduces a new claim by framing this figure as being unproblematic and a reasonable expense. This is an example of the tension between 'categorisation' and 'particularisation' laid out by Billig (1996). Whilst Farage highlighted this figure as distinctly large, Watson categorised it alongside other 'essential' public spending costs such as healthcare (Demasi, 2019).

Finally, speakers were observed to invoke hypothetical scenarios in order to undermine the legitimacy of factual claims. Demasi (2019) notes that although it may seem counterintuitive to construct what is essentially an imaginary account to orientate towards facticity, this device performs various functions. One function is that through producing an 'if/then' formulation, speakers can implicitly construct an argument which supports their version of the 'facts' without having to answer for their accuracy. The facticity of such formulations often rests on the notion that the presented scenario seems reasonable and familiar to the listener. That is, if 'X' happens, then it is also fair to assume that 'Y' would follow. Within the context of Brexit discourse, Demasi (2019) explored how this strategy was used to argue about the benefits and disadvantages of EU membership. Farage and Former Leader of the Liberal Democrats Nick Clegg constructed a scenario in which 'you' (here

referring to the general audience) go on holiday to a European country and get in trouble with the law. Clegg uses this 'if' to lead to the 'then' of receiving help from the EU, whilst Farage uses it to challenge the legitimacy and fairness of alternative legal systems.

These three strategies therefore illustrate how 'facts' are a contested issue within political debate. From the perspective of DP, there is not one true version of reality but several competing accounts. Because of this, speakers seek to construct the objectivity of their account and undermine the credibility of others. Fact construction has been a particular area of interest for many researchers studying EU discourse. This is in part due to the claim that the results of the 2016 referendum marked the beginning of a 'post-truth' era, in which objective facts were now said to be less critical in shaping beliefs than subjective feelings (Flood, 2016). Discursive researchers have cautioned against the over-embellishment of this phenomenon, highlighting that speakers still orientate towards factuality during talk. However, this remains an interesting topic of analysis due to arguments about knowledge and truth underpinning much of political discourse (Demasi, 2019).

The apparent emergence of a 'post-truth' era is often attributed to the rise and success of populist movements worldwide. Examples of this include Donald Trump's election to the US Presidency, as well as Brexit itself in 2016 (Montgomery, 2017). For this reason, I will now discuss how populist strategies are employed in political discourse.

3.4 Populism

The concept of populism is something that researchers have often found difficult to define. This is in part due to the lack of clarity surrounding this term, in which multiple and seemingly contradictory ideologies have all been labelled as 'populist' by the media. This lack of clarity is confounded by the fact that it is rare for politicians to adopt this label for themselves or the party they represent (Weyland, 2001). However, despite having no concrete definition, there are some generally agreed-upon characteristics which are said to define populist politics. Mudde (2004) notes that a unifying feature of populist movements across the political spectrum is the existence of an 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy. The 'us' is typically used in reference to the public, who are treated as 'pure people'

whose will is sacrosanct. This group are pitted against the 'corrupt elite', who are framed as having nefarious motivations (Mudde, 2004). Whilst most of the literature surrounding this topic has treated populism as an ideology, DP is instead interested in populism as a rhetorical strategy (Sakki & Martikainen, 2020). From this perspective, populism is something which is done through talk. Discursive researchers therefore seek to identify the actions being performed through populist rhetoric. This involves analysing how speakers construct and enact the identity of 'the people' in comparison to that of 'the elite' and how the 'will of the people' is mobilised.

In order to authoritatively invoke 'the will of the people' in political discourse, speakers must first demonstrate that they are part of 'the people' they claim to be representing. This attends to fact construction as speakers indicate that they have the 'right' to make knowledge claims about what the people want because they themselves are part of this group (Wodak, 2017). This can be accomplished through 'category entitlement', a discursive device used by speakers to 'work up' their right to speak on certain issues through appeal to group identity (Sacks, 1984). A further function this performs is that it allows the speaker to include themselves in the positive characterisation of 'us' and exclude themselves from the negative characterisation of 'them'. This is especially important for politicians, who must work to avoid being categorised in terms of the 'elite' class they are criticising (Rooyakers & Verkuyten, 2011). For example, Rapley (1998) analysed the discursive deployment of self-categorisation by Australian MP Pauline Hanson, a divisive figure known for her anti-immigration views. Here, Hanson was found to present herself as being a representative of the 'ordinary Australian'. She distanced herself from the elite class of 'polished' politicians by invoking the identities she shares with the ingroup of 'ordinary' people, such as small business owners and single parents. These references to the lived experience of being an 'ordinary' person legitimised her identity and built up her entitlement to speak on behalf of 'the people'. A function of this is that it allowed her to distance herself from accusations of prejudice by indicating that she has no real power or ill will as she is "only a fish and chip shop lady" (p.331) who is simply describing the reality she shares with millions of other 'ordinary Australians'.

Alongside this invocation of social identity, speakers can also position themselves as part of the ingroup by employing colloquial language, such as using language that is not 'politically correct' or appropriate for a formal political setting, such as parliamentary debates. Through this strategy, speakers indicate that they do not speak the language of the elite establishment but the 'folksy' language of 'the people' (Rooyakers & Verkuyten, 2011). In the context of Brexit, this performative disregard for the establishment was employed by individuals such as Nigel Farage, who was observed to demonstrate disrespect towards the protocols of the European Parliament through actions such as laughter, personal attacks, and turning his back to the playing of the Ode to Joy (Ekström, Patrona &, Thornborrow, 2018; Rankin, 2019). Whilst these actions are used to delegitimise this institution by implying it is not worthy of respect, they also work to distance Farage from the elite class of politicians who work within this system. When challenged on the apparent irony of presenting himself as an 'outsider' to a system he works within, Farage responded that "they haven't tamed me yet" (Ekström, Patrona, & Thornborrow, 2018, para.17). Through this, he builds a shared identity with the public by indicating that he has not been corrupted by these institutions and is still an outsider who is 'telling it like it is' to those in power (Rooyakers & Verkuyten, 2011).

Once politicians have demonstrated that they speak for 'the people', they must also construct a positive characterisation of this ingroup to present them as worth listening to. In democratic societies, respect for 'the will of the people' is typically treated as a fundamental guiding principle in politics (Mudde, 2004). However, Pappas (2019) claims that the populist conceptualisation of 'the people' lends itself to illiberal understandings of democracy. This is because they discount the plurality and diversity of views which exist within a society to present an image of a homogenous people who all share the same wants and needs (Muller, 2017). This construction of homogeneity occurs in discourse, in which populist leaders such as Donald Trump refer to 'the people' or 'the nation' as though they are a cohesive and knowable entity (Kreis, 2017). It is important to note that despite the seeming broadness of this category, constructions of 'the people' will vary on their inclusion and exclusion criteria (Wodak, 2017). For example, the argument that 'the people' voted for Brexit implicitly frames Remain voters as being outside of this group. This relates to one of the

strategies Rheinforf (2020) identified for mobilising 'the people' in political discourse. The 'will of the people' is framed as sovereign, meaning that it is the source of determining where power lies. By constructing 'the people' as ideologically homogenous and relegating those who do not agree with these beliefs to the outgroup of 'them', populists make the case that their policies have unanimous support and should therefore be implemented.

However, in populist discourse, it is not necessarily the concept of democracy that is idealised, but 'the people' themselves (Osuna, 2020). A second strategy used to mobilise 'the people' is to construct them as part of 'the common' people who have wisdom lacking by the elite class (Rheinforf, 2020). Just as populist politicians frame themselves as being 'ordinary', they also proclaim the virtues of 'normal people'. This positive representation typically draws on the notion that ordinary citizens are living in the 'real world' and will therefore have better insight into the issues facing the country (Salter, 2016). The invocation of 'real world' experience is often invoked in political discourse so to justify prejudiced views. For example, politicians may claim that they are speaking on behalf of the people who, unlike the elite, will be impacted by the negative impacts of immigration (Gale, 2004). Ordinary citizens are also constructed as having 'common sense', with this framing their actions and beliefs as being ultimately reasonable. This is in contrast to the elite, whose intellectual snobbery leads them to miss the 'simple' solutions that the public picks up on (Wodak, 2015).

Appeals to the common sense of the people have been observed to be used in order to attend to the legitimacy of policy positions. For example, former Prime Minister David Cameron justified his austerity policy by comparing it to the common-sense strategies members of the public use to manage their household spending (Andreouli, 2020). Through this, 'the people' are a malleable construct that attributed positive characteristics in order to serve populist arguments and ideas (Rheinforf, 2020). The final strategy identified by Rheinforf (2020) is the construction of 'the people' as being representative of 'the nation'. Populism typically includes the invocation of nationalist sentiments, through which individuals argue that there is a subset of 'real' British people who are being ignored. From this, the criteria for who is really British extends beyond nationality and is instead shaped

around characteristics such as ethnicity, common practices, and certain cultural values (Bennett, 2019; Billig, 1995). Atkins (2021) notes that these values are often based on 'national myths' which permeate society. This relates to van Leeuwen's (2008) model of discursive construction, in which it is claimed that accounts can be legitimised through mythopoesis. Here, speakers are said to engage in storytelling to create a comparable narrative which tells a moral or a cautionary tale. In Brexit discourse, the image of 'Blitz spirit' or 'Britain standing alone' during World War Two was used to frame 'the people' as resilient and strong and Brexit as an opportunity to make 'a great escape' from the German-dominated EU (Williams, 2021). The construction of 'the people' is therefore central to the construction of 'the nation', and vice versa (Atkins, 2021). Because of this, the 'national interest' is intertwined with the 'will of the people'. This is evident in how politicians who were perceived to be preventing the implementation of Brexit were characterised in the media as being unpatriotic and traitorous (Chakelian, 2019).

A defining feature of populist movements I have not discussed here is the existence of a strong and charismatic leader who acts as a figurehead for the movement to rally around (Mudde, 2004). Whilst the populist strategies employed by leaders are not a primary concern of my account, Chapter 6 analyses how the leadership of Prime Minister Theresa May and Boris Johnson were resisted. Next, to provide context for this analysis, I will discuss how leadership is constructed by speakers in political discourse.

3.5 Leadership

Fairhurst (2007) identified several key features which distinguish the discursive approach to leadership from traditional leadership psychology. First, discursive theories challenge the use of 'mental theatre' (Cronen, 1995) as an object of analysis. This refers to the attempt to understand leadership through identifying the cognitive and affective factors which underpin this behaviour. By treating leadership as an interaction of variables, researchers neglect to consider how these behaviours are coordinated and experienced in interaction (Fairhurst, 2007). Related to this point, traditional theories of leadership have assumed that there is an inherent 'essence' to what makes a good leader.

Meanwhile, DP has a 'thin' model of the human actor (Potter, 2003) and therefore analyses 'good leadership' as a constructed and contestable action. This leads to the two approaches having different analytic focuses. Whilst Leadership Psychology seeks to establish why certain characteristics are associated with leadership, DP is interested in examining how leadership itself is constructed. These two approaches also differ in their conceptualisation of 'power'. DP has a more flexible view of power and influence in that these factors are not inherently negative or positive. Finally, they also hold varying approaches to the issue of agency. Drawing on the ethnomethodological assumption that people are knowledgeable agents who reflexively monitor and organise their social interaction (Garfinkel, 1967), Fairhurst posits that leaders must navigate the constraints of their environment by orientating towards expected rules and norms. This is in contrast to more traditional theories of leadership, which adopt a more individualistic approach (Gronn, 2000).

Reicher, Haslam and Platow (2011) conceptualise a 'new psychology of leadership', the assumptions aligning with many of the features of a discursive approach. Like DP, this social identity-influenced approach challenges traditional assumptions about what a 'leader' is and frames talk as being the primary medium through which leadership is done. A core principle of this model is the idea of 'engaged followership'. Here, it is proposed that in order to perform their role as 'leader', individuals must mobilise the group that they will lead. Because of this, leadership is not the 'top-down' process it had previously been envisioned to be. Instead, leaders must position themselves amongst their followers in order to gain their cooperation and support (Reicher, Haslan, & Platow, 2007). The success of a leader is therefore said to be best judged by the followership they inspire (Haslam & Reicher, 2012). In Chapter 6 of this thesis, I critique how, despite emphasising the importance of followership, researchers employing this framework often neglect to consider how followers construct themselves or their prospective leaders. By analysing how speakers resist and challenge the leadership of Prime Minister Theresa May and Boris Johnson, I illustrate the role followers play in co-constructing the character and actions of those in power. In Chapter 6, I will provide a more comprehensive discussion of the function and strategies of engaged followership. For

present purposes, I will outline how political leaders do leadership in discourse through the lens of this approach (Reicher, Haslam, & Platow, 2007).

This approach to leadership psychology draws heavily on Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory. From this perspective, social identity is defined as an individual's knowledge that they belong to a particular group to which they assign emotional value. Society is made up of a myriad of groups which all exist in relation to one another. This means that for every group a person does identify with, there is another one with which they do not. This leads to the construction of 'ingroups' and 'outgroups'. Here, the differences between each group are exaggerated, and the ingroup is more likely to be attributed positive characteristics (Hogg, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This informs the engaged followership approach by demonstrating that a leader is a leader of a group that they are also a member of. Because of this, in order to mobilise their followers effectively, leaders must construct a shared identity with the group (Haslam et al., 2011).

One way in which this is achieved is through 'prototypicality'. Leaders are said to be most successful when they are seen by their followers to embody the identity of their shared social group (van Knippenberg & Wilke, 1988). As there is an ingroup preference for people similar to ourselves, a leader's influence is proportional to the extent to which they are accepted as 'one of us' (Haslam et al., 2011). The concept of prototypicality relates to many of the previously discussed populist strategies employed in political discourse. In order to claim to represent the 'will of the people', leaders must demonstrate that they are part of this group by emphasising their 'ordinariness' (Rapley, 1998). For example, Reicher and Haslam (2017) argue that Trump's electoral success was a result of him positioning himself as a 'prototypical American'. While it might be assumed that Trump's wealth would preclude him from the category of 'ordinary', this characteristic was framed as a success story that represented the aspirations and values of the American people.

Like Farage, Trump was observed frequently to violate political and societal norms by making personal attacks against his opponents and derogatory remarks about marginalised communities. These actions worked to cement his place within the 'ingroup', as despite his wealth allowing him access to the lifestyle of the 'elite', he had still not sacrificed his principles (Reicher &

Haslam, 2017). It is important to note that prototypicality is not confined to just populist discourse or politicians. For example, when competing in the Conservative leadership election in 2016, Theresa May worked to present herself as a prototypical 'One Nation Conservative' by emphasising her status as a middle-class Vicar's daughter with a proven track record of getting things done (Atkins & Gaffney, 2022)

Whilst prototypicality relates to who leaders should be, Haslam et al. (2011) also discuss what leaders do to mobilise followers. To be effective, leaders must demonstrate that they are working in the group's interest rather than for their own personal gain. In political discourse, this willingness to serve the group interest can be constructed in various ways. For example, leaders can claim that they have nothing personal to gain beyond that which would benefit the entire country's well-being. Reicher and Haslam's (2017) research noted that Trump's wealth was frequently highlighted as evidence that, unlike his opponent, he could not be bought by lobbyists or elite financial institutions such as Wall Street. In addition, leaders can downplay their previous political experience to distance themselves from 'career politicians' who are rhetorically situated as working 'within' the corrupt system. A further strategy involves 'leader sacrifice' on behalf of the group (van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). For instance, Nigel Farage often highlighted the career and family sacrifices he had made in order to lead UKIP. His life before UKIP was said to be that of a comfortable businessman, but he gave this up to defend the UK against increasing EU encroachment (Kelsey, 2017).

Haslam et al. (2011) note that leaders are not expected to constantly prove that they work in the group's interest. Instead, past actions are treated as legitimate indicators of future behaviour. This means that to influence their followers effectively; political leaders must illustrate a track record of working in the national interest. This links to a further strategy for mobilising followership, in which leaders must 'make it all real' by developing structures and systems which allow followers to derive meaning from their group identity (Haslam et al., 2011). Within politics, this does not necessarily have to be achieved through electoral success. For example, Haslam et al. (2021) discuss how the storming of the US Capitol building in 2021 occurred following a 'Stop the Steal' rally orchestrated

by Trump. This rally provided an opportunity for his followers to act upon their grievances (through booing and chanting). It cemented the idea that patriotic Americans were being conspired against by a nefarious outgroup of elites. Through this, Trump was able to construct a new social reality for his followers.

Finally, although these group identities may be taken for granted, they are not fixed. Leaders act as 'identity entrepreneurs' in that they do not simply respond to the pre-established identity of their group but actively shape this identity through their actions and words (Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005). In politics, leaders must work to craft an in-group identity that both serves their interests and unifies large groups of people around a common political goal (Reicher & Haslam, 2017). Because of this, in times of crisis politicians have been observed to construct an overarching account of 'the people' through which various diverse communities are homogenised into the same ingroup. This can be seen in Augoustinos and De Garis's (2012) analysis of former US President Obama's candidacy speech. Here he was found to manage his identity as an African American by presenting himself as an exceptional leader who could unite Black and White communities because he exemplified shared American values. Through this, he and the American people were constructed as joint partners collectively working to transform social reality (Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005).

In summary, the process of leadership and followership is an important component of political discourse. Leaders must construct their talk to appeal to a potential followership, who in turn work to rhetorically resist or accept the 'right' of this individual to speak on their behalf. Because of this, other functions of discourse (fact construction, positive self-presentation) can be seen to be shaped by speakers through the lens of this dynamic. The events surrounding the EU referendum provide an interesting opportunity to analyse the relationship between leader and follower. The line 'ingroup' and 'outgroup' has arguably become increasingly blurred, as politicians must seek to mobilise the support of both 'Leavers' and 'Remainers' within their own party. Whilst divisions regarding the future of the UK in Europe have long existed on both an inter and intra-party level (Kirby, 2020), Brexit provides an 'out-there' basis through which these identities can be ratified and constructed as 'real' (Wooffitt, 1992).

3.6 Research Context

The United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union has long been a point of contention within British politics. In 1973 the UK joined the European Economic Community (EEC), an organisation formed to encourage the economic integration of various European powers through the establishment of a common market and customs union (Kirby, 2020). The EEC acted as a precursor to the European Union, a geo-political entity ratified by The Maastricht Treaty in 1992 to ensure peace in Europe (Janning, 2017). The decision to enter into this initial economic community was divisive among politicians and members of the public, leading to the prediction by an editorial in the Guardian newspaper that "the journey into Europe will be bumpy and discordant" (Mckie & Barker, 1973, para.19). Following the controversy surrounding this decision, two years later in 1975 a nationwide referendum was held on membership of the EEC. With support from then leader of the Conservative Party, Margaret Thatcher, the British public voted overwhelmingly in favour of saying 'yes to Europe', a campaign slogan reflecting the view that remaining in the EEC would benefit the country's economic growth (Kirby, 2020).

Despite the result of this referendum, the relationship between the UK and Europe remained uncertain, with politicians seeking to distance the country from further integration with the EU. This is reflected in the securing of multiple 'opt-outs'. For instance, by remaining outside the Eurozone and the Schengen border-free area, the UK could maintain control over its currency, banking, borders, and immigration policy (Barnard, 2008). These opt-outs were, however, not enough to prevent the rise in euro-scepticism among individuals who viewed the EU as an overreaching bureaucratic institution whose values were incompatible with British sovereignty and democracy (Kirby, 2020). This euro-scepticism was further fuelled by the Eurozone financial crisis in 2008, which confirmed the perception of many of the EU as a project "doomed to fail" (Easton, 2015, para.1). In addition to these economic factors, the issue of immigration became a key talking point in British politics (Curtice, 2016). Following the expansion of the EU in 2004 and 2007 to incorporate various countries from the former 'Eastern Bloc', politicians raised concerns about the country's ability to adapt to an increasing fluctuation in the number of people entering the country (Dejevsky, 2019). These concerns were

heightened by the refugee crisis of 2015, in which the EU's seemingly lax policy on migration from countries such as Syria was pointed to as producing a terrorism risk and posing a threat to national security (Goodman, 2017).

It was these factors, amongst others, that commentators have pointed to as the driving force behind the insurgence of the radical right UK Independence Party in British politics. Led by Nigel Farage, UKIP provided the voting public with a strident anti-EU platform through which grievances regarding immigration, sovereignty and the economy could be expressed. The public's growing appetite for this brand of hard-line euro-scepticism was evident in the 2014 European parliamentary election results, in which UKIP gained 27.4 % of the vote (Towler, 2017). Bale (2018) notes that it was this success, alongside pressure from Conservative backbenchers, which led to then Prime Minister David Cameron's campaign promise to hold an in/out referendum on the UK's membership of the EU if his party were to gain a majority in the 2015 General election. Although criticised internally (Shipman, 2017), this decision proved popular with the voting public. The results of the election provided the Conservative party with the votes needed to gain a small majority in the House of Commons, thus pushing David Cameron to fulfil his referendum promise by announcing in February 2016 that a referendum on British membership of the European Union would be held later in the year (Kirby, 2020).

Following this announcement, two official campaign groups were established to debate the referendum's outcome. The 'Vote Leave' campaign advocated for the public to 'take back control' from the European Union, which was framed as an authoritarian institution that had come to threaten British democracy. A central argument of this campaign was that the EU's overreaching legislation had worked to greatly limit the UK's ability to police its own borders, leading to migration rates becoming 'unmanageable' and, therefore, a risk to national security. It was proposed that leaving this institution would enable the UK to implement a 'fairer' immigration system in which migrants would be admitted based on their skills and profession rather than their status as an EU citizen. Related to this, proponents of this campaign also claimed that EU membership had economically isolated the UK, and thus leaving would allow the country to establish free trade agreements with countries such

as Australia, India, and Brazil ("Our Case", 2016). In contrast, the 'Stronger In' campaign emphasised the benefits gained through access to the single market and suggested that irreparable damage would be done to the economy should the UK vote to leave. Furthermore, this campaign highlighted the advantages of the free movement of people and ideas throughout Europe and commended the contribution of immigrants to the British workforce (Crines, 2016).

The three-month campaigning period following Cameron's announcement was marred by controversy, with both the 'Vote Leave' and 'Stronger In' campaigns being criticised for engaging in divisive, harmful, and fear-provoking rhetoric (Bulman, 2017). Those advocating for the UK to leave the EU were frequently met with accusations of racism and xenophobia, exemplified by the response to campaigning material such as the 'breaking point' poster published by UKIP. The poster, which depicted refugees entering Europe as being tantamount to an 'invading force', was heavily criticised for engaging in dehumanising discourse and mirroring anti-Semitic propaganda seen in Nazi Germany (Hopkins, 2016). Similarly, advocates for Britain remaining in the EU also faced accusations of fearmongering, with Conservative politician Boris Johnson labelling the 'Stronger In' campaign 'agents of project fear' due to their emphasis on the risks of leaving the EU (Stone, 2016).

Despite the adversarial nature of this period, pollsters consistently predicted that the UK would decide to remain an EU member state (Cooper, 2016). It was therefore unexpected when, on the 23rd of June 2016, the British electorate voted in favour of leaving the European Union by 51.9% to 48.1% (Withnall, 2016). In the immediate aftermath of the vote, commentators were quick to claim a resurgence of 'post-truth politics', a term used to describe a political culture in which "objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (Flood, 2016, para.2). Many aspects of the EU referendum were being pointed to as evidence of this claim, most notably the figure displayed on the so-called 'Brexit bus' ("We send the EU £350 million a week let's fund our NHS instead") which was challenged by the UK Statistics Authority for being 'potentially misleading' (Sparrow, 2016). While claims that the UK has entered a 'post-truth' era of politics have been dismissed as exaggerated (Fox, 2016), it is undeniable that the referendum's result

has decisively changed the trajectory of British politics. This change is evident in the events of the six years following the UK's decision to leave the European Union.

As a result of the referendum, David Cameron subsequently resigned as Prime Minister, citing the need for 'fresh leadership' to guide the country through the Brexit process (Stewart & Asthana, 2016). Following this announcement, the search for his successor began, and in July 2016, Home Secretary Theresa May was formally declared Leader of the Conservative Party (Kirby, 2020). This was considered a somewhat surprising decision because May had previously advocated for the UK to remain in the EU. Despite this, May made it clear that her government would respect the people's will while working towards a 'positive vision' for the country's future (Simpkins, 2018). During her first term in office (2016-17), there was much debate about triggering Article 50 of the European Union. The triggering of this article would initiate the UK's official withdrawal from the EU, with this in turn allowing negotiations regarding the terms of this arrangement to begin. May initially delayed invoking this process, suggesting that more time was needed to ensure a 'sensible' departure which would limit damage to the British economy. However, on March the 29th 2017, the UK gave notice of its official exit from the European Union, thus marking the beginning of a two-year period of negotiations intended to ensure a favourable withdrawal agreement (Kirby, 2020).

Before beginning official talks with the European Union, in April 2017, May announced that a snap General Election would be held. In calling this election, May had hoped to secure a larger Conservative majority in the Houses of Commons, with this working to strengthen her negotiating position within the EU (Asthana & Walker, 2017). However, the election resulted in a hung parliament, meaning that no one party could form a majority. In response, the Conservatives formed a minority government with support from a 'confidence and supply' arrangement with the Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).

This arrangement did little to increase May's standing within parliament, and instead, it worked to weaken her ability to authoritatively negotiate the terms of the UK's withdrawal (Brancaccio, 2017). This became evident as the UK entered various stages of negotiations with the EU throughout 2017. Whilst some parameters were established in these talks, specifically regarding

the status of immigrants in post-Brexit Britain. Generally, very little progress was made. Issues such as the future of the Northern Irish border and the so-called 'divorce bill' became a main topic of contention within these negotiations, with the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker criticising the UK for providing 'unsatisfactory' solutions (Crisp, 2017). Despite these setbacks, in June 2018, the European Withdrawal Act passed through parliament and gained royal assent, marking a turning point in the future of UK-EU discussions. This bill set out a timeline for the future of the Brexit negotiations, stating that by 21st January 2019, the government must come to a decision regarding the future of the country's relationship with the European Union. This date would then be followed by a transitionary period in which the UK would remain subject to EU laws and be granted access to the single market and customs union. Following multiple extensions of Article 50, the terms of this arrangement were altered to set the official withdrawal date to the 31st of January 2020 (Kirby, 2020).

This extension was established following Theresa May's failed attempts to pass her renegotiated Brexit withdrawal bill through the Houses of Parliament. This bill outlined the agreed-upon terms of Britain's departure from the EU and set out future government policy on issues such as immigration and the customs union (Henley, 2018). The terms of this agreement proved unpopular across party lines. While 'leave' supporters such as former Conservative leader Iain Duncan Smith derided the bill for being "a bad buffet of non-Brexit options" (Vaughan, 2019, para.2), many of those in favour of remaining in the EU argued that a second referendum should be held to provide the public with the opportunity to affirm or reject the implementation of this deal ("Brexit bill should include public vote", 2019). Following the third failure to pass this withdrawal bill, in March 2019, Theresa May announced her resignation as party leader. This led to a further leadership election within the Conservative Party.

This leadership campaign was subsequently won by former Mayor of London Boris Johnson, a supposed hard-line Brexiteer who promised the public that his government would both negotiate a better deal with the European Union and work towards securing the UK's exit from this institution by October 31st, 2019 (Cowburn, 2019). However, his negotiations with the EU remained largely

unproductive, specifically in regard to issues such as the Northern Irish backstop. Because of this, the House of Commons became increasingly sceptical of the government's ability to produce and agree to a deal with the EU before the departure date (Kirby, 2020). In an attempt to prevent this discordance from preventing the UK's planned exit, Johnson requested and was granted the power to prorogue Parliament. This prorogation was challenged by campaigners and subsequently deemed unlawful by the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, leading to members of parliament being recalled to their seats in September 2019 (Kennedy, 2019). In response to Johnson's actions, the House of Commons elected to pass 'the Benn Act', a bill requiring the government to ask the EU for an extension to the negotiating period to avoid the possibility of the country exiting without a deal in place ("The Benn Act - UK in a changing Europe", 2019). The Prime Minister obliged. However, he refused to sign the document, describing it as 'Parliament's letter, not my letter' (Malnick, 2019). The extension was granted, and most MPs successfully agreed upon a revised version of the withdrawal agreement (Kirby, 2020).

On the 31st of January 2020, 'exit day' marked the UK's withdrawal from membership of the European Union. This was preceded by the results of the General Election in December 2019, in which the Conservative Party gained a sizeable majority in the House of Commons. The success of Johnson in this election was seen as reflecting the public desire to end the Brexit process and instead start planning for the country's future (Henley, 2019). As the UK has entered a new post-EU era, the current research seeks to examine and understand the change in discourse which happened through the period leading up to this event, and in particular from January to December 2019, a crucial period during which May and then Johnson were trying – and often failing – to resolve Brexit in a manner that would be able to receive the assent of the House of Commons.

Chapter 4: Longitudinal Qualitative Research

Longitudinal studies have traditionally been associated with quantitative approaches to analysis. This method has sought to collect and compare statistical data to examine change over time, such as using questionnaires to measure how public attitudes towards immigration shift in response to changing

domestic circumstances (Mitchell, 2019). This type of analysis enables researchers to draw

conclusions about the relationship between different variables and make further predictions about how

they will interact in the future (Watson, 1998). Whilst this approach can help identify what changes

across time, the question of how these developments emerge is left largely unanswered by this

approach (Holland, Thomas, & Henderson, 2003). In order to address this gap, longitudinal

qualitative research (LQR) has become of increasing interest to the field of social psychology. Like its

quantitative counterpart, this method seeks to observe the process of change within the dataset.

However, LQR also focuses on exploring how these changes are responded to and understood

(Corden & Millar, 2007). This involves collecting data through interviews and other qualitative

methods which can provide insight into individual lived experiences. In this chapter, I will first

provide an overview of the principles underpinning LQR before examining how this approach aligns

with the DP conceptualisation of 'time' and 'change'.

4.1 Principles and Practices

Saldaña (2003) identified three key principles which underpin the practice of LQR: duration, time,

and change. As LQR is a developing method, there are no set standards determining how these

principles should be defined or implemented within the analytic process (Calman, Brunton, &

Mollassiotis, 2013). Saldaña argues that the framework for understanding these concepts should

instead 'emerge' from the research itself. This flexibility is fitting because just as LQR recognises the

multifaceted ways in which people experience change, researchers must also acknowledge that the

meaning they attribute to these terms will develop as the study progresses. These principles are,

therefore best employed when shaped to meet the demands of the research context (Corden & Millar,

2007).

First, the principle of 'duration' relates to the length of the dataset. The question of 'how

much data is enough' is a common concern within qualitative research (Kalifa & Mahama, 2017).

This issue becomes particularly pressing in LQR, where researchers seek to provide an account of

change through time. Whilst Saldaña (2003, p.1) suggests that it is fair to assume that 'longitudinal

means a lonnnnnnnng time', it is often difficult to determine the parameters of the time period being analysed. Previous LQR has experienced success with both large- and small-scale studies. An example of a large-scale dataset can be seen in the Timescapes study. This research collected data throughout a five-year period in order to gain insight into how identities and relationships change over time (Holland, 2011). Reid (2011) invokes this study as a retort to the claim that LQR cannot 'do big' without sacrificing the element of in-depth analysis. However, it should be noted that the collection of continuous data over an extended period is rare within the literature. Such research is often unfeasible in the long term, in part due to lack of funding and the loss of participant interest (Holland, Thomas, & Henderson, 2003). Because of this, smaller-scale studies can be a more efficient way to conduct LQR. As recognised by Saldaña (2003), a hypothetical forty hours of data could be collected over the span of a month or across several years. Although analysing these datasets would produce different results, it is unclear that one would provide a less 'true' account of change than the other.

This brings us back to the question of how we understand the 'long' in longitudinal – is a study longitudinal because it covers extensive change or because it provides an intensive overview of how change is experienced? Researchers should ensure that their dataset accounts for 'an amount of time sufficient to examine relevant change from one point to another' (Hermanowicz, 2013, p.196). However, the amount of data needed in order to achieve this will be dependent upon contextual factors and the aim of the study. Research exploring lifespan development will require the collection of data over several years. In contrast, studies examining patient experiences of healthcare can be relatively short in duration due to participants only remaining in the target population for a limited amount of time (Calman, Brunton, & Molassiotis, 2013; Hermanowicz, 2016). This thesis will analyse data collected from episodes of *Question Time* broadcast throughout 2019, a time period which was initially chosen to capture the lead-up to and subsequent aftermath of the UK's failure to leave the EU on the 29th of March 2019. This analysis also captures further key changes, such as the transition between two Prime Ministers and the results of both the General and EU elections. These changes function as 'time points' through which the data can be contextualised and understood

(Holland, Thomas, & Henderson, 2003). This conceptualisation of time is a further core principle of LQR.

In LQR, time is treated as being both a vehicle and an object for study. This refers to how this concept directs the design of longitudinal research whilst also being the primary focus for analysis (Henwood & Shirani, 2011). Because of this, time can be understood as a methodological and conceptual tool (Treanor, Patrick, & Wenham, 2021). Before discussing how time is methodologically incorporated into LQR, I will first consider the theoretical underpinnings which inform this approach. Neale and Flowerdew (2003, p.94) describe LQR as having "a particular theoretical orientation, a way of knowing and understanding the social world". The defining feature of this orientation is the recognition that time is contextually, individually, and culturally constructed (Saldaña, 2003). That is, how it is experienced will be relative to each individual and setting. For instance, arriving early to an airport will be understood differently than being early to a party. Likewise, adherence to what Adam (1990) calls 'clock time' is not historically or universally consistent across cultures. From this, Neale (2015) argues that it is not that reality exists within the continuum of time but rather that the social world constitutes time. It is for this reason that alongside examining how time is experienced, LQR also analyses how it is constructed and attributed meaning. This understanding of time as an object has implications for how it is employed as a vehicle for study, with this provoking some debate regarding how researchers should approach longitudinal data in order to best reflect this constructionist perspective.

One such debate is related to how the process of LQR should be described. Specifically, whether researchers should seek to analyse change over or through time. Whilst this may appear initially as a relatively trivial distinction, Balmer et al., (2021) argue that these two phrases carry disparate temporal perspectives. The phrase over time is criticised for implicitly prioritising the start and end of the dataset. It suggests that these points can simply be jumped between with little regard given to the intervening period (Saldaña, 2003). This contradicts the purpose of LQR, which is primarily interested in examining the nuances of how change progresses and develops. It is therefore an insufficient description of this approach. Instead, through time is said to better represent the

crawling journey taken from one point in time to another. This analytic focus on the journey between time points distinguishes LQR from other longitudinal methods and provides insight into the complexity of people's lived experiences (Balmer et al., 2021). A second practical concern that stems from this is how time is utilised in the study design. Researchers can choose to collect data continuously throughout their selected time period or at regular or irregular intervals (Holland, Thomas, & Henderson, 2003). Again, this structured sequencing can be understood to reflect the distinction between LQR as a methodological and conceptual tool. Time is treated as fixed when organising the dataset but flexible when analysing participants' experiences (Balmer et al., 2021). This dual perspective is present in the current research. Here, I collected data throughout 2019 and identified key time points which could be expected to facilitate change. However, my analytic understanding of time and its relation to Brexit was informed by the speakers and the meaning they attributed to its passing. For example, the UK not leaving the EU on the 29th of March is not treated as a failure due to it being 'late' but rather as a result of speakers treating it as such.

Finally, LQR is also informed by the principle of change. This term can be defined in various ways but is typically understood as referring to perceived differences in the world around us (Saldaña, 2003). This difference manifests as a process rather than an event and simultaneously impacts people's beliefs, attitudes, and experiences (Fullan, 2021). The primary purpose of LQR is to examine how and when this change occurs in the data. Time and the social actions performed within it are contextual, meaning the changes prompted by these actions can be understood as constructed. Pettigrew (1990) suggests that in order to best understand the constructed nature of this process, LQR should be guided by the theory of contextualism. This theory recognises the emergent and situational characteristics of change and argues that it cannot be divorced from the setting in which it emerged. From this, researchers are encouraged to consider contextual factors when determining how change can be identified within the dataset. This provides a useful framework for analysis, as it can be difficult to establish a criterion for what constitutes 'meaningful' change when this process occurs continuously and in a range of mundane everyday settings (Menard, 1991). Actions such as using a

different pen or starting a new job can both fall under the definition of change, raising questions about where the line should be drawn when coding and analysing data (Saldaña, 2003).

As discussed in relation to the principle of time, researchers can resolve this issue by using the dataset to inform their definition of change. This means permitting ourselves to "change our meaning of change as the study progresses" (Saldaña, 2003, p.10). One way this can be achieved is by using how speakers respond to events or actions as a marker of change. If certain events are treated as being particularly significant or impactful, this works to identify a starting point for analysis (Menard, 1991; Saldaña, 2003). Through this, the meaning speakers attribute to their experiences can determine our understanding of what constitutes change. A further way this can be determined is through the researcher's own judgement. Pettigrew (1990) proposes that any initial definitions of change can be established based on prior knowledge of the topic. When analysis begins, this definition can again be adapted to be more situationally appropriate. Whilst it may be erroneous to label a life event as an example of change if not treated as such in the data, observing differences in how speakers discuss this event provides insight into how their understanding of this experience developed (Lewis, 2007). It is also important to note here that just as change is of interest to LQR, so is its absence. The presence of consistency can work to highlight the conditions under which change emerges. Therefore, the process of identifying and understanding change involves identifying the stable and unstable features of people's talk through time.

When employing LQR, it is recommended that this orientation is combined with a qualitative methodology which shares the same conceptualisation of time and change (Calman, Brunton, & Mollassiotis, 2013). Using these principles, I will next discuss the compatibility between LQR and DP. As previously noted, to my knowledge, this issue of 'time' has not been systematically addressed by the field of discursive psychology. Because of this, I will also draw on broader discourse analytic approaches to demonstrate how longitudinal research can be employed within this framework.

4.2 Time and Discursive Psychology

From the perspective of discourse analysis, 'time' is a societal practice that is maintained through

social actions such as talk (Bordieu, 1996). Researchers therefore work to identify how time is constructed as a discursive object and employed as a rhetorical strategy (Hamann & Suckert, 2011). Like LQR, this approach is largely informed by social constructionism. This social constructionist understanding of 'time' has been previously criticised. In particular, Crossley (2000, p. 528) criticises discourse analytic approaches for overemphasising the "flux, disorderliness and incoherence" of everyday life when examining 'narrative structures'. She argues that to make sense of themselves and their experience; people must be able to define what happened and when. Because of this, how speakers orientate towards time is organised and coherent, with this being evidenced in the production of narrative structures. In response, Taylor (2007) suggests that the apparent continuity between past, present, and future in narrative structures is constructed. For example, speakers may invoke 'born and bred narratives' in which they construct a sense of belonging by discussing memories of the house they grew up in. Here, the continuity between past and present is not constructed through uninvolved descriptions but as a device employed to perform action in talk. Time is thus treated as a discursive resource to be drawn upon rather than a given feature of sense-making practice.

Whilst the construction of 'time' itself is not something which has been analysed in any great detail, there are various branches of research within discourse analysis that can be said to contribute towards our understanding of this concept. First, previous research has identified how the invocation of temporality is used in accounts to perform various functions. For example, in their analysis of environmental discourse, Hanson-Easey et al. (2015) found that participants constructed climate change as a temporally distant threat to manage how salient this issue is in comparison to other social issues. Additionally, Fozdar (2008) identified how talk about Māori people in New Zealand often involved a temporal dimension through which speakers would draw a distinction between the past and present to oppose arguments in favour of reparations. However, research which has discussed the construction of temporality tends to treat this as simply another device to be identified rather than something central to the context of talk (Levine, 2003). As a result, there are limited instances within the literature where temporality is the focus of analysis. Interestingly, research which has focused on

temporality within discourse has done so to highlight that this is an issue that the field has widely neglected. This is evident in Condor's (2006) analysis of temporality and collectivity.

Condor (2006) engages critically with Turner and Tajfel's (1979) Social Identity Theory (SIT) in order to examine the discursive construction of nations. She notes that when creating an image of the 'national character', speakers often draw upon historical imagery. This works to construct a shared identity between current inhabitants and those who came before them. Anderson (1991) suggests that this works to 'solidify' the nation by framing its citizens as steadily moving through history together. Despite the historical aspects of social identity and categorisation being long-observed, interest in the temporality of representations of the nation-state is largely confined to those analysing temporal comparisons. This refers to how the status of a group (in this case, a national group) is judged compared to its past. Advocates of this type of analysis position this as an alternative to the inter-national comparison explanation of social categorisation, in which members of the ingroup compare themselves to the outgroup (Mummendey, Klink & Brown, 2011). However, Condor (2001) is critical of this assessment, suggesting that there is little evidence that such a sharp distinction between 'social' and 'temporal' comparison is necessary. She also emphasises that even if this were the case, temporal comparisons are not the only temporal work occurring in discourse and should therefore not be treated as such.

This was demonstrated in Condor's (2006) analysis, which demonstrates that the use of temporal references does not necessarily preclude inter-national comparisons. For example, speakers would discuss the history of the UK's monarchy in order to contrast this system with other countries and present the UK as being 'unique'. Speakers employed temporal language to assess the present state of the country and its future direction. These 'narratives of progress' were used to attend to both a positive ('people here are much better off now') and negative ('we're not world leaders anymore') characterisation of the ingroup (Condor, 2006, p. 666). Finally, history itself was treated by speakers as a national possession. A nation's history was presented as something which had been achieved and therefore must be preserved. Nations were attributed possession of history through either a 'tradition' or 'heritage' repertoire. These two repertoires differ due to tradition referring to the continuity of

cultural values through time and heritage referring to national characteristics which were said to be lost. From this research, Condor concludes that temporality is not simply an analytic consideration that researchers can opt into or out of. Time is the frame through which speakers organise and orientate their accounts, meaning that temporality should be embedded in research practices. Condor suggests it is important for researchers examining this change to also analyse the complex and flexible system of shifting beliefs, values, and history which underlies this construction.

The discussion of history is particularly relevant here as it pertains to a further branch of research within DP, which can contribute to our understanding of time. Within the discursive literature, attention has been paid to how 'history' as a concept is invoked in speakers' accounts. Gibson (2012) identified how historical analogies about World War II were employed during Televised political debates about the Iraq war to rhetorically 'anchor' this new situation to something more recognisable (Moscovici, 1984). Gibson (2012) highlights that social representations of history have largely been treated as static and abstract. It is suggested that previous research in the field has conceptualised history more in terms of representation than the active process of representing that speakers do in talk (Billig, 2008). For example, in their analysis of social representations of history and identity politics, Liu and Hilton (2005) explain that 'Britain' was willing to join the US invasion of Iraq due to the legacy of WWII in which the UK and US acted as the 'world policemen' to defeat Germany. Gibson (2012) points out that it may be problematic to ascribe such historical motivations when it is unclear here if 'Britain' refers to the government, the people, or both. This illustrates the trap that social representation theorists can fall into if they are not careful to avoid taking the descriptions of the world that are present in historical narratives for granted.

This engagement with historical social representations is informative for DP's conceptualisation of time in practice, as researchers have set out to establish how issues of the 'past' should be approached. Much of the groundwork for this type of analysis was set out by Tileagă and Byford (2014), who provide a systematic review of the possibilities for interdisciplinary analysis between psychology and history. However, the relationship between psychology and history is treated critically, with the authors cautioning against interdisciplinary 'borrowing' due to existing

epistemological and conceptual tensions. To illustrate one such tension, Byford and Tileagă (2014) discuss differences in how social psychological and historical research approaches the issue of contradicting and competing accounts. They use the example of the rescue of Bulgarian Jews during WWII, which in psychology has been studied through the lens of bystander intervention (Reicher et al., 2006). When describing the context of their study, Reicher et al. emphasised that their sources for this analysis were historical sources and were therefore bound to be coloured with ideological bias. This was supported through reference to debate which was prominent within Bulgaria's communist era, in which historians argued whether the elites or the workers were responsible for this rescue.

This contestation around key information can be challenging for social psychologists, who are largely concerned with observing behaviour in the present (Tileagă & Byford, 2016). To resolve this, Reicher et al. (2006) chose to consider only that which was consistent throughout the texts for analysis. This appeal to 'empiricism' and 'consensus' is something which is dominant within experimental psychological research. Tileagă and Byford (2016) refer to this as a form of interdisciplinary 'borrowing', in which psychological tools are applied to historical accounts. The problem with this is that in attempting to negate these apparent ideological biases and establish factuality, the researchers have distorted these accounts by inserting their own assumptions and biases. From this, Byford and Tileagă (2016, p. 30) conclude that for interdisciplinary analysis "to transcend some of the problems of borrowing, it needs to be transformative rather than confirmatory".

Whilst the discussion of 'borrowing' provides useful insight into how the past can be explored from a non-historical perspective, DP is at an advantage regarding many of these interdisciplinary issues. This is a result of its social constructionist epistemology, in which it is acknowledged that multiple versions of history exist. There is no need to establish what really happened, as researchers are instead interested in analysing how these representations are constructed in talk. Because of this, DP can apply a more flexible approach in which our understanding of what happened and when can be guided by the data. Tileagă and Byford (2014) argue that discursive analysis is therefore able to provide a critical reflection into taken-for-granted features of the human condition, such as memory, morality, ideology, and belief.

Tileagă (2012) analysed how biography, memory, and identity are managed in the public confessions of former informants for the Romanian Communist Secret Police. The construction of memory is of particular interest here, as the data source for the analysis is confessions sent to a national newspaper between 2000 and 2009, ten years after the communist regime was overthrown. Within DP, memory is treated as an accomplishment which is performed through discourse and can orientate towards various social actions such as accountability and fact construction (see Edwards & Potter, 1992). Therefore, Tileagă is not interested in what participants remember but rather in how they orient towards memory to recontextualise their identity and actions in relation to what was and what is now. It was found that writers of the confessions worked up a form of reflexive engagement through which they switched between reflecting on what was happening 'then' and what the documents about this time period are saying now. This switching was used to perform functions such as making excuses and demonstrating innocence. From this, the analysis of social representations of history is informed by what events the participants treat as meaningful. Likewise, our understanding of time can be gleaned from how participants orientate towards the past and present.

Therefore, the form of longitudinal DP employed in this thesis can be said to be informed by previous literature on temporality and social representations of history. Whilst neither of these areas of study has necessarily focused on time as an object, they provide useful insight into what speakers do with time in their talk. Condor's (1996, 2001, 2006) work on social identity illustrates that temporality is built into discursive practices. Speakers draw upon a range of temporal resources within talk in order to perform a variety of actions. Because of this, Condor emphasises that it is wrong to treat the 'temporal' and 'social' world as separate entities. Furthermore, discursive literature on the social representation of history demonstrates that 'the past' is not a static entity. Analysing how speakers orientate towards history does not necessitate compromising on our social construction principles to find out what really happened. The continuity between 'then' and 'now' should be treated critically, and descriptions of the past, present or future should not be taken for granted.

Further drawing on the principles of LQR (Saldaña, 2003), I will next discuss how DP conceptualises and analyses change within talk.

4.3 Change and Discursive Psychology

Wiggins (2017) explains that discursive practices are context-dependent rather than person-dependent. This refers to how talk shapes and is shaped by its institutional, sequential, and rhetorical setting (Edwards & Potter, 2001). For example, in my discussion of the forms of broadcast political media in Chapter 3, it becomes clear that speakers construct their talk to navigate the expectations and organisation of each medium. The way in which Boris Johnson addresses Leader of the Opposition Keir Starmer during Prime Minister's Questions is going to be different to how he addresses debate moderator Fiona Bruce during BBC *Question Time*. This is not simply because they are different people but because their institutional roles carry different rhetorical demands. The situated nature of talk therefore provides an explanation as to why descriptions of what are ostensibly the same object or events can differ between accounts. From this, Edwards (1999, p.272) argues that the existence of variation and contradictions in talk 'is precisely what we need to study'. This is because, to understand the function of discourse, we must identify when and how it is produced (Wiggins, 2017).

Previous DP work has been very good at analysing variations between accounts and between speakers. The understanding that there are variations in how accounts are produced and occasioned to perform social action can be said to be one of the key contributions of this approach. This can be seen in Edward and Potter's (1992) critique of the cognitive-experimental conceptualisation of memory. To challenge the cognitive assumption that studying memory necessitates identifying what is 'true', they analysed 'Lawsongate'. As discussed in Chapter 3, this refers to a 1988 dispute between then Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson and ten political journalists. Following an 'off the record' meeting, the journalists printed that Lawson had stated that the pension system would be 'targeted' for controversial reform. Lawson was quick to deny this claim, characterising it as a malicious lie. Edwards and Potter analysed the accounts of both Lawson and the journalist defending the facticity of their account. One key finding related to how speakers constructed 'where the truth lies' (Edwards & Potter, 1992, p.200). On different occasions, Lawson and the journalists were observed to point towards different pieces of evidence to support their version of events. One piece of evidence highlighted by all parties was the existence of the notes that journalists had made during the meeting.

The journalists argued that these notes supported their version of events, as they had all come to the same conclusion about what had been said separately. In turn, Lawson treated this corroboration as evidence that the journalists had conspired against him. The construction of the notes can therefore be seen to change across discursive contexts. When used to criticise Lawson, they were the careful writings of seasoned professionals. When undermining the credibility of journalists, the same notes were now 'sketchy'. From this, Edwards and Potter (1992) conclude that 'the truth' is a live and contested issue within talk.

This variation across accounts means that it is important for researchers to both identify the strategies speakers use and identify occasions in which different strategies are used in order to achieve different interactional goals (Goodman, 2017). However, despite the extensive literature on variations between accounts and contexts, there has been very little research examining change through time. This lack of engagement is surprising for various reasons, not least because it appears to be an 'obvious' area for analysis. That is, the claim that what people talk about, and how they talk about it, changes through time follows from a DP perspective on contextual variation, as well as seeming to be so self-evident as to be taken for granted, and yet there are very few attempts within the DP literature to engage directly with this issue. The way in which DP conceptualises the notion of 'change' (as opposed to mere 'variation') has been largely neglected. Because of this, the current thesis also draws insight from other psychological fields, which have more explicitly addressed how change should be approached within research.

One such field is Organisational Psychology, where there has been much discussion regarding how researchers should treat change within organisational settings. Grant et al. (2005) argue that the field must adopt a more discursive approach. Whilst the authors do not explicitly refer to DP in particular, this 'discursive approach' they are advocating for is presented as being grounded in social constructionism. They argue that as the practice of an organisation is shaped by the discourse of its members, change should also be treated as a socially constructed object. Throughout this issue, the authors reference Collins's (2003) call for organisational psychologists to 'reimagine' change. Despite

not explicitly orientating towards a discursive approach, Collins's (2003, p. 5) conceptualisation of change seems fitting here as he argues for;

> A world where change is understood not as an exception to the norm of stability; not as an outcome that is known in advance and discussed in retrospect; not as something that can be made to unfold to the rhythm of "clock-time"; but as the defining character of organization; a fuzzy and deeply ambiguous process, which implicates both author and subject in the quest for new and different ways to understand one another

As previously discussed, in many ways, DP already encompasses this worldview. Indeed, we can extend Collins's line of argument to suggest that change is not just a defining characteristic of organisations but of talk in general. Because of this, the tendency of researchers to take for granted that accounts change through time is problematic for our understanding of discourse.

Drawing on Saldaña's (2003) overview of LQR's conceptualisation of change, the discursive approach to change can also be said to take two forms. One area that should interest analysts is how participants themselves orientate towards change in their accounts. For example, how men discuss the development of their masculine identity in relation to changing social norms (Wetherell & Edley, 2014), or how speakers categorise changes in their friends' behaviour (Smith, 1978). Here, we can identify change by examining what the participant treats as significant. For this, we do not need to make a claim regarding whether something has changed but simply focus on how this apparent change is constructed. A further way in which researchers can identify change is by using the same analytic techniques that are employed when analysing variations across accounts. This involves exploring how rhetorical strategies and social actions are occasioned to serve a specific function.

However, longitudinal discursive research should also seek to analyse developments over time, not just differences. Billig (1992) suggests that in ongoing arguments, rhetorical strategies are used to undermine alternative accounts. Longitudinal DP could therefore be used to examine how rhetorical strategies are developed in response to changing argumentative pressures. Whilst LQR provides a useful and largely DP-compatible framework for analysing change through time, Saldaña's

(2003) question about why change occurs in discourse should be treated more cautiously. This is because, whilst not ruling out the existence of mental processes, discursive psychology does not assume that they can be accessed through talk alone. In contrast to the assumptions of traditional longitudinal research, analysts do not need to establish cause and effect to understand how change occurs.

From the review of the literature, it is evident that DP's lack of systematic engagement with longitudinal research is not a result of it lacking the tools do so. This is because its grounding in social constructionism provides a well-formed conceptualisation of time and change, which can be drawn on. Likewise, DP has long since emphasised the importance of examining discourse in its situated context. It is thus unclear why time appears to be the context that DP has forgot. As alluded to earlier, it seems that part of the problem is that change through time is taken for granted. Even research which is essentially longitudinal in nature often avoids this framing. This can be seen in Goodman, Sirriyeh and McMahon's (2017) analysis of the 2015 'migrant crisis'. Here it was found that throughout 2015 and 2016, the British media constantly developed the terminology used to describe refugees entering Europe. Early references to this event as a 'Mediterranean Migrant crisis' present it as something which is happening 'over there', negating the UK's responsibility to attend to this issue and highlighting it as a potential future threat. This threat becomes more imminent as categorisation shifts to a 'Calais crisis', where 'migrants' are characterised as invaders trying to enter the country. Next, the term 'Europe's Migrant crisis' presents this as an ongoing and widespread issue. This event is a 'crisis' for Europe due to the migrants being an omnipresent force.

The fourth iteration of this description is distinct from the others in that 'migrants' now become the more morally deserving category of 'refugees'. This shift occurred following a child's death as a boat attempting to cross from Turkey to Greece capsized. Now, refugees were more often treated as objects of sympathy. It was another event, the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, which occasioned a return to the 'Migrant crisis'. People attempting to enter Europe were again treated as dangerous, and the categories of 'migrant' and 'refugee' were constructed as indistinguishable. These findings demonstrate that how the media constructs issues such as migration will be shaped by the

time and context in which they occur. However, this research is not described as being longitudinal despite analysing how the change in the categorisation occurs through time. Although this may seem to be a pedantic complaint, the way in which research is framed has a significant impact on how it is understood. For example, if I had not framed the current thesis as an analysis of broadcast political media, this would have neglected the context in which the talk occurs. The same is true for research which analyses how talk is temporally situated.

One piece of research that explicitly frames itself as a longitudinal discursive analysis is Varjonen, Arnold and Jasinskaja-Lahti's (2013) examination of the construction of ethnic identity. This research collected focus group data from ethnic Finnish migrants from Russia. Participants were interviewed at two different points in time. First, they were interviewed before they migrated from Russia to Finland. They were then interviewed again after living in Finland between one and two years. The findings of this analysis identified that how speakers constructed their identity changed pre- and post-migration. Before moving to Finland, participants typically categorised themselves by orienting towards their Finnish ethnicity. This ethnicity was treated as a key component of their identity, as speakers drew on a biological repertoire to suggest the existence of inherited and shared Finnish values and traits. Speakers attributed positive characteristics towards 'Finnishness', with this presented in contrast to what it means to be Russian. However, in the post-migration data, participants were observed to shift away from this Finnish identity. The category of 'Ethnic Finn' was no longer relevant to their everyday life In Finland, where they were now treated as Russian. From this, the notion that 'Ethnic Finns' were Finnish in Russia and Russian in Finland became a commonplace 'fact' shared by participants. This research demonstrates that the construction of identity is not stable. Through time, new constructions of self-identity emerge in response to changing circumstances and relationships. Examining these patterns longitudinally allows researchers to identify how these identities are managed and navigated through time.

DP's lack of engagement with longitudinal research has limited the field's scope of analysis in various ways. Condor (1996) expresses concern that much of the relevant literature has neglected the analysis of how social processes develop and endure in favour of examining discrete moments of

identity construction. She argues that the temporal trajectory of social interactions should be a focal point of analysis for identity theorists, as it is here that people develop their identity and form their understanding of the world. Furthermore, Levine (2003) draws attention to the hypocrisy of DP regarding the issue of time. Whilst criticising quantitative approaches for employing experimental tools, such as experimental conditions and replications, which obscure the importance of time and context, DP also often falls into this trap. For example, collected data often becomes 'frozen in time', meaning that it is treated as an unchanging account that researchers can refer back to without having to consider the time and context in which it took place. From this, DP can be seen to have its own 'temporal skeletons' to contend with (Levine, 2003, p.14). Finally, Gibson's (2012) critique of the 'static' treatment of history can also apply to DP's treatment of talk. Wiggins (2017) suggests that by analysing discursive practices as objects rather than processes, we are missing an opportunity to identify changes in how people manage psychological business in their everyday social lives. It therefore may be more accurate to conceptualise talk not as just an action, but as a process of actions.

Although DP has yet to address LQR systematically, there is growing discussion in other qualitative research methods regarding how these methods can be used to analyse change. The discussion of this issue within the field of conversation analysis (CA) is particularly relevant here as the two approaches share many foundational principles. Due to the overlap between these two disciplines, it is worth providing a brief overview of how time and change are conceptualised from this perspective.

4.4 Longitudinal Conversation Analysis

Depperman and Doelher (2021) note that whilst CA is typically interested in identifying the consistent features of talk which underpin interactional practices, longitudinal CA is primarily concerned with how these practices develop. This includes examining how the social actions and organisational structures that inform talk are constructed and built upon over time. In order to identify the occurrence of change in these interactional practices, researchers must engage in what Koschmann (2013, p. 1039) refers to as "same-but-different" analysis. This means that the phenomenon being studied must

present as being similar enough to facilitate its recognition across the dataset but different enough to demonstrate its change over time. Although the use of 'same-but-different' analysis has primarily been established in relation to CA, this approach can also inform how discursive researchers approach and organise longitudinal data.

Previous studies employing longitudinal CA have primarily focused on analysing issues such as the development of talk in children, in which change and time are inherent to understanding the topic (Pfeiffer & Anna, 2021). A further interest of scholars adopting this methodology has been in identifying how social and historical changes have led to the development and establishment of new social norms. This research is particularly relevant to the current thesis, as much of the CA work on sociohistorical change has been developed through the analysis of political discourse (Depperman & Doelher, 2021). For example, using data collected between 1975 and 1995, Clayman and Heritage have conducted multiple studies analysing the organisational features of talk in British and American broadcast media. Although this research was not explicitly framed as being longitudinal, it did consider the subtle variations in interactional practices with the dataset. For example, Clayman and Heritage (2002) identified a change in the mode of questioning directed towards President Eisenhower in 1954, and President Reagan in 1981. The questions asked of Eisenhower were largely deferential to his judgement and lacked adversarial features such as a hostile preface in which speakers orientate towards the 'correct' answer – one which if true, would reflect poorly on the President. This is in contrast to Reagan, who was more directly challenged through the use of adversarial devices such as negatively formed questions (e.g., "Isn't it time for some strong action", p.765).

Whilst the focus of this research was to analyse practices for building and sequentially organising argumentative discourse, Clayman and Heritage (2002, 2021) also reflected upon the social conditions that led to changes in how questions are constructed. They identified several key factors which could have led to the emergence of more adversarial journalistic and political norms between 1954 and 1981. Examples of potential factors include the proliferation of TV journalists seeking to break the next big news story and Presidential press conferences becoming less strict in their expectations for formal conduct. The intended purpose behind viewing data through such a

sociohistorical lens is not to establish a definitive cause for why this change occurred but rather to observe how these new norms are ratified into interactional practices. Longitudinal CA work therefore demonstrates the importance of conducting a context-sensitive analysis which recognises that change is a socially constructed action performed through talk.

4.5 The current analysis

Previous research employing LQR has had some success in addressing Brexit-related issues. For example, the 'BrExpats' project examined how British immigrants living in France and Spain navigated the new political reality of Brexit. Using data from 300 interviews collected between 2016 and 2019, researchers sought to identify how participants' experiences and identities developed in response to emerging debates regarding their EU residency (Benson & O'Reilly, 2020). A key finding of this analysis relates to how uncertainty about the future was managed throughout this period. At the beginning of the dataset, participants were primarily concerned with how Brexit would impact their resident status. Their worries were primarily practical and related to issues such as their financial and job security. Dissatisfaction was expressed with the UK and French governments for their lack of clarity regarding this issue. When Benson (2019) conducted further interviews two years later in 2019, this lack of clarity remained a key point of contention. However, some participants reported that they had taken matters into their own hands by starting the naturalisation process – something which they had previously been observed as ambivalent towards. This experience was described as challenging elements of their personal identity which had previously been taken for granted. Before, participants were happy with their status as Britons in France. Now, they felt the need to choose between a British or 'European' (French) identity. The changing relationship between the EU and the UK and uncertainty about the future led to participants questioning their understanding of their place in the world. A 'snapshot' study of these data may have incorrectly assumed that this identity struggle emerged as a natural response to Brexit rather than a result of government inaction and a consistent lack of clarity over several years. These findings therefore demonstrate the benefits of analysing political change through the lens of LQR.

Whilst providing valuable insight into how impacted communities experienced the process of the UK leaving the EU, this research also demonstrates the need for a more rigorous DP contribution towards the development of LQR. Within the 'BrExpats' project, Benson and O'Reilly (2020) examined how the experiences both shaped and were shaped by everyday practices and social structures. However, changes within participant's accounts were treated as simply reflecting these shifting practices. DP should therefore seek to highlight that talk itself is doing something within the social world, meaning that longitudinal research should instead prioritise analysing how different versions of reality are constructed through time. This thesis seeks to illustrate the benefits of adopting a longitudinal discursive approach by analysing changes in how speakers construct key issues relating to Brexit through 2019 as the UK attempted to enact its departure from the European Union. In the next chapter, I will provide an overview of my methodology to demonstrate how this type of research can be accomplished.

Chapter 5: Methodology

Having previously discussed the principles and practices of discursive psychology, in this chapter, I will provide an overview of how this thesis employed a longitudinal discursive approach. First, I will outline the dataset and consider the implications of using this type of data when analysing political discourse. Next, I will set out the specific procedures used to collect and analyse these data. This will involve summarising the transcription, ethical, and analytic process.

5.1 Data

This research analyses naturalistic data drawn from episodes of the BBC television show *Question Time*. Before considering why this programme was selected for analysis, it is first worth discussing the debate over the use of naturalistic data in discursive psychology (Wiggins, 2017). Potter (2004) argues that unlike 'naturally occurring talk' (everyday conversations, radio broadcasts, etc.), data generated from interviews and other such methods are contrived and artificial. Because of this, they are unrepresentative of how talk is constructed in the real world. Furthermore, this type of data is also said to be affected by the agenda of the researcher. In particular, Potter and Hepburn (2005) express

concern that researchers may inadvertently 'flood' interviews with social psychological agendas and categories. They note that through their education and career, researchers will have developed a specific worldview about how interviews should be conducted. As a result, the 'social science agenda' will be embedded in their interview questions, in which researchers may organise questions in a certain way to build a narrative that foregrounds their area of interest. Researchers can also often be seen to construct questions using abstract processes and categories that bear little resemblance to how these issues are discussed on a day-to-day basis. From this, subjects are not simply 'interviewees' but recruits who are implicitly and often unknowingly both acting and treated as a representative of a specific psychological phenomenon (Potter & Hepburn, 2005)

To mitigate this risk, Potter (2002) proposes 'The Dead Social Scientist Test', in which researchers should aim to analyse interactions that would have taken place regardless of their involvement. As the broadcasting of *Question Time* occurs independently from my research, this dataset avoids many of the weaknesses associated with 'contrived' data. However, Speers (2002) challenges this distinction, instead arguing that 'all data are researcher prompted and thus contrived' (2002, p.516). The process of gathering data is inherently selective as it is geared towards the researcher's analytic interests. Because of this, it is important to be reflexive and transparent about the decisions made regarding the dataset.

Once I established an interest in analysing Brexit discourse in broadcast political debate, my next step was finding a data source aligned with this research purpose. From this, I determined that episodes of *Question Time* would best represent the phenomena being studied. This decision was made for two key reasons. First, from prior engagement with this setting, both analytically and through the literature, I was able to reasonably assume that it would produce relevant and rich data (Huma et al., 2020). Data from this programme has been previously used to analyse various issues, including fact construction (Demasi, 2019) and immigration (Gibson & Booth, 2018). This suggests that this source is suitable for the exploratory nature of my analysis. The second reason this data was identified as appropriate for my research relates to the back-and-forth nature of the interaction it enables between audience members and politicians. This is relevant to the current thesis, as I am

interested in examining how key issues relating to Brexit were constructed and challenged. The construction of these issues does not solely occur within the political or public sphere. Instead, Brexit is co-constructed by both politicians and the public who mutually shape the other's discourse on this topic. *Question Time* therefore provides an opportunity to examine how these interactions happen in real time.

First airing in 1979, *Question Time* has become a longstanding staple of British political discourse (McNair et al., 2003). Broadcast weekly, the show adopts the style of a town hall meeting in which a panel of politicians and other public figures are asked topical questions from a live studio audience. This audience is comprised of members of the public who have been selected to represent all sides of the political spectrum. The debate is presided over by a host who facilitates discussion between the audience and the panel. Due to the often highly charged nature of the issues discussed, the host is responsible for maintaining civility and order between participants. Ansted and O'Loughlin (2011, p.442.) note that this level of proximity between the "governing and the governed" is somewhat unique to the format of *Question Time* in the present day. As political discourse has largely moved away from town hall settings to adapt to technological developments, *Question Time* maintains many of the stylistic features of this tradition. Hutchby (2017) suggests that the roles established within conventional political media (e.g., journalist, politician, voter) are challenged through this format. Instead, the audience is positioned as 'citizen interviewers' who can bring panellists to account (Bowen, 2020). However, whilst the audience is encouraged to challenge panellists and are often invited to comment, the barriers between 'the public' and 'the politicians' remain. For example, audience members are allocated less time to speak than the panel and are typically not granted the right to reply once their question has been answered. Nevertheless, it is the proximity of this interaction which makes *Question Time* an interesting medium through which to analyse the form and function of political discourse as the UK leaves the European Union.

After identifying *Question Time* as a source, I next considered the size of the dataset. At this point in the research process, I had not yet decided to conduct a longitudinal analysis. Because of this, my primary concern was ensuring that I had enough material to conduct a substantive analysis of the

topic. In line with Wiggins's (2017) guidelines for doctoral research using discursive psychology, I determined that between 20 and 40 hours of audiovisual data would provide a fair representation of Brexit discourse. Whilst this established a useful timeframe to work towards, the size of this dataset was primarily determined by the aims of my research (Goodman, 2017). As this thesis aims to analyse political discourse as the UK left the EU, I initially prioritised capturing the events surrounding the original withdrawal date of the 29th of March 2019. This date was subsequently delayed on several occasions throughout 2019, leading to a change in how I approached the data. Rather than seeking to analyse the specific act of leaving the EU, I instead came to be interested in examining how speakers constructed the process of Brexit. For this reason, I decided to maintain an analytic focus on the events of 2019.

The resulting data set consists of 42 episodes of *Question Time* broadcast between the 13th of January and the 13th of December 2019. Two of the episodes within this dataset (19/11/2019 and 22/11/2019) were 'General Election specials'. This is worth highlighting due to the different format of these episodes in which, instead of a panel discussion, host Fiona Bruce and the audience individually questioned the leaders of the party and the audience on specific aspects of their manifesto. Table 1 displays the broadcast date of each episode selected for analysis, the panel members present, and the time dedicated to discussing EU-related matters. The total amount of material sampled was thus 20 hours 40 seconds.

Table 1
Episodes of Question Time

Broadcast Date	Panel Members	Duration of EU-related Discussion
10/01/2019	James Cleverly; Emily Thornberry; Jo Swinson; Melanie Phillips; Nish Kumar.	43 minutes 36 seconds
17/01/2019	Rory Stewart; Diane Abbott; Kirsty Blackman; Anand Menon; Isabel Oakeshott.	51 minutes 24 seconds
24/01/2019	Suella Braverman; John Healey; Sonia Sodha; Iain Anderson; Nick Ferrari	33 minutes 24 seconds
31/01/2019	Helen Whately; Richard Burgon; Juergen Maier; Camilla Tominey; Gina Miller	32 minutes 20 seconds
07/02/2019	Michael Forsyth; Anneliese Dodds; Fiona Hyslop; Hugo Rifkind; Eunice Olumide	34 minutes 36 seconds
14/02/2019	Jacob Rees-Mogg; Lisa Nandy; Grace Blakeley; Geoff Norcott; Jimmy Wales	19 minutes 10 seconds
21/02/2019	Mel Stride; Andy McDonald; Chris Leslie; Ella Whelan; John Barnes	31 minutes 22 seconds
28/02/2019	Nadhim Zahawi; Barry Gardiner; Layla Moran; Lionel Shriver; Henning Wehn	23 minutes 55 seconds
07/03/2019	Dominic Raab; Margaret Beckett; Iain Martin; Javed Khan; Owen Jones	21 minutes 16 seconds
14/03/2019	James Cleverly; Clive Lewis; Ian Blackford; Catherine Barnard; Julia Hartley-Brewer	19 minutes 10 seconds
21/03/2019	Tobias Ellwood; Nick Thomas-Symonds; Jeffrey Donaldson; John O'Dowd; Polly Mackenzie	35 minutes
28/03/2019	Damian Hinds; Jenny Chapman; Simon Wolfson; Merryn Somerset Webb; Yanis Varoufakis	43 minutes 30 seconds
13/04/2019	Jeremy Wright; David Lammy; Mairead McGuinness; Charles Moore; Ash Sarkar	44 minutes
25/04/2019	Victoria Atkins; Jon Ashworth; Vince Cable; Caroline Lucas; John Rhys-Davies	20 minutes 29 seconds
02/05/2019	Kenneth Clarke; Emily Thornberry; Kate Andrews; Sonia Sodha; Simon Evans	27 minutes 54 seconds
09/05/2019	Amber Rudd; Jonathan Reynolds; Anna Soubry; Nigel Farage; John Mills	47 minutes 29 seconds
16/05/2019	Bim Afolami; Richard Leonard; John Swinney; Christine Jardine; Eilidh Douglas	22 minutes 7 seconds
23/05/2019	Damian Green; Tracy Brabin; Camilla Cavendish; Miatta Fahnbulleh; Simon Jordan	27 minutes 55 seconds
30/05/2019	Rory Stewart; Barry Gardiner; Jo Swinson; Alex Phillips; Steven Pinker	25 minutes
06/06/2019	Nicky Morgan; Anneliese Dodds; Drew Hendry; Alison Phillips; Piers Morgan	19 minutes 53 seconds
13/06/2019	Theresa Villiers; Stephen Kinnock; Adam Price; Mark Reckless; Francesca Martinez	15 minutes 56 seconds
20/06/2019	Kwasi Kwarteng; Margot James; Laura Pidcock; Ed Davey; Tim Martin	26 minutes 25 seconds
27/06/2019	Elizabeth Truss; Caroline Flint; Richard Walker; Tom Newton Dunn; Ayesha Hazarika	27 minutes 16 seconds
04/07/2019	Vicky Ford; Louise Haigh; Siân Berry; Tom Harwood; Martin Lewis	7 minutes 14 seconds

05/09/2019	Kwasi Kwarteng; Emily Thornberry; Ian Blackford; Layla Moran; Richard Tice; Iain Dale	57 minutes 50 seconds
12/09/2019	Brandon Lewis; John Healey; Jeffrey Donaldson; Catherine Barnard; Afua Hirsch	47 minutes 48 seconds
19/09/2019	Victoria Atkins; Charles Falconer; Ed Davey; Ash Sarkar; Camilla Tominey	32 minutes 19 seconds
26/09/2019	James Cleverly; Nick Thomas-Symonds; Adam Price; Mark Reckless; Gina Miller	46 minutes 45 seconds
03/10/2019	Nadhim Zahawi; Sarah Jones; Melanie Phillips; Anand Menon; Bonnie Greer	33 minutes 42 seconds
10/10/2019	Grant Shapps; Lisa Nandy; Rupert Read; Julia Hartley-Brewer; Theo Paphitis	19 minutes 50 seconds
17/10/2019	Matthew Hancock; Anneliese Dodds; Philippa Whitford; Martin Daubney; Javed Khan	40 minutes 49 seconds
24/10/2019	Norman Lamont; Richard Leonard; Caroline Voaden; Kate Andrews; Ken Loach	35 minutes 37 seconds
31/10/2019	Paul Scully; Jon Ashworth; Layla Moran; Mairead McGuinness; Isabel Oakeshott	23 minutes 31 seconds
07/11/2019	Kirstene Hair; Barry Gardiner; Humza Yousaf; Angela Haggerty; Iain Anderson	23 minutes 33 seconds
14/11/2019	James Cleverly; Clive Lewis; Alex Phillips; Liz Saville Roberts; Chris Boardman	10 minutes 19 seconds
19/11/2019	Nigel Farage	18 minutes 42 seconds
21/11/2019	Robert Jenrick; Richard Burgon; Chuka Umunna; Philippa Whitford; Sherelle Jacobs	41 minutes 13 seconds
22/11/2019	Boris Johnson; Jeremy Corbyn; Jo Swinson; Nicola Sturgeon	21 minutes 22 seconds
28/11/2019	Brandon Lewis; Andy McDonald; Caroline Lucas; Zanny Minton Beddoes; Lionel Shriver	13 minutes 25 seconds
05/12/2019	James Cleverly; Anneliese Dodds; Ed Davey; Ian Blackford; Richard Tice	18 minutes 40 seconds
09/12/2019	Robert Jenrick; Angela Rayner; Jo Swinson; Humza Yousaf; Adam Price; Jonathan Bartley; Nigel Farage	19 minutes 45 seconds
13/12/2019	Grant Shapps; Stephen Kinnock; Drew Hendry; Helen Lewis; Michael Dobbs	26 minutes 45 seconds

5.2 Transcription

The Jeffersonian system of transcription is common practice within discursive psychology due to its

ability to capture how interaction unfolds in talk (Huma et al., 2020). This system is designed to

provide a textual representation of how things are said, with specific symbols being used to highlight

certain features of speech (see Appendix 1). From this, features such as pauses, pitch, emphasis and

interruptions are treated as being potentially meaningful and relevant to the analysis due to their

action-orientated nature (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). For the purpose of this analysis, I only

transcribed talk that I deemed as being relevant to Brexit and the European Union. The distinction between 'Brexit' and 'non-Brexit' discourse was not always clear due to the effect this process has had on British politics more widely. To account for this, I established inclusive data selection criteria in which all talk that explicitly or implicitly alluded to Brexit was considered for analysis. These data were transcribed using a simplified form of Jefferson notation. I determined that some features of talk (overlap, pauses, laughter, applause) were necessary to understand what was being said and illustrate the practices that occur in broadcast political debate (Clayman & Heritage, 2003). Features such as breath, pitch, and elongation were largely omitted in the initial transcription stage, but they were later included if they were relevant to my analysis of individual extracts.

5.3 Ethics

Episodes of *Question Time* exist within the public domain, meaning that there are minimal ethical issues to address within this research. However, to protect the anonymity of non-public figures, members of the audience were represented using pseudonyms (A1, A2) for the purpose of transcription of analysis. This anonymisation was not extended to panel members due to their status as public figures. All data was publicly available and accessible through BBC iPlayer (an online streaming service) and is therefore in line with the ethical guidelines laid out by the British Psychological Society (2009) regarding collecting and observing online data. Ethical approval was received from York St. John University.

5.4 Analysis

Before providing an overview of my analytic procedure, it is first necessary to emphasise that this research did not begin as a longitudinal study. I began this process by conducting a 'traditional' discursive analysis, in which identifying change through time was not a concern. It was only once I had identified various of the key discursive strategies present within the dataset that I began to recognise that they were subject to change. This led me to seek out a discursive framework for conducting longitudinal research. When this was unsuccessful, I broadened my literature review to draw insight from other qualitative methods. Here, the field of Longitudinal Qualitative Research was

particularly useful for guiding my analysis because, as discussed in Chapter 4, DP and LQR share a similar conceptualisation of change and time. Once I had gained a better understanding of how to approach the data longitudinally, I revisited areas of analytic interest to examine them through this lens. As a result, my analytic procedure was by no means a linear process. Additionally, many of the decisions made here were informed by my own judgment and understanding of the data. To some extent, this does not deviate from the 'typical' approach of discursive researchers, who must make multiple judgements regarding issues such as which extracts are most relevant to the analysis. However, the current analysis required additional consideration of how 'change' can be defined, identified, and examined. I therefore provide an overview of this process not to dictate how LDR should be done but to provide an example of how it can be accomplished.

5.5 Analytic procedure

As outlined by Goodman (2017), the first stage of a discourse analysis involves identifying a research question which is appropriate for this methodology. At this stage in this analysis, my research question was relatively broad as I sought to examine how Brexit-related phenomena were constructed within Question Time. It was determined that any specific research interest would be shaped around the content of the dataset. After collecting and transcribing the data, I moved on to the second stage of analysis. This involved engaging in a preliminary reading of the data. Here, I noted down my initial thoughts without making any assumptions about their meaning or the significance of these findings. Instead, I simply highlighted what I felt was interesting and relevant to the research question (Goodman, 2017). I made a concerted effort to do this in a way which would account for the situated nature of discourse (Potter, 2012). This meant that alongside examining what words and phrases were used, I also considered how these utterances were organised in relation to the sequential and institutional context (Wiggins, 2017). The aim of this was to broadly understand the actions speakers were accomplishing through their talk. This involved making general observations about the nature of each interaction. For instance, were speakers justifying, blaming, performing anger – and if so, what had prompted this response? From this, I was able to gain insight into what issues were being routinely contested and on what grounds.

Whilst conducting this preliminary reading, certain 'chunks' of data were separated from the wider dataset (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). At this stage, extracts were largely selected due to them representing re-occurring aspects of the data. For example, speakers were found to frequently debate the necessity of a second referendum. These extracts were then moved to separate Word documents, and categorised based on the issue being discussed and the actions being performed. There was often overlap between these groups, as speakers performed multiple actions when attending to the construction of various issues. Identifying the overlap between 'issues' and 'actions' allowed me to refine my areas of analytic interest further as I began to focus on how speakers challenged and justified their support for key Brexit issues. Whilst there were no fixed inclusion criteria for how many times an issue had to be debated within the dataset for it to be deemed 'key', I judged the prominence of these issues in two ways. First, they were issues that were treated as contestable by the speakers themselves. Second, they were issues that were present on multiple occasions, rather than just in one episode of *Question Time*.

This led to the next stage of my analytic procedure. I began to employ the principles of DP more explicitly to examine how speakers orientated towards action in their talk (Wiggins, 2017). Due to my interest in how key Brexit issues were attended to, I worked to identify all the rhetorical strategies and devices speakers drew upon to justify their position and challenge that of others. This involved highlighting devices such as category entitlements, extreme case formulations, and three-part lists, and noting how they worked to undermine or support a particular stance (Wiggins, 2017). From this, I further categorised each extract into separate Word documents depending on the issue being discussed, the action being performed, and the discursive devices being utilised. Through this, I was able to collate the different strategies speakers employed in the construction of their arguments. This led to the establishment of three key areas of analytic interest: a second referendum, Labour's Brexit policy, and leadership.

The first analytic area of interest I established was in relation to how speakers constructed and challenged support for a second referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union. This issue became of interest due to it being a highly contested policy within the data set. The idea of a

second referendum is also something that speakers frequently invoked – without prompting – to perform various functions. For example, the Liberal Democrat's support for this policy was highlighted by their opponents as evidence of their disregard for democratic processes. Beyond being a prominent issue, the way in which speakers attended to this proposal was interesting due to it capturing a tension which is evident throughout much of the dataset in which speakers must carefully balance the 'will of the people' with the 'national interest'. Those in favour of leaving the EU justified their position by framing Brexit as an enactment of the people's will. However, they also had to construct their account to respond to the claim that this process would negatively impact the UK. Conversely, those opposed to Brexit emphasised the damage that would be caused by leaving the EU. In turn, they were accused of undermining the 'will of the people' by trying to prevent something which the public voted for. This tension was encapsulated by the debate surrounding the possibility of a second referendum, as speakers both in favour of and opposed to this proposal worked to present their position as both reflecting the national interest *and* the will of the people.

As I had previously collated a document containing all of the extracts in which a second referendum was invoked, the next step of this analytic procedure involved determining which discursive devices and actions were employed as part of a wider rhetorical strategy. This meant further narrowing down exactly what speakers were doing with their talk when challenging or supporting this proposal. From this, I identified two key strategies speakers used to undermine a second referendum, and two keyways in which these challenges were responded to. One such strategy for opposing a second referendum was arguing that nothing had changed since the first vote, rendering this proposal futile as it would be unlikely to lead to a different outcome. This was responded to through reference to the emergence of 'new information', which was said to have changed the public's understanding of Brexit sufficiently to justify a second vote.

Speakers were also found to undermine this proposal by constructing a negative characterisation of those who supported it. Here, people advocating for a second referendum were depicted as arrogant elitists who, being unable to accept that they had 'lost', were attempting to disregard democratic processes. To counteract this, advocates framed their stance as instead being a

reluctant response to the government's inability to produce a withdrawal agreement. From this, a second referendum was presented as being a last resort solution which would protect the national interest whilst also respecting the sovereignty of 'the people' and their vote. When examining these strategies, it was not simply a case of highlighting how each argument was responded to within the immediate interactional setting. Instead, I considered how speakers' strategies were shaped by and worked to undermine potential counterarguments previously invoked within the context of *Question Time.*

The second area of analytic interest I identified was the construction of Labour's Brexit policy. This issue was identified due to the striking way in which members of the audience and panel consistently responded to accounts justifying this policy with laughter. The laughter was striking because it was not confined to a few episodes but was consistent across the dataset. I found that this laughter worked to treat Labour's Brexit policy as being confusing and ridiculous. This led to me examining what specifically was being laughed at. From this preliminary analysis, I identified three ways in which speakers constructed and justified Labour's Brexit policy. These strategies included framing the policy as being grounded in the 'simple principle' of preventing no deal, characterising it as a comprehensive customs union, and presenting it as a nuanced and complex policy. At first, I inadvertently took for granted the differences, and apparent contradictions between these strategies. This is because it is expected within DP that there will be variations in how speakers construct their accounts. However, here the variations across the strategies stood in contrast to the consistent nature of the laughter they were met with, leading me to investigate further.

When organising data, it is good practice to document the relevant extracts in chronological order. Previously I have followed this practice primarily for the purpose of being able to contextualise each extract. For example, it is useful to know what vote in parliament is referred to by speakers at any given time. However, when analysing the different strategies speakers invoke, their temporal relation to each other has not previously been of particular relevance to my work. Instead of treating time as a context in and itself, it had been used to gather information about what I had incorrectly assumed was the real context of talk (e.g., its institutional and rhetorical setting). However, when

revisiting the different strategies speakers employed to defend Labour's policy, I identified a pattern in when these strategies occurred. They were not randomly produced but employed in a linear fashion in which as one strategy fell out of use, another would appear within the dataset. From this it became clear that these strategies were not simply 'different', but they were changing through 2019.

To better understand the temporal organisation of these extracts, I made note of when they occurred in relation to the timeline of Brexit events that I had pre-established before the analysis (see Appendix 2). From this, I identified two key time points at which the strategies speakers used to justify Labour's Brexit policy began to shift. These time points included the EU election in May and the General Election in December 2019. Being able to pin the differences between accounts to specific time points reinforced that these accounts were situated within the context of time. This variation through time suggested that these accounts were changing rather than simply different. In order to understand these changes, it was decided that a longitudinal approach towards the data was needed. As there is only limited discursive literature which has explicitly engaged with longitudinal research, I drew heavily on the field of Longitudinal Qualitative Research. Specifically, Saldaña's (2003) longitudinal framework guided much of this analysis. In line with this framework, I began further examining the data to identify other key time points which could reasonably be expected to facilitate change. The time points identified included the failure to leave the EU on March 29th, the EU election and UK general election, Theresa May's resignation as Prime Minister, and Boris Johnson being appointed as leader of the Conservative party. These events were highlighted as significant due to my prior knowledge of the topic and my observation that participants treated them as meaningful (Pettigrew, 1990).

Once these time points had been identified, I then further organised the data to establish 'data ponds'. This involved sorting extracts into further subsets depending on when they occurred in relation to these events. For example, one subset contained Labour Brexit strategies employed after the 29th of March but before the EU election. Saldaña (2003) refers to these different periods as 'ponds' because the intention is that once analysed, they will be combined into the wider pool of data. This allows for change to be tracked throughout the dataset. The next stage of longitudinal analysis

includes describing the kind of change which has occurred, examining how and why it happened, and then considering what these changes tell us about the phenomena being studied (Saldaña, 2003; Wolcott, 1994). In order to do this, I revisited the analytic notes I had made for each extract and focused on establishing how the strategies present in each 'pond' had been developed.

This involved identifying similarities and differences in the devices employed and actions performed by speakers at different time points. From this, I was able to establish that the three strategies speakers used to defend Labour's Brexit policy were being consistently built upon to respond to the challenges that they were faced with. This involved drawing upon the discursive resources of the previous strategy to construct a viable counterargument to previous criticism. For instance, the reference to the 'simple principle' of stopping no deal was treated by the audience as evasive and vague. This led to speakers adopting the strategy of a 'comprehensive customs union' in order to present Labour's Brexit policy as detailed and specific.

A key challenge I faced when adopting a longitudinal approach towards data analysis was concern regarding how 'change' should be defined and understood. Saldaña (2003) notes that it can be difficult for researchers to distinguish between change through time, and differences between accounts. Whilst it is expected that different speakers will construct different accounts at different points in time, this does not necessarily reflect change. Saldaña (2003) proposes two methods for identifying change within the dataset. First, 'change' can be identified by examining what is treated as being significant within the dataset. If speakers highlight that something has changed, then this is a good starting point for analysis. I employed this method to identify instances within the data where speakers referred to the existence of change through time. An example of an explicit reference to change is that following Boris Johnson being appointed Prime Minister, Conservative speakers claimed that their opponents had changed their position on holding a general election. However, speakers' orientation towards change was not always so explicit. Because of this, I also made note of instances in which speakers implicitly orientated towards change by responding to an issue or utterance as though it was novel or significant. This led to a broad inclusion criterion for selected

instances of change. The broadness of this criterion reflects the flexible nature of longitudinal research, in which my understanding of change was guided by the data rather than any fixed measure.

In conjunction with this method for identifying change, I also used my own judgment to assess how the rhetorical strategies speakers employed progressed throughout the dataset. This involved keeping track of when specific discursive devices emerged in relation to key time points, and when they fell out of use. Once I had established when these devices were employed, I was able to gain better insight into the action they were performing. Using the principles of DP, I examined how these utterances were situated and constructed to respond to previous claims and pre-empt future arguments. Here, I also drew on the principles of Pettigrew's (1990) contextualism in that I analysed change within the wider context of Brexit. For example, if a strategy emerged in the weeks leading up to the General Election, then this provides a basis for understanding why the strategies employed by speakers may change in response to this upcoming event. Whilst the purpose of longitudinal discursive work is not to establish causality, accounting for the context in which change occurs is important when analysing how speakers perform certain actions through their talk.

Having used the principles of longitudinal research in order to analyse Labour's Brexit policy, I then began revisiting other established areas of analytic interest in order to examine their construction through this lens. As I had already conducted a preliminary analysis of how speakers justified and challenged support for a second referendum, I had already made notes regarding the devices being utilised and the actions being performed. The next step therefore involved organising these extracts into 'ponds' and identifying when they took place in relation to each of the key time points. I then made note of the differences which occurred between each pond. Unlike Labour's Brexit policy, what was immediately striking here was the consistency of the strategies used. For example, speakers who opposed a second referendum invoked the 'will of the people' at each of the key time points I identified. Saldaña (2003) argues that within longitudinal research, the stability of talk should be of as much interest to researchers as change. Here, the consistency of certain strategies provided insight into the action they were performing. Arguments against a second referendum

remaining stable throughout the dataset worked to underscore one of the key strategies opponents employed – that 'nothing had changed' since the result of the first vote.

However, when analysing all extracts related to a second referendum within the context of their respective temporal ponds, I did identify a change in the strategies employed by speakers in favour of a second referendum. Prior to Boris Johnson becoming Prime Minister, the failures of Brexit were largely attributed to the poor governance of Theresa May. The change of Prime Minister in July led to opponents of this proposal questioning why a general election would not be a suitable alternative to a second referendum, as it would also allow the public to have a final say on Brexit. As a result of this, advocates had to construct a 'new' version of Brexit in which leaving the EU was now consistently treated as being inherently damaging regardless of leadership. Whilst I had previously made note of this strategy, I had conceptualised it as simply representing a 'different' version of Brexit, rather than change through time. I had also previously decided not to make it a key area of analytic focus due to it being less prominent in the dataset than other strategies. It was only when examining the extracts within their temporal context that it became apparent that it had appeared less prominent as it was only developed towards the end of the year in response to unfolding events and new challenges. The way in which speakers undermined arguments for a general election in order to justify a second referendum therefore built on previous strategies in order to maintain the characterisation of Brexit as being harmful to the national interest whilst also changing who is responsible for this failure.

Finally, I then attempted to analyse the construction of leadership using this longitudinal discursive approach. The current dataset covers the premiership of both Theresa May and Boris Johnson, with this allowing me to compare and contrast how these leaders were constructed. This issue became of analytic interest due to the notable differences in how May and Johnson are characterised. This was observed through identifying the varying discursive devices which were employed in accounts challenging the legitimacy of their leadership. Following my decision to conduct a longitudinal study, I had initially assumed that my preliminary analysis of leadership would be best suited to this approach. This is because Theresa May and Boris Johnson represent a change in

leadership which occurred during the period covered by my dataset. The way in which leadership was constructed changed around the key time point of May resigning and Johnson becoming Prime Minister. However, when analysing the data, it became apparent that any change present appeared across 'objects', rather than through time. Unlike the previous issues I analysed, the rhetorical strategies employed by speakers were not developed through time. Instead, they were used to represent separate objects at different time points. Despite this, the construction of leadership remains relevant to the current analysis as it demonstrates stability across time. This is because the way in which May and Johnson were individually characterised by speakers remained stable through their premiership.

The identification of change and stability was therefore central to my analysis. A further key component which I have not yet discussed is my engagement with reflexive practices. Reflexive practices refer to a range of strategies that that researchers can use to critically reflect on their role, biases and subjectivity in the research process (Dogdson, 2019). Next, I will discuss how I incorporated reflexivity into this analysis.

5.6 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is particularly relevant to the practice of DP due the epistemology that underpins this approach. From a social constructionist perspective, the individual cannot be separated from the knowledge they produce (Potter, 2003). Because of this, researchers must carefully consider how their prior experiences and biases inform their understanding of the data (Gough, 2003). Benson and O'Reilly (2020) highlight the importance of ongoing reflexive practice in longitudinal qualitative research. As data is collected over a long period of time, researchers often 'live through' the subject matter being examined (Benson & O'Reilly, 2020; Saldaña, 2003). The use of 'live' data therefore requires specific considerations regarding how the researchers understanding of the data is situated within the same temporal framework that is being subject to analysis.

The dataset for this thesis consists of 42 episodes of Question Time broadcast throughout 2019. Data collection for this project also began in 2019, meaning that many episodes were

transcribed shortly after their first broadcast. This is unlike my previous experience of discursive research, in which I have collected data surrounding events which at the point of data collection had already occurred (for example, the 2016 EU referendum). Because of this, the experience of collecting data surrounding events that were currently happening introduced a new element to my engagement with reflexivity. Whilst analysis itself did not commence until I had completed the transcription stage in 2020, I worked to carefully consider how my analytic decisions may have been influenced by the process of gathering this data. To ensure that personal biases were not impacting my interpretation the data, I employed two strategies that have previously been identified as working to validate DP research (Wiggins, 2017).

First, I used a form of deviant case analysis which accounted for instances of talk which did not correspond with previously identified discursive patters. For example, whilst speakers challenging Boris Johnson typically constructed his character as being indistinct from leadership, this was not universal across the data. In particular, speakers representing the Brexit party were found to often praise Johnson's commitment to leaving the EU whilst in turn criticizing his failure to do so. By analysing accounts in which challenges to Johnson's 'affective face' (Partington, 2006) were absent, this helped to solidify my understanding of how face threatening acts were used to undermine leadership. The identification of such cases also worked to ensure that I was not inadvertently ignoring data that did not conform to my analytic narrative (Wiggins, 2017).

A further tool I used to validate my interpretation of the data was the employment of 'next turn truth procedure' (Wiggins, 2017). This procedure works to evidence analytic interpretations of an utterance by paying attention to what happens in the 'next turn'. The way in which speakers understand and respond to each other's talk provides insight into the actions an utterance is performing. For example, in Chapter 6 I identified that a speaker's use of an extended pause represented a rhetorical strategy rather than lexical recall. This was evidenced by the laughter of the audience, who treated this pause as humorous. By employing this procedure, I was able to ensure that my analysis was informed by the data itself, rather than by my own experiences and beliefs.

A further issue that requires reflexive consideration relates to this aim of this thesis. Speers (2002) argues that the process of gathering data is inherently biased as researchers seek to selectively collect data which is relevant to their analytic interest. Likewise, researchers can also be said to present selected extracts that best represent their analytic interpretation of the data. Once I had determined that a longitudinal approach was best suited to this research, I re-visited my analysis of the data in order to see if previously identified 'variations' across accounts could instead be conceptualised as change through time. Whilst repeatedly returning to the data to ensure the validity of interpretations is generally good practice, there is a risk that my identification of 'change' was motivated by my emerging interest in longitudinal qualitative research. However, I worked to avoid this possibility by grounding my understanding of 'change' and 'stability' within the literature surrounding both DP and LQR. Drawing on Saldaña (2003) overview of the principles LQR, I employed two key strategies to validate the existence of 'change' within the data.

One such strategy involved identifying how speakers themselves explicitly and implicitly orientated towards change within talk. For example, in Chapter 8 speakers emphasised the supporters of a second referendum had only become opposed to the idea of a General Election once Johnson took office. Similarly, in Chapter 7 Fiona Bruce implicitly characterised each account of Labour's Brexit policy as being 'novel', and therefore in need of further explanation. Saldaña (2003) also suggests that the analysis of change should be guided by the theory of contextualism (Pettigrew, 1990). This involves the researcher making judgements regarding the presence of change based on contextual factors. I employed contextualism to my research by first creating a Brexit timeline (see Appendix 2), and then organising the dataset around these key time points. This allowed me to track when certain strategies became prominent, and when they fell out of use. Through this, I had a relatively concrete tool I could use to determine if the different strategies I identified reflected variation across accounts or change through time. Furthermore, by treating stability as an equally important aspect of longitudinal research I avoided inadvertently prioritising the identification for change, and instead let the data speak for itself.

To further explore my approach to stability within the dataset, Chapter 6 will examine the strategies speakers used to construct and contest the leadership of Theresa May and Boris Johnson.

Chapter 6: May and Johnson: An analysis of followership.

The current dataset captures the leadership of, and transition between, two Conservative Prime Ministers. From my analysis of the data, I identified that the leadership of Theresa May and Boris Johnson was contested on different grounds. However, this change in and of itself is not necessarily relevant to discursive analysis. This is because differences in how May and Johnson were characterised was a result of the change in leadership rather than a function of change through time. This chapter will therefore instead focus on the issue of stability through time. The rhetorical strategies speakers used to undermine May and Johnson were found to remain largely consistent for the duration of their premiership. As noted by Saldaña (2003), stability (alongside change) is a key component of temporality in talk. The following analysis seeks to demonstrate how this can be approached from a discursive perspective.

A further key aim of this chapter is to gain insight into the construction of leadership within political discourse. In Chapter 3, I provided an overview of Reicher at al.'s (2011) conceptualisation of leadership. However, for the purpose of this analysis I am here going to focus on a component of this model which is often neglected in the wider leadership literature – the role of followership. As previously discussed, the legitimacy of a leader is ultimately a function of the followership they amass. there are no followers, then there can be no leader (Haslam & Reicher, 2012). Because of this, they "both actively rely on each other to create the conditions under which mutual influence is possible" (Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins 2005, p.5). This is evident in Haslam and Reicher's (2017) review of Milgram's (1974) obedience experiments. In this review, it is argued that participants' apparent compliance with the requests of the experimenter was not a result of them entering an 'agentic state' as Milgram (1974) suggested. Haslam and Reicher instead propose that the findings of this study reflect a form of 'engaged followership' in which participants followed directives due to them having constructed a shared identity with the experimenter. Participants identified with the

scientific goals of the experimenter, and therefore sought to help advance these goals. The theory of 'engaged followership' has also been used to explain the storming of the US Capitol in 2021 (Haslam et al., 2022). Haslam et al. (2022) explain that whilst Donald Trump did not provide direct instruction for his followers to do this, he established a vague goal for them to strive for ('stop the steal'). The 'Save America' rally which took place in the lead up to the riot worked to cement their ingroup identity and establish the existence of an outgroup 'threat'. Followers were active participants in this rally, rather than simply a listening audience. The insurrection was therefore an opportunity through which followers could demonstrate their commitment to the group by signalling that they supported the movement.

Botindari and Reicher (2015) note that social identity research examining the relationship between 'leader' and 'follower' tends to fall into one of two categories. There are experimental studies which seek to quantify how followers respond to leaders. For example, manipulating the prototypicality of an apparent leader in order to measure how certain traits and characteristics are rated by potential followers (Platow, van Knippenberg, Haslam, van Knippenberg, & Spears, 2006). Alternatively, qualitative research has generally focused on analysing how leaders engage in 'identity entrepreneurship' to construct an ingroup identity which serves their purposes. For instance, Reicher and Hopkins (2001) found that the Scottish National Party (SNP) established an inclusive identity by defining 'Scottishness' in terms of diversity and tolerance. These are values which can be adopted by a wide range of people, thus increasing their potential for success. Botindari and Reicher (2015) suggest that this type of research fails to account for the active role of followers in defining this relationship. Instead, followers are treated as simply responding to the actions of leaders, rather than performing actions of their own. To bridge this gap, Botindari and Reicher used thematic analysis to examine how young voters evaluate leadership.

In this study, participants were asked to keep a diary for two weeks before the 2006 Italian general election, and one week afterwards. In this diary, they were prompted to discuss their thoughts on the election, report any conversations they had, and include campaigning material they had received. The findings of this analysis demonstrate that voters are not passive recipients of the

identities constructed by leaders. Instead, they are active participants within the mobilisation process. Botindari and Reicher (2015) explored the findings of this analysis using three dimensions of the social identity leadership model. First, just as leaders work to present themselves as a 'prototypical' group member, participants also assessed if politicians were in the ingroup or outgroup. Politicians were typically categorised as part of the outgroup, with participants explaining that 'they' could not be trusted. Despite categorising politicians as part of the outgroup, participants also attempted to determine if politicians were working in the interest of 'us'. For example, some participants reporting feeling conflicted about their support for left-wing parties due to some of their policies being at odds with their Catholic faith. Finally, participants discussed the likelihood that politicians would be able to deliver on their promises. This was treated a key motivating factor when deciding who to vote for. From this, Botindari and Reicher conclude that followers are 'entrepreneurs' of their own identity.

The findings of this analysis demonstrate that the way in which followers respond to the identity work of leaders is an important area for analysis. This research also provides some interesting insight into how the leader/follower dynamic is managed within a political context in which public support is vital for electoral success. In this chapter, I aim to build on Botindari and Reicher's work by discursively analysing how speakers resist the leadership of Theresa May and Boris Johnson. Like leadership, followership is something speakers do in talk. The practice of DP is therefore well-suited to analysing how potential followers undermine leaders. This is because unlike thematic analysis, which is largely concerned with examining patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), DP takes an action orientated approach towards talk.

This chapter seeks to provide a novel contribution to the literature by identifying and comparing the discursive devices used to challenge and reject the leadership of May and Johnson. From this, the talk of followers, potential followers and opponents is highlighted as being an equally important component of the leader-followership dynamic. The findings of this analysis demonstrate that the construction of leadership is dependent on not just what May and Johnson 'do', but also how these actions are responded to. From this, two key distinctions between accounts of May and Johnson

were identified. This chapter will discuss these contrasting rhetorical strategies and consider how they work to construct and undermine leadership.

The first distinction this chapter will explore is in regard to how the relationship between leadership and character was constructed. It was found that when challenging May's actions, speakers would often acknowledge or praise her positive characteristics. It was argued that whilst her leadership skills were poor, her intentions and intrinsic qualities were admirable. Because of this, accountability for her failures were attributed both internally and externally. In part, her poor leadership was characterised as being a response to the unprecedented nature of Brexit, and the divisions within her own party. However, it was also implied that these external factors were exacerbated due to May's own incompetence. In comparison to this, speakers critical of Johnson were not observed to ascribe charitable motivations to his actions as Prime Minister. Instead, his failures in leadership were presented as being a direct consequence of his moral values and personality traits. Through this, his leadership was constructed as being indistinguishable from his intrinsic character.

The second distinction analysed here is differences in how the discursive device of reported speech is employed. Reported speech is a discursive device through which speakers "can comment on the utterances they report while simultaneously appearing to simply reproduce them" (Holt, 2000, p.427). This may take the form of paraphrasing, quotation, active voicing, or references to prior turns in the conversation (Parker, 2003). It was found that in relation to May, speakers frequently used hypothetical or indirect reported speech to make implicit assessments about the intentions underlying her actions. This strategy worked both to present May as incompetent, with speakers attributing foolish utterances to her, and suggest that her actions and motivations are predictable. This hypothetical reported speech was largely absent from accounts challenging Johnson. Instead, direct reported speech was used to hold Johnson accountable for specific claims he has made, with this in turn undermining his trustworthiness as Prime Minister.

6.1 Character and Motivation

This analysis will first examine differences in the construction of leadership and character. As

previously discussed, it is unsurprising that Johnson and May are subject to different criticism. However, it is interesting to note the contrast in how their leadership is treated. When challenging May, speakers were seen to separate her character from her actions as leader. For example, her failure to negotiate a withdrawal agreement with the EU was presented as reflecting poor leadership skills, rather than any kind of moral failure. Her motives were commended, whilst her abilities as Prime Minister were undermined. In contrast to this, Johnson's leadership was constructed as being indistinguishable from his character. His actions as Prime Minister were presented as being a direct result of his personality, values, and nefarious motivations. Because of this, speakers who were critical of his Brexit strategy were by extension critical of Johnson himself.

This relates to theories regarding the notion of 'face'. Brown and Levison (1987, p.61) define face as 'the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself (sic)'. Politicians therefore want to defend their positive face, whilst opponents seek to undermine it. Partington (2006) identified two types of positive face which are particularly important for those in positions of authority to maintain. First, 'competence face' refers to the appearance of having both the skills necessary for the role, as well as control over the situation at hand. The term 'affective face' is used to describe the desire to be liked by others, and to be seen as having good moral standing (Partington, 2006). Politicians therefore want to defend their positive face, whilst opponents seek to undermine it.

Throughout the dataset, Johnson's leadership was consistently challenged through face-threatening acts which worked to challenge both his affective and competence face. In contrast, speakers were seen to construct May's affective face whilst challenging her competence. As evident in Table 2, this trend remained broadly stable throughout 2019. It is important to highlight here that no episodes of *Question Time* were broadcast between the 4th of July and the 5th of September.

Table 2
Instances of Face-Threatening acts

Face	Time Period											
	Theresa May Premiership							Boris Johnson Premiership				
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Affective	1	2	4	0	3	1	0	0	8	11	7	1
Competence	5	7	10	2	8	4	0	0	7	9	4	4

Here, a face-threatening act was categorised as instances in which speakers resisted the leadership of May or Johnson by explicitly undermining either their character and motivation or their ability and competence. As seen in Table 2, speakers challenging May's leadership most frequently invoked strategies that threatened her competence face. Whilst there were instances of affective face-threatening acts, these strategies were lower in frequency. Once Johnson became Prime Minister, both affective and competence face-threatening acts were employed at a broadly consistent rate. This therefore reflects stability across accounts of May and Johnson's leadership.

Extract 1 provides a typical example of how speakers undermined Johnson's affective and competence face. In this extract, Labour Shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry provides an assessment of his leadership thus far.

Extract 1; Question Time, 05/09/2019

```
1   ET  it's a complete mess (.) and I shadowed Boris Johnson for two
2       years and I knew how bad he was going to be as Prime Minister
3       (.) well at least I thought I did but then (.) you know (.) he's
4       been accountable to parliament for three days he's lost three
5       votes (.) he's dragged her Majesty into politics (.) he's made
6       speeches in front of fainting police cadets who have been
7       waiting for him for an hour whilst he makes a political speech
8       at them (.) you know (.) I think this man has no judgement and
9       most importantly (.) of all he is determined to drag our country
10      out of the European Union without a deal (.) he's reckless he's
11      a liar (.) he certainly isn't in the interest of this country
12      [and it's not right]
```

Thornberry invokes first-hand experience to attend to the facticity of her account. She notes that she had 'shadowed' him in government 'for two years' (lines 1-2), with this being in reference to

Johnson's time as the Foreign Secretary. The appeal to personal experience positions her negative characterisation as being informed by observation rather than simply reflecting the Labour 'party line' (Potter, 1996). It is claimed that she 'knew how bad he was going to be as Prime Minister' (line 2), implying that he long since demonstrated that he is not suited to the role. Thornberry somewhat shifts her stance to 'at least I thought I did' (line 3), suggesting that she could not have predicted the extent of his failure. This is highlighted using the point that 'he's been accountable to parliament for three days he's lost three votes' (lines 3-5). The inclusion of specific numerical information works to highlight this as being particularly noteworthy and implies that this scale of failure is unprecedented. This presents his earlier actions as being indicative of what is to come. Through reference to both past

Thornberry indicates that Johnson's leadership style is not solely defined by this parliamentary failure but is also reflected in how he treats others. She first argues that he has 'dragged her majesty into politics' (line 5), referring to an instance in which the Queen was asked to suspend parliament before the deadline for the UK to leave the EU (Elgot & Stewart, 2019). The verb 'dragged' implies that despite the Queen's reluctance and responsibility to remain politically neutral, Johnson forced her into a difficult position to achieve his own ends. Additionally, the use of the formal title 'her Majesty' works to position Thornberry as someone who is respectful to the Queen, with this standing in contrast to Johnson's apparent discourtesy (Billig, 1991). She next criticises the speeches made 'in front of fainting police cadets' (line 6)[1]. As with the monarchy, the police have traditionally been viewed as respectable symbols of stability who should be held in high esteem (Billig, 1991; Methven, 2018). By specifically invoking these two institutions, Thornberry implies that Johnson has acted contemptuously towards those he should be showing deference. She frames this speech as having been something that was made 'at them' (line 8) rather than something they listened to, with this suggesting that Johnson boorishly rambled with little concern for the wellbeing of the audience. This constructs Johnson as not only an ineffective leader but also a thoughtless and foolish person.

---

[1] This refers to an incident that occurred during a public speech given by Johnson. A police recruit, who had been stood behind Johnson and was therefore visible to the media, had fainted. This led to criticism as Johnson was accused of having exacerbated the situation by arriving late to the venue and talking far too long.

Although Johnson is criticized for personal characteristics ('he's reckless he's a liar', lines 10-11), it is his actions and intentions which are highlighted as being the primary cause for concern. Thornberry notes that 'most importantly (.) of all he is determined to drag our country out of the European Union without a deal' (lines 9-10). The verb 'drag' is again employed here to suggest that the public is opposed to a no-deal Brexit, meaning that Johnson is prioritising his own political interest against the 'interest of this country' (line 11). The repertoire of the 'national interest' is often employed in political discourse and serves an argumentative function through which politicians can be accused of being unpatriotic, and uncaring about the people they serve (Dickerson, 1998). As this is something he is 'determined' to do, this characterises him as being unwilling to compromise or listen to reason.

In this extract, Johnson's actions are constructed as a direct result of his intrinsic characteristics and values. It is not that he is simply reacting poorly to situations beyond his control, something which would indicate weak leadership. Instead, it is suggested that he is manufacturing damaging situations, such as the UK crashing out of the EU without a deal, due to his dishonesty and recklessness. From this, Johnson is attributed personal responsibility for the failures that have occurred during his time as Prime Minister.

Extract 2 provides an alternative example of how leadership can be constructed. In this extract, author and broadcaster Melanie Phillips responds to the question, 'Has Theresa May lost control of the Brexit process?'. Phillips voted to leave the European Union and is considered a leading right-wing voice in the British media. Here, she criticises May for her lack of negotiation skills and inability to control the Brexit process.

```
Extract 2; Question Time, 10/01/2019
1  MP  er (.) I (.) has Mrs May lost control has the government lost
2      control of the process (.) I don't think that it was ever in
3      control of the process (.) I think from the very start Mrs May
4      gave control of the process (.) to the European Union (.) it was
```

5	the European Union who was calling all the shots in the
6	negotiation (.) her strategy was flawed from the very start (.)
7	and I think the gentleman who asked (.) asked the question erm
8	(.) who made the point over there (.) erm also hit a very
9	important point (.) that you know she's caught between the
10	fifty-two and the forty eight percent (.) and I think her fatal
11	mistake was to think (.) that she could kind of square the
12	circle bridge the gap (.) she wanted to unite the country she
13	behaved with the most (.) noble of motives (.) and you have to
14	admire her resilience (.) and her courage and her stamina and
15	her staying power (.) but she didn't have (.) the advisors to er
16	(.) er to tell her (.)th-the brutal truth (.) that (.) in the
17	(.) in the choice (.) that the people have made between
18	remaining in (.) the European Union and coming out of the
19	European (.) union (.) there is no compromise (.) you cannot be
20	half in half out

Phillips challenges May's leadership ability on the grounds that she has ceded control of the negotiations to the EU. This control is something 'Mrs May gave' (lines 3-4) rather than something they 'took'. This further reframes the premise of the original question, as control was not 'lost' but instead given away. This action is characterised as being a failure caused by May's ignorance and naivety. Phillips speculates that May had thought that 'she could kind of square the circle bridge the gap' (lines 11-12) between leave and remain supporters. Whilst the phrase 'bridge the gap' suggests that she sought to build unity between the two groups, the imagery of 'square the circle' implies that this was an unfeasible task. This is a result of the binary nature of EU membership, in which 'you cannot be half in half out' (lines 19-20). The use of hedging ('kind of') presents May as being aware of the limited extent to which this proposition could be achieved (Gribanova & Gauidukova, 2019). It

was therefore foolish of her to pursue this strategy under the false pretence that compromise could be achieved. A further reason for this inability to reach a consensus is that leaving the EU is a 'choice (.) that the people have made' (line 17). The use of populist rhetoric undermines the necessity of attempts to appeal to both sides of the debate as, regardless of existing ideological divisions, 'the people' as a collective voted to leave (Fairclough, 2003). This is reinforced by referring to leave and remain supporters in statistical terms ('the fifty-two and the forty eight percent'), which highlights that the sides are not evenly matched in terms of support. There is no compromise to be had on EU membership, as the leave campaign has already 'won' the referendum vote. May is therefore criticised for engaging in a Brexit strategy which is both logistically impossible and democratically unjust.

Whilst Philips constructs a negative characterisation of May's leadership during the negotiation process, she is sympathetic and somewhat favourable when describing her character. Although May's actions are undermined, her intentions are praised as reflecting the 'most noble of motives' in attempting to unify the country (line 12). The notion of 'noble motives' behind harmful actions is a well-established trope within political discourse. For example, President George W. Bush's 'War on Terror' is often justified through reference to his good intentions (Mazid, 2008). The audience is told that 'you have to admire her resilience (.) and her courage and her stamina and her staying power' (lines 13-15). This four-part list is presented as an objective and fair characterisation, as the imperative 'have to' suggests that even for critics such as Phillips, these traits are both evident and commendable (Atkinson, 1984; Fairclough, 2003). Although this list is constructed as complementary, Phillips can also be seen to be making an implicit criticism. This reflects the three-part structure (proposition – concession – reprise) identified by Antaki and Wetherell (1999) as a tool for 'making a show' of conceding. Unlike other forms of concession, this structure strengthens the speaker's position by addressing potential counterarguments. Here, Phillips's concession regarding May's resilience is 'cheapened' by the following reprisal of claims about her incompetence. That is, May has 'staying power' because in ordinary circumstances, her mistakes would necessitate the resignation of her position. This praise is therefore not regarding how she has managed Brexit, but instead how she has responded to the backlash from her unpopular strategy. From this, Phillips further

undermines May's competence whilst also attending to her affective face (Parrington, 2006). Though May does not have the skill set necessary to be an effective leader, her response to the rejection from her followers indicates a strong moral character.

Throughout this extract, Phillips works to deflect responsibility for the current situation away from May. This can first be seen in line 1, where she changes the subject of the original question from 'Mrs May' to 'the government'. From this, May's individual involvement is downplayed, and the government are held collectively accountable for losing control of the Brexit process. A further example of this deflection of responsibility is evident in Phillips's characterisation of the EU. Drawing upon a battle repertoire, she employs the idiom of 'calling the shots' (Staniford, 2017). This, alongside the extreme case formulation 'all' (Pomerantz, 1986), positions the EU as an uncompromising and somewhat tyrannical force. Despite being critical of May's negotiation strategy, it is the EU that Phillips depicts as being the unreasonable actor in this situation. The implication is that May's ability to achieve a withdrawal agreement was limited by the EU's negative attitude towards compromise. Finally, May's failure is partly attributed to a lack of guidance. It is claimed that 'she didn't have (.) the advisors to er (.) er to tell her (.) th-the brutal truth' (lines 15-16). Accountability for May's ignorance is attributed externally to her advisors, suggesting that had May known this information, she would have acted accordingly. This demonstrates that the construction of leadership is not just based on what leaders do. Here, May's leadership is also constructed through the actions and responses of her followers and opponents. This enables Phillips to present a negative characterisation of May's leadership whilst also being somewhat favourable when describing her character.

This is also evident in extract 3, in which an audience member discusses who is responsible for the failure to produce a withdrawal agreement with the EU.

Extract 3; Question Time, 14/03/2019

```
1  A1  yeah erm (.) I don't see how you can lay the blame at anybody
2      else's feet other than the government (.) which is (0.4) kind of
```

```
3        led by Theresa May

4   AU   [((laughter))                          ]

5   FB   [you had to think about that for a while]

6   A1   sorry

7   FB   you had to think about that for a while

8   A1   I was trying to find the right word [erm it's um  ]

9   AU                                       [((laughter))]

10  A1   I mean I I have some (.) I have some sympathy with her I have

11       some respect for her for kind of you know (.) sticking in there

12       (.) and all the rest of it (.) I don't don't know how many

13       people could stand in the place that she's in and survive but 14

14       (.) but having said that erm (.) you may say that she's doing it

15       for the sake of her own party (.) but her own party isn't

16       playing ball (.) we you know the gentleman back here talks about

17       the arrogance of of the remainers (.) I think that arrogance of

18       the ERG (.) and the rogue cabinet members (.) who refuse to

19       compromise a jot (.) in order to get this deal through (.) are

20       to blame (.) and we (.) you know the only way I see this working

21       for the country (.) is to get a compromise deal through (.) the

22       remainers won't get exactly what they want (.) the leavers don't

23       get exactly what they want (.) but there's something that

24       represents enough of the views in that deal (.) to serve us all
```

The audience member attributes accountability directly to the Conservative government, stating, 'I don't see how you can lay the blame at anybody else's feet' (lines 1-2). This presents the notion that somebody else could be responsible for the current situation as being not only incorrect

but also unfeasible. When attributing responsibility to May, he expresses uncertainty in his assessment of her role. He performs this uncertainty through an extended pause and hedging (Fraser, 2010; Krauss et al., 2000), characterising her as someone who the government is 'kind of led by' (lines 2-3). These devices work to implicitly undermine May by suggesting that she does not fulfil the expectations of a leader, thus challenging both her competency and status. Previous research has identified pauses in political discourse as a form of rhetorical humour (Navaretta, 2017). In this extract, the subsequent laughter from the audience indicates that rather than reflecting a failure of lexical recall, the pause performs a comic function. This is also supported by Bruce highlighting this as a notable feature of his utterance ('you had to think about that for a while', line 5). The audience member explains that he 'was trying to find the right word' (line 8), with this reinforcing that 'led by' does not accurately represent the relationship between May and her government. This pause therefore exaggerates the speaker's uncertainty and lays the foundation for the underlying point of this account – that is, that May has lost control of her party.

As seen in the previous extract, the audience member offers a positive characterisation of May's character whilst resisting her leadership. Here, he challenges her position as leader on the basis that she has not been able to gain the support of other Conservative party members. This group is expected to represent the core of her followership due to their shared identity and ideology. However, it should be noted that the speaker treats the ERG as being unwilling to compromise with May on a withdrawal agreement as being somewhat unremarkable. Whilst cabinet members who refuse to 'get this deal through' (line 19) are described as 'rogue', the ERG is referred to without such an epithet. The challenge this poses to May is illustrated through the employment of a sporting analogy, in which it is claimed that 'her own party isn't playing ball' (lines 15-16). This phrase frames political parties as being analogous to competing teams. In order to achieve a common goal, teams must work collectively and follow the directions of the person appointed to lead them. The splintering of the Conservative party into smaller groups, such as the ERG, who explicitly reject her authority, not only reflects poorly on her leadership but also brings into question whether her role can be defined in these terms. Per Reicher and Haslam's (2012) theory, leadership requires the mobilisation of followers.

Without this, May is limited in her ability to lead. The audience member challenging May on these grounds therefore highlights the importance of followership in the construction of leadership.

Despite being critical of May, the audience member also offers a positive assessment of her character and motive. As also seen in extract 2, the speaker praises her resilience, stating, 'I have some respect for her for kind of you know (.) sticking in there' (lines 10-11). This presents the speaker's assessment as fair and avoids the implication that his account is motivated by personal antipathy towards May. Through this, the earlier suggestion that May is only 'kind of' leading the Conservative party is positioned as a factual observation rather than a politically motivated insult (Potter, 1996). The audience member also expresses that he has 'some sympathy with her' (line 10). Previous research has noted that the employment of sympathy within talk denotes that the speaker recognises the difficulty of the recipient's circumstances (Heritage & te Molder, 2005). This, alongside his reference to groups such as the ERG, works to acknowledge that forces external to May are in part responsible for the failure to produce an EU withdrawal agreement. Finally, the audience member asks, 'how many people could stand in the place that she's in and survive' (lines 12-13). This positions the current situation as being something which exists independently of May. Removing May from the leadership of the Conservative Party is not highlighted as a solution to the issues facing the country. Instead, she is characterised positively for 'surviving' in a 'place' that others would find difficult to remain in.

The key findings of this analysis therefore relate to the concepts of face and followership. Speakers challenged May and Johnson's leadership based on the actions they had taken as Prime Minister. However, this analysis identified differences in how these actions were constructed. As seen in extract 1, Johnson's failures were presented as being a direct result of his incongruent personal values. This worked to undermine both his 'affective' and 'competence' face. In contrast, speakers worked to attribute responsibility for May's actions externally. This enabled them to resist her leadership whilst also attending to her affective face by praising her intrinsic character. The implicit justification provided for this was that despite having good intentions, May was put in an impossible position due to both Brexit itself and the people whom she was supposed to be leading. This

emphasises the importance of followership in the construction of leadership. Leaders are not only challenged based on what they do but also through the construction of particular kinds of responses on the part of those who would follow them.

6.2 Reported Speech

A second distinction between the construction of Theresa May and Boris Johnson relates to the use of reported speech. There are three key types of reported speech which are of concern to this analysis. First, in 'direct speech', the speaker adopts the role of 'animator' through which they recount verbatim somebody else's words (Goffman, 1981). Next, 'indirect speech' refers to when the content of the utterance is conveyed without the use of direct quotations (Fetzer, 2015). Finally, hypothetical reported speech evokes examples of what may or should, have been said (Romaine & Lange, 1991).

The contrast in how reported speech is used to characterise both leaders is evident in the function performed by this device. When challenging May, speakers shifted the frame of their talk to appear to discuss events from her perspective. This enabled them to implicitly speculate on her intentions and construct a negative representation of her actions. In comparison, direct and indirect reported speech was used to highlight specific instances of Johnson being untruthful in talk. This worked to establish a factual precedent through which speakers could undermine his credibility and character. Table 3 illustrates the prevalence of these devices throughout the year.

Table 3
Instances of Reported Speech

Type of Reported Speech	Time Period											
	Theresa May Premiership							Boris Johnson Premiership				
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Direct	1	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	3	3	3	0
Indirect	4	3	1	2	0	1	0	0	7	4	5	2
Hypothetical	1	2	3	3	1	2	0	0	1	2	0	0

As seen in this table, hypothetical reported speech was a stable feature of accounts undermining May's competence. In contrast, this device was largely absent from speakers construction of Johnson. Whilst direct and indirect reported speech was evident across accounts of both leaders, these strategies were a more prominent characteristic of the strategies used to resist

Johnson. An example of how direct and indirect reported speech were used to undermine Johnson's credibility can be seen in extract 4.

In this extract, Green Party Leader Caroline Lucas discusses the future of the UK's National Health Service (NHS). This was in response to a question concerning the fate of the NHS in a Brexit agreement between the UK and the US. An audience member asked the panel if Johnson could be trusted to protect the NHS from being privatised by US pharmaceutical companies. Prior to this extract, American writer Lionel Shriver had argued that such companies had no interest in 'buying' into this system. Lucas begins her account by responding to this claim.

Extract 4: Question Time, 28/11/2019

```
1   CL   well (.) I think it's really important to remember that (.) er
2        Trump himself has said and I quote (.) I've directed our trade
3        representatives to make this a top priority (.) with every
4        trading partner (.) and he's referring to the idea of extending
5        these patents (.) so that (.) the those drugs (.) will be more
6        expensive than the generic (.) er ordinary drugs so that is a
7        very real risk I think to (.) erm our NHS and (.) and at the end
8        of the day it comes down to you know who do you trust (.) and
9        when Boris Johnson says you know don't worry (.) this is not on
10       the table (.) I think you have to ask yourself two things (.)
11       one (.) why didn't it actually get properly written into these
12       documents that the NHS isn't on the table because other issues
13       were (.) written like that (.) on the US side they were actually
14       ruled out (.) and we haven't ruled it out [and secondly
15       secondly ]
16  FB                                            [climate climate
```

```
17        change for] example

18   CL   climate change [for example         ]

19   JM                  [climate change yeah]

20   CL   and secondly just (.) do you trust the same man who said for

21        example that he was going to build (.) forty hospitals that

22        turned out to be six there's (.) he said he was going to recruit

23        [fifty thousand ]

24   BL   [he said that it]

25   CL   new nurses when there's thirty thousand (.) if we're lucky (.)

26        he's supposed to be (.) prostrate in a ditch I think (.) because

27        we didn't leave the EU at the end of October [this is a man (.)

28        who lies whenever it suites him and I wouldn't]

29   AU                                              [((applause))

30                                                                ]

31   CL   trust his word on whether or not the NHS is safe
```

In order to argue that the NHS would be at risk in a post-Brexit trade agreement with the US, it is first necessary for speakers to demonstrate that American pharmaceutical companies are interested in engaging with the British healthcare system. Lucas presents this interest as being a well-established fact, encouraging the audience to recollect ('it's really important to remember', line 1) what they already know (Potter, 1996). She specifically highlights the stance of then-President Donald Trump, reporting him as having said, 'I've directed our trade representatives to make this a top priority' (line 2). Here, Lucas goes to great lengths to emphasise that this is a direct quote, with the preceding utterance 'and I quote' presenting this as a verbatim representation of what was said (Bull, Fetzer & Waddle, 2016). Additionally, referring to 'Trump himself', rather than just 'Trump', also underpins the facticity of this report. This lends credibility to Lucas's account, as the words of somebody in a position of power evidence her argument. If she had quoted someone with lesser

authority than the President, this would have been easier to dismiss as they would not have been viewed as having the ability to enact such decisions. Finally, although not visible in the transcript, during this exchange, Lucas can be seen reading off a piece of paper. As stated by West and Turner (2004), verbal and non-verbal behaviour work to reinforce each other. In political discourse, non-verbal actions have been found to strengthen the message and attend to positive self-presentation (Rominiecka, 2008). By performing this action, Lucas indicates that she has carefully researched this point and reinforces that this is a direct quotation.

Lucas first attributes indirect reported speech to Johnson on lines 9 to 10 ('you know don't worry (.) this is not on the table') in order to undermine his trustworthiness on the issue of the NHS. This works to build a contrast between what Johnson has 'said', what Trump has 'said', and what Johnson has 'done'. To challenge Johnson's trustworthiness, she invokes various instances in which his promises regarding the NHS were found to be untrue – he 'said for example that he was going to build (.) forty hospitals that turned out to be six' (lines 20-22). The discourse marker 'for example' implies this is not an isolated incident but one of many instances Lucas could draw upon. It is also significant that the failures she highlights relate to hospitals and nurses, as this provides a precedent for Johnson lying about his healthcare policy. This indirect reported speech therefore works to fact-check Johnson's claims in comparison to his actions and justifies Lucas's skepticism of his intentions.

A further instance of indirect reported speech can be seen on line 26, where Lucas states, 'he's supposed to be (.) prostrate in a ditch I think'. This utterance invokes a line from a speech in which Johnson claimed that he would "rather be dead in a ditch" than delay Brexit. As indicated here, in the month following this speech, Johnson wrote to the EU asking that Article 50 be extended, thus prolonging the UK's departure. As demonstrated through the audience's applause (lines 29-30), that is not treated as a serious statement of intent (Clayman, 1993). Lucas is instead alluding to this quotation in order to characterise Johnson as being careless with language. Alongside having precedent for lying about the NHS, there is evidence of him making extravagant pledges which he has neither the means nor the will to fulfil. These are deliberate mistruths motivated by self-interest, with Johnson lying 'whenever it suits him' (line 28) regardless of the consequences.

In this extract, reported speech is used to negatively construct Johnson's character and challenge his trustworthiness on matters relating to the NHS. By highlighting previous claims Johnson has made, Lucas can establish a precedent for him having behaved dishonestly. This grounds her scepticism of his claims based on observation and experience rather than political bias. In comparison, accounts challenging May used reported speech to undermine her intentions and challenge her competency as a leader. This speech was often hypothetical and used to provide insight into her motivations and behaviour.

. This is evident in extract 5, in which Ash Sarkar responds to an audience member's question regarding the talks between Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn. The audience member asks the panel if these talks are a sign of good faith or if they had been designed to set a 'trap' for Labour. Sarkar is a communist political activist and journalist who supported the UK remaining in the European Union.

Extract 5; Question Time, 04/04/2019

```
1   AS   I mean (.) to answer the question that was initially asked about
2        whether or not (.) this is a trap I think it's irrelevant about
3        whether or not it's a trap or whether this is a genuine attempt
4        at finding consensus (.) because either way Theresa May is bad
5        at it (.) because if she had wanted to set an effective trap for
6        Labour or if she genuinely wanted to build consensus (.) she
7        would have reached across the aisle (.) three years ago (.) that
8        did not happen (.) instead what she did was played Brexit as if
9        it was an issue of party management (.) trying to appease the
10       ERG who actually (.) don't want to be appeased they want her
11       head on a platter
12  DL   [((laughter))]
13  AS   [and now     ] (.) what she's saying to Jeremy Corbyn look (.)
14       let's (.) come up with a deal as long as it er (.) broadly
```

15	resembles my deal which you've rejected three times (.) and he
16	walks into the room and he goes okay let's talk about this (.)
17	I'm not sure how much (.) erm (.) constructive (.) material can
18	come out of a meeting like that it seems to me Theresa May's
19	doing (.) what she normally does which is saying you're not
20	listening to me hard enough and now let's do it in a smaller
21	room

Sarkar argues that 'whether or not it's a trap' (line 3) is irrelevant as 'either way Theresa May is bad at it' (lines 4-5). As seen in extract 3, May's intentions are dismissed as unimportant due to her failure to act upon them effectively. Throughout this account, Sarkar provides examples of what May would have done had she truly wanted to build a cross-party consensus. For example, she 'would have reached across the aisle' (lines 6-7). Whilst this overview is framed in terms of what May 'would' have done, it also dictates what 'should' have been done. This undermines her leadership by highlighting that she failed to employ common-sense solutions to the problems caused by Brexit (Augoustinos & Every, 2007). Despite suggesting that May's motive for calling a meeting with Corbyn is irrelevant, Sarkar also provides an implicit assessment of her intentions. She does not dispute the notion that May is seeking to 'set a trap', instead explaining what should have been done had she wanted this trap to be 'effective'. In contrast, the possibility that May is seeking to reach a compromise is constructed as being unlikely. Had she 'genuinely' wanted to do this, she would have already attempted to do so.

Additionally, May's failure to 'reach across the aisle' is presented as having been a result of her prioritising party politics over the wellbeing of the country. Specifically, she 'played Brexit as if it was an issue of party management' (lines 8-9). The employment of game-based language is used to illustrate the existence of fixed rules and competing teams (Howe, 1988). The implication is therefore not only has she misunderstood the nature of Brexit, but she is also playing for the wrong 'team'. As seen previously, again the ERG are highlighted as posing a distinct and powerful threat to May's

leadership. However, here the threat is constructed as being personal as well as political. The idiom 'they want her head on a platter' (lines 10-11) invokes violent imagery through which the ERG are constructed as vengeful and reactionary. They are not the reasonable opposition with whom May should have sought compromise, but rather extremists invested in plotting her downfall. Her failure to recognise this, and her continuation of 'trying to appease the ERG' (lines 9-10) reflects the haplessness of her leadership. The term 'appeasement' is particularly significant in building this characterisation of May as within a British political context, such language has most notably been associated with the actions of former Prime Minister Neville Chamberlin. By mirroring the language used to describe Chamberlain's policy of appeasement Sarkar draws a link between the ERG and the Nazis (Goodman, 2020). Sarkar's criticism of May can therefore be said to be grounded in historical precedence, with this attending to the facticity of her account (Gibson, 2012).

Sarkar uses hypothetical reported speech to shift the footing of her account from stating what May should have done to discussing what she is currently doing. Hypothetical speech allows Sarkar to speculate on what is happening in these meetings without being held accountable for the facticity of these claims (Myers, 1999). May is reported as favouring a compromised withdrawal agreement 'as long as it er (.) broadly resembles my deal which you've rejected three times' (lines 14- 15). Through this speech, Sarkar provides her own assessment of the meeting between May and Corbyn. It is suggested that despite the appearance of seeking compromise ('let's come up with a deal, line 14), May does not intend to negotiate. She is characterised as stubborn and unreasonable for expecting Corbyn to agree to a deal he has already rejected whilst seemingly offering no concession of her own. This instance of reported speech also allows Sarkar to interject information critical of May, such as her deal being rejected three times without caveats or explanations. Furthermore, in contrast to May's negative depiction, Corbyn is attributed reasonable hypothetical talk ('okay let's talk about this', line 16). This contrast provides a further example of how May should have acted had she wanted to achieve a consensus.

Though this speech is not characterised as being an accurate and literal representation of May and Corbyn's meeting, this does not in turn suggest that these utterances are entirely fabricated.

Instead, Sarkar grounds this account in reality by noting that May is doing 'what she normally does' (line 19) by refusing to compromise. Because of this, there is no implication that Sarkar is providing a particularly unique insight into May's actions, as the outcome of the meeting was predictable. Her narration is simply providing a voice to observable and well-established phenomena. May is repeating the same behaviour – 'you're not listening to me hard enough and now let's do it in a smaller room' (lines 19-21) – despite its ineffectiveness. This reinforces her stubbornness and unreasonableness, as 'not listening' is being conflated with not agreeing. Her stubbornness is also reflected in her moving these meetings into a 'smaller room'. Sarkar's humorous tone indicates that this is a ridiculous course of action which is a result of May seeking to further obfuscate the issue rather than genuinely find compromise.

A further example of hypothetical reported speech is present within extract 6. In this extract, an audience member discusses the role of language within the Brexit debate. The hypothetical reported speech employed here differs somewhat from the previous strategy I discussed. This is because it draws on common-place idioms, rather than humour, to highlight the speech being attributed to May is not literal.

Extract 6: Question Time, 28/02/2019

```
1   A1   I think we have to be careful with the language we use (.)
2        there's a lot of talk of betrayal (.) an I I think that that
3        only stokes the fires of (.) societal strife (.) if and when
4        something happens that does go against it and I think this has
5        been happening from the very beginning (.) the the Brexit vote
6        was pretty close (.) it was seventeen point four million
7        seventeen point two (.) million (.) or something like that (.)
8        seventeen point two million was a huge number of people yet (.)
9        Theresa May at the start of it didn't (.) she didn't reach out
10       [to these people the]
```

```
11   BG   [that's exactly it    ]

12   A1   point's been made many times and Brexit was (.) what was voted

13        for was in a bit of a vacuum (.) so (.) we're trynna create

14        meaning in that and it'll be a bumpy road but from the very

15        start (.) erm (.) Theresa May was my way or the highway (.) I'm

16        only backing the seventeen point four million (.) and I'm gonna

17        use all this language about betrayal and (.) that only sets us

18        up (.) for that's a self that's a self-fulfilling prophecy (.)

19        and I think it's really dangerous and I think we should stop 20

20        using words like betrayal
```

The audience member uses this account to make three key points about the Brexit process. The first point she makes is in regard to the damage being caused to the country by the 'talk of betrayal' (line 2). It is argued that such language 'only stokes the fires of (.) societal strife' (line 3). Drawing upon fire imagery works to construct the issues facing the country as being harmful and dangerous (Charteris-Black, 2017). This will be particularly problematic 'if and when something happens that does go against it' (lines 3-4). Through her later invocation of the 'Brexit vote' (line 5), it can be assumed that 'it' refers to the results of the EU referendum. The speaker therefore expresses apprehension that any delay to the UK's departure from the EU would be co-opted to further the narrative of 'betrayal'. This is especially troubling as her shift from 'if' to 'when' suggests that it is inevitable that the public's expectations for Brexit will not be met. This justifies her assertion that 'I think we have to be careful with the language we use' (line 1). This statement is hedged to be presented as a suggestion, with 'I think' working as a plausibility shield through which the speaker expresses uncertainty (Gribanova & Gaidukova, 2019). However, the use of the imperative 'have to' performs the function of ordering the public to be careful with their language to maintain order and unity. To undermine the potential counterargument that terms such as 'betrayal' are justified due to the current failure of politicians to negotiate a withdrawal agreement, she notes that 'this has been

happening from the very beginning' (lines 4-5). As this rhetoric existed before the referendum result, this implies that Brexit in and of itself may be a consequence of this division and extremism.

The second point made in this account is that not only is this rhetoric about betrayal irresponsible, but it is also inaccurate. This is because 'the Brexit vote was pretty close' (lines 5-6), meaning it is only reasonable that the 'seventeen point two million' (line 8) people who voted to remain in the EU also have their interests represented. In addition, the audience member undermines the circumstances surrounding the vote, claiming that 'what was voted for was in a bit of a vacuum' (lines 12-13). This presents Brexit as being an isolated event which exists separately from ordinary political proceedings. Because of this, it is implied that voters did not have the information necessary to make an educated decision regarding the broader consequences of leaving the EU. Furthermore, whilst Brexit may have made sense within this vacuum, trouble arises when attempting to implement this venture in the 'real world'. The implication is that it is difficult to 'betray' a concept poorly defined and understood from the outset. As it was always going to 'be a bumpy road but from the very start' (lines 14-15), this minimises the extent to which politicians can be held accountable for the current situation.

Finally, despite suggesting that Brexit is inherently difficult to implement, the audience member also uses this account to undermine the leadership of May. Her leadership is challenged due to both her narrow-minded approach to Brexit and the role her rhetoric has played in further dividing the country. The audience member employs hypothetical reported speech to demonstrate examples of these failings. May's attitude is described as 'my way or the highway' due to her insistence on 'only backing the seventeen point four million' (lines 15-16). This idiom is used to characterise May as inflexible and stubborn, with these traits opposing liberal values such as tolerance and compromise (Augoustinos & Every, 2007). The employment of reported speech continues in lines 16 to 17, in which an active voice is given to May's thought process – 'I'm gonna use all this language about betrayal'. This utterance is not constructed to convince the audience that this is a direct quote; instead, the extreme case formulation 'all this' and the informal 'gonna' emphasises that this is a hyperbolic statement (Edwards, 2000). Whilst the audience member suggests that May has made comments about

'betrayal', she does not provide a specific example. A potential function of this strategic vagueness is that it prevents others from challenging the accuracy of her recall (Edwards & Potter, 1992). It is difficult to hold a speaker accountable for misrepresentation if they do not claim to be giving a factual characterisation of what was said (Tannen, 1989). Furthermore, by avoiding providing a specific example of May invoking 'betrayal', the audience member can present this as being a common occurrence rather than a single instance. This, in turn, works to imply that May's continuing use of divisive rhetoric is a deliberate choice motivated by self-interest.

The analysis illustrates the role of discourse in the construction of leadership. As May and Johnson 'do' leadership through talk, their utterances are treated by opponents as actions to be challenged. Because of this, their legitimacy as leaders can be undermined through reference to things that they have said. Direct and indirect reported speech were identified as devices used by speakers to present Johnson as dishonest and inconsistent. It was argued that he could not be trusted due to a discrepancy between what he claimed he would do and the reality of the situation. This analysis also examined how hypothetical reported speech was used to characterise May's leadership. Here, this device worked to allow speakers to make implicit assessments about the intentions underlying May's actions. Whilst speakers did not attempt to present this talk as being anything other than hypothetical hyperbole, the employment of this strategy also made it difficult for others to discredit their accounts on factual grounds. This analysis provides insight into the specific strategies speakers can use to construct and resist leadership. As previously noted, for a leader to be effective, they must convince followers to 'buy-in' to their version of reality (Reicher, 2001). The use of reported speech is therefore a tool through which people resist the leadership of their opponents by undermining their identity construction and offering an alternative account of 'who' they really are.

6.3 Discussion

Drawing on Reicher et al.'s. (2011) conceptualisation of leadership, this chapter provides insight into how speakers reject the 'identity entrepreneurship' of leaders to provide a competing account of reality. While the broader leadership literature has been primarily concerned with how leaders

construct identity to enlist followers, the current analysis instead explores how potential followers react to these attempts. This involved identifying the discursive tools potential followers used to construct the character, intent, and competence of individual leaders. Here, it was found that the leadership of May and Johnson was challenged on different grounds. For example, speakers resisted Johnson's leadership by constructing a negative depiction of his moral values. This included highlighting instances of apparent disrespect towards British institutions such as the monarchy and NHS. This negative characterisation of his character was used to argue that he could not be trusted to work for the national interest. Furthermore, reported speech was used to demonstrate that Johnson had lied to the country for his own personal gain. Speakers also drew attention to his lack of success in passing a Brexit deal through parliament, indicating that despite his manipulative and deceitful behaviour, he had still largely failed to lead the country through Brexit. Through this, Johnson is framed as an 'atypical' rather than a 'prototypical' leader. This is because he is attributed values and qualities which are presented as standing in direct opposition to the values of the country.

In contrast, the strategies used to undermine the leadership of May were observed to be somewhat more nuanced. May is primarily resisted on the basis that she lacks the skills necessary to lead. She is characterised as incompetent due to her inability to control her party and stubborn due to her apparent reluctance to compromise on a withdrawal bill. However, unlike Johnson, here, these failings are separated from her intrinsic character. The criticism levelled at May is that she is too weak to pursue the country's interests. Speakers were found to praise her values, noting that despite her failings, she had good motivations and displayed resilience in the face of adversity. From this, it can be seen that speakers were resisting the leadership of May rather than May herself. This is an interesting distinction which appears to have been largely neglected by the relevant literature due to the lack of analytic focus on followership. Unlike leadership models such as trait theory, which presents the category of 'leader' as something people are, Reicher et al. (2011) conceptualise it as something people do. This is evidenced by the current research findings, in which the leadership and character of May were treated as separate objects.

These findings suggest that a critical way in which the flexible nature of leadership can be understood is through the analysis of accounts that challenge the legitimacy of particular leaders. Examining the talk of potential followers provides insight into not only how leaders are undermined but also how the meaning of leadership itself is crafted, constructed, and contested through talk. Future research which seeks to explore how leaders enlist followers should therefore be complemented by an analysis of how potential followers, in turn, resist this attempt at leadership.

A further contribution of this analysis is that it provides an example of how discursive analysis can approach longitudinal research. In particular, it underpins the discursive conceptualisation of change outlined in Chapter 4. While the data presented here reflects a change in leadership, for the purpose of the current analysis, differences in how May and Johnson were constructed were not treated as a change through time. This was because it was determined that changes in how speakers undermined these leaders were not a function of temporality itself but rather a consequence of variation between accounts. Accounts challenging May and Johnson can be seen to have been each constructing a different 'object' that exists within rather than through time. Because of this, this analysis was instead concerned with stability. The rhetorical strategies speakers used to resist the leadership of May and Johnson were found to remain stable for the duration of their respective premierships. When conducting a 'traditional' discursive analysis, researchers will typically seek to identify which strategies and devices are most prominent within the dataset. However, this chapter illustrates the possibility that in certain instances, 'prominence' can be re-conceptualised as 'stability' and thus be considered a component of longitudinal discursive research.

Following this demonstration of how discursive research can approach stability through time, Chapter 7 will next provide an example of how change within political discourse can be identified and analysed.

Chapter 7: Confusion and complexity: Constructing and justifying Labour's Brexit policy.

In the General Election of December 2019, the Labour Party experienced a historic defeat in which the Conservatives, led by Boris Johnson, succeeded in winning the largest majority since 2001 (Bush,

2019). Following this defeat, political commentators attempted to make sense of how Labour had gone from near breakthrough in the 2017 election to failing to maintain support in constituencies which had traditionally been thought of as safe seats (Kibasi, 2019). Despite pledging to respect the outcome of the EU referendum in their 2017 manifesto, Labour faced scepticism from both Leave and Remain voters. Whilst Leave voters criticised what they viewed as a 'soft' approach to Brexit, supporters of Remain expressed concern that Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, a presumed Eurosceptic himself, would lead Labour away from being a 'pro-Europe' party (Goes, 2019). As a result of this, some claimed that Labour adopted a policy of 'constructive ambiguity', in which they sought to obscure the 'true' nature of their policy in an attempt to appeal to both sides of the debate (Harris, 2019).

However, it has been argued that Labour's approach led to confusion amongst the public, with polling suggesting that 65% of voters reported feeling unclear about Labour's Brexit position (Abraham, 2019). This apparent confusion was evident throughout this dataset. Speakers representing Labour were consistently challenged on or asked to clarify the details of their policy. Their responses were often received as indicative of a lack of clarity and treated by the audience as frustrating and amusing, with actions such as laughing and booing being performed in response. The reasoning underlying this ambiguity was characterised differently as the year progressed. At first, this abstruseness was implied to be simply the result of incompetency and ambivalence. This narrative began to change after the EU Parliament elections in May, as speakers now accused Labour of deliberately misleading the public about their approach. In response to these challenges, Labour politicians and supporters adjusted their defence accordingly. This analysis examines these changes in the construction and justification of Labour's Brexit policy during 2019.

By outlining this analysis, the present chapter aims to demonstrate the benefits of employing a longitudinal approach to discursive psychology. Longitudinal analysis enables us to identify and track changes in how speakers construct Labour's Brexit policy. The key point underlying this thesis – that rhetoric changes and evolves over extended periods is itself unsurprising. Due to the situated nature of talk, it is reasonable to presume that speakers will adjust their strategies to reflect changing

circumstances and incorporate new information. Discursive psychologists acknowledge this and argue that language is a constructive medium through which varying versions of reality are constructed (Potter, 2012). In practice, much discursive research has tended to focus on small-scale changes in context within the course of a single episode of interaction. Studies analysing political discourse have typically sought to identify the strategies speakers employ to undermine the accounts of their opponents whilst justifying the legitimacy of their own position (Chilton, 2004). However, there has been little focus on examining how these discursive practices change over extended periods of time. By adopting a longitudinal approach, we can recognise and account for these changes. This chapter will therefore demonstrate how prior interactions can form and shape future actions.

This analysis identified three ways in which speakers justified Labour's Brexit policy in response to accusations of ambiguity or the employment of confusion. First, speakers were seen to construct Labour's policy as being centred around the simple principle of 'stopping no deal'. Preventing the UK from leaving the EU without a deal was presented as being vital to the welfare of the country, with other factors, such as plans for the future of immigration or security, dismissed as being currently irrelevant. From this, the accusation that their approach lacked substance and was therefore unclear was undermined. The specific details of their position were argued to be less important than their priority of stopping no deal. This was then followed by speakers adopting an alternative strategy, in which they claimed Labour had a comprehensive policy which accounted for all issues relating to Brexit. Through this, any confusion was dismissed as a result of either ignorance or political motive. The final strategy identified within the dataset saw speakers concede that Labour had a somewhat complex approach towards Brexit. However, this complexity was constructed as reflecting the nuances of the current situation. This was therefore presented as being advantageous, whilst the straightforward policy of their opponents was implied to be ineffective and informed by populism.

The shift in these strategies was observed to occur around one key time point – the EU election on the 27th of May. Whilst prominent at the start of the year, speakers were observed to invoke the first strategy ('a simple principle') less frequently the closer it came to the EU election in

May. Likewise, the second strategy ('a comprehensive customs union') gained traction before the EU

election but gradually became less central to arguments justifying Labour's Brexit policy. The final

strategy ('a complex approach') first emerged immediately before the EU election in response to a

specific accusation made by Nigel Farage. It, too, gradually shifted to becoming more central to the

construction of Labour's policy, and by the General Election in December 2019, the notion that

Labour had a 'complex approach' to Brexit became a taken-for-granted 'fact' to those both opposing

and defending this policy. An overview of this can be seen in Table 4, which reflects the specific

number of instances each strategy occurred throughout 2019.

Table 4

Instances of Labour's Brexit strategies

Strategy	Time Period											
	Before EU election (May 27th)					Following EU election						
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
A simple principle	3	5	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A comprehensive customs union	2	3	3	6	4	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
A complex approach	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	2	3	2	1

As seen in Table 4, it is important to note that I am not claiming that, for example, following

the EU election no speaker ever again referred to a comprehensive customs union. However, what can

be seen here is a gradual re-focusing of the central 'point' of Labour's argument. This will be

demonstrated in the analysis below.

7.1 A simple principle

At the beginning of the dataset, the first strategy speakers employed was the notion that a simple yet

fundamental principle informed Labour's Brexit policy. This principle was that in order to ensure the

best interests of the country were met, the UK should not be able to leave the EU without a deal. As a

result, they demanded government assurance that 'no deal' would be taken off the table in

negotiations with the EU. Without this assurance, it was suggested that any other details relating to

then-Prime Minister Theresa May's withdrawal agreement were irrelevant. This worked to justify Labour's apparent lack of specific policy proposals, as the principle of stopping no deal was presented as being the only basis on which further plans could be made.

This can be seen in extract 1, in which moderator Fiona Bruce questions Shadow Home Secretary and Remain advocate Diane Abbott about the issues Labour would be willing to compromise on. Before this extract, Minister of State Rory Stewart had attributed the failure of May to pass her withdrawal agreement through parliament to Labour refusing to clarify their Brexit position. He argued that if Labour could provide a clear overview of what they wanted, then the government would be able to negotiate and adjust their withdrawal deal accordingly. Abbott disputes this claim throughout the extract.

Extract 1: Question Time; 17/01/2019

```
1    FB   Diane Abbott this is the moment of compromise (.) which red

2         lines would you compromise on

3    DA   well (.) we have we have said (.) and we've been saying it since

4         last year (.) the things that we think are important are the

5         customs union some sort of [deal]

6    FB                              [no  ] but we know what you think is

7         impor[tant]

8    DA        [yes ]

9    FB   you said that at the beginning

10   DA   yes

11   FB   so what would you compromise on which red lines [have you got]

12   DA                                                   [we haven't  ]

13   FB   in a negotiation you will be prepared to [compromise on ]

14   DA                                            [we haven't got] any

15        red lines (.) it's only the government that's put forward red
```

```
16        lines [that's my point]

17   AU        [((laughter))   ]

18   FB   but hang on (.) no red lines is no policy (.) you have got a

19        policy

20   DA   we have got a policy and I've explained it to you [the customs

21        union]

22   FB                                                        [exactly so

23        are  ] there any policies that you'd be willing to compromise on

24        (.) a customs union for example

25   DA   we're happy to talk to the government (.) about some sort of

26        [movement on the customs union]

27   AU   [((jeering))                                        ]

28   IO   [but Jeremy Corbyn is not talking to the government]

29   DA   the only thing (.) that we have said and it's not popular with

30        this audience [but I assure you it's popular with]

31   AU                 [((laughter))                        ]

32   IO                 [or with anybody I don't think      ]

33   DA   business (.) is that you have to rule out no deal [that would

34        be]

35   AU                                                      [((groans))

36         ]

37   FB   what about (.) what about the six tests Labour has set (.) one

38        of the most interesting ones (.) perhaps (.) is that whatever

39        (.) deal is done has to deliver the same benefits as being in

40        the single market and customs union

41   DA   that was in fact David Davis [who said that]
```

```
42   AU                                    [((laughter)) ]

43   DA   and we were just repeating what he said [we were]

44   FB                                           [sorry  ] is that not

45        one of your six tests

46   DA   it is one of our [six tests  ]

47   FB                    [oh right ok] alright

48   AU   [((laughter))      ]

49   DA   [what we were doing] was repeating what (.) let me see [was that

50        the second or the third Brexit secretary said       ]

51   FB                                                         [well

52        hang on hang on never mind that it's either your test] or it

53        isn't your test [if it]

54   DA                   [it is]

55   FB   your test (.) I mean Michel Barnier has said (.) that's not

56        possible third countries cannot have the same rights and

57        benefits (.) would that be something you'd compromise on

58   DA   unlike the prime minister (.) we are prepared to be flexible on

59        everything

60   RS   okay [well can I]

61   FB        [hang on a ] minute [you heard]

62   RS                            [c-can I ]

63   FB   it here [first   ]

64   RS           [yeah you] heard it [here first]

65   FB                               [literally ] everything

66   AU   ((laughter))

67   DA   what we [want]
```

```
68   FB           [so  ] no red lines at all
69   DA   no no no what we want (.) we're the Labour party (.) what we
70        want is a deal that is in the best interest of the entire
71        country [we're not being rigid we're not being rigid]
72   AU           [((laughter))                                 ]
73   DA   like the prime minister (.) the only thing we're saying is she
74        has to take no deal off the table
```

In this extract, Abbott works to respond to challenges from Fiona Bruce and the audience. Each of these actors presents a similar criticism – that Labour's Brexit policy is confusing. However, these critiques are performed in distinct ways. In turn, Abbott constructs her defence accordingly to meet the demands of the counterargument. This analysis will first examine how Labour's policy is justified in response to Fiona Bruce's confrontational line of questioning. Due to her role as Chair, Bruce has to carefully manage challenging politicians about their position with her duty to remain neutral (Al-Rojaie, 2003). Here, she characterises her primary interest as gaining clarity from Abbott about what action Labour is proposing. This can be seen in lines 1 and 11, where she repeats the question, 'what would you compromise on which red lines' (line 11). The term 'red lines' became shorthand within the Brexit debate to describe policies that are deemed as being non-negotiable. Here, she frames the term 'red lines' as referring to the policies that Labour 'will be prepared to [compromise on]' (line 13) rather than Abbott's reference to the 'things we think are important' (line 4). This interaction marks the beginning of Bruce employing these 'clarifying' questions to imply that Abbott's responses are evasive. This is used to undermine the coherence of Labour's Brexit approach.

A further variation of this strategy is evident when Bruce seeks clarification on the issue of Labour's 'Six tests'. Following Abbott attributing responsibility for the creation of this 'test' to former Brexit Secretary David Davis, Bruce asks, '[sorry] is that not one of your six tests' (lines 44- 45). Murphy (2015) notes that in contentious political discourse, 'sorry' is used to indicate that the previous turn was unexpected. This enables Bruce to challenge the facticity of Abbott's claim whilst

avoiding the appearance of being confrontational. The 'correct' answer is, however, implied through the negative framing of the question, where it is asked if the policy is 'not' one of Labour's six tests rather than if it is. When Abbott confirms that it is 'one of our [six tests]' (lines 46), this, in turn, is treated somewhat facetiously by Bruce ('[oh right ok] alright' line 47). Both this response and the framing of her initial question reinforce that this information is 'obvious'. From this, it is suggested to be ridiculous that Abbott's evasiveness has led to a situation in which even the most straightforward of issues require clarification. This strategy therefore works to indicate that Abbott is not providing a satisfactory explanation of Labour's policy. Bruce treats Abbott's answers as being non-responsive to the questions asked, with the implication being that this reflects Labour's lack of clarity regarding the policies they support and the 'red lines' they oppose.

The audience also treats Abbott's response to the questions posed by Bruce as being both evasive and ridiculous. For instance, on line 25, when Abbott attempts to explain the policies Labour would be willing to compromise on, she is met with booing from the audience. Clayman (1993) analysed distinctions between the form and function of booing, laughter, and applause in political discourse. It was found that although these actions all perform either an affiliative or disaffiliative function, booing represents the most conventional and unambiguous signs of audience disapproval. This hostile response can be attributed to the perception that Abbott is avoiding the question. This is because being 'happy to talk to the government' (line 25) does not necessarily equate with Labour being willing to compromise on a withdrawal agreement. Although brief reference is made to some '[movement on the customs union]' (line 26), she avoids answering the question directly. The audience's booing therefore works to indicate that this non-response reflects a pattern of behaviour that they are frustrated with. Prior to this, Abbott's assertion that Labour had no redlines had been met with laughter (line 17), with this constructing a derisive assessment of this claim. This laughter in part can be seen to stem from the unexpectedness of a politician seemingly declaring that they have no policy on Brexit (Demasi & Tileagă, 2019). Laughter in this extract is also used to mark 'obvious' information. Before revealing what Labour are willing to compromise on, Abbott employs a disclaimer to pre-emptively manage the listeners' expectations ('and it's not popular with this

audience', lines 29-30). The response of laughter on line 31 is the audience performatively demonstrating agreement with this sentiment. This type of non-verbal action works to reinforce that Abbott's account is neither clear nor reasonable and treats this as an expected consequence of Labour's nonsensical position on Brexit.

In response to this construction of her account, Abbott argues that Labour's policy is informed by a simple principle – preventing a no-deal Brexit. The 'only' prerequisite Labour have for compromising on a withdrawal agreement is that the government 'have to rule out no deal' (line 33). Although this discussion is centred around the concept of compromise, the modal verb 'have to' constructs this utterance as an order rather than a suggestion (Al Kharusi, 2016). Through this, ensuring that the UK does not leave the EU without a deal is presented as the starting point for any future negotiation. Without this assurance, there is no basis on which Labour can seek to reach a compromise. Abbott uses this principle to challenge the government's inflexibility, undermine the legitimacy of the 'confusion' surrounding Labour's position, and justify her lack of concern for specific policy details.

Before discussing the construction and function of this principle, it is worth first commenting on other notable features of how Abbott responds to criticism. First, she treats the apparent uncertainty about Labour's policy as disingenuous. Abbott highlights that her party has previously set out its approach to negotiations with the EU, noting that 'we have said (.) and we've been saying it since last year' (lines 3-4) that they are in favour of a customs union. The conditions under which Labour would agree to Theresa May's withdrawal agreement have therefore long been established. Furthermore, she undermines the significance of the audience's derisive response by suggesting that they already have a negative predisposition towards Labour's policy ('and it's not popular with this audience', lines 29-30). From this, the impact of any reaction (e.g. booing) is lessened as it is expected of them. Abbott advocates for the public to be more concerned with the views of businesses, who she can 'assure you it's popular with' (line 30). By comparing the audience's opinions against those of businesses, she positions their disagreement as resulting from a lack of knowledge.

Throughout this extract, Abbott challenges the legitimacy of the government's policy on 'red lines'. Although Abbott's claim that Labour 'haven't got any red lines' (lines 14-15) could be viewed as an admission of carelessness, it is presented as an argumentative point. As it is 'only the government that's put forward red lines' (lines 15-16), this suggests that other political parties have not felt it necessary to set such boundaries in negotiations. The implication is that these 'red lines' were not established in response to the realities of creating a compromised withdrawal agreement but work to serve the partisan interests of the Conservative Party (Potter, 1996). From this, what Bruce and the audience treat as evasiveness is constructed as representing Labour's lack of concern for this type of minutiae when there are more important issues to contend with. Despite this, Abbott rejects the claim that Labour has 'no red lines at all' (line 68). Through identity work, she indicates that the values guiding their Brexit approach are self-evident and pre-established ('we're the Labour party', line 69). The implication of this is that Labour can be expected to adhere to a certain set of principles, meaning that it is unnecessary for them to lay out individual 'red lines' regarding Brexit. Rather than concerning themselves with the minute details of a potential withdrawal agreement, they are instead prioritising the 'national interest' (Dickerson, 1997) by finding a 'deal that is in the best interest of the entire country' (lines 70-71). This positive characterisation of Labour's flexibility undermines May's rigid approach, presenting her as serving her own political interests rather than the national interest. Finally, Abbott reaffirms that 'the only thing we're saying is she has to take no deal off the table' (lines 73-74). This minimises what is expected, with this emphasising that the government are being held to a reasonable standard.

This characterisation of Labour's policy is challenged by Bruce, who queries, 'what about the six tests Labour has set' (line 37). This refers to the criteria used by the party to judge May's withdrawal agreement. One such 'test' is that any deal achieved with the EU must 'deliver the same benefits as being in the single market and customs union' (lines 39-40). Her description of this test as being 'one of the most interesting ones' (lines 37-38) carries negative connotations and implies that contrary to Abbott's claims, Labour is making unrealistic and divisive demands. This is because the existence of these 'six tests' suggests that Labour are not simply concerned with preventing a no-deal

Brexit. In response, the responsibility for the creation of this 'test' is attributed to former Brexit Secretary David Davis. This lends credibility to this test by highlighting that it is not something the Labour Party concocted. Instead, it is informed by the view of a government minister who has experience negotiating with the EU. This works to invoke a stake and interest claim, as Davis's ideological status as a Conservative Eurosceptic means it is difficult to accuse Labour of using these tests as a means to stop Brexit (Edwards & Potter, 1992). From this, the assurance that the UK will have access to the same benefits gained from EU membership is presented as a reasonable and feasible expectation for the government's withdrawal agreement once no deal is taken off the table.

Despite using the status of David Davis to corroborate her party's position, Abbott also uses this opportunity to undermine the government's withdrawal strategy. This employment of feigned ignorance, in which she presents herself as being uncertain about the number of Brexit Secretaries there have been, suggests that the government are disorganised and chaotic. It is therefore the Conservatives, rather than Labour, who have an unclear stance on Brexit.

In this extract, Bruce challenges Abbott on Labour's lack of clarity regarding the policies they support and the 'red lines' they oppose. To counteract this, Abbott indicates that it is pointless for Labour to pursue a detailed Brexit strategy until the government can ensure that no deal is taken off the table in negotiations with the EU. This is presented as being a clear and simple principle which should take precedence over the minor details of May's withdrawal agreement. In addition, their lack of codified 'red lines' is used to demonstrate that they are flexible and open to compromise. Therefore, Labour's policy is constructed as concerning the 'bigger picture' regarding Brexit, meaning that the specifics are currently less important to the country's well-being. This encompasses many of the discursive strategies which are changed or built upon as the year progresses. The invocation of uncertainty and laughter from the audience is a consistent response to Labour's policy and is reflected in much of the dataset. However, speakers shifted away from this strategy as the EU election in May grew nearer. A potential reason for this, as evidenced through the dataset, is that a policy presented without reference to specific detail is treated by opponents as being non-existent. Labour subsequently

sought to provide a more comprehensive overview of their approach to avoid the appearance of evasiveness or ambiguity, which they accomplished by arguing for a 'comprehensive customs union'.

7.2 A comprehensive customs union

As seen in extract 1, one strategy used to justify confusion regarding Labour's Brexit policy was to argue that their approach was guided by one key principle, making additional detail unnecessary. However, speakers were seen to shift away from this strategy in the lead-up to the EU election. Instead, they began to argue that Labour had a thorough and straightforward policy which accounted for the various elements of the Brexit debate. Throughout the dataset, speakers consistently referred to Labour's support for a customs union, but here this customs union was presented as being 'comprehensive' in that it would encompass issues such as trade, the economy, and travel. From this, confusion surrounding their position was implied to be the result of either ignorance or political bias.

This strategy is evident in extract 2, where Fiona Bruce asks Shadow Security Minister Nick Thomas-Symonds to clarify which amendments of the government's withdrawal agreement Labour would support changing. This was a particularly important issue, as this episode was broadcast a week prior to the original end of the Article 50 period. The following week, a third meaningful vote was set for May's Brexit deal. The EU Commission had stated that if this deal were to pass through parliament, they would be willing to extend the withdrawal period to May 2019. Therefore, Bruce is seeking to understand Labour's plan for the upcoming vote.

Extract 2; Question Time, 21/03/2019

```
1   FB   it looks like we're facing a I mean everything is so uncertain
2        to be honest but as far as we can tell it looks like we're
3        facing (.) a vote next week (.) what is Labour's move in all
4        this what's the (.) [there are a whole number of amendments]
5   AU                       [((laughter))                          ]
6   FB   that that that well (.) Nick is here and he will tell us (.)
```

7		there are a whole number of amendments that that Labour might
8		support (.) it's unclear at the moment but what's the (.) what's
9		the what's your priority (.) in terms of your next move
10	NT	well (.) Jeremy Corbyn has been out in Brussels today (.) Fiona
11		and he's been talking about er (.) an alternative deal and I've
12		been out saying this [for months and months]
13	FB	[and what do you think] that will be
14	NT	right (.) it would be a comprehensive (.) customs union first of
15		all (.) together with strong single market access protections er
16		(.) for rights so that'd be workers' rights environmental rights
17		and also (.) and crucially and I say this (.) as [a]
18	FB	[no] but hang
19		on we know all that because Jeremy Jeremy Corbyn in fairness has
20		been talking about that for some [time]
21	NT	[yes]
22	FB	it hasn't garnered (.) cross-party support which it needs (.) so
23		what's the thing that Labour's going to do next week what's of
24		all the things you could go for (.) second referendum (.) er
25		there's talk about (0.2) I mean there's so many different
26		amendments common market two point zero there's Norway (.) plus
27		there's all sorts of things (.) there's going for no confidence
28		vote (.) what is Labour's priority [next week]
29	NT	[well well]
30	FB	it's a critical week next week
31	NT	it is a critical week I was just answering (.) er the question
32		and the additional the only additional point I was gonna make is

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33   obviously the security (.) position is also very very important
34   in this because I was quite shocked (.) as Labour's shadow
35   security spokesperson to read (.) the political declaration to
36   discover no reference for example to the CIS two databases as
37   it's known
38 FB  no but [hang on    ]
39 NT        [which which]
40 FB  hang on [what what are you gonna go for next week]
41 NT          [I'm answering I will answer the question] Fiona just to
42   say (.) the other thing that was a real problem was that issue
43   and nothing for example on the European arrest warrant or the
44   structures we need going forward (.) very important issue (.)
45   but (.) those things that I have just suggested around the (.)
46   custom comprehensive customs union and the strong single market
47   access (.) minds are now being concentrated. I still believe you
48   can build a majority for that in parliament and the other
49   crucial thing as well is (.) we're not asking (.) the EU to 50
50   reopen the withdrawal agreement [the EU    ]
51 FB                                     [you still]
52 NT  are clear that they won't and [they have been ]
53 FB                                   [you still haven't] answered my
54   question [unless]
55 NT        [I am  ] answering the [question]
56 FB                                 [am I    ] [missing it]
57 PM                                 [((laughter))        ]
58 NT  I am answering the [question]
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59   FB                          [are you ] clear [what Labour's]

60   NT                                         [we are       ]

61   FB  priorities will be [next week]

62   NT                      [we are   ] pushing for (.) to build a

63       majority in parliament around those [principles and ideals]

64   FB                                       [yes but so far that  ]

65       hasn't worked
```

As seen in extract 1, Fiona Bruce performs somewhat of an adversarial role throughout this extract. This is evident at the beginning of the extract, in which she asks, 'what is Labour's move in all this' (lines 3-4). Although this question is not constructed to be humorous, it prompts laughter from the audience (line 5). As noted by Romaniuk (2013), the meaning of laughter is often ambiguous. However, two key functions are performed by this action. First, it orients towards the audience's expectations of the next turn. Before Nick Thomas-Symonds can reply, his answer is pre-emptively treated as mockable. This does knowledge work in that it demonstrates that the audience understands Labour's strategy and therefore can provide a predictive assessment of Thomas-Symonds's response (Potter & Hepburn, 2010). Next, this laughter can also be seen to position Bruce's question as being humorous in that it is ridiculous that clarification on Labour's position is still necessary when the vote is happening 'next week' (line 3). Bruce characterises the audience's response as signifying this incredulity, stating, 'well (.) Nick is here and he will tell us' (line 6). Through the employment of the pronoun 'us', she changes footing and steps outside her role of 'animating' public concern, instead affiliating herself with their scepticism (Goffman, 1981). This further reinforces the notion that Labour's position lacks clarity.

Whilst Bruce's comment is presented as an invitation for Thomas-Symonds to respond, it also works as a challenge to his epistemic domain. As a serving politician, he has privileged access to information concerning Labour's plans for the upcoming vote (Heritage, 2013). In turn, he is expected to share this information to serve the public interest (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012). The inability to

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answer Bruce's question would therefore indicate either one of two things. It could suggest that he does not hold this knowledge, thus undermining both his credibility as a speaker and his entitlement to provide an account (Sacks, 1992). Alternatively, it could indicate that Labour has yet to decide which of the 'whole number of amendments' (line 7) they will support. Through this, Thomas-Symonds is put in a position where he must perform knowledge work as denying Bruce's implicit order ('he will tell us') would reflect poorly on himself and the party he represents.

He begins his explanation by referring to then-leader Jeremy Corbyn, reporting he has been 'out in Brussels today' 'talking about er (.) an alternative deal' (lines 10-11). The use of the temporal deixis 'today' and the present tense verb 'talking' constructs Labour as having a proactive approach, as they are purposely seeking out collaboration with others to develop a feasible alternative to Theresa May's withdrawal agreement (Bellos, 2013; Fairclough, 2003). As this action is taking place in the present, this provides a reasonable justification as to why Labour have not yet finalised their plan. Whilst these last-minute talks could be pointed to as evidence of incompetency, they are instead characterised as a sign of Corbyn's dedication to ensuring a fair resolution to the Brexit crisis. This suggests that although Labour are still working to finalise their Brexit plan, their 'priority' (line 9) and principles are consistent and have long been established. From this, any uncertainty regarding their position is attributed to ignorance rather than communication failure.

Following Bruce's request for details, Thomas-Symonds sets out the hypothetical attributes of Labour's alternative withdrawal agreement, proposing a 'comprehensive (.) customs union' (line 14). The response initiator 'first of all' (lines 14-15) works to manage this information, presenting this feature as the most defining characteristic of their preferred deal. This mirrors the key principle of 'stopping no deal', which is presented in extract 1 (Schubert, 2019). However, here, he begins to provide a detailed list of the protections this alternative deal will offer the country. Bruce interrupts to challenge the relevance of Thomas-Symonds's account. Also as seen in extract 1, she suggests that he is equivocating by avoiding providing any new information ('we know all that', line 19).

Through this, Bruce suggests that past actions or pledges are unimportant. This sentiment is supported in line 22, where more context is provided regarding Labour's failure to garner 'cross-party

support which it needs'. Through this, the parameters of Bruce's original question are somewhat

shifted. She does not simply want an overview of what Labour are planning to do in terms of an ideal

scenario; she instead requires Thomas-Symonds to produce a feasible strategy which will be able to

make real change in parliament. As the 'comprehensive customs union' has already been

demonstrated to fall short of this standard, it is intrinsically incapable of being Labour's 'next move'

(line 9).

Like Thomas-Symonds, Bruce presents Labour's approach towards a withdrawal agreement

as having been consistent over time, acknowledging that 'Jeremy Corbyn in fairness has been talking

about that for some [time]' (lines 19-20). However, this is used to further undermine the credibility of

their approach. First, it suggests that they have failed to make suitable adjustments to their deal based

on the response they received in parliament. Next, whilst Corbyn has been 'talking' about his plans,

he is not implied to have acted accordingly. Bruce lists the various amendments Labour 'could go for'

when voting on Theresa May's withdrawal agreement (line 24). As there are 'all sorts of things' (line

27) which could be supported, this again puts Thomas-Symonds in a precarious position. If he cannot

name even one amendment that Labour are in favour of out of the many that exist, this would indicate

the lack of a clear strategy. It is especially important for them to have a clear plan because 'it's a

critical week next week' (line 30). This raises the political stakes even higher (Bhatia, 2006)

Throughout this extract, Bruce interrupts Thomas-Symonds's talk on multiple occasions. In

line 31, he attempts to manage this, asserting 'I was just answering (.) er the question'. By 'doing'

being interrupted, he signals that his right to speak was violated (Bilmes, 1997). This in turn treats

Bruce's interjection as being illegitimate, as it is unfair to challenge an account before allowing it to

be fully explained. However, it is not, as Bruce implied, that he has failed to answer the question

entirely. His previous discussion surrounding support for a customs union with single market access is

presented as representing Labour's approach to the upcoming vote. Instead, Thomas-Symonds notes

that his answer to the original question was incomplete, stating, 'the only additional point I was gonna

make is obviously the security (.) position' (lines 32-33). The issue of security is 'also very very

important' (line 33) as it pertains to Theresa May's 'political declaration' (line 35), which sets out the

terms of the UK's relationship with the EU. His invocation of category entitlement on lines 34 to 35 ('as Labour's shadow security spokesperson') constructs his assessment as well-informed and entitles him to his 'shocked' reaction to the declaration (Potter, 1996).

Bruce again treats this account as irrelevant to her question, repeating, 'what are you gonna go for next week]' (line 40). In response, Thomas-Symonds reiterates that '[I'm answering I will answer the question]' (line 41). It is interesting to note this subtle self-correction, as he goes from 'answering' in the present tense to having yet to provide an answer. This emphasises that his point regarding national security is not crucial to Labour's strategy but is just another 'very important issue' that needs to be considered (line 44). Following this, he refers back to the idea of a 'comprehensive customs union'. He prefaces this proposal by describing it as 'those things that I have just suggested' (line 45), implying that Bruce's confusion regarding Labour's priorities are unwarranted as he has already provided a concise overview of the characteristics of their preferred withdrawal agreement. The earlier criticism from Bruce that this deal has previously failed to receive a cross-party agreement and is therefore void is also undermined here. Thomas-Symonds suggests that it is only recently that 'minds are now being concentrated' (line 47), meaning that it is possible for parliament to have changed their mind on Labour's proposal. This also provides a justification for why their approach to the EU withdrawal bill has previously been unclear, as like others, they have only recently come to concentrate their position. From this, the establishment of a comprehensive customs union is constructed as being a feasible option which 'you can build a majority for' (line 48).

For the fourth time, Bruce interjects to dismiss this account, asserting, '[you still haven't] answered my question' (lines 53-54). This acts as a direct threat to Thomas-Symonds's credibility, as 'still' highlights that he has repeatedly failed to provide a satisfactory response. As he has had various opportunities to clarify Labour's position, it is implied that this failure is intentional (Antaki, 1988). It is not that he has misunderstood the question but that he is actively avoiding responding to it. It is not that he has misunderstood the question but that he is actively avoiding responding to it. Bruce addresses the audience to seek confirmation of her assessment, asking, '[am I] [missing it]' (line 56). Although her role as moderator requires her to challenge panellists, to maintain neutrality she must

avoid the appearance of being overly interested in discrediting a specific speaker (Al Kharusi, 2016). By asking the audience to affirm that they also have not yet heard a satisfactory response, she re-establishes her footing as an animator (Goffman, 1981). Thomas-Symonds counters this claim on lines 55 and 58 ('I am answering the question'), with this reflecting Bull's (2008) 'Typology of Equivocation'. This typology suggests that one strategy employed in political discourse to evade a question is to state or imply that it has already been answered. Here, this works to illustrate the differences in how each speaker defines the parameters of the question regarding what Labour's 'priorities be [next week]' (line 61) will be. As seen in extract 1, whilst Thomas-Symonds presents Labour's 'principals and ideals' (line 63) as being indicative of their strategy, Bruce rejects this on the basis that '[so far that] hasn't worked' (lines 64-65).

Through examining similarities and differences between this extract and the previous, we can identify how speakers began to shift their construction of Labour's Brexit policy in order to respond to criticism. In order to demonstrate that Labour has a detailed and well-established approach, Thomas-Symonds sets out the principles of the 'custom comprehensive customs' (line 14) they are advocating for. Details of the withdrawal agreement, which would have been treated as an unimportant distraction by Abbott, are now presented as central to Labour's argument. However, the challenges faced remain much the same. Despite attempting to provide a more thorough account, Thomas-Symonds is still met with laughter and confusion. Likewise, Bruce's line of questioning implies that he is evading providing a straight answer. This apparent confusion is present throughout the dataset, leading speakers to adopt an alternative strategy to construct the legitimacy of Labour's approach to Brexit.

7.3 A complex approach

The final strategy discussed here emerged following the EU elections in May 2019, in which the Labour Party performed relatively poorly, only gaining 13.7% of the vote (Vasilopoulou, 2020). Now, Labour representatives began to consistently acknowledge and embrace the ambiguity of their policy. It was argued that, unlike other political parties, Labour had developed a complex response to the

various issues facing the country. From this, their policy was constructed as being nuanced rather than confusing. This claim implied that whilst other politicians were strategically pandering to voters by offering simplified and unrealistic proposals, Labour had prioritised the country's interests over their electoral chances.

Despite this strategy only becoming prominent following the EU election, it was first observed one week before the vote. In this extract, Nigel Farage (Leader of the Brexit party) implies that Labour is engaging in a policy of constructive ambiguity, in which they are purposely obscuring their actual views on Brexit in order to gain electoral success. This marks a shift in how their opponents treat Labour's apparent lack of clarity. Until this point, it was primarily highlighted as evidence of disorganisation and poor leadership. Whilst Labour are consistently characterised as being incompetent, from this point on in the dataset, they are also consistently depicted as strategic and dishonest. Farage's accusation is responded to by Labour's Shadow Economic Secretary Jonathan Reynolds, who undermines the motives of those simplifying the Brexit process. Prior to the beginning of this extract, Fiona Bruce had asked Farage to assess each party's chance of success in the upcoming election.

Extract 3; Question Time, 09/05/2019

```
1   NF   but Labour's the fascination (.) you've heard it again tonight
2        (.) the Labour position (.) basically (.) they want associate
3        membership (.) half in half out (.) but here's the problem (.)
4        that Labour have got (.) if you look (.) at South Wales (.) look
5        at the midlands (.) look at the north of England (.) you see (.)
6        that nearly every single seat was a (.) that had Labour hold (.)
7        was a leave seat (.) there are nearly five million people (.)
8        who voted Brexit (.) and then voted for Jeremy Corbyn(.) and
9        whatever (.) clever game of ambiguity team Corbyn try to play
10       (.) the truth of it is (.) the Labour party is now a remain
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11      party (.) just look at their candidates in these European

12      elections (.) they nearly all support (.) a second referendum

13      (.) and remain and I think actually (.) actually given the

14      direction of the Labour party (.) they too (.) now because

15      they're betraying Brexit (.) cannot form a majority in this

16      country (.) but the real answer is what we now need (.) is the

17      two party system (.) to start to break up they're serving

18      nothing but themselves (.) we need a radical change in British

19      politics and I hope (.) the Brexit party can start that process

20  AU  ((applause))

21  FB  but you [you need to be worried]

22  JR          [I-I say to Nigel      ]

23  FB  don't you

24  JR  no I say to Nigel bring it on because yes this is a heavily

25      divided country nobody can deny that (.) in this audience or any

26      other audience and if you only want to appeal (.) to appeal to

27      one side of that divide whether the Brexit party or Change UK

28      (.) yeah that's about as easy (.) as it can get (.) but you're

29      never gonna move on past this (.) unless you have a party that

30      is willing (.) to try and appeal to both sides to try to move on

31      (.) and I think if you look at the things that need to happen

32      (.) to address the reasonable level of resentment (.) around

33      that Brexit vote (.) the way regions have been left behind too

34      much regional inequality (.) too much (.) insecure precarious

35      work (.) you've got to have policy to address [those things ]

36  FB                                               [yes but      ]
```

```
37        Brexit-

38   JR   there are no [policies in the Brexit party]

39   FB                [the Brexit party are not   ] talking about those

40        kind of policies but none the less they're getting (.) rather a

41        lot of traction and rather a lot of

42   JR   of course they are [of course they will because ]

43   FB                      [reasonable amount of support]

44   AS                      [it's because they have XXX  ]

45   JR   it's easy to have no answers and to just (.) say [things that

46        are not true]

47   NF                                                [ no no we have

48        an answer   ]

49   JR   get media coverage

50   NF   we look what [we're saying]

51   JR                [you don't  ] have an answer you've [been proved

52        wrong]

53   NF                                                [what is the

54        point] of your form of associate membership (.) we will not

55        have a say (.) we will continue to have [our laws made somewhere

56        else ]

57   FB                                          [you have said that many

58        times]

59   NF   what's the point of it
```

Although prior to this extract, Farage criticises both the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, here, the use of 'but' (line 1) positions them favourably in contrast to the Labour Party. Farage's

'fascination' with Labour is not an interest grounded in admiration but instead reflects his disbelief that they are behaving irrationally. He evidences this characterisation by noting that the audience has 'heard it again tonight' (line 1), thus grounding his observation in the external world (Potter, 1996). In specifying that this is something that the audience is hearing 'again', he also suggests that representatives of Labour have consistently expressed the same sentiment espoused by Jonathan Reynolds on the current broadcast. This is important as it pre-emptively dismisses the counterargument that Farage is misrepresenting Labour's policy by attributing Reynolds's view to the party at large.

Farage goes on to summarise Labour's position using the epistemic marker 'basically' (line 2). This marker signals that although this summary accurately captures the core principles of Labour's Brexit approach, it is by no means a thorough overview of their policy (Molina, 2012). He indicates that any further information is irrelevant, as ultimately Labour 'want associate membership (.) half in half out' (lines 2-3). This phrase has long been used to describe the relationship between the UK and the EU, in which the UK has sought to avoid closer integration (Broad & Daddow, 2010). Following the referendum results, it has been increasingly employed by Eurosceptic groups and individuals to express dissatisfaction with the ongoing Brexit negotiations (Chinchon, 2019). Similarly, Farage establishes a contradiction between being 'in' and 'out' of the European Union, reinforcing the notion that Labour are acting nonsensically by pursuing associate membership. Alongside being illogical, their approach is also self-defeating in that it works against the electoral interests of the party. This can be viewed as a variation of the 'confusion' invoked in previous extracts. Here, it is not the content of policy which Farage finds confusing, but rather he does not understand what would motivate them to adopt such an approach if they were genuinely interested in representing the will of their constituents.

Farage illustrates this by referring to parts of the country where 'nearly every single seat' held by Labour in parliament voted leave in the EU referendum (line 6). The statistic of 'five million' people who voted for Brexit and 'then voted for Jeremy Corbyn' (line 7) emphasises the apparent discrepancy between the actions of Labour politicians and the ideology of their supporters. As Farage

earlier implied, it is somewhat understandable to adopt an unpopular policy if it reflects the party's membership. However, the criticism is not that Labour are rejecting the referendum result but that they are specifically ignoring the wishes of their supporters. This is therefore a logical failure in that they cannot expect to win elections using this strategy, and a moral failure in that Labour are 'betraying Brexit' (line 15) through their policy. Accusations of betrayal are a reoccurring feature of populist EU discourse. They are often used to construct a conspiracist narrative in which the 'elite' are working to undermine 'the will of the people' (Breeze, 2019). This narrative is employed and built upon here to present Labour as purposely misleading the public about their position. This marks a notable shift in the dataset regarding how other speakers treat this policy.

In earlier extracts, disagreement with Labour's Brexit approach was typically orientated through the construction of confusion, and speakers would often 'confess' that they did not understand the policy. Here, Farage indicates that it is his understanding of this policy which enables him to assess its content and impugn the motives underlying it. He argues that 'whatever (.) clever game of ambiguity team Corbyn try to play (.) the truth of it is (.) the Labour party is now a remain party' (lines 9-11). By drawing upon gaming analogies, Farage emphasises that there is something to be won or lost. Due to the upcoming election, there is the motive for Labour to mislead the public and conceal their status as a 'remain party'. This attribution of motive works to construct the ambiguity of Labour's policy as being a strategic move purposefully designed to appeal to the broadest possible demographic. Through this, Farage's description of their 'half in half out' approach is reconceptualised as reflecting Labour's strategy to gain support from both leave and remain voters.

Although Labour tries to play an ambiguous game, their true intentions are demonstrated through their actions. In previous extracts, references to 'ambiguity' were typically presented as being the unintended by-product of incompetence, whereas here, it is highlighted as being evidence of duplicity. Notably, these intentions are attributed to 'team Corbyn' rather than the Labour Party. First, it continues the analogy that a 'game' is being played, with different 'teams' competing for victory. Instead of working in the national interest, 'team Corbyn' is motivated by the interests of their leader. Following his election as party leader, the media frequently portrayed Corbyn as an unrelenting

dictator who, having fostered a 'cult of personality' within the party, was now seeking to pursue a dogmatic leftist agenda (Airas, 2018; Iszatt-White, Whittle, Gadelshina & Muller, 2019). Farage draws upon this trope to imply that not only is 'team Corbyn's' Brexit approach unrepresentative of Labour supporters, it is also unrepresentative of the party's traditional values. Therefore, whilst the Brexit Party are seeking to serve the public, Labour have manufactured an ambiguous and misleading policy which serves 'nothing but themselves' (line 18).

Fiona Bruce signals agreement with this assessment, asking Labour MP Jonathan Reynolds, 'but you [you need to be worried] don't you' (lines 21-23). Although phrased as a question due to its rhetorical nature, this utterance works more as a statement of fact. Because of this, Reynolds cannot simply answer the 'question' as this would legitimise its premise. Instead, he directly challenges Farage to 'bring it on' (line 24). This use of 'tough talk' indicates that he has confidence in Labour's Brexit strategy and places the onus on Farage to defend his own position (Pierce, 2008). Despite Farage's advocacy for a 'radical change' in British politics, Reynolds indicates that his approach contributes to maintaining the status quo. He argues that 'if you only want to appeal (.) to appeal to one side of that divide' then 'that's about as easy (.) as it can get' (lines 26-28). From this, it is the Brexit Party who are positioned as pursuing a strategy which serves their own interest. Rather than being 'willing (.) to try and appeal to both sides to try to move on' (line 30), they are exploiting the division within the country. This is because by pandering to 'one side' of the debate, they are ensuring support from single-issue voters.

Reynolds uses this criticism to reframe the accusation that Labour are being deliberately ambiguous. In contrast to the Brexit Party's facile approach, Labour are presented as having a complex solution to the issues facing the country. It is this complexity that Farage has misrepresented as ambiguity. Here, Reynolds also undermines the notion that their attempt to appeal to both sides of 'the divide' is part of an underhand strategy to gain support. As it is 'easy' to pander to a specific demographic of voters, it must conversely be challenging to work towards a compromise. Labour therefore has little motivation to pursue such a complicated strategy out of self-interest. This constructs their position as being principled and honest, as they are unwilling to sacrifice the well-

being of the country for the sake of ease. Furthermore, public resentment is attributed to issues such as 'regional inequality' (line 34) rather than the vote itself. This subtly undermines the intentions of leave supporters, as it suggests that their decision was primarily influenced by their material conditions. Because of this, it would be redundant to withdraw from the EU before first tackling any underlying problems. By highlighting these various concerns, Reynolds dismisses the accusation that Labour are ignoring the will of the people. Instead, he emphasises that Brexit is a symptom of public discontent rather than the cause, meaning that a more complex strategy is needed. This is particularly damning for Farage, as there 'are no [policies in the Brexit party]' (line 38).

As the Brexit Party have secured a 'reasonable amount of support' (line 43) despite not 'talking about those kinds of policies' (lines 39-40), Bruce suggests that Labour have misjudged the interests of the voters they claim to represent. Reynolds constructs this state of affairs as being expected ('of course they are', line 42) and further evidence of the systemic issues facing the country. Their popularity provides further evidence for his prior claim that it is 'easy' to exploit these issues for political gain. Additionally, it is not simply that individuals such as Farage are taking advantage of the current political crisis; they are also being purposely misleading by saying 'things that are not true' (lines 45-46). From this, Reynolds indicates that the Brexit Party's success results from its willingness to hide hard truths from the public. This is in contrast to Labour, who developed their policy to address the uncomfortable reality of Britain's political climate.

This strategy can also be seen in extract 4. Here, Labour Shadow Housing Minister Sarah Jones is challenged by Fiona Bruce and Business Minister Nadhim Zahawi on Labour's policy regarding a second referendum. What is different in this extract is how this strategy is responded to by others. By this point in the dataset, this strategy had become a commonplace argument. As such, their policy is no longer treated as 'confusing', just ridiculous.

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Extract 4; Question Time, 10/10/2019
1  SJ  we're a very divided (.) country (.) clearly (.) erm on the one
2      hand (.) you've got a Conservative government that's saying (.)
```

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 3        do or die we're gonna leave on the thirty first (.) smash the

 4        good Friday agreement smash the economy doesn't matter we're

 5        leaving (.) on the other hand (.) you've got those in the

 6        Liberal Democrats and others who say (.) let's forget the whole

 7        thing happened erm revoke article fifty and everything will be

 8        fine (.) and you know what [the extremes]

 9   NZ                             [people who  ] negotiate deals

10        [Sarah]

11   SJ   [shhh ]

12   NZ   and then [recommend]

13   SJ            [extremes ]

14   NZ   against it

15   SJ   the [extremes]

16   NZ       [in your ] [referendum]

17   SJ                  [extremes  ]

18   NZ   that's a [crazy place to be]

19   SJ            [the extremes the ] extremes on both sides (.) like

20        Nadhim (.) want to whip up this fury (.) they want to cause it's

21        in their interest because they want to fight each other (.) but

22        the majority of the population (.) are somewhere in the middle a

23        little bit leave-y a little bit remain-y actually want to find

24        their way through this (.) now Labour's position is not a sound

25        bite right (.) it is not (.) erm (.) easy to explain it has its

26        difficulties [right (.) let me try and explain it because the

27        point is]

28   AU              [((laughter))
```

```
29                   ]

30   FB  I ask about it [most weeks]

31   SJ                 [the point ] is the point is (.) it is honest (.)

32       right (.) this is [hard (.) this is hard] [let me finish    ]

33   AU                    [((laughter))                             ]

34   FB                                          [no Sarah hang on]

35   SJ  let me finish

36   FB  but when you get

37   SJ  let [me finish   ]

38   FB      [honestly I'm] not trying to put you in a difficult position

39   SJ  no no

40   FB  but when you get that response

41   SJ  yep I understand I understand of course I do because we're

42       [divided we're fighting over this]
```

Like Reynolds, Jones also acknowledges that 'we're a very divided (.) country' (line 1). In order to construct Labour's proposal as the most appropriate solution to this divide, she first undermines the credibility of the government's approach to Brexit. The government are reported as saying, 'do or die we're gonna leave on the thirty first' (line 3). This refers to a comment made by Prime Minister Boris Johnson during the Conservative leadership campaign, in which he issued a 'do or die' pledge that the UK would leave the European Union on the 31st of October (Mason & Walker, 2019). Whilst Chilton (2004) notes that idioms are often used to invoke 'common-sense' values, here the phrase 'do or die' is used to position the government as having an extremist Brexit strategy for reducing the potential outcome of their negotiations to only two binary options. Further examples of reported speech are employed in lines 3 to 5; 'smash the good Friday agreement smash the economy doesn't matter we're leaving'. Here, Jones uses the hyperbolic language of 'smash' to indicate that she is not providing a direct quotation but illustrating the practical consequences of the government's

strategy. The verb 'smash', alongside the comment 'doesn't matter', constructs their attitude towards the Good Friday agreement and economy as being reckless and damaging, with leaving the EU being prioritised over the welfare of the country.

Next, the marker 'on the other hand' (line 5) establishes a semantic link between Jones's previous comments and what she is about to say. Following her characterisation of the Conservative government, she discusses the behaviour of 'those in the Liberal Democrats and others' (lines 5-6). As the Liberal Democrats campaigned to remain in the European Union and subsequently advocated for a second referendum, they are presented as having a Brexit policy which, despite being contrary to the government's strategy, corresponds in terms of its extremeness. This is again illustrated using reported speech: 'let's forget the whole thing happened erm revoke article fifty and everything will be fine' (lines 6-8). Whilst both the government and the Liberal Democrats are presented as oversimplifying Brexit, the intention underpinning these policies and the consequences thereafter are constructed differently. In contrast to the government knowingly and actively damaging the country in their effort to leave the EU (for example, 'smash the economy'), the Liberal Democrats are instead characterised as being naïve to the consequences of their actions, assuming that 'everything will be fine' (lines 7-8). This lends implicit support to a second referendum whilst also enabling Jones to orientate her account towards a middle way. Through this, Labour is constructed as rejecting the divisiveness of the Brexit debate by proposing a sensible 'common ground'.

Nadhim Zahawi interrupts this account in multiple places, reporting that 'people who negotiate deals' and then 'recommend against it' (lines 9-14) are in a 'crazy place' (line 18). This is in reference to an aspect of Labour's Brexit policy. It was suggested that after negotiating a deal with the EU, this deal may still be put to a second referendum in which they would reserve the right to campaign against it. In addition to highlighting the absurdity of working to negotiate a deal with the EU only to recommend against it, Zahawi also criticises the notion that the public would then be asked to vote again on Labour's Brexit deal. Although throughout the data set, such proposals are most commonly referred to using the terms a 'second referendum' or a 'people's vote', here it is labelled as your] [referendum]' (line 16). The application of the possessive adjective 'your' constructs

Sarah Jones, and therefore, by extension, the Labour Party, as having ownership over this policy. Whilst working to pose a direct challenge to Jones, this attribution of ownership is also used to indicate that the public does not share her desire for a second referendum. From this, Zahawi undermines the accusation that the government's Brexit policy is extreme and instead positions Labour as occupying a 'crazy place' on the political spectrum due to their nonsensical and unrepresentative proposals.

Jones uses shushing to draw attention to Zahawi's interruption and illustrate her claim that 'extremes on both sides (.) like Nadhim (.) want to whip up this fury' (lines 19-20). Shushing is also an impoliteness strategy through which speakers both maintain a positive face by indicating that their point is important and should therefore be listened to and threaten the face of their opponent by highlighting that they are engaging in socially unacceptable behaviour (Brown & Levison, 1987). By framing her opposition as having a desire to divide the country, she provides a counterclaim to the insinuation that Labour's Brexit policy does not represent public sentiment. The division in the country is constructed as being manufactured by politicians, making it an unnatural and preventable state of affairs (van Dijk, 1994). From this, it is instead the 'extremists' that are rejecting the will of the people, not those seeking to find a moderate compromise between the two factions.

A 'true' representation of public opinion is presented in line 22, where Jones argues that 'the majority of the population (.) are somewhere in the middle', again orientating towards the existence of a sensible common ground. This works to build consensus, which in turn legitimises this apparent centrist approach towards Brexit. As 'the population', rather than the politicians, are presented as having reached the same conclusion, Labour's Brexit policy is constructed as objectively existing independently from any specific political ideology. Her characterisation of the public is somewhat hedged, as she describes the 'majority' of people as being 'a little bit leave-y a little bit remain-y' (lines 22-23). Through this, she builds an inclusive ingroup identity in which a wide range of people with 'reasonable' views on Brexit can see value in the centrist position that Labour represents. This further positions those who reject this middle ground as extremists who, by extension of their ideology, are uninterested in finding 'their way through this' (line 24).

To more directly defend her position on Brexit, Jones states, 'now Labour's position is not a sound bite right' (lines 24-25). The term 'sound bite' is defined by Safire (1993, p. 733) as a "snappy snippet of taped comment or news". By referencing this device, Jones orients toward the expectations of the medium of broadcast political debate whilst also undermining them. The implication is that, unlike their opposition, Labour's policy has not been designed to be media friendly. Because of this, their position is not 'easy to explain it has its difficulties' (lines 25-26). Jones does not suggest that the policy is incomprehensible, as she later requests that the audience allow her to 'try and explain it' (line, 26).

Instead, she presents Labour as having a nuanced and complex approach which cannot be effectively summarised within the constraints of the Question Time format. This complexity contrasts with the apparent extremism of the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, who have simplified their Brexit policy into meaningless slogans (e.g., 'we're leaving', lines 4-5). From this, criticism of Jones's account is attributed to people expecting a simple answer to a complicated question. She indicates that it is unreasonable to expect her to provide a concise overview of such a detailed and nuanced approach. The onus for understanding this policy is therefore attributed to the listener rather than the speaker herself.

This comment is met with uproarious laughter from the audience (line 33). As seen throughout the data set, this response treats Jones's defence of Labour as non-serious and worthy of ridicule. Similarly, the laughter here serves two key functions. First, it is derisive in that it mocks the notion that 'difficulties' are a virtuous characteristic of policy proposals. This works to undermine her account as excusing, rather than explaining, the absurdity of Labour's approach. Next, this laughter can also be seen as marking Jones's comment as being 'obvious' in that she is finally acknowledging what the public has long known. Further evidence for this is Fiona Bruce's claim that 'I ask about it [most weeks]' (line 30), which constructs the uncertainty regarding Labour's policy as an enduring feature of the Brexit debate. As this has been asked about 'most weeks', this suggests that this confusion is not grounded in ignorance but is instead a result of the repeated failure of politicians to explain their position. It is interesting to note that unlike in previous extracts, here she shifts footing

('I') to move away from her neutral stance and present herself as the 'principal' author of this utterance (Goffman, 1981).

Jones undermines both Bruce's comment and the audience's laughter by indicating they have missed 'the point' (line 31). The purpose of highlighting the 'difficulties' of Labour's approach is not to excuse its complexities but to demonstrate that 'it is honest' (line 31). This is unlike other political parties, who are implied to be obscuring the reality of Brexit to appeal to the public and attract media coverage. Through this, uncertainty is again constructed as an inevitable by-product of a nuanced and complex policy. Furthermore, by invoking honesty, Jones also upholds the positive face of her party. That is, regardless of any challenges to the content of the policy, the intentions underpinning its production are moral and therefore beyond reproach. The use of the tag question 'right' (line 32) acts as a confirmation that this assessment is shared by the audience, with this presenting Labour's honesty as being self-evident. In part, this assessment is also evidenced through the audience's response, as it is unlikely that a politician would profess false support for a policy that the public consistently treats as unfavourable.

However, this declaration of honesty is mocked on line 33 through further laughter. This captures two interesting changes within the dataset. This captures two interesting changes within the data set. First, as the ambiguity of Labour's policy has long been a known and accepted fact, so now are the intentions underpinning it. Unlike in extract 3, where Nigel Farage's accusation of dishonesty is met with a mute response and left unchallenged, here, the large audience reaction marks this as being a key point of contention. Related to this, despite Jones repeatedly indicating that allowing her to continue her explanation would resolve any misunderstanding ('let me finish', line 35), the problem no longer lies in confusion alone. Whilst in extract 1, speakers take issue with the poor communication of Labour's position; this is no longer the case. Now, the laughter suggests that it is the public's understanding of the policy which allows them to undermine and mock the notion that it is honest. Criticism of Labour has moved from challenging the competency and execution of their approach, to more specifically challenging their integrity and motivations.

7.4 Discussion

This chapter sought to identify how Labour's Brexit policy was justified and challenged throughout the year. Here, I identified that the strategies Labour representatives employed developed in response to the counterarguments they faced. The first strategy ('a simple principle') involved speakers suggesting that it was vital that the UK did not leave the EU without a deal. When questioned on what type of deal they would agree to support in order to prevent this outcome, the specifics of any given withdrawal agreement were treated as being secondary to this principle. As seen in extract 1, Dianne Abbott characterises the Conservative government as being unreasonable for refusing to compromise with Labour and take no deal off the table. It is thus the Conservatives who are prolonging the Brexit process, as it is only reasonable to discuss the details of the UK's future relationship with the EU once this risk has been averted. Both Fiona Bruce and the audience treat this account as being evasive. The apparent reluctance to provide detail about Labour's approach to Brexit negotiations was characterised as indicative of their lack of a cohesive policy.

As the EU election grew closer, Labour representatives began to establish their support for a comprehensive customs union. Unlike previously, here speakers more consistently provided a detailed overview of how their approach to Brexit would account for specific issues such as national security and trade. Whilst this worked to undermine the implication that they had 'no policy', it also invoked new challenges from both the opposition and Fiona Bruce. Now, they were challenged not on the details of their policy but on their ability to implement it. This line of questioning was shaped by events happening at the time, such as the third meaningful vote referred to in Extract 1. Again, the apparent inability of Labour representatives to provide concrete information about their plan was treated as evasive. Similarly, through laughter, the audience treated this evasiveness as 'typical' of Labour and their ridiculous and disorganised approach to Brexit.

Before the EU election in May, Labour's evasiveness was primarily framed as a consequence of their incompetency. However, this changed to accusations of constructive ambiguity as the year progressed, as the lack of clarity surrounding their approach was now perceived as deliberate and

motivated. Because of this, speakers defending Labour's policy now had a new challenge to contend with. This led to the development of a strategy in which speakers conceded that they had a complex and nuanced policy. It was acknowledged that it was something that the public would find difficult to both understand and accept; however, it was also presented as being the only viable way to secure the UK's safe exit from the EU.

The key takeaway from this analysis is that the strategies the speakers employed to justify Labour's Brexit policy did not exist within a vacuum. Despite the acknowledgement that discourse is rhetorically situated, there is a tendency in discursive research to inadvertently treat different arguments delivered across anything more significant than a context that shifts on a moment-by-moment basis as being separate entities which bear no relation to each other. When analysing how debates develop through time, it becomes clear that arguments are built in response to previous counterclaims. Each rhetorical strategy will draw upon the resources of previous arguments in order to develop a new version of reality which better defends against criticism and makes up for any past deficiencies. This strategic shift is something which can arguably only be appreciated through the employment of a longitudinal approach that considers how talk is situated within its temporal context.

As illustrated in Table 4, changes in rhetorical strategies can be measured and tracked by researchers in a relatively concrete manner. However, it is important to emphasise that this analysis should not be treated as a framework for all longitudinal discursive research. This is partly due to the data presented here somewhat representing a best-case scenario. That is, these identified changes largely occur linearly and can be reasonably pinpointed as having developed in response to specific contextual and rhetorical demands. Due to the complex nature of talk and interaction, it is unlikely that all instances of change and stability will be so clear-cut. This means that the needs of the data should inform the approach researchers utilise when conducting longitudinal analysis. Chapter 8 therefore provides a further example of how change and stability can be approached and examined within a DP framework.

Chapter 8: A People's Vote: Constructing and justifying support for a second referendum.

In this chapter, I will identify the discursive strategies used by speakers to challenge and support a second referendum on the UK's membership of the EU. This analysis will be conducted longitudinally to examine how these strategies were constructed throughout 2019. The main advantage of employing this approach is that it allowed me to explore how the tension between 'the will of the people' and the 'national interest' develops through time. These constructs underpin much of the debate surrounding a second referendum, as both those in favour and against this proposal claimed that their stance was in line with public opinion and would lead to a beneficial outcome for the country. From a discursive perspective, it is understood that these concepts are constructed and given meaning through talk. There is not one version of the 'national interest' or a singular 'will of the people', but rather various competing accounts. For example, Scottish politicians were found to mobilise different versions of the 'national interest' depending on their stance on devolution (Reicher & Hopkins, 2011). The employment of these constructs works to establish a narrative which legitimises the speaker's argument. Zapettini and Krzyżanowski (2019) note that in Brexit discourse, the rhetorical appeal to the 'will of the people' is used to warrant the government's actions as being necessary and morally justified due to the results of the 2016 EU referendum. Researchers therefore seek to analyse the form and function of these discursive strategies within different contexts.

By analysing how these strategies are mobilised in isolated instances of talk, researchers can inadvertently treat them as being fixed constructs. It is not that there are various pre-existing versions of the 'will of the people' waiting to be invoked depending on the speaker's ideology. Instead, these constructs are being continually built upon within talk to adapt to the rhetorical demands of competing accounts. This occurs on both a moment-by-moment basis and throughout a long period of time, as speakers construct their accounts to respond to what they have previously heard and pre-empt future counterarguments. For this reason, in order to understand the function these strategies perform in political discourse, it is important to observe not only how they are used but also how they are developed. This includes identifying the change (and stability) which occurs across time. In this

analysis, I will therefore provide an alternative lens through which the 'will of the people' and the 'national interest' can be conceptualised.

A longitudinal approach is particularly well-suited to analysing these specific concepts due to their status as longstanding tropes of political discourse (Milzow, 2012). In particular, the flexible nature of the 'national interest' has been identified and discussed within the field of international relationships (IR). McIntyre (1991) argues that if we understood talk to be an important form of political action, we should also be concerned with how the meaning of the 'national interest' has changed over time. In contrast to the realist view of IR, he suggests that our understanding of this issue is informed by discourse rather than institutional power. Because of this, it is influenced by popular discussion and debate and is responsive to ongoing circumstances. This is evident in Kudlaeva's (2019) critical discourse analysis of Russian political discourse. Here, she identified that the construction of the 'national interest' underwent a shift following the post-soviet era, as more emphasis was placed on defending the country's borders against external threats rather than on competing as a great power on the world stage. Whilst such research has acknowledged that something is different about how speakers talk about the national interest at different time points, to my knowledge, this has never been explicitly framed in terms of longitudinal research.

This lack of longitudinal framing is also apparent in research analysing the construction of the 'will of the people'. Like the national interest, the mobilisation of 'the people' has become ubiquitous in political discourse (Zapettini, 2018). A key area of interest for researchers has been identifying how this device is utilised to facilitate populist movements and ideas. This includes examining how speakers establish their views as representative of 'the people', and how the virtues of ordinary citizens are constructed in contrast to the corruption of the elite ruling class (Ekström, Patrona, & Thornborrow, 2018). As previously discussed, there is no single or definitive will of the people, only that which is constituted through talk. It can therefore be expected that the categories of 'the people' and 'the elite', and claims regarding what they really want will be subject to change. This change is something which has been analysed between speakers. For instance, unlike left-wing US Senator Bernie Sanders, Donald Trump characterised the will of the American people in terms of what they

were opposed to (e.g., immigration) rather than what they were in favour of (Cullen, 2017). Likewise, it is accepted that such characterisations can change and develop through time. In their discussion of Brexit discourse, Zappettini and Krzyżanowski (2019) note that the promises of the 2016 referendum campaign are 'discursively retrofitted' to justify the actions of the current government.

Therefore, despite it being acknowledged that concepts such as the 'will of the people' and the 'national interest' are subject to change, the discursive literature has largely failed to treat this as being analytically significant. Whilst challenging the taken-for-granted nature of these constructs in political discourse, researchers have seemingly simultaneously taken-for-granted that this change occurs. In this chapter, I aim to demonstrate that change through time should not be treated simply as an interesting footnote but rather as a vital tool which we can use to track the development, and thus function, of populist rhetorical strategies. These strategies draw and employ a range of devices related to the 'national interest' and the 'will of the people'. However, unlike in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, the current analysis is concerned with *both* the change and stability of how these devices are constructed and employed. This reflects the data, in which it was found that whilst the strategies used by speakers opposing a second referendum remained relatively stable throughout 2019, speakers advocating for this policy shifted their approach in response to rhetorical and contextual demands. Here, this change and stability were treated as equally valuable to understanding how the 'will of the people' and the 'national interest' were conceptualised during the UK's exit from the European Union. This is because the existence of stable and enduring features across different versions of these constructs can further inform our understanding of their function and meaning.

One strategy for opposing a second referendum, which remained consistent throughout the dataset, was the argument that public opinion regarding the European Union had not changed. It was suggested that because of this, another vote would be unlikely to prompt a different outcome. This was used to present this proposal as being futile in that it would both change very little and only serve to entrench the divisions within the country further. How this challenge was responded to was also consistent, with speakers invoking the concept of 'new information' to argue that the public's understanding of Brexit had changed. This term was used about information that both could and could

not have been known at the time of the 2016 referendum. For example, it is claimed that if not for the lies of the Leave campaign, the public would have been able to understand the already well-established facts about Brexit better. Alternatively, there are some things about the consequences of leaving the EU which could not have been known or predicted until they happened. This strategy worked to construct a second referendum as being a reasonable and democratic proposal which would enable people to vote again to defend the national interest.

Speakers also worked to undermine the intentions of those advocating for a second referendum by characterising them as being inherently elitist for disregarding the will of the people. It was suggested that the problems facing the country were not a consequence of the vote itself but rather a result of the failure of politicians to implement Brexit. From this, this proposal was treated as an anti-democratic and unfair way through which the elite could avoid accountability for their mistakes. Those responding to this challenge were found to broadly accept this interpretation of events. Blame for the current political crisis was attributed to the government's inability to produce a withdrawal agreement. From this, a second referendum was presented as being a last resort option which would give power back to the people and allow the country to progress.

After Johnson became Prime Minister in July, this discussion of government failure was co-opted by those opposing a second referendum. It was argued that if unhappiness with the government's actions motivated calls for a people's vote, a general election would be better suited to rectifying this problem. An election would allow the public to shape the UK's Brexit policy without directly contradicting the referendum result. Advocates who dismissed this idea were accused of being hypocritical, as despite their proclamations, they were seen to be preventing the public from having their say. Because of this argument, the strategies used to justify this proposal began to shift. Instead of attributing blame to the government, the difficulty involved in leaving the EU was constructed as being inherent to Brexit itself. Regardless of who is leading the withdrawal process or what trade deal they agree to, it was claimed that this action would cause irrevocable damage to the country. From this, a general election was presented as being ineffective as it would not work to tackle the source of these critical issues.

Table 5 provides an overview of how the strategies speakers employed in their construction of a second referendum changed and remained stable throughout 2019. As seen in this table, the strategies used largely remained consistent throughout the year. However, a shift did occur once Johnson became Prime Minister. Speakers in favour of a second referendum began to shift their attribution of blame for the current political deadlock from the government ('Government failure') to the intrinsic nature of Brexit itself ('An ineffective solution'). This development occurred in response to the emerging argument that a general election would better resolve ('A reasonable alternative') than a second referendum vote.

Table 5

Instances of Second Referendum Strategies

Strategy	Time Period											
	Theresa May Premiership							Boris Johnson Premiership				
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lack of change	4	3	1	3	2	1	0	0	3	2	1	0
Sore losers and arrogance	1	2	4	3	3	2	0	0	2	4	1	2
A reasonable alternative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	1	1
New information	3	2	1	3	2	1	0	0	3	1	2	0
Government failure	2	3	4	5	2	3	0	0	1	1	2	0
An ineffective solution	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	2	1

The first 3 strategies documented this table represent the strategies speakers used to undermine the prospect of a second referendum. I will next examine the argument that there had been a 'lack of change' since the first vote.

8.1 Lack of Change

One strategy used to oppose the holding of a second referendum was constructing the proposition as being an absurd but ultimately futile action which would only serve to create more divisions within the country. This argument was built on the notion that, in actuality, very little had changed since the first vote in terms of the public perception of Brexit and the European Union. As a result, it was presented as being unlikely that asking the public to vote again would achieve anything other than

reinforcing what we already know. Whilst some speakers concede the possibility that a second vote could turn in favour of remaining in the EU, this was frequently accompanied by the prediction that the voting percentages for this outcome would be equally as close to what was seen in 2016. Through this, 'a people's vote' was constructed as both meaningless for progress and harmful to the unity of the country.

This can be seen in extract 1, in which German comedian Henning Wehn initiates a straw poll of the audience to support the argument that there has been no significant change in the public's perspective on the European Union. Wehn supported the Remain campaign during the 2016 referendum; however, he expressed opposition to the holding of a second vote. Following Fiona Bruce's invitation for him to share his opinion on the matter of a people's vote, Wehn employs humour to undermine the purpose of this proposition:

Extract 1: Question Time; 28/02/2019

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1    HW   for starters I have to say (.) I quite like (.) the whole
2         scenario what's going on because it's highly entertaining
3    AU   ((laughter))
4    HW   so you wake up I mean we haven't had a dull moment every morning
5         you wake up instantly turn on the radio has anyone resigned (.)
6         [have we still got a government]
7    AU   [((laughter))                  ]
8    HW   is anybody saying anything about bananas being too straight or
9         too bendy (.) or is there some ardent remainers going oh if
10        there is a no deal Brexit (.) there'll never ever be another
11        plane taking off [all their hyperbole I absolutely love it]
12   AU                    [((laughter))                            ]
13   HW   and for me (.) with the referendum I would personally have had
14        preferred if it had been (.) best of seven
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15   AU   ((laughter and applause))

16   HW   on a serious note out of curiosity don't tell me which way round

17        you voted last time (.) but if you had your time again (.) who

18        would vote differently

19   A1   I would have

20   FB   who would vote [differently that's it]

21   HW                  [who would differently] (0.2) a handful of

22        people (.) that's it the [outcome would be give or take]

23   FB                            [I think it was five or six   ]

24   HW   exactly the same

25   FB   well

26   HW   if you were unhappy –

27   AU   [((applause))    ]

28   FB   [in this audience]

29   HW   no across the country (.) if you were unhappy with the level of

30        immigration three years ago you're gonna be unhappy with it now

31        (.) if two years ago you felt the country's run by unelected

32        European bureaucrats (.) well I doubt you would have changed

33        your mind on that over the past few years

34   AU   ((laughter))

35   HW   and if you were daft enough to fall for the three hundred and

36        fifty million quid for the NHS like (.) you're that stupid

37        you'll fall for something equally daft next time (.) [so I

38        genuinely believe that the next time round it would be give

39        or take   ]

40   AU                                                        [((
```

```
41      laughter))]
42  HW  the same the best you could hope for was forty eight fifty two
43      the other way and that will make things a lot worse than they
44      are now
```

In this account, Wehn justifies his opposition to a second referendum by arguing that nothing tangible had changed since the result of the first vote. In order to lend credibility to this claim, he draws upon three strategies – identity management, humour, and the audience. Whilst there is considerable overlap between these strategies, and they are frequently used in conjunction with one another, for the purpose of this analysis, I will discuss each one in turn. First, Wehn performs identity work throughout this account to attend to positive self-presentation and pre-emptively undermine potential counterarguments. One example of this relates to his status as a German comedian. Although nationality is not explicitly orientated to, it is possible that his 'Germanness' could be used to challenge his epistemic entitlement to comment on UK politics (Demasi, 2016). To avoid this, Wehn frequently inserts colloquial 'British-isms' into his utterances. This can be seen in lines 35 to 36, where he refers to the leave voters who were 'daft enough to fall for the three hundred and fifty million quid for the NHS'. The use of terms such as 'quid' and 'daft' indicates that he is familiar with British politics and culture. Through this, he avoids being positioned as a critical 'outsider' and instead grants himself the 'right' to speak authoritatively about what is in the country's interest (Potter, 1996).

Alongside presenting himself as part of the ingroup, Wehn is also careful to position himself as a neutral observer of the Brexit proceedings. He constructs Brexit as something he finds 'highly entertaining' (lines 1-2) rather than something he is personally or emotionally invested in. As a result, he is able to see beyond the petty squabbles between Leave and Remain supporters to objectively identify the stupidity which is perpetrated by both sides of the debate. This is illustrated by how his criticisms are constructed, as each negative characterisation of the Leave or Remain campaign is followed by a similarly critical depiction of their opponents. For instance, in lines 8 to 9, he employs

active voicing to invoke a rhetorical question people may hypothetically ask themselves whilst listening to the news ('is anybody saying anything about bananas being too straight or too bendy'). This refers to a long-standing 'Euromyth' perpetrated by some Eurosceptics who had claimed that the EU have laws dictating the size of bananas being sold (Henley, 2016). Wehn's voicing of this claim works to suggest that Leave supporters are too concerned with trivial matters and highlight that they have engaged in disinformation. Additionally, the contrast between 'too straight or too bendy' indicates that this issue is so meaningless that people arbitrarily decide what position they will argue for on any given day.

Following this, he next derides the 'ardent remainers going oh if there is a no deal Brexit (.) there'll never ever be another plane taking off' (lines 9-11). Through this, remain supporters are characterised as acting hysterically, with this harkening back to the 'Project Fear' label that was often levied at the 'Stronger In' campaign during the 2016 referendum (Bailey, 2017). By hedging the identity of 'remainer' with the adjective 'ardent', Wehn indicates that this characterisation does not represent the group as a whole, just the 'extremists' amongst them. This enables him to maintain the appearance of fairness and neutrality, as condemning 'extremism' is treated as a default stance (Waikar, 2016). By implicitly criticising both sides of the Brexit debate, he reinforces that he is not biased in favour of one position. This undermines the assumption that his opposition to a second referendum is politically motivated. Instead, he grounds his later observations regarding the lack of change as grounded in an objective reality (Potter, 1996). Alongside attending to identity work and fact construction, the aforementioned instances of hypothetical speech are designed to be funny. As Wehn is a comedian, it is unsurprising that he would employ humour in the construction of his account. However, here, this humour performs specific rhetorical functions which are used to legitimise his views regarding a people's vote.

Whilst humour is not classified under the banner of 'serious discourse', Weaver (2011) notes that it can be used to perform a range of 'serious' actions. Wehn employs humour to construct a derisive account of the fallout from Brexit. In lines 4 to 5, he narrates, 'so you wake up I mean we haven't had a dull moment every morning you wake up instantly turn on the radio has anyone

resigned (.) [have we still got a government]'. This is formulated to construct these actions as 'scripted', meaning it is typical or routine behaviour (Edwards, 1994). This, alongside the use of active voicing, works to position these thoughts as being reasonable concerns people may have due to the unstable political climate (Wooffitt, 1992). From this, it is not Wehn's response to Brexit, which is treated as being humorous, but rather the absurdity of a situation in which it is plausible that the government might collapse overnight. This works to ridicule the current political climate while highlighting that Brexit has caused serious consequences. A further function of the humour in the account refers to what Mulkay (1988) refers to as the 'retractability of humour'. This is when speakers can deny the serious content of their humorous rhetoric if it is found to be untrue or socially unacceptable. For instance, if challenged to identify who said that there would 'never ever be another plane taking off' (lines 10-11), Wehn could counter that he was 'only joking' and therefore avoid providing evidence. This makes it difficult for others to undermine his claims on factual grounds.

The absurdity of the political fallout of Brexit could be used in order to advocate in favour of a second referendum. As I discuss later in the chapter, one strategy speakers employed when justifying this position was highlighting that the failure of the government to respond appropriately to Brexit had caused damage which could only be rectified by a second vote. Here, Wehn takes an alternative route by suggesting that a second referendum would simply be a continuation of this absurdity rather than a solution. Again, employing humour and irony, he directly addresses this issue by stating that 'and for me (.) with the referendum I would personally have had preferred if it had been (.) best of seven' (lines 13-14). The implicit argument is that there is no logical reason for supporting a second referendum that could not be as equally applied to supporting a seventh (or, by implication, any subsequent) referendum. Humorously expressing this sentiment works to emphasise the underlying point – that this proposal is not something to be treated seriously. This comment is followed by laughter and applause from the audience, legitimising Wehn's argument. That is, by laughing at the notion of holding seven referendums, the audience supports Wehn in constructing this as a ridiculous notion. It is not just that he is funny, but that the issue he is presenting is in and itself laughable (Romaniuk, 2009).

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The laughter of the audience contributes to the final strategy Wehn employs in this extract. This strategy relates to not only what the audience does but also how they are used. Whilst the laughter throughout this account works to validate the implicit argument that the current situation is ridiculous, the audience is then asked to more actively participate in a way which attends to the facticity of specific claims. On lines 17 to 18, Wehn indicates that the audience should raise their hands in response to the question, 'if you had your time again (.) who would vote differently'. Previous research, particularly in the field of conversation analysis, has identified the devices speakers use to invite certain actions from the audience (Atkinson 1984; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986). However, little discursive research has examined such explicit use of the audience in constructing arguments. Despite minimising the purpose of this activity ('out of curiosity'), his shift from speaking humorously to speaking 'on a serious note' (line 16) presents the audience's response as being a substantive argumentative point. The observation that only a 'handful of people' (lines 21-22) raised their hands is used to corroborate and provide evidence for the assertion that the outcome of a second referendum would be 'exactly the same' (line 24). This is then used as a foundation on which he continues to build a case against a second referendum on the basis that not enough people have changed their minds to make it a worthwhile proposition.

Chair Fiona Bruce somewhat challenges this conclusion, interjecting that this is only true 'in the audience' (line 28). In response, Wehn claims that his argument is applicable 'across the country' (line 29), suggesting that he is confident that the audience is representative of the public at large. Similar to his previous use of rhetorical questions, he provides a three-part list of reasons which support the rationality of his assessment (Jefferson, 1990). These reasons all follow a similar structure, in which it is suggested that if 'X' was true in the 2016 referendum, then it will also be true in 2019. One example given is that 'if two years ago you felt the country's run by unelected European bureaucrats (.) well I doubt you would have changed your mind on that over the past few years' (lines 31-33). The phrase 'I doubt' implies that the behaviour of EU officials since the referendum has legitimised some of the concerns people had, or at least done very little to change their view. From this, he highlights that the point of his argument is not just that people have not changed their minds

but that they have no reason to do so. The circumstances surrounding Brexit are no different now than in 2016, meaning that the audience, and by extension, the broader electorate, will not be motivated to vote differently in a second referendum.

Wehn concludes that 'the next time round' (line 38), the results of an EU referendum would result in a similar, if not identical, outcome. Whilst he does acknowledge the results would be 'give or take' the same (line 38-29), this is still presented as being a negligible number not worth considering. However, his concern is not just that this is a pointless proposal but also a potentially harmful one. He claims that if the vote were to lead to a different outcome ('forty-eight fifty-two the other way', lines 42-43), then this would 'make things a lot worse than they are now' (lines 43-44). The slight possibility that people may change their minds is presented as being less significant than the negative consequences which would follow. A second referendum is therefore unnecessary as it is unlikely to lead to a different outcome and unable to resolve the problems that Brexit has already caused.

In summary, a 'people's vote' is constructed as being a futile proposition in that it would only work to reinforce what we already know - that the country is divided on the issue of Brexit. The 'lack of change' in public sentiment towards Brexit, as evidenced by the audience, is used to support this assessment. This lack of change is not a result of stubbornness or partisanship but rather a reasonable response to the reality of the UK's current circumstances. This provides a somewhat typical example of how this strategy is employed within the dataset. Implementing the results of the 2016 referendum is treated as being the default action, meaning that any variation to this needs to be justified on the basis that something is different. A further commonality between accounts which employed this strategy is the use of ridicule. In particular, variations of the sentiment that if there were to be a second vote, why not make it 'best of seven' (line 14) appeared four times within the dataset. Unlike the other strategies discussed in this chapter, this 'lack of change' was primarily used by speakers to orientate towards the absurdity of a second referendum rather than its unfairness or immorality. The absurdity of this proposal was reinforced through humour and audience laughter. As the audience is positioned as being a representative of the public, their laughter works to support this characterisation and indicate that they, too, are opposed to this idea.

A distinct feature of this extract relates to how 'the people' are constructed by Wehn. Throughout the dataset, the 'people' were treated as a sovereign entity by panel members. As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, even speakers in favour of a second referendum were careful to mitigate the public's responsibility for the outcome of Brexit. Wehn displays no such reverence for the 'will of the people' and, at points, is highly critical of their judgement ('if you were daft enough to fall for the three hundred and fifty million quid for the NHS', lines 35-36). Whilst this type of negative characterisation of the public is somewhat rare, this sentiment underlies the key function of this strategy. The appeal to 'lack of change' is grounded in practical concerns regarding its necessity rather than moral principle. To respond to this, speakers advocating for a second referendum must argue that there has been enough significant change to the political landscape of the UK that another vote is warranted.

8.2 New Information

A key strategy speakers used to justify holding a second referendum was claiming that our understanding of Brexit has changed since 2016. This involved highlighting the existence of 'new information' which, if known at the time, would have influenced how people had voted. The concept of 'new information' can be defined as any knowledge regarding Brexit which could not have been known to the public before the vote. It was argued that in light of this information, 'something' had now changed regarding Brexit. People were said to be more aware of the consequences of leaving the EU and more critical of this misinformation spread during the referendum campaign. As circumstances are now different, the democratic option would be to allow voters to change their minds accordingly.

An example of this can be seen in extract 3, in which Canadian-American psychologist Steven Pinker contributes to a discussion regarding the possibility of a second referendum. Despite not being from the UK, Pinker had supported remaining in the EU during the 2016 referendum. Here, he provides justification for a second referendum by highlighting the difficulties involved in implementing Brexit:

```
     Extract 2: Question Time, 30/05/2019
1   SP  well I'm (.) er reminded of H L Mencken's (.) er quote about
2       democracy that democracy is based on the principle that the
3       people know what they want (.) and they deserve to get it good
4       and hard
5   AU  ((laughter))
6   SP  here it it seems to me that (.) er (.) that as much as we (.) we
7       er value direct participatory democracy if the people vote for
8       square circles (.) it's gonna be a problem for the politicians
9       to deliver it (.) and there seems to be a number of square
10      circles here (.) taking the view from an outsider who has no
11      direct skin in the game (.) but a (.) a no deal Brexit seems (.)
12      mad (.) er it just seems like a recipe for chaos (.) er the no
13      deal that has been proposed is acceptable within the overall
14      concept of (.) Brexit (.) the idea of having a border between
15      the Republic of Ireland and er Northern Ireland (.) is (.) ahh
16      (.) ahh (.) a bad idea but then of er not having a border (.)
17      would again be inconsistent with what Brexit promised to deliver
18      (.) so it does seem that as we start to (.) think about the
19      actual implications of implementing it seems more and more like
20      a square circle (.) and that the essence of (.) errr (.) of
21      intelligence of learning of progress is (.) err (.) absorbing
22      new information (.) learning from your mistakes and not
23      repeating the (.) same policy if new information that comes to
24      light (.) shows that it's er unreasonable (.) based on what we
25      know about now about how to implement Brexit (.) it seems to me
26      perfectly reasonable to err have a er a (.) ju- a second
27      decision a second ref [referendum]
```

As seen in extract 1, Pinker also attends to identity management throughout this account.

Unlike Wehn, here, Pinker more explicitly orientates towards his nationality by framing his argument

as a 'view from an outsider who has no direct skin in the game' (lines 10-11). By highlighting that he

has no stake in the outcome of a second referendum, he indicates that his support for this proposal is

devoid of personal biases. From this, his characterisation is presented as being based on objective

observation (Edwards & Potter, 1992). This objectivity is also built through Pinker distancing himself

from the production of parts of this account. This can be seen in lines 1 to 4, where he defines

democracy using a quote from American journalist and satirist H.L. Mencken, stating 'democracy is

based on the principle that the people know what they want (.) and they deserve to get it good and

hard'. The use of quotations in political discourse is a form of meta-representation through which

speakers subtly align themselves with a perspective without necessarily endorsing it (Bull & Wells,

2012). By specifying that this definition was something that he was simply 'reminded' of, Pinker

further manages stake and interest by reinforcing that this is not his personal opinion. This enables

him to make claims about the nature of democracy without being held accountable for their accuracy

(Potter, 1996).

Alongside attending to identity management, this quote also works to justify Pinker's support

for a second referendum. By conceding that 'the people know what they want', this suggests that he

respects their decision. However, the following assertion that they should 'get it good and hard'

implies that voters should not be sheltered from the ramifications of Brexit. As marked by the

audience's laughter (line 5), this quote is recited somewhat humorously. This works to both soften the

harshness of this sentiment and further distance Pinker from being accountable for this claim

(Edwards & Potter, 1992). The point being made is that enacting the will of the people necessitates

accepting the damage that will caused by Brexit. From this, his advocacy for a second referendum can

be seen as him providing a way forward to avoid these consequences. Furthermore, despite indicating

that the public knew what they were voting for, he later frames a second referendum as an opportunity

for 'learning from your mistakes' (line 22). This shifts his construction of 'the people' from being

knowing accomplices to Brexit to having made an understandably flawed decision based on the

information available to them at the time. By constructing their vote as a 'mistake' rather than a

decision, he suggests that the electorate would welcome an opportunity to rectify their error. A second referendum is therefore presented as serving the public interest.

As those in favour of a second referendum are often accused of undermining 'the will of the people', the suggestion that this proposal is in line with public opinion works to legitimise Pinker's account. He builds a case for this being a democratic course of action in lines 6 to 9, arguing that 'as much as we (.) we er value direct participatory democracy if the people vote for square circles (.) it's gonna be a problem for the politicians to deliver it' (lines 6-9). The pronoun 'we' frames valuing democracy as being an intrinsic component of our collective identity (Bramley, 2001). This challenges the assumption that those advocating this position do not accept the will of the people and works to establish a principle-practice distinction (Wetherell, Stiven, & Potter, 1987). Through this, implementing the results of the referendum is treated as desirable in principle but infeasible in practice due to the nature of Brexit. Furthermore, by specifying that Brexit is an example of 'direct participatory democracy', Pinker constructs an implicit contrast between the EU referendum and other forms of democracy such as parliamentary or representative. This situates a second referendum as existing within an alternative democratic system in which we can reject the results of Brexit whilst still respecting democracy.

Pinker illustrates the difficulty of implementing Brexit using the imagery of 'square circles' (line 8). This imagery characterises Brexit as being logically impossible and self-contradictory. Because of this, the responsibility for the failure to leave the EU is attributed to those who voted for this outcome rather than the politicians who have been unable 'to deliver it' (line 9). As the inability to enact this policy is a consequence of Brexit itself, rather than a result of political incompetency, this further cements a second referendum as the only viable way to resolve the current deadlock. He adds that 'there seems to be a number of square circles here' (lines 9-10), emphasising that this is a complex situation with numerous logical inconsistencies which cannot easily be fixed. A 'real world' example of these 'square circles' is provided in lines 16 to 17, where Pinker argues that the possibility of a border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland would be 'a bad idea but then of er not having a border (.) would be inconsistent with what Brexit promised to deliver' (lines 16-17). This

suggests that it is impossible to maintain peace in Northern Ireland and deliver an internally consistent Brexit. Additionally, the verb 'promise' highlights that such an outcome would not align with public expectations. It is therefore the implementation of Brexit which would undermine 'the will of the people', as the 'reality' is not what they voted for. Through this, the 'actual implications of implementing' (line 19) the results of the referendum are constructed as being problematic and infeasible.

Following his justification of a second referendum on the grounds that it is both compatible with democratic principles and a practical response to the difficulty of implementing Brexit, Pinker finally invokes the concept of 'new information'. This device is used to highlight that that the public's understanding of Brexit has changed since the initial EU referendum. He explains that 'the essence of (.) err (.) of intelligence of learning of progress is (.) err (.) absorbing new information' (lines 20-22). In contrast to much of this account, this statement is not prefaced by a disclaimer or attributed to another party. As a result, this assertion is presented as an authoritative statement of fact (Potter, 1996). The invocation of terms which carry positive connotations ('intelligence' and 'progress') positions the process of changing one's mind as being both logical and morally admirable. Likewise, the verb 'absorbing' suggests this process is a natural response to learning 'new information' (Chen, Bartlett, & Peng, 2021). Making poor decisions before this information 'comes to light' (lines 23-24) is presented as an understandable mistake. However, 'repeating the same policy' when it has been shown 'that it's er unreasonable' (lines 23-24) is implicitly criticised. As repetition suggests a level of intentionality (Antaki, 1998), Pinker indicates that those still pursuing Brexit are doing so with the full knowledge that it is harmful.

From this, it is concluded that 'based on what we know about now about how to implement Brexit (.) it seems to me perfectly reasonable to have a er a (.) ju- a second decision a second ref [referendum]' (lines 24-27). Here, the difficulty experienced by politicians trying to deliver Brexit is the 'new information' that we should act upon to avoid the 'square circle' of leaving the EU. Although Pinker positions his support for a second referendum as a personal opinion ('it seems to me'), his assessment of Brexit is constructed as an observable fact corroborated by the shared knowledge 'we'

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now have. He also supports this argument through an appeal to reason. This has previously been identified as a persuasive strategy used within political discourse to ground accounts in an objective reality which exists separately from the speakers' own biases and desires. Supporting something 'reasonable', even if it turns out to be false, is treated as a rational and fair stance (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2011). A second referendum is therefore framed as a practical response to the 'new information' which has emerged since the referendum vote.

In this extract, Pinker invokes the concept of 'new information' to justify his support for a second referendum. Through this, he constructs a temporal dimension through which it is suggested that the public could not have known how difficult it would be to implement Brexit before casting their vote. The implication of this is that if they had known then what they know now, then they would have voted differently. This strategy works towards legitimising this proposal by providing a direct rebuttal to the claim that 'nothing has changed'.

The two strategies discussed here ('lack of change' and 'new information') were found to remain relatively stable throughout the dataset. When considering the function of the argument employed by opponents of a second referendum, that there had been no change in a circumstance that would justify a second vote, this stability is somewhat unsurprising. The consistency of this strategy can itself be seen to be orientated towards action – that is, the argument remains the same as nothing has changed. In response to this argument, proponents of a second referendum were found to consistently invoke the concept of 'new information'. It is the flexibility of this strategy which enabled it to remain stable throughout time. For example, the public coming to learn of 'facts' purposely hidden from them during the 2016 referendum is treated as 'new information'. Likewise, 'facts' that have only emerged as a response to Brexit and could not have been reasonably predicted are also treated as 'new'. From this, unfolding events (such as Boris Johnson becoming Prime Minister) are not framed as a form of 'new-er' information but rather used as a further resource the speaker can draw upon when employing this strategy.

8.3 Arrogance and Sore Losers

A second key strategy speakers used to challenge calls for a second referendum was the negative characterisation of those supporting this proposal. This strategy was also observed to remain broadly stable throughout the dataset, as opponents of a second referendum sought to present those advocating for this position as arrogant elitists who could not accept that they had 'lost' the Brexit vote. However, in the months leading up to Boris Johnson taking office (January to July), this arrogance was primarily evidenced through highlighting instances of politicians working to 'stop' Brexit. Calls for a second referendum, alongside the failure of May's withdrawal bill to pass through parliament, were both presented as evidence of an elitist attempt to undermine the 'will of the people'. This characterisation drew upon many populist tropes, including the idea that the oppressive elite was seeking to suppress the voice of the 'underdogs' (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2017). Speakers employing this strategy were observed to strongly object to any suggestion that Leave voters had fallen victim to disinformation. Instead, the failure to implement Brexit was attributed to the incompetence and wilful obstinance of those in power. From this, a second referendum was constructed as an anti-democratic proposition which would punish the public for the failure of politicians. This can be seen in extract 3, where an audience member dismisses the claim that leave voters had been influenced by disinformation.

Extract 3: Question Time, 14/03/2019

```
1   A1  we had a vote (.) that wasn't meaningless (.) or was it if if it
2       was if we have a third referendum or a second ref- where does it
3       end (.) [why don't we just honour what the people voted for (.)
4       then take (.) then take ]
5   AU          [((applause))    ]
6   A1  take a view as to whether or not that was right or wrong (.) the
7       people voted for a reason (.) they got out of their beds they
8       went down to the polling station [and they voted    ]
9   A2                                   [because they were] lied to
10  A1  that is nothing but sheer arrogance (.) arrogance of people that
```

```
11      have lost (.) and people who want to subvert democracy [that
12      are now asking for a second referendum (.) get on with what
13      the people vote for (.) whether you like it or whether you
14      lost people voted for a reason and it'll be the end of democracy
15      in this country]
16  AU                                                      [((
17      applause))     ]
18  A1  if we can't honour what parliament said they would do (.) two
19      years ago (.) they've had two years to do this they haven't done
20      it (.) it's not it's not people's fault (.) it's parliament's
21      fault for not getting its own house in order (.) and for people
22      the parliamentarians (.) ahead of us today to say (.) well we
23      need more time (.) we're only needing more time cause you
24      failed (.) [gentlemen you failed us]
25  AU             [((applause))           ]
```

Before constructing a negative characterisation of those advocating for a second referendum, he first makes the case for why the results of the EU referendum should be respected. He begins by arguing, 'we had a vote (.) that wasn't meaningless (.) or was it' (line 1)'. Following this statement of 'fact' with a question may be viewed as the audience member seeking reassurance for his assessment. However, as 'or was it' is framed as a rhetorical question, it is instead used to make a point (Kalkhoven, 2016). The point being made here is that if there were to be a second referendum, then this would render the results of the first vote meaningless. It is interesting that his focus here is on the 'meaning' of the vote. This suggests that his opposition to a second referendum is grounded in the concern that it would undermine the significance of the Brexit vote rather than the possibility that it would prevent the UK from leaving the EU. This is reinforced in line 3, where he asks, 'why don't we just honour what the people voted for'. Again, his support for Brexit is not a result of the benefits it would bring but because of his respect for the 'will of the people'. From this, the audience member positions his account as a principled defence of democracy.

A further function of this question is that it also works as a suggestion. Unlike a second referendum, honouring the people's vote is presented as being the 'obvious' way forward. The employment of what Lee (1987) labels a 'depreciatory just' works to attenuate the force of this utterance and minimise what the audience member is asking for. From this, implementing Brexit is treated as the 'natural' response to the referendum vote. The implication that this is the natural course of action orientates towards a 'common sense argument' through which this account is constructed as a rational assessment of what should happen next (Augoustinos & Every, 2007). It is argued that it is only when the referendum results have been 'honoured' that we are entitled to 'take a view as to whether or not that was right or wrong' (line 6). This further attends to the rationality of this assessment by providing the audience member with a neutral footing (Clayman, 1991). As he does not provide an opinion regarding whether it was 'right' to vote for Brexit, this reinforces that his interests lie in protecting the right of people to have their vote respected. It also undermines potential counterarguments, as it is not definite that the negative consequences of Brexit, which advocates claim can be avoided through a second referendum, will actually occur. The proposal for a second referendum is therefore ill-informed, as there is a lack of knowledge regarding the long-term impact leaving the EU will have on the country.

The audience member further undermines the legitimacy of a second referendum through his construction of 'the people'. He argues that 'the people voted for a reason (.) they got out of their beds they went down to the polling station [and they voted]' (lines 6-8). This third-person narrative structure is used to construct the public as having made an active decision to participate in the referendum (Wooffitt, 1992). Rather than simply happening upon a polling station, they are instead presented as intentionally seeking one out to cast their vote. The use of this structure emphasises that the act of voting is a wilful decision and should therefore not be taken lightly. It is worth considering here the function of this narration beginning with a reference to people getting 'out of their beds'. One potential function this serves is that it typifies this series of events as being 'normal', with this constructing his account as being representative of the average voter. Additionally, this narrative can be seen to take the form of a three-part list (Jefferson, 1990). This highlights that the decision to vote

was routinely acted upon during the day of the referendum. From this, it is implied that the way people voted was not a spur-of-the-moment decision but something which involved thought and planning. The phrase 'the people voted for a reason' (line 14) is repeated throughout this extract and works as a cohesive device. By repeating this assertion, the audience member presents all his arguments as unified by the same underlying 'truth' (Tannen, 1987): that a second referendum would undermine the principle of democracy and disrespect the agency of 'the people' and their right to vote.

This characterisation of 'the people' is interrupted by another audience member who interjects '[because they were] lied to' (line 9). This provides an alternative account of the Brexit vote in which the public is stripped of their agency. Although the individual or group doing the lying is not specified, it can be assumed that this refers to supporters of the Leave Campaign. As discussed previously in this chapter, throughout the dataset, it was commonplace for the Leave Campaign to be accused of having intentionally obscured the reality of Brexit. This accusation is rejected on lines 10 to 11, where it is dismissed as 'nothing but sheer arrogance (.) arrogance of people that have lost'. Through this, the character of those making such claims is criticised. Such individuals are depicted as self-righteous and contemptuous towards those with differing opinions. This arrogance is constructed as being particularly unjustified as despite this opining about factuality, they still 'lost' the referendum as a result of their failure to convince the public of their own position.

By noting that Remain supporters lost the referendum, the audience member also highlights that they have an interest in framing the outcome as being a product of disinformation. This is because attributing Brexit to the deception of the Leave campaign allows them to save face and maintain that the facticity of their stance could only be challenged through lies (Edwards & Potter, 1992). This negative characterisation is extended to those 'people who want to subvert democracy [that are now asking for a second referendum' (lines 11-12). Through this description, the audience member impugns the motives of those advocating for this policy. He suggests that they purposefully seek to undermine democracy, rather than this being an accidental by-product of their position. Accusations regarding the subversion of democracy have been identified as a populist strategy used to resent political opponents as elitists who are conspiring against the national interest (Sengul, 2019).

Alongside being undemocratic, this position is also constructed as being inconsistent. The temporal adverb 'now' indicates that a second referendum is not something that its supporters have always favoured. This challenges the sincerity of their support; if they genuinely believed that a second referendum was in the best interest of the country, then they would have advocated for this position before they knew they had lost the vote.

Finally, the audience member highlights the role politicians and political institutions have played in enabling such anti-democratic attitudes. It is not just a second referendum, which would be the 'end of democracy in this country' (lines 14-15), but also the inability to 'honour what parliament said they would do' (line 18). This suggests that as politicians had promised to implement the results of the referendum, their failure to do so would mean they failed to perform their duty. From this, it is parliamentarians rather than Leave supporters who are framed as liars. Additionally, this reference to parliament serves to highlight that it is not just a fringe minority who are rejecting Brexit. Instead, even institutions which are said to represent the "heart of UK democracy" (Russell, 2020, p.443) are working to undermine the will of the people. Politicians are also criticised on practical grounds, as despite having 'two years to do this they haven't done it' (lines 19-20). Their inability to deliver Brexit over this period is presented as evidence of both their incompetence and reluctance to accept the referendum results. The establishment is characterised as being hypocritical for making negative assumptions about Leave voters despite 'not getting its own house in order' (line 21). From this, the current circumstances are the fault of politicians' lack of action rather than Brexit itself.

In this extract, the speaker challenges the legitimacy of a second referendum by constructing a negative characterisation of those advocating this proposal. Central to his argument is the claim that those seeking a second referendum are sore losers who lack respect for the 'will of the people'. This negative characterisation is built in contrast to a positive portrayal of Leave supporters, who are depicted as having made an informed decision to vote to leave the EU. Brexit itself was treated as being unproblematic, meaning that the failure of politicians to implement it was viewed as indicative of their disdain for democracy. Through this, he draws on populist rhetoric regarding 'the people' to

frame the implementation of the result of the referendum as the only reasonable and morally just course of action.

8.4 Government Failure

Interestingly, accounts supporting a second referendum were also found to attribute blame for the failure of Brexit to politicians. Similar to extract 4, here speakers would argue that then Prime Minister Theresa May had failed to take appropriate action to ensure the UK's withdrawal from the EU. May was characterised as stubborn and incompetent due to her unwillingness to compromise on issues such as the future of immigration, trade, and the border in Northern Ireland. This lack of compromise was highlighted as being one of the key factors preventing Brexit, as it had led to parliament being unable to produce a withdrawal agreement. However unlike in the previous extract, here this failure was used to justifying a 'people's vote' on the basis of it being a last resort solution which would end the political deadlock and protect the national interest. This strategy also invoked a populist characterisation of 'the people', who were constructed as having a common sense that was lacked by the elite (Mudde, 2004).

This can be seen in extract 4, in which Anna Soubry suggests that only the public has the common sense required to end the chaos caused by Brexit. From this, politicians are framed as lacking insight into what is in the best interest of the country. Soubry had resigned from the Conservative party three months prior to joining the independent group Change UK. This group formed in response to what they described as a loss of the centre ground in British politics due to the influence of hard-line Brexiteers (Adams, 2020). At the time of broadcast, Change UK comprised of 11 MPs from across the political spectrum who all supported holding a second referendum. This extract begins with Fiona Bruce reiterating an earlier question from the audience regarding the likelihood of May's withdrawal bill gaining support in parliament.

Extract 4: Question Time, 09/05/2019

1   FB can Theresa May do the same (.) Anna Soubry

2   AS   no (.) the numbers are not there for her (.) and she has no plan

3   B (.) and that is the real problem (.) look we're in a real

4   political crisis and we are in a crisis because parliament can't

5   decide on a way forward and one of the biggest problems we have

6   (.) is that people aren't being honest about why we're in this

7   crisis and the way out of it (.) we're in this crisis because of

8   Brexit because of all the fake and phony promises that were made

9   about (.) how easy it would be how good it would be (.) and

10   which ever way you cut it it's now arguable that you can't

11   actually deliver it (.) and in whatever Brexit deal you put

12   forward even on the government's own assessment is going to make

13   our country poorer

14   FB   so do you think [Theresa May has]

15   AS   [and the majority]

16   FB   made false promises then

17   AS   I- no (.) Theresa May's problem is that she's put down these

18   things called her red lines that she's never been able to move

19   away from (.) so you've got that problem (.) because there was

20   a time in parliament when we could have absolutely reached a

21   compromise (.) we could have delivered the results of the

22   referendum we could have done the best for British business and

23   maintained peace in Northern Ireland (.) that time was there (.)

24   and Theresa May refused to grasp it I went to her (.) I made the

25   case for the single market and the customs union and she would

26   not listen (.) she would not have it even after she lost the

27   conservatives the majority (.) and it's now gone and it's moved

28	on (.) and I believe people in this country are fed up to the
29	back teeth with the whole thing (.) I think they look at both
30	parties and they see them in a mess and the only way out of it
31	now (.) to do the right thing is to take it back to the British
32	people

Soubry's support for a second referendum is grounded in the notion that May is both unwilling and unable to produce the Brexit that people voted for. Because of this, this account begins by building a negative characterisation of May and her government. She responds to the question by indicating that the 'real problem' (line 3) in getting May's withdrawal bill through parliament is that 'the numbers are not there for her (.) and she has no plan B' (lines 2-3). The criticism here is not just that May has failed to gain support but also that she has no alternative plan to fall back on. This suggests she is either unaware of the current political reality facing her or that she is stubbornly pushing a bill which she knows is going to be rejected. By describing this incompetency as 'the real problem' rather than the equally applicable 'a real problem', Soubry indicates that this is the most accurate and important explanation for the delay to Brexit. This negative characterisation then continues later in the extract, when Bruce prompts Soubry to hold May accountable for any 'false promises' (line 16) made. Whilst avoiding characterising May as dishonest ('no', line 17), this opening is used to level an alternative charge. Instead, May's 'problem is that she's put down these things called her red lines' (lines 17-18). At first glance, this may appear to be a new 'real problem' to replace the one provided earlier in the account, but it is a continuation of this point. That is, 'she's never been able to move away from' (lines 18-19) these red lines due to her stubbornness.

The term 'red lines' is used to describe proposed Brexit policies which May deemed as being non-negotiable. This includes issues such as a rejection of the single market and a commitment to limiting EU immigration (Barry, 2019). Dismissively labelling these red lines as 'things' rather than policies constructs them as ambiguous and insignificant. The way in which Soubry introduces the concept of red lines implies that they are not something which she expects the listener to understand.

This is not due to the ignorance of the listener but a result of them holding very little meaning to anyone outside of May herself. The possessive pronoun 'her' attributes their existence solely to May and indicates that nobody else holds to them in the same way (Karapetjana, 2011). This brings into question their legitimacy as Brexit policies and presents May's inability to 'move away from them' as being unreasonable. These criticisms were also identified in Chapter 6, in which speakers undermined May's leadership by characterising her as stubborn and naïve. This reflects stability in how May was constructed throughout the dataset. Furthermore, the extreme case formulation 'never' emphasises the stubbornness of this action (Pomerantz, 1986) and suggests that this is an ingrained pattern of behaviour which reflects May's character. Soubry highlights the consequence of this in lines 19 to 21, claiming that 'there was a time in parliament when we could have absolutely reached a compromise'. From this, the current political crisis did not emerge as an inevitable response to the outcome of the referendum, something which, if true, would relieve May of accountability. It is instead constructed as being something avoidable and the direct consequence of her failures in governance.

A three-part list (Jefferson, 1990) is employed to illustrate what has been lost due to May's refusal to compromise on Brexit. Soubry argues, 'we could have delivered the results of the referendum we could have done the best for British business and maintained peace in Northern Ireland' (lines 21-23). By employing this device, she identifies these factors as the 'big' current issues that politicians have found difficult to reconcile. This reinforces the idea that these issues are not inherently difficult to resolve but have become so due to the inflexibility of government policy. This lost opportunity for progress is not a result of May having misjudged the situation but due to her having 'refused to grasp it' (line 24). The implication of this is that she knowingly rejected proposals that would benefit the country in favour of pursuing her own politically motivated deal. This is further evidenced through Soubry's account of her meeting with May. In lines 24 to 26, she provides a narrative account of this meeting, in which 'I went to her (.) I made the case for the single market and the customs union and she would not listen'. The construction of narrative in talk is an externalising device which works to produce vivid descriptions which are seen as existing independently from the speaker's biases (Potter, 1996; Woolgar, 1998). This device presents Soubry's account as a factual

retelling of events and establishes that her characterisation of May stems from first-hand experience. The invocation of first-hand experience is significant, as it positions her criticisms as being informed by objective observation, not political speculation and spin (Augoustinos & Every, 2007).

May's stubbornness continued 'even after she lost the Conservatives the majority' (lines 26-27). The adverb 'even' marks this behaviour as being unusual and suggests that there is an objectively 'correct' course of action which should have been taken in response to the Conservative's loss of seats at the 2017 General Election. By selectively referencing this event and her meeting with May, Soubry implicitly draws parallels between these two situations. Both are presented as having been potential 'turning points' which should have led May to rethink her Brexit strategy. Her refusal to do so is again framed as indicative of her resistance to compromise and failure to recognise the reality of the situation. The 'reality' being that 'we're in a real political crisis' (lines 3- 4). Previous research has identified the categorisation of 'crisis' as being frequently mobilised within European political discourse (Kirkwood & Goodman, 2018). As noted by Hay (1995), this device provides an effective tool through which speakers can provide a nuanced account of the complex causes and consequences of a situation whilst simultaneously being simple in their attribution of responsibility. For instance, in this extract, issues such as the deadlock in parliament, the Northern Irish border, and the negative economic consequences of Brexit are all attributed to the failings of Theresa May and her government.

Although the key strategy employed in this extract involves holding May accountable for the current political 'crisis', Soubry also indicates that these issues are not just a result of poor leadership. The problems facing the country are also attributed to 'all the fake and phony promises that were made' (line 8) about Brexit. This introduces a temporal dimension to this account, in which dishonesty is presented as a fixed and longstanding characteristic of Brexit (Walton, 2004). The use of the past tense alludes to this dishonesty having taken place during the referendum campaign, with this suggesting that the vote itself was based on lies. As the claims made about Brexit are characterised as having been overly simplistic and lacking in nuance ('how easy it would be how good it would be', line 9), this implies that the people making such false promises were knowingly misleading the public.

This has resulted in a situation where 'whichever way you cut it it's now arguable you can't actually deliver it' (lines 10-11). It is important to emphasise here that Soubry is not making the case that it is impossible for the UK to leave the EU, but rather that Brexit cannot be achieved on the terms the public had voted for. This works to build the case for a second referendum on the basis that Brexit is a symptom of a broader systemic problem in British politics which exists beyond Theresa May.

Like the dishonesty of the referendum campaign, in the present day, 'one of the biggest problems we have is that people aren't being honest about why we're in this crisis and the way out of it' (lines 6-7). The extreme case formulation 'biggest' highlights the severity of this issue (Pomerantz, 1986). However, by specifying that this is only 'one' of the country's problems, Soubry suggests that the factors underpinning the current crisis are widespread and difficult to resolve. Unlike the explicit criticism of May, here Soubry employs systematic vagueness to attribute responsibility for this dishonesty to unidentified 'people'. This vagueness attends to fact construction by limiting the ability of opponents to challenge the details of this representation (Potter, 1996). It also reinforces the impression that dishonesty is so pervasive within politics that it cannot be pinned down to one specific group or individual. As Soubry goes on to advocate a second referendum, it can be inferred that 'the way out' of this crisis is allowing people to vote again. By not providing this as an option, those in power are lying to the public about the best way forward for the country. From this, it is those opposed to a second referendum who are constructed as lacking respect for the rights and autonomy of 'the people'.

Throughout this account, Brexit is constructed as a political 'crisis' due to the deadlock in parliament and May's lack of appropriate action. It is primarily the process of leaving the EU which Soubry frames as harming the country. However, she also highlights the consequences that would occur if this process were to reach completion, claiming that 'whatever Brexit deal you put forward even on the government's own assessment is going to make our country poorer' (lines 11-13). Reference to this data works to lend credibility to her position by grounding it in this external world. The damage caused by Brexit is presented as being an objective and tangible fact that exists beyond Soubry's respective biases (Edwards, 2003). By attributing this information to the Conservative party,

she indicates that this claim is free from stake and interest (Edwards & Potter, 1992). This is because, unlike Soubry, the government have little motivation to exaggerate the severity of these economic consequences, as doing so would reflect poorly on their policy and leadership. The harm Brexit would cause is, therefore, undeniable even to those with a stake in this not being the case.

As a negative outcome will occur regardless of 'whatever' Brexit deal is proposed, this undermines the possibility that there is any withdrawal agreement which would provide the country with the benefits that had been promised during the referendum campaign. This reinforces the suggestion that the time for compromise has 'now gone and it's moved on' (lines 27-28). The construction of a temporal comparison between 'now' and 'then' works to create discontinuity between the political circumstances of the past and present (Condor, 2006). This suggests that due to the incompetence and dishonesty of politicians, Brexit can no longer be resolved through conventional means. From this, Soubry justifies her support for a second referendum by presenting this policy as the sole remaining viable option for political progress. Her account of her meeting with May reinforces that this is a conclusion that she has come to reluctantly and only after exhausting all alternative avenues for compromise. By offering her position as one which she arrived at reluctantly, she indicates that, in principle, she is opposed to the idea of a second referendum (Edwards, 2003; Potter, 1996). It is because of government failure that she has been 'pushed' into advocating this stance in order to protect the interests of the country.

Finally, Soubry constructs her view as representative of public sentiment, stating, 'I believe people in this country are fed up to the back teeth with the whole thing' (lines 28-29). This draws upon a populist repertoire by indicating that she is motivated by the 'will of the people' and the 'national interest' rather than her political interests (Dickerson, 1997). As the public is tired of 'the whole thing', this implies that they too would not be satisfied by any 'solution' which would work to further prolong the Brexit process, such as a new withdrawal agreement. This dissatisfaction is framed as being non-partisan, as the public 'look at both parties and they see them in a mess' (lines 29-30). Due to Soubry positing herself as the 'animator' of the public's concerns (Goffman, 1981), she must be seen to remain objective. By characterising both parties as equally flawed, she maintains her

neutral footing and suggests that her allegiance is with 'the people' rather than any specific party. This negative characterisation of 'both sides' also reinforces that dishonesty and incompetence are rampant across the political spectrum, meaning that drastic action is needed to restore order. From this, Soubry concludes that 'the only way out of it now (.) to do the right thing is to take it back to the British people' (lines 30-32). The adjective 'right' has multiple meanings here as it indicates that a second referendum is both an objectively correct and morally righteous response to this crisis. This is because they, unlike the politicians, can be trusted to act reasonably.

Soubry justifies her support for a second referendum in three ways. First, she constructs British politics as being in a state of disrepair. Much of the blame for the current chaos is attributed to May, whose inability to compromise is treated as being a contributing factor towards the lack of a withdrawal agreement. From this, preventing Brexit in its current form is presented as being in the best interests of the country. Next, she frames this proposal as a last resort option, which has only become necessary due to the failure of May and her government. The suggestion that Soubry arrived at this position reluctantly legitimises her account by indicating that she is not motivated by political bias. Finally, she suggests that this view represents public sentiment, therefore providing a defence against the claim that she is undermining the 'will of the people'.

8.5 A reasonable alternative

As seen in extract 4, the negative characterisation of Theresa May was a common device speakers used to justify their support for a second referendum. A similar strategy was employed following Boris Johnson's appointment as Conservative Party leader in July 2019. Johnson's government was also presented as being incompetent and stubborn, with speakers criticising them for adopting what was viewed as a hard-line Brexiteer stance. Johnson was also faced with challenges to the legitimacy of his democratic mandate, as critics highlighted that, unlike May, he had not been subject to a public vote. Whilst such arguments worked to undermine the government's approach to Brexit, they also inadvertently provided an alternative to a second referendum. It was suggested that if people were dissatisfied with the government's actions, a general election would be more effective at addressing their concerns. This would provide the public with the opportunity to influence the Brexit process

without stopping it in its entirety. From this, those who advocated for a second referendum whilst opposing an election were treated as hypocritical and politically motivated. This worked to build on the strategy outlined in extract 3, in which supporters of a second referendum were characterised as arrogant 'sore losers'. Following Johnson's appointment, supporters of this position were framed as not only wanting to prevent 'the will of the people' concerning Brexit but also as wanting to undermine British democracy more broadly.

This can be seen in extract 5, in which Jeffery Donaldson addresses a point regarding public dissatisfaction with the government's Brexit policy. At the time of broadcast, Donaldson was the Chief Whip in Westminster for the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), who were in a confidence-and-supply arrangement with the Conservative government. Prior to this extract, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Housing, John Healy, claimed that a second referendum would prevent Johnson from taking the UK out of the EU without a deal. In this extract, Donaldson works to present this position as hypocritical and anti-democratic.

Extract 5: Question Time,12/09/2019

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 1   JD   well look (.) if people are not happy with the government (.)
 2        and not happy with the Prime Minister there is a very simple
 3        answer (.) we have a general election [and let the people
 4        decide (.) and (.) you know (.) for month and months]
 5   AU                                          [((applause)) ]
 6   JD   and months we had Jeremy Corbyn (.) and his colleagues (.)
 7        demanding a general election (.) and when they had the
 8        opportunity this week (.) twice to vote for a general election
 9        (.) they ran away from that opportunity (.) [so you know when]
10   A1                                               [no they didn't  ]
11   JD   I (.) [when I]
12   A1         [lies  ]
13   JD   [when I hear people]
14   A1   [why would they run] away
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15  JD   well they run away from it because I rather suspect that given
16       the deep divisions in the Labour party (.) and the that they
17       don't want an election right now (.) but if if if er (.) you
18       know people have an issue (.) er and want to have their say er a
19       general election (.) er gives people that opportunity to do it
20       (.) now we've got a few weeks (.) here (.) and I think that
21       we've got to give the Prime Minister a chance (.) to see if he
22       can bring back a deal to parliament (.) because if we can get a
23       deal and I believe we can (.) er then that will (.) help to
24       resolve the Brexit issue (.) we will then have a general
25       election (.) and people can give their verdict (.) and and I
26       think that's a sensible way to deal with this now (.) give the
27       government (.) er er (.) a few weeks (.) given all that we've
28       had we've had hundreds of hour of debate in parliament (.) on
29       Brexit (.) hundreds of hours of it (.) I think now (.) let's
30       give the prime minister a few weeks to see if he can deliver
31       that deal (.) erm and he brings it back to parliament (.) and
32       then we go to the country and that I think is the fairest and
33       best way of dealing with this once and for all
```

This account performs two argumentative functions. First, it undermines the authenticity of Healy's concern about the UK leaving the EU without a deal. Next, it defends the Conservative Brexit policy against criticism by suggesting that it is unfair to make an assessment at the current time. Central to both arguments is the implicit invocation of 'the will of the people'. The accusation he has been charged with is that 'the people' are unhappy with a government that he supports. This places Donaldson in a difficult position. It would reflect poorly on his party if he were to concede the claim that there is dissatisfaction with the government's policy and would also reflect poorly on him if he was seen to dismiss the genuine concerns of the public. This tension is first navigated using a conditional proposition, in which it is only 'if people are not happy with the government' (line 1) that action should be taken. This allows him to simultaneously reject this assessment of public opinion whilst also signalling that if this were the case, he would have a 'very simple answer' (lines 2-3) in the

form of a general election. Through this, he emphasises that regardless of his stance on a second referendum, he is still in favour of letting 'the people decide' (lines 3-4).

This sentiment is repeated on multiple occasions throughout the extract. Donaldson more explicitly orientates towards a general election being an alternative to a second referendum on line 18. Alongside simply being dissatisfied with the government, he acknowledges that people might 'want to have their say'. From this, a general election is positioned as not just a 'solution' but as a democratic right. To pre-empt the argument that the public should have the right to vote on the withdrawal agreement specifically, Donaldson reiterates that once an agreement is established, 'we will then have a general election (.) and people can give their verdict' (lines 24-25). Discursive research has identified modal verbs as a common device used by political leaders in order to demonstrate strength and express certainty within their accounts (Shayegh, 2012). Here, the modal auxiliary verb 'will' suggests this is a guarantee rather than a prediction (Leech, 1987). This indicates that unlike those advocating a second referendum, Donaldson can make assurances regarding how his stance will be implemented.

Therefore, unlike in extracts 1 and 3, here, the morality or necessity of a second referendum is not explicitly challenged. Instead, he works to position a general election as being a more viable alternative. Describing this solution as 'simple' presents a general election as a straightforward and common-sense response to the current situation (Capdevila & Callaghan, 2007). Through this, the Labour Party's apparent rejection of this proposal is treated as being unreasonable and politically motivated. This is reinforced through the claim that this rejection came after 'months and months' (line 4) of 'demanding a general election' (line 7). The sudden halting of support for a seemingly strongly held belief is presented as suspicious, as no justification for this decision is provided. As Labour 'ran away' (line 9) when allowed to enact their demands, this suggests that their advocacy was insincere. Their demands were made for the purpose of political bargaining rather than representing the national interest. Donaldson adopts language typically used to justify a 'people's vote' ('let the people decide', lines 3-4) to highlight the hypocrisy of their position. If Labour were genuinely interested in letting the public determine the future of the country rather than simply stopping Brexit,

then they would agree to a general election. Their unwillingness to do so not only impugns their credibility but also the legitimacy of a second referendum.

When challenged on this representation of Labour, Donaldson refers to the 'deep divisions in the Labour party' (line 16). Alongside further undermining the credibility of their position, this response also works to justify the later assertion that 'we've got to give the Prime Minister a chance' (line 21) in two ways. First, it presents the actions of Johnson and the government as preferable to those of their opposition. Next, by highlighting the negative consequences of internal division, Donaldson implicitly presents the idea of the country unifying behind Johnson as a more robust Brexit strategy. Whilst 'got' constructs this point as a command rather than a suggestion, Donaldson minimises what is expected of the public. He is not demanding that they provide unquestioning loyalty to Johnson, but simply that they wait to 'see if he can bring back a deal to parliament' (lines 21-22) before making final judgements about the feasibility of Brexit or the tenability of the current government. Through this, he indicates that he, unlike Labour, trusts people to come to a reasonable conclusion once they have access to all of the facts.

This 'softening' can be viewed as Donaldson 'doing politeness' in that he avoids both damaging his own face and directly challenging the face of others (Billig, 1997; Brown & Levinson, 1987). He avoids threatening the negative face of the public by emphasising that he is not restricting their ability to disapprove of Johnson but instead just requesting that they give him a fair chance to act. This also protects Donaldson's positive face, as he is not seen as overtly biased in favour of the government or dismissive of public opinion (Chilton & Fetzer, 2010). As well as attending to self-presentation, his repeated assertion that we should 'give the Prime Minister a few weeks to see if he can deliver that deal' (lines 30-31) also works to implicitly undermine calls for a second referendum. In the same way, he suggests it would be premature to hold a general election; it would also be unreasonable to vote again on EU membership before knowing details regarding the potential withdrawal agreement. The specified time of 'a few weeks' is about the extended withdrawal date of the 31st of October 2019. By highlighting that there is still time left for Johnson to reach a compromise with the EU, Donaldson dismisses concerns about the risk of no deal. This reinforces that

a second referendum would be an overreaction to the concerns people might have, especially as a general election is 'a sensible way to deal with this now' (line 26).

As seen in previous extracts, the use of 'now' provides this argument with a temporal dimension (Condor, 2006). It is suggested that because 'we've had hundreds of hours of debate in parliament (.) on Brexit' (lines 27-29), the back-and-forth arguing about the UK leaving the EU has run its course. If those opposing the government and advocating a second referendum had a convincing case to make, it would have been heard by that point in the process. From this, a general election is constructed as being a natural and inevitable endpoint which would allow the country to move past Brexit 'once and for all' (line 33).

Donaldson's account characterises his stance as sensible and fair ('the fairest and best way', lines 32-33). This line of 'practical reasoning' is an argumentative strategy that restricts the amount of potential actions that can be taken to achieve a desired outcome. The function of this type of reasoning is to present the speaker's argument as the only rational solution to a given problem. This invocation of 'fairness' is an example of what Walton (2007) labels 'value-based reasoning'. Here, a general election would meet "both the goal and the value in question" (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2011, p.11). That is, it would allow 'the people' to have a say on the government's withdrawal bill whilst respecting the legitimacy of the Brexit vote. Labour's apparent rejection of this proposal is therefore framed as evidence of their disregard for common sense and democratic values.

8.6 An ineffective solution

In response to this argument, speakers advocating a second referendum had to be careful not to be seen as dismissive of a general election. As a second referendum was built on the principle that people should be allowed to have a say in the future of the country, opposition to other types of democratic votes was likely to be treated as hypocritical. This was particularly pertinent when many arguments favouring their position claimed that a second referendum was a last-resort solution to government failure. If there were other, more accessible ways to resolve the Brexit crisis, this would work to undermine the legitimacy of their claims. From this, speakers presented leaving the EU as being an

inherently harmful action, regardless of leadership. They claimed that the only way to protect the national interest was to stop Brexit in its entirety, something which a general election would be unlikely to accomplish.

In extract 6, Liberal Democrat MP Layla Moran makes the case for a second referendum. Prior to her speaking, a heated debate had taken place between Shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry and LBC radio presenter Iain Dale. Thornberry had claimed that Boris Johnson would manipulate the timing of any potential election to push the country into leaving the EU without a deal. Dale rejected this assertion, claiming that Labour feared having an election as they knew they would be defeated. This interaction is referred to in the opening of this extract.

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Extract 6: Question Time, 05/09/2019
1   LM   I think what this conversation has shown us yet again is how
2        Brexit (.) is stopping us from talking about (.) all the other
3        (.) it's a mess (.) it's a complete mess and I'm not totally
4        sure (.) that a general election right now is even going to
5        solve it
6   FB   so do you [not want ]
7   LM             [there is ] one [way that]
8   FB                             [Layla   ] do you not want one is one
9   LM   well [actually]
10  FB        [Layla   ] I'm asking you do you [not want one]
11  LM                                         [the liberals] if all I
12       cared about was getting more Lib Dem MPs (.) the lib Dems are
13       ready we're willing to take it there (.) and as the gentleman
14       said (.) if you're a remainer (.) as I am (.) you vote liberal
15       democrat (.) we are going to do really well (.) when this
16       election comes (.) but I'm just not sure it's going to solve
17       anything (.) if you want to make Brexit stop (.) there is only
18       one way (.) voting for no deal and the cliff edge of no deal and
19       whatever that's going to bring (.) or a deal (.) we still know
20       that that's going to bring chaos in of itself (.) it's going to
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21        be a transition (.) it's the next (.) it's part one (.) then
22        you've got the (.) political declaration to still talk through
23        you're talking about decades of this (.) if you really want to
24        make Brexit stop (.) you take it back to the people (.) with the
25        option to remain and you vote to remain in the European union
26        (.) that's the only way to make it stop
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Throughout this extract, Moran works to justify her opposition to a general election. As general elections are typically treated as a hallmark of democracy, she must carefully manage her self-presentation. One way she does this is by emphasising that even for her, this stance is out of the ordinary. In lines 4-5, her doubt that 'a general election right now is even going to solve' the chaos caused by Brexit is used to mark this as an unusual set of circumstances. This is evident in the adverb 'even', which works to construct support for a general election as being her de facto position and the 'go to' form of recourse. Additionally, the temporal phrase 'right now' (line 4) implies that 178 she is not opposed to the idea of an election in principle but has concerns due to the timing. Through this, accountability for her opposition is placed externally. She is not against a general election due to some callous disregard for the people but because the 'complete mess' (line 3) of Brexit means that traditional solutions can no longer be relied upon.

Moran also attends to positive self-presentation by highlighting that she has nothing to gain from this stance. She suggests that if she were to support an election, this would be based on her prioritising party-political interests over the welfare of the country – 'if all I cared about was getting more Lib Dem MPs' (lines 11-12). This both attends to her positive self-presentation and undermines the integrity of her opponents, who, by extension of this point, are characterised as having a personal stake in this outcome (Potter, 1996). Moran highlights the party-political benefits of an election in lines 15-16, predicting that 'we are going to do really well (.) when this election comes'. Through this, she dismisses the potential argument that she is reluctant to agree to an election due to the fear that her

party will be unsuccessful. On the contrary, she characterises the Liberal Democrats as being confident in their chances. However, she also suggests that this would represent a failure to stop Brexit and amount to a last-ditch effort by the Liberal Democrats to limit the harm caused. On lines 12 to 13, she states that 'the Lib Dems are ready we're willing to take it there'. 'Take' indicates that there are other more immediate solutions to this problem, with this suggesting that Moran would only be 'willing' to resort to an election if need be. This enables Moran to avoid accusations of hypocrisy, as she is seen to welcome all opportunities for the public to vote. A second referendum is prioritised simply because 'there is only one way' (lines 17-18) to achieve the goal of stopping Brexit.

After attending to self-presentation, Moran works to undermine the usefulness of a general election. Moran displays some uncertainty when making this argument, shifting from not totally sure' (lines 3-4) to being 'just not sure it's going to solve anything' (lines 16-17). By omitting the modifier 'totally', she presents her position with more certainty (Skelton, 1997). Throughout the extract, Moran can be seen to hedge her position. This enables her to avoid appearing overly dismissive of an election whilst also emphasising that Brexit is so muddled and volatile that it is difficult to make predictions about what would and would not resolve the situation. Despite this apparent uncertainty, one strategy she uses to justify her opposition is to provide an overview of the negative consequences that will happen if a second referendum is not held.

If a second referendum is not held, Moran argues that the country will be restricted to one of two policy options. First, there is the possibility of 'voting for no deal' (line 18) and leaving the EU without a withdrawal agreement. This is described as being a 'cliff edge' (line 18) option, with this imagery characterising a no-deal Brexit as being dangerous and potentially fatal (Đurović, 2014). This metaphor also illustrates that there is no way of knowing the full extent of the damage which this would cause. Moran emphasises this through the employment of vagueness - 'whatever that's going to bring' (line 19), through which she again avoids making any factual claims which could be challenged by other speakers (Wooffitt, 1992). The alternative to this is 'a deal' (line 19), about which the

audience is also provided very little information. This allows Moran to implicitly reject the existence of a beneficial withdrawal agreement. The specific terms of any individual deal are treated as being irrelevant as ultimately leaving the EU will 'bring chaos in of itself' (line 20). Additionally, the assertion that Brexit is inherently problematic undermines the purpose of an election. Chaos will be caused by the UK leaving the EU, no matter which party is leading the proceedings.

Furthermore, this damage is something that 'we still know' will happen (line 19). The shift from the pronoun 'you' to 'we' indicates that this is an uncontested fact and is agreed upon by even those in favour of leaving the EU. Moran attributes the cause of the chaos to the long and drawn-out withdrawal process. It is described as being a 'transition' (line 21), highlighting that the country is going to have to go through a fundamental change in order for Brexit to take place. Establishing a withdrawal agreement is only 'part one' (line 21) of this process. Because of this, 'you're talking about decades' (line 23) of continuing negotiations. The time scale of 'decades' enables Moran to emphasise the length of the withdrawal process whilst avoiding being required to account for any specific claim. The public is positioned as being co-involved in this process ('you've got the (.) political declaration to still talk through', line 22). Through this, Moran constructs Brexit as not just something that will be damaging for the country but also something that will be personally 180 taxing on each individual. A second referendum is thus presented as being 'the only way to make it stop' (line 26). Other proposals, such as a general election, would only extend the chaos and delay progress.

Finally, despite being somewhat vague when discussing the content of a potential withdrawal agreement, she is explicit when defining the terms of a second referendum. Moran makes it clear that the purpose of this proposal is to provide the public 'with the option to remain' (lines 24-25). By being specific and detailed when explaining how Brexit can be prevented, Moran constructs this as being a simple and transparent process. In comparison to holding a general election or withdrawing from the EU with or without a deal, a second referendum offers a straightforward method for resolving the issues facing the country.

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8.7 Discussion

This analysis identified the various strategies speakers used to construct and undermine support for a second referendum. Here, I observed three ways a second referendum could be opposed. First, speakers highlighted that as very little had changed since 2016, a second vote was unlikely to prompt a sway in public opinion or a different outcome. From this, this proposal was treated as a ridiculous waste of time. Next, a second referendum was characterised as an inherently elitist attempt to disregard the will of the people. It was argued that the government were at fault for the failure to implement Brexit, and it was, therefore, unfair to make the public pay for their mistakes. Finally, a general election was presented as a reasonable alternative which would allow the public a final say on Brexit without discounting the results of the 2016 referendum.

When analysing the strategies through a longitudinal lens, one thing which is striking is the stability across the extracts which oppose a second referendum. By this, I mean that despite being produced by different speakers and at different points in the year, these accounts were found to all draw on similar lines of argument. When put together, there is a throughline that suggests that they are repetitions of the same argument rather than separate accounts competing to demonstrate the real problem with a second referendum. That is not to say that there are no differences between the production of each account. For example, in extract 1, Wehn was found to be less deferential to the 'will of the people' than speakers in extracts 3 and 5. However, the construction of who the people are and what they want remained largely consistent throughout this analysis. The 'will of the people' here is solely defined in terms of the results of the EU referendum, and 'the people' is used as a synonym for the country as a whole. Likewise, respecting the referendum results is presented as being in the 'national interest', regardless of the consequences of leaving the EU. Because of these consistencies, each account can be seen to be grounded in the same principles despite differences in detail and presentation.

This stability may provide insight into how speakers argue from different positions. Within this debate, those arguing against a second referendum can be seen to be representing the 'default' stance. Referendums in the UK are typically characterised as once-in-a-generation events, and it is expected that the result of a democratic vote will be implemented. Because of this, speakers already have a pre-established set of discursive resources and social norms to upon. Values such as 'respect for democracy' and 'fairness' are taken for granted and therefore require little justification. This contrasts those advocating a second referendum, who are instead doing something 'new'.

Despite the arguments used by opponents of a second referendum remaining relatively stable, these strategies were observed to draw on different resources through time. This is evident in extract 5, which outlines a third strategy speakers used to undermine support for this position. Here, the circumstances and controversy surrounding Johnson's leadership are used to expand upon the negative characterisation of those advocating for a second vote. However, to discuss this in context, I will first provide an overview of how speakers were found to respond to these arguments to construct their support for a people's vote.

In response to the claim that nothing had changed to justify another vote, speakers highlighted the emergence of 'new information'. This referred to any information which the public could not have previously known due to either the dishonesty of the Leave Campaign or lack of knowledge about the actual consequences of Brexit. Through this, a second referendum was presented as a democratic response to changing circumstances. Those advocating for a second referendum were also found to attribute blame for the current political crisis to politicians. The government's consistent failure to produce a withdrawal agreement was highlighted as evidence that Brexit in its current form had become difficult to achieve. Allowing the public to vote again was therefore constructed as a last resort option to this ineptitude.

Unlike the stability of 'new information', the strategy of attributing blame to the government for the failure of Brexit shifted over time. This occurred in response to the language of this strategy being co-opted by those opposing a second referendum and being shaped to serve their purposes. This can be seen in extract 5, in which Donaldson makes the case for a general election using rhetoric typically invoked within arguments constructing a case in favour of a second vote ('let the people decide'). Because of this new challenge, advocates work to develop a different version of Brexit that better suits their rhetorical needs. As seen in Table 5, once Johnson became Prime Minister, speakers adopted a strategy that was previously absent from the dataset ('an ineffective solution'). Now, Brexit was constructed as inherently impossible to implement regardless of leadership. This justified the rejection of a general election on the basis that it would be an inefficient solution to the problems facing the country. By building a different version of Brexit, speakers implicitly also built a new 'threat' to the national interest. During May's premiership, the 'national interest' was primarily framed as being threatened by the incompetency of politicians – particularly the poor leadership of May and her government. However, in order to undermine calls for a General Election, Brexit itself was now constructed as posing an existential threat to the well-being of the country. This analysis therefore illustrates the tension that exists within the dataset regarding how speakers construct and attend to the 'national interest' and the 'will of the people'.

One fundamental tension present in this analysis relates to the relationship between the 'national interest' and the 'will of the people'. For those opposing a second referendum, these concepts are presented as being irrevocably linked. That is, the best interest of the country is determined by 'the people', which is in turn determined through the outcome of direct participatory democracy. Through this, the 'will of the people' is treated as sacrosanct and concrete, whilst the 'national interest' is more conceptually framed in terms of fairness and protecting shared values. In contrast, supporters of a second referendum constructed the 'national interest' as being related to material factors, such as financial prosperity and global standing. Furthermore, the conceptualisation

of the 'will of the people' offered by such individuals was often more complex. This is because speakers emphasised their respect for 'the people' whilst simultaneously undermining the feasibility of their 'will'. Here, the national interest was presented as being inseparable from the well-being (rather than the 'will') of the people. This provided speakers supporting a second referendum with the flexibility to change their strategy in response to rhetorical and situational demands. Unlike their opponents, who constructed the 'will of the people' and, by extension, the 'national interest' as being represented by a fixed time point (the EU referendum), threats to the material conditions of the country and its citizens are ongoing and can therefore be situated through time.

This chapter provides an example of how longitudinal discursive research can be used to gain insight into taken-for-granted political phenomena. Whilst discursive psychology recognises that populist constructs such as the 'national interest' and the 'will of the people' are subject to change across accounts, there has been very little consideration of how these constructs are situated through time. As illustrated in the current analysis, temporal context is not incidental to the function of these strategies and should, therefore, not be treated as such. A further contribution of this analysis is that it builds on the previous two chapters by demonstrating that longitudinal discursive research does not have to be concerned with only change or stability. Instead, change and stability both can and should be analysed in tandem. The existence of stability is analytically interesting for its own sake but is also important for informing our understanding of how change within the data occurs. Researchers seeking to adopt this approach must be careful to treat all data as analytically relevant in order to avoid inadvertently prioritising change over stability.

In Chapter 9, I will provide a framework for conducting LDR. However, to contextualise this framework, it is first worth discussing the analytic findings of this thesis in more detail.

Chapter 9: Discussion

In this thesis, I have used the principles of Discursive Psychology (DP) to provide a longitudinal analysis of broadcast political debate as the UK exited the European Union. This involved exploring how key issues relating to Brexit were constructed and challenged by speakers throughout 2019. The issues selected for analysis included leadership, advocacy for a second referendum, and Labour's Brexit policy. Through employing a longitudinal approach, I identified that many of the strategies speakers used to justify their position changed through time. This reflects one of the key findings of this thesis, which is that the construction of political phenomena is temporally situated. This is important as it has broader implications for how psychology and other related disciplines should best approach the political sphere. The findings of this analysis also work to substantiate my call for discursive researchers to engage with methodological and conceptual questions of change through time. This research can, therefore, be seen as a challenge to the field of DP. Why is it that something so apparent – that change occurs through time – is so routinely ignored?

In Chapter 4, I discuss how the broader discursive literature has largely failed to systematically address the constructs of time and change as they relate to talk. However, it is important to highlight that this failure is not a consequence of DP simply lacking the temporal tools to engage in this type of analysis. This is evident in the fact that I was able to draw heavily on the framework offered by LQR without compromising DP's core principles. As previously outlined, LQR and DP share a similar conceptualisation of 'time' and 'change' as socially constructed phenomena (Saldaña, 2003). Because of this, it was possible to implement McCoy's (2017) suggestion that LQR be employed as a research *orientation* in conjunction with a theoretically aligned qualitative method. From my analysis, it became evident that the principles of DP make this approach particularly well-suited to examining how discourse changes and develops through time. The key reason for this is DP's acknowledgement that talk is both constructive and situated (Potter, 2012). By recognising the

constructive nature of talk, this lends itself to the understanding that accounts of time and change are not bound to one version of 'reality'. Furthermore, DP's concern with identifying how discourse is situated to perform specific actions works to highlight that talk is shaped by the interactional context. These principles enable this approach to adopt a flexible approach towards longitudinal analysis in which the meaning of change is guided by the data rather than preconceived realist notions regarding what 'true' changes should look like (Saldaña, 2003).

The overlap between the principles of LQR and DP highlights that longitudinal analysis is not something that should be viewed as a novel addition to 'traditional' discursive research. The ability to identify variations in how speakers construct what is ostensibly the same issue has long been a hallmark of this approach. What has been lacking from the field is a specific focus on how these variations occur through time. This lack of engagement with LQR can be said to be a twofold problem. First, unlike other qualitative methods, such as conversation analysis (see Depperman & Doelher, 2021), DP has yet to participate in a wider discussion regarding the temporality of discourse. The issue is not that the temporal nature of talk is not acknowledged but rather that it has become taken for granted. Besides a few limited examples (see Condor, 1996), researchers have not explicitly considered how temporality should be addressed. Because of this, those wishing to undertake a longitudinal discursive analysis are left without the framework to do so. The lack of discussion surrounding temporality also has a detrimental impact on 'traditional' discursive research. This is because the perspective on *how* speakers came to perform certain actions is often lost in favour of analysing discrete units of interaction. Talk is a process rather than a fixed event, meaning that if we want to understand what speakers are 'doing', we must also consider how their actions progress on a larger scale than the moment-by-moment frame DP typically relies upon. This is something that can only be appreciated through a longitudinal discursive approach.

The second factor underpinning this lack of engagement is that even when researchers conduct what is, in essence, a longitudinal discursive analysis, it is rarely positioned as such. This

became evident in my literature review, where I was surprised to find that researchers often glossed over their identification of change through time. To some extent, this is understandable. The focus of each analysis will be guided by its research question, and the purpose of this thesis is not to argue that all research should adopt a longitudinal lens. However, if change is identified within the dataset, this should be central rather than incidental to the analysis. For example, Goodman, Sirriyeh, and McMahon (2017) examined how the category of 'refugee' developed in media headlines between 2015 and 2016. Despite this, the authors do not reference the longitudinal aspect of their research or temporality in general when discussing their methodology and findings. As a result, the situated nature of this data is not fully appreciated by the analysis. Related to this, prior discursive research typically emphasises variation across accounts rather than change through time. For example, when discussing variations in how the Scottish National Party (SNP) and Conservative Party construct the 'national interest', Reicher and Hopkins (2011) note that the SNP's conceptualisation of this phenomenon has shifted from devolution to independence. This observation is presented as being additional context for the analysis but could itself be examined to gain insight into the rhetorical strategies speakers use to justify their version of the national interest through time. This suggests that to meaningfully engage with the methodological and conceptual question of change through time, the field of DP may need to challenge its analytic priorities and expectations.

The aim of this thesis has therefore been to illustrate how longitudinal discourse analysis can be conducted and make a case for why this approach should be of interest to discursive researchers. To demonstrate the benefits of adopting this approach, I will next provide a summary of my analytic findings and discuss how they contribute to the broader literature on political discourse.

9.1 Overview of Findings

In Chapter 6, I employed a longitudinal discursive approach to analyse how leadership is constructed and resisted. The key contribution of this chapter is the specific focus on the role of followers in the

leadership process. Despite highlighting that leadership can only be performed through the successful mobilisation of followers (Reicher et al.,2011), there has been limited research examining how the rejection of the mobilisation occurs. This chapter therefore provides insight into the role of followership by examining how speakers challenged the credibility of Theresa May and Boris Johnson. From this, it was found that 'potential' followers rejected the leadership of May and Johnson on different grounds. When challenging May, speakers distinguished between her 'character' and her leadership abilities. Whilst intrinsic characteristics such as her resilience were praised as admirable, her actions as a leader were depicted as ineffective. In contrast, Johnson's character was treated as being inseparable from this role as leader. Through this, his actions were presented as a direct result of his poor moral character. Speakers evidence this negative characterisation using direct reported speech, in which specific quotes from Johnson would be invoked to highlight his apparent hypocrisy and deceit. Reported speech was also evident in accounts challenging May; however, here, hypothetical reported speech was found to be more frequently employed. This strategy worked to underpin the incompetency of May's leadership by attributing foolish and naïve utterances to her.

These findings highlight the importance of treating potential followers as active participants in the leadership process. Through examining variations in how leaders are contested, we can gain insight into how leadership itself is conceptualised and constructed. A further contribution of this chapter relates to the process of longitudinal discursive analysis. Whilst the transition between May and Johnson's premiership represents a change, this change is not necessarily relevant to longitudinal research. This is because not every contextual variation needs to be treated as meaningful change through time. Instead, such contextual variation can perhaps best be understood through the stability they demonstrate. For example, speakers' characterisation of Johnson remained consistent throughout the dataset despite this construction of leadership differing from the one employed when discussing May. This chapter therefore illustrates the analytic insight that can be gained through identifying

stability within the data. The existence of stability should not be treated as a consolidation prize but instead as a critical component of temporal discourse.

In Chapter 7, I continued using longitudinal discursive research to provide an example of how change through time can be identified and analysed. This analysis identified three strategies speakers used to defend Labour's Brexit policy in response to accusations of ambiguity. The most significant insight gained from this analysis is the finding that differences in the strategies speakers employed did not represent variation across accounts but change through time. Through organising relevant extracts, it became evident that the strategies speakers used were invoked linearly. This means that as one strategy fell out of use, another would become present within the data. The introduction and phasing out of these strategies were found to be situated within both a rhetorical and temporal context. This can be seen in the analysis of the first strategy ('A simple principle'), which was found to be prominent in early 2019. Speakers employed this strategy to argue that Labour's Brexit policy was informed by the simple yet fundamental principle of stopping a 'no deal' Brexit. It was suggested that preventing the UK from leaving the EU without a deal was the only way to secure the 'national interest'. From this, any other details relating to then Prime Minister Theresa May's withdrawal agreement were treated as an unimportant distraction from the real issues facing the country.

However, this disregard for specific policy details was treated by both the audience and other panel members as evasive. This apparent evasiveness was constructed by opponents as representing a lack of policy, with the implication being that Labour is disorganised and therefore incapable of establishing a feasible approach to Brexit. This led speakers representing Labour to develop an alternative strategy ('A comprehensive customs union'). This strategy became prominent in the lead-up to the EU election in May but became gradually less frequent following this event. The key function of this strategy is that it worked to undermine the criticism that Labour's policy lacked substance. Their support for a customs union was constructed as 'comprehensive' insofar that this policy would account for all aspects of the UK's departure from the EU. Speakers provided a detailed

overview of this policy, implying that political bias or ignorance motivated any confusion regarding their stance.

Despite attempts to construct a more thorough account of Labour's Brexit policy, invoking a 'comprehensive customs union' was still met with laughter and confusion. This led to speakers adopting a third and final strategy for legitimising their approach. This strategy became prominent in the period following the EU election but was most frequently employed in the weeks leading up to the General Election in December 2019 (see Table 4). Here, speakers conceded that Labour had a 'complex approach' to Brexit. However, this concession accomplished the task of undermining the claims of their opponents. Primarily, it worked to challenge the suggestion that Labour was being deliberately ambiguous to appeal to all sides of the political spectrum. Instead, this apparent ambiguity was presented as reflecting a nuanced approach, with this being advantageous due to the complex nature of Brexit.

This analysis provides an example of how longitudinal discursive research (LDR) can be used to analyse change through time. By examining rhetorical strategies within their temporal context, we can gain further insight into how these devices are rhetorically situated through talk. This is because speakers draw on the resources of previous strategies to build a new version of reality which is more convincing than that which came before it. If this data had not been analysed using a longitudinal framework, it would likely have been assumed that the different and contradictory ways speakers constructed Labour's policy reflected variation across accounts. This would have provided only a surface-level understanding of the data and missed important context regarding what speakers are actually *doing* with their talk.

Finally, Chapter 8 provides an example of how specific political phenomena can be examined using longitudinal discursive research. This analysis provided insight into the construction of populist rhetoric by identifying the strategies speakers used to support and challenge a second referendum on

the UK's membership of the EU. From this, the devices of the 'will of the people' and the 'national interest' were found to be employed by both opponents and supporters of this proposal. There was evidence of stability and change in how speakers drew upon these resources through time.

First, speakers supporters of this position argued that there had been no meaningful change in circumstances since the first referendum. Because of this, it was deemed unlikely that the public would have changed their opinion on Brexit. A second referendum would, therefore, be pointless and potentially harmful to the 'national interest'. A further strategy employed by opponents of a second referendum was building a negative characterisation of those who supported this position. It was suggested that these individuals were arrogant elitists unable to accept that the first vote had not gone in their favour. From this, implementing the 'will of the people' by respecting the results of the first referendum is presented as intrinsically linked to the 'national interest' of the country. This is because a second referendum would undermine core British values, such as respect for democracy.

To respond to this challenge to their position, supporters of a second referendum employed two key strategies. Speakers invoked the idea of 'new information' to suggest that the public's perception of Brexit had changed since the first vote. The concept of 'new information' referred to 'facts' about the consequences of leaving the EU that the public had not previously known. This device was flexible in that it encompassed both information that had been deliberately obscured from public view and information that could not have been reasonably predicted before the referendum. Through this, a second referendum was constructed to represent the 'will of the people' and the 'national interest'. This is because it would provide the public with the opportunity to change their mind in light of 'new information' that demonstrates that Brexit would harm the country. Whilst this strategy remained stable throughout the dataset, the resources speakers drew upon were situated through time. For example, Theresa May's resignation was incorporated into this strategy to provide a further example of 'new information' that would change the public's understanding of Brexit.

To challenge the assertion that a second referendum would undermine the 'will of the people', supporters of this proposal attributed blame for the negative consequences of Brexit to the government. In particular, May's inability to pass a withdrawal bill through parliament was highlighted as evidence of the government's incompetence. This worked to justify their position on the basis that a second referendum would act as a last-resort solution to the current political crisis. In contrast to the government, the public was favourably characterised as possessing a 'common sense' lacked by politicians. This avoided the implication that a second referendum would work to blame 'the people' for the government's failures. This strategy remained largely stable throughout the beginning of the dataset (January to July) but reduced in frequency once Johnson became Prime Minister (see Table 5). This shift was situated both rhetorically and temporally as speakers worked to respond to the language of 'government failure' being coopted by their opponents. When this shift began to occur, Johnson had yet to face a general election. This challenged his democratic mandate and provided a 'reasonable alternative' to a second referendum.

Drawing on the wider debate surrounding the legitimacy of Johnson's mandate, speakers opposing a second referendum constructed a general election as a 'reasonable alternative' that would enable the public to have a say on the direction of Brexit without undermining the 'will of the people'. The existence of this alternative was used to further undermine those supporting a second referendum, as they were now presented as hypocritical for rejecting a democratic solution to government failure. The adoption of this strategy reflects the stability of how populist devices were employed by opponents of a second referendum. Here, the 'national interest' is consistently constructed as pertaining to the 'will of the people', with this conceptualisation working to imply that it 'the people' who decide what is in the best interest of the country. To respond to this challenge, speakers began to shift away from attributing the failures of Brexit to government failure. Now, Brexit itself was constructed as being inherently impossible to implement. This justified skepticism regarding using a general election as a proxy second referendum, as a simple change in leadership would be ineffective

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at resolving this issue. Through this, the 'real' threat to the UK's national interest was shifted by speakers in respond to these emerging contextual and rhetorical demands.

Chapter 8 demonstrates how political phenomena can be analysed using a longitudinal discursive approach. Whilst previous research has examined how populist devices such as the 'will of the people' and the 'national interest' are constructed through talk (see Dickerson, 1997; Ekström, Patrona, & Thornborrow, 2018), this work often fails to treat the temporal context of these devices as being analytically significant. The result of this is that such research only provides a snapshot image that does not capture how populist strategies are developed through time. Identifying how common populist tropes change or remain stable across different temporal contexts can provide deeper insight into their function within political discourse. For example, the stability in how speakers opposed to a second referendum constructed the 'will of the people' and 'national interest' underpins the actions these strategies performed. Specifically, the lack of change in how these strategies are constructed implicitly underlies the argument that 'nothing has changed' since the 2016 referendum. There is no need for speakers to shift their version of the 'will of the people' as respecting the outcome of democratic votes is already treated as the norm. It is therefore speakers in favour of a second referendum who need to make the case for why this breaking this apparent norm is justified. The primary justification offered is that it would protect the 'national interest'. However, this device was flexible because it shifted in response to rhetorical pressures. This allowed speakers to situate their construction of what was in the UK's best interest within a temporal context, which accounted for the developing circumstances surrounding Brexit. Likewise, speakers' construction of the 'will of the people' shifted to the 'wellbeing of the people', as it was implicitly argued that the public valued the security and prosperity of the country more than they valued Brexit. These findings demonstrate the flexibility of populist devices and the importance of analysing how these strategies develop through time.

This thesis aims to build a framework for applying longitudinal discursive research. Through my analytic chapters, I have attempted to demonstrate how this analysis can be conducted. I have also sought to emphasise the importance of identifying stability and change within the dataset and worked to provide evidence of the analytic insight that can be gained from this approach. To further expand on this, I will next discuss in more detail the theoretical implications and practical applications these findings have for our understanding of political discourse.

9.2 Theoretical Implications

Whilst the aim of this thesis is to make the case for the use of LDR within the broader field of DP, from my analysis, it became evident that this approach has specific implications for political discourse. This is unsurprising because, as argued by Debray (cited in Hay 1999, p. 319), "time is to politics what space is to geometry". The business of 'doing' politics is an explicitly temporal activity. For example, time is inherent to political procedures such as electoral cycles and parliamentary sessions (Jarvis, 2022). Similarly, Gokmenoglu (2021) notes that mundane temporal practices such as adherence to 'clock time' in the workplace are governed, negotiated, and reinforced through political action. The toolkit of political rhetoric has also been found to draw on various temporal resources. For example, politicians may try to appeal to voters by promising a brighter future or by invoking traditional images of an idealistic past (Buhre, 2019). From this, time can be seen as inextricably linked to the social and political world. The findings of the current analysis can therefore provide valuable insight into the construction of political phenomena.

First, the findings of this analysis have theoretical implications for our understanding and conceptualisation of populism. In Chapter 4, I provide an overview of what are said to be the key characteristics of populist rhetoric. A defining feature of this rhetoric is the construction of an anti-establishment stance through which the political elite are presented as working against the interests of 'normal people' (Muddle, 2004). Political analysts such as Browning (2018) have labelled Brexit as a

manifestation of populist and nationalist sentiment, making this issue particularly relevant to my research. Within my analysis of the discourse surrounding proposals for a second referendum on EU membership, the populist devices of the 'will of the people' and the 'national interest' became of this interest. It was found that speakers both supporting and favouring a second referendum employed these devices to present their stance as favoured by the public and beneficial for the country. The observation that speakers representing opposing political stances both use rhetorical strategies that can be categorised as populist exemplifies the difficulty researchers can face when defining this concept (Weyland, 2001). From a DP perspective, such variation and flexibility are expected, but these findings have further theoretical implications for understanding populism.

In particular, the longitudinal analysis of these devices provides insight into how populist rhetoric develops through time. Whilst some of the strategies speakers used remained stable, others shifted to incorporate new information and respond to specific challenges. The presence of change and stability through time indicates something about the nature of populism. First, much of what can be labelled as populist rhetoric can be seen to rely on 'mainstream' political tropes. Despite variations in *how* the 'will of the people' and the 'national interest' were constructed, individuals on both sides of the debate consistently employed a version of this strategy throughout 2019. For example, speakers opposing a second referendum justified their stance by positioning it as a continuation of accepted sociopolitical norms. This led to the 'will of the people' being consistently defined by the outcome of the initial referendum throughout the dataset. In contrast, speakers supporting a second referendum continually adapted their characterisation of the 'will of the people' to situate it within the changing political climate. These strategies can therefore be seen to have utilised different temporal resources to achieve different ends. However, it remains that speakers consistently drew on taken-for-granted assumptions about the 'will of the people' and the 'national interest'.

This consistent appeal to the 'will of the people' and the 'national interest' throughout 2019 suggests that these constructs have become rhetorical commonplaces within British political

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discourse. Billig (1991, p.208) uses the term rhetorical commonplace to describe arguments which invoke "values which themselves are not matters for debate but which rhetorically are often used to support contestable positions". This is reflected in my analytic findings, where the existence of a 'people' or 'nation' in need of protection was never contested. Instead, speakers worked to present their position as being the 'truest' representation of these principles. This raises the question of whether researchers can treat the employment of such devices as being meaningfully different from other forms of 'mainstream' political discourse. Higgins (2013) notes that mainstream political discourse increasingly draws on the resources of 'successful' populist rhetoric. This suggests that populism should not be conceptualised as a distinct phenomenon that imposes itself on politics but rather as a flexible tool that is central to the evolution of political discourse through time. Because of this, discursive researchers should be sceptical of the 'populist hype' surrounding Brexit (Brown & Mondon, 2020). As seen in my analysis, populist rhetoric is not confined to a specific event or movement. LDR can therefore contribute to our theoretical understanding of this issue by exploring the development of populist strategies through time. This will provide insight into how and when these strategies shift to constitute mainstream rhetorical commonplaces within political discourse.

A second theoretical contribution of these analytic findings relates to the process of policy development within political discourse. Jenkins (1993) describes policy development as a dynamic and continuous process that involves several complex factors. To this end, the analysis of political discourse is central to understanding how policy is constructed, legitimised, and contested by the actors involved. In my analysis of Labour's Brexit policy, I identified that the strategies speakers used to justify this position changed throughout 2019 to better incorporate and respond to emerging challenges. This reflects the conceptualisation of policy development as a continuous process that occurs through talk. However, the key implication of these findings relates to how policy construction is situated within its immediate temporal and rhetorical context. As seen in Table 4, the strategies speakers used were found to gradually shift in relation to specific time points. These time points

include the EU election in May and the General election in December. Whilst LDR is not necessarily interested in establishing causal relationships, the temporal pattern of these changes, as evidenced within the dataset, is worth considering in more detail.

The existence of temporal sequencing within policy development has been examined within the field of political science. Particularly relevant to the interpretation of my analytic findings is research investigating the complex 'timescapes' of policymaking. Adam (2004,p.143) developed the concept of 'timescapes' to describe the "cluster of temporal features" which give form to our social understanding of the past and present. Within policy development, timescapes should be understood as an institution and a resource. This means that temporal features such as 'deadlines' work to constrain political action to specific time points, but they can also act as discursive devices that prompt change (Zahariadis, 2003). For example, in my analysis, I found that the upcoming end of the initial Article 50 period (29ᵗʰ March) was used by speakers to invoke a sense of urgency regarding the terms of the withdrawal deal. Likewise, the failure to leave the EU by this period was treated as meaningful by speakers due to this being indicative of poor governance. These findings demonstrate that policymaking is not a fixed cycle to which political actors passively respond. Instead, policymaking is a process that constitutes meaning through the social and temporal context. This supports the constructivist conceptualisation of policy development, which suggests that policies are not the result of rational decision-making external to the social world (Saugrugger, 2013). As seen in my analysis of Labour's Brexit policy, the construction of policy is informed by the interaction of the actors involved in this process. A key actor within this process is the public, suggesting that this practice does not only occur in elite discourse. From this, political discourse should be conceptualised as a momentum of *collective* social actions that inform policy decisions through talk. LDR is, therefore a valuable tool for understanding how this momentum develops and is situated through time.

A final theoretic contribution of this thesis relates to Mead's (1932) theory of emergence. In Chapter 1, I briefly discuss how Andreouli et al. (2019) draw on emergence theory to develop a

conceptual framework for understanding Brexit within social psychology. The theory of emergence suggests that complex systems can exhibit properties and characteristics that are not simply the sum of their individual parts. Emergent properties such as Brexit arise when interacting components of political discourse give rise to new phenomena (Andreouli et al.,2019). As illustrated in this discussion, temporality is a critical component of political discourse. The 'timescape' of political discourse unfolds through time and involves complex interactions between past, present and future considerations. As a result of this, how rhetoric is situated within this temporal framework impacts how political actions are constructed and understood by speakers. This was evident throughout my analysis, where emergent properties such as leadership, democracy, and policy were rhetorically and temporally situated within the dataset and thereby subject to change. From this, the theory of emergence can be seen to underscore the dynamic nature of political discourse. By examining the intricate nature of interaction through time, we can gain insight into the 'feedback loops' that inform the construction of political phenomena through time (Andreouli et al., 2019; Mead, 1932).

The findings of this analysis therefore have various theoretical implications for how political discourse should be conceptualised and analysed. From this, DP's failure to meaningfully engage with conceptual questions of change through time has limited its ability to understand with political phenomena in its temporal context. To rectify this, I will next provide a methodological framework for the practice of LDR. This framework will offer a step-by-step guide on how this type of analysis can be conducted and will illustrate how this approach differs from 'traditional' discursive research.

9.3 A framework for conducting longitudinal discursive research (LDR)

Alongside showcasing the analytic benefits of longitudinal discursive research (LDR), a key aim of this thesis has been to establish a methodological framework for researchers seeking to engage in this type of analysis. It is hoped that through further engagement with LDR, the field of DP will begin to

systematically address issues relating to temporality within talk. In Chapter 5, I provide an overview of how I developed the longitudinal approach employed in the current research. As noted in the chapter, my account of this process does not reflect a linear step-by-step 'how to' guide for LDR. Instead, it is primarily focused on reflecting the trial-and-error way in which I approached the data and in documenting the key methodological and theoretical concerns that informed my analytic decisions. Whilst this overview is useful for the purposes of transparency and reflexivity, it does not necessarily offer a clear path forward for readers wanting to employ longitudinal practices in their own research. To rectify this, I will develop and systematise this process to present an eight-point guide for conducting LDR. In addition to my own experiences, this guide will also draw on the wider literature surrounding LQR, as well as the principles and practices of DP. Through this, I will establish a comprehensive methodological framework for this approach.

As noted by Goodman (2017), it is important to emphasise that a guiding principle of conducting discursive research is that 'there is no analytic method' (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 169). This means that whilst researchers may share a common understanding of talk and its rhetorical functions, this does not necessitate that all research be conducted in the same way. Instead, the process of discursive analysis will be largely dependent on individual preference and the data itself (Wiggins, 2019). Likewise, by developing this framework, my intent is not to insist that LDR must be conducted in a 'first this then that' manner. It is my hope that as DP begins to more seriously address change through time, other researchers will use their own experience and knowledge to further contribute to the development of this framework. The primary aim of this guide is therefore to provide a starting point for those undertaking LDR by highlighting the step-by-step analytic decisions and actions that this process requires.

The stages of longitudinal discursive research include:

1. Identifying a longitudinal research question

2. Identifying a suitable data source

3. Data generation, duration, and timeline

4. Transcription and organisation

5. Preliminary reading – identifying temporal and action orientation

6. Generating results – discursive devices, rhetorical strategies

7. Creating data ponds

8. Writing the analysis

Whilst much of my case for LDR rests on the claim that this approach is grounded within a 'typical' DP perspective, as seen in this overview, there are various methodological concerns that are unique to this type of analysis. Where relevant, this guide will therefore identify where this divergences between LDR and a 'traditional' DP-informed analysis occur. To illustrate these distinctions, I will next discuss each of these stages in turn and hypothetically apply them to a previous piece of 'traditional' discursive research. Through this, I will provide an example (beyond the current thesis) of what LDR can look like in practice and demonstrate the benefits of employing a longitudinal approach.

To summarise the research chosen for this exercise, Gibson and Booth's (2017) paper examines the rhetorical strategies employed by members of UKIP in the lead-up to the 2015 UK General Election. A novel strategy identified here was the use of an 'Australian-style points system'. In their 2015 manifesto, UKIP advocated for the introduction of an 'Australian-style points-based system to manage the number and skills of people coming into the country' (UKIP, 2015, p. 11). The basis of this policy is that migrants seeking to enter the country would be judged and attributed 'points' based on factors such as their education level, language, and employment history (Sumption, 2019). It was found that speakers representing UKIP in broadcast political debate constructed this policy as a fair

and commonsense solution to mass immigration. As this system would be based on individual characteristics rather than group identities (i.e., race or nationality), these strategies worked to counter or pre-emptively deflect accusations of prejudice. These findings can be seen to reflect a key feature of 'new racism', in which speakers deracialise, individualise, and rationalise their talk so to not violate the apparent 'norm against prejudice' that exists within the UK political sphere (Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Billig, 1988; Gibson & Booth, 2017).

It is important to emphasise that my decision to use this research to illustrate the stages of LDR is not a critique of the authors approach or findings. Instead, this paper was identified as presenting an interesting example of a topic area that is prime for longitudinal analysis. First, the fact that the employment of an 'Australian-style points system' is described as a novel strategy by the paper indicates that this device is in some way different from what has come before it. Related to this, Gibson and Booth (2017, pp.24.) also note that their analysis "highlights how a number of well-established discursive devices and rhetorical strategies for talking about immigrants and immigration are apparent in these data". That these strategies and devices are well-established suggests that they have been identified consistently within different temporal and social contexts, with this also offering a potential area for LDR. Finally, the employment of an 'Australian-style points system' is not confined to speakers within the lead-up to the 2015 General Election. Similar rhetoric was observed in the dataset utilised in this thesis, and in 2021 the British government officially established a 'Points-based Immigration System' following the end of the UK's participation in the EU's freedom of movement policy. The subject matter of this research can therefore be seen to provide various opportunities for longitudinal research. The following guide aims to explore in more detail how this can be achieved.

Longitudinal Discursive Research

1. Identifying a longitudinal research question

In line with Goodman's (2017) guidelines for DP-informed discourse analysis, the first stage of LDR involves developing an appropriate research question. Due to the longitudinal nature of this approach, research questions should be broadly concerned with issues relating to change and stability. Holland et al. (2006) suggest that LQR should seek to identify how individual beliefs, motivations, and experiences develop in response to contextual factors. However, this attempt to determine causation or gain access into cognitive processes does not align with the principles of DP. It is therefore important that researchers are mindful that any research questions reflect both the longitudinal *and* discursive aspects of this approach. Like DP, LDR is interested in examining how speakers use talk to perform social action. This includes analysing how these actions are situated within their institutional, rhetorical, and sequential context (Potter, 2012). Where LDR may differ from a more 'traditional' DP approach is the additional and explicit consideration of how talk is also situated within a temporal context. Because of this, suitable research questions may look like 'do the strategies that speakers use to justify X change through time', or 'how is X constructed by speakers at different time points'.

In their analysis, Gibson and Booth (2017, pp.6) set out to examine immigration discourse in "political debates broadcast on television and radio in the 2015 UK General Election campaign". Whilst this is an appropriate starting point, a longitudinal research question may somewhat reconceptualise this research aim to explicitly draw attention to the design of LDR. For example, it might be specified that discourse will be explored *throughout* the election campaign. This may appear to be a minor semantic difference without consequence, but this phrasing underlies the implicit distinction between LDR and traditional discursive research. . By framing this study as being interested in discourse 'in' the General Election campaign, Gibson and Booth implicitly present this period as a static object before analysis has even begun. By specifying that talk is analysed *throughout* this period, this embeds temporality within the research design and reflects the LQR principle that change is a process rather than an event (Saldaña, 2007).

As previously noted, the subject matter Gibson and Booth's (2017) research provides basis for a broader longitudinal approach. For example, a future project may set out to examine how between 2015 and 2020 political discourse shifted from employing an 'Australian-style points system' as a rhetorical strategy to now constructing the UK's own version of this policy. Like any discursive analysis, the scope of LDR will be shaped by the demands of the data. Researchers can therefore revisit the research question once the direction of data collection becomes more evident. The methodological concerns that researchers conducting LDR need to consider when collecting and generating their data will be discussed next.

2. Identifying a suitable data source

Once a research question has been identified, the next step of this process involves identifying an appropriate data source. As discursive analysis is primarily concerned with how speakers accomplish social actions through their interaction with others (Goodman, 2017), Because of this, researchers should prioritise data sources in which such interaction between speakers can or does occur. When selecting a suitable data source, it is also worth considering the 'naturalistic data debate' within DP. The naturalistic data debate concerns the controversy regarding whether 'generated' data is suitable for discursive research (see Chapter 5 for more detail). Guidelines for conducting DP-informed discourse analysis have tended to adopt a neutral stance on this issue (e.g., Goodman, 2017; Wiggins, 2019). Such guidelines have instead emphasised the importance of selecting data that is suitable for the aims of the research regardless of any wider debate regarding its supposedly 'contrived' nature (Goodman, 2017). Similarly, longitudinal discursive research does not necessitate that researchers use only naturalistic data. This would be contradictory due to this approach being informed by the principles of LQR, a field which has been largely built on the back of interviews and focus groups (Holland et al., 2006).

This stage of the analytic process does therefore not differ greatly from a 'traditional' discursive approach. However, the source of the data will guide later analytic decisions. It is therefore important to carefully consider if the source of data you identify is appropriate for longitudinal analysis. This may initially be difficult to determine, but will be become more evident once data generation begins. Therefore, the most important factors to consider at this stage is if the chosen source of data has temporal potential – meaning the ability to provide insight into how interaction unfolds through time.

I will next provide a more detailed explanation of how temporality should be incorporated into the design of LDR.

3. Data generation, duration, and timeline.

The third stage of conducting LDR involves making further methodological decisions regarding data generation. When conducting a 'traditional' discourse analysis, researchers must determine the size of corpus that is both appropriate and feasible for the aims of their study. Typically, DP conceptualises the size of the corpus in terms of total number of hours and number of transcripts produced (Wiggins, 2019). From this, some discursive researchers have sought to provide guidelines on how many hours of data are appropriate for certain types of projects. For example, Wiggins (2019) recommends that doctoral research employing discursive psychology should collect between 20 and 40 hours of audio-visual data. However, she also notes that the decision of how much data is 'enough' should largely be left to the researcher's discretion. This decision should be based on various factors, including the aims of the research question, the timeframe for analysis, and the resources at hand (Wiggins, 2019).

It is here that the considerations required by LDR begin to differ from those present within a traditional DP-informed discourse analysis. Here, the size of the corpus can be better conceptualised as the 'duration' of the data. Duration refers to the length of the dataset and is identified by Saldana (2007) as one of the defining principles of LQR. Whilst we can assume that longitudinal research

means a "lonnnnnnnng time" (Saldaña, 2003, p.1), the amount of time data generation is required to cover can be difficult to determine. Drawing on Hermanowicz's (2013) suggestion, it seems reasonable that longitudinal discursive research should seek to encompass a period that can sufficiently capture key points of change in how the phenomenon of interest is constructed. However, the length of dataset this requires will depend on the aims and design of the research itself.

For example, researchers collecting generated data which is dependent on the participation of others (such as interviews or focus groups) may be more subject to more constraints than those working with naturalistic data. The field of LQR has consistently reported the challenges of maintaining participant interest over a long period of time, with this often compounded by researchers being unable to offer consistent incentives to secure commitment (Holland, Thomas, & Henderson, 2003). Naturalistic data may therefore provide researchers with more flexibility regarding the duration of the corpus. A further potential advantage of naturistic data is that it provides an opportunity for other researchers to pick up on where you left off, with this having the potential to contribute further analytic insights. For example, a researcher may be interested in examining the rhetoric strategies speakers representing UKIP used to construct their immigration policy following the results of the 2015 General Election, in which they only managed to secure one seat in the House of Commons. Such research could therefore build upon Gibson and Booth's (2017) corpus to provide a broader longitudinal perspective on the construction of how UKIP's policy is situated at specific points in time. This process could hypothetically be indefinite, as researchers consecutively expand on the duration of the data corups to examine several iterations of how these strategies developed.

Naturalistic data can therefore be seen to offer more opportunity for a collaborative and in-depth analysis than 'generated' data, which is bound to specific ethical and practical concerns. However, the apparent open-endedness of naturalistic data returns us to the question of how much data is too much? The purpose of LDR is not to indefinitely examine the same issue at different time points, as this approach would quickly become contrived and produce meaningless analytic findings.

The data generation process for LDR therefore needs to be *intentional* in that the duration of the corpus should be tailored towards the aims of the investigation.

A necessary tool at this stage of analysis is a timeline which chronicles key events related to the research topic. Establishing a preliminary timeline at this stage of the analysis is an effective way to determine and justify the duration of the dataset. It is important to emphasise that at this stage, any timeline produced does not need to act as a comprehensive overview of any given period. Once data has been generated, researchers are expected to revisit the timeline and adjust based on new information or what the participants consider a significant event or experience. Similarly, establishing a timeline does not imply that data must be collected from interactions that have already happened (and therefore have a clear order of events). In the current thesis, I began data collection in January before key events such as the UK's failure to leave the EU on the initial withdrawal date of the 29th of March 2019. Whilst some of the events included in my timeline could be pre-empted, many of what became 'key time points' within my research only occurred whilst I was generating the data. However, having a rough idea of what is happening and when can be useful in guiding decisions regarding how much data is needed.

Gibson and Booth (2017) note that the dataset for their analysis spans the period of the 26th of February to the 1st of May 2015. The duration of this dataset reflects the aim of the research, in which the authors were interested in the strategies speakers used in the build-up to the election. Approaching this study through a longitudinal lens does not necessitate that this duration is increased to cover more time. Instead, this process would involve making note of any notable 'time points' which occur within (or around) this build up. For an example of how this may look for this study, see Table 6:

Table 6

Example Timeline

Date	Timepoint
28/02/2015	UKIP Spring Conference
13/03/2015	Liberal Democrat Conference
18/03/2015	Last fiscal plan of parliament
25/03/2015	Last sitting of Prime Minister's Questions
26/03/2015	Channel 4/Sky News Leadership interviews with Miliband and Cameron
30/03/2015	Dissolution of parliament and the start of the official campaigning period
02/04/2015	ITV Leadership Debate
16/04/2015	BBC 'Challenger Parties' Debate
30/04/2015	BBC Question Time – Leadership edition
07/04/2015	Election Day

By establishing a timeline, researchers can begin to determine if their data contains enough 'time points' that can be reasonably expected to facilitate change. For example, Gibson and Booth may identify the UKIP spring conference as a potential starting point for the development of the Australian-style points system that speakers employ within later debates. At this stage of the analysis, the inclusion criteria for 'time points' should be as broad as possible and based on your understanding and observations of the phenomena being examined. A good starting point for this is identifying 'events' that occur within this period. This might include formally scheduled occasions such as a general election or any other incidents that are notably distinct from the mundane everyday activities that occur within this context.

For example, a common activity during the campaigning period leading up to an election is canvassing. Here, politicians may visit the consistencies of 'target seats' to meet with local residents and mobilise support for their party. Due to the general banality of this activity, instances such as Nigel Farage meeting with local business owners in Lincolnshire are unlikely to constitute a meaningful time point. However, such routine actions can become 'events' in certain circumstances. For example, during a routine campaigning trip to Rochdale during the 2010 general election campaign, then Prime Minister Gordon Brown was caught on microphone calling a constituent a 'bigoted woman' following their discussion on immigration (Butterfield, 2017). The public and media

response to this led to an otherwise non-event, becoming a meaningful time point that would be relevant to LDR.

Identifying time points may be relatively straightforward for researchers interested in phenomena well-documented within the public sphere. In my analysis of 2019 Brexit discourse, much of the information I needed to understand what was happening and when was already established and publicly accessible. This provided a basis on which I could develop an initial timeline for my analysis. Whilst this process might be more challenging for researchers using generated data to understand the construction of individual experiences, a precise research question and prior knowledge of the issue at hand can help inform what events can reasonably be expected to facilitate relevant change during this period. The amount of 'time points' deemed necessary for an LDR project will depend on the focus and scope of the analysis. However, timelines such as this can act as a valuable yardstick to measure the duration of the corpus. As previously noted, at this stage, this timeline does not need to be a complete reflection of how events unfolded. It is likely that once the analysis has begun, many of these 'time points' will be found to have very little relevance to speakers' accounts. Likewise, it is also possible that speakers themselves will treat unexpected 'time points' as significant or a catalyst for change. This timeline will therefore be re-visited at various stages across this analysis.

A final consideration to be made regarding duration is whether data will be collected continuously, or at regular or irregular periods. Again, this determination will largely depend on the type of data being used and the aims of the research question. If Gibson and Booth (2017) set out to understand how the strategies used to justify UKIP's immigration policy developed in the lead-up to the 2015 election, it seems logical to collect data continuously to capture these shifts at an appropriate analytic level. Alternatively, if this research was instead interested in analysing how these strategies developed over several years, data could be collected at regular intervals to capture discourse surrounding various general elections. Regardless of whether data is collected continuously through the same period or at several different intervals, it is important that researchers uphold the principles

shared by both LDR and LQR. Specifically, change should be analysed *through*, rather than over time. This means that researchers should avoid jumping through the dataset to identify change and instead prioritise analysing how this change occurs (Saldaña, 2003). A unique contribution of LDR's approach to data analysis is that it provides insight how discursive strategies develop on a scale larger than moment-by-moment scale that is typically the focus of DP. Data should therefore be generated within this aim in mind.

4. Transcription and organisation

As has become standard within DP practice, the next step of LDR involves the transcription of data using the Jeffersonian system of transcription (Jefferson, 2004). This system can be used to identify the micro-details of talk (e.g., pauses, pitch, overlapping of speech), with this providing insight into both how the interaction unfolded and how things were said (Huma et al., 2020). Potter and Hepburn (2005) note that this method of transcription can also works to support researchers' interpretative claims. For example, a shift in tone or emphasis placed on a certain word made reflect the utterance being use for comedic effect. Identifying these features in talk is also important for the practice of LDR, particularly as they can often be an indicator of change or consistency within the data. For example, the observation that audience members consistently responded to Labour's Brexit policy with non-verbal actions such as laugher helped to highlight that the strategies speakers used to defend this policy changed through time. The level of detail included when transcribing should be determined by the aims of the project, and some researchers may opt for a simplified version of Jefferson annotations as utilised in this thesis (Goodman, 2017).

Following transcription, researchers should work to organise their transcripts in a way that reflects LDR's prioritisation of temporality. Alongside labelling completed transcripts with the date on which the interaction occurred, researchers should also make note of where these interactions occurred in relation to the previously established timeline of events. This can help to provide context

for when analysis begins, but also works as a reminder that the dataset is not 'frozen in time' (Levine, 2003). Through this process of temporal organisation, researchers are required to make considerations about the time and context in which these interactions took place – something which is often neglected within 'traditional' DP work.

5. Preliminary reading – identifying temporal and action orientation

Once the data has been transcribed, researchers should begin a preliminary reading of the data. As with all qualitative research, the key purpose of this stage of analysis is to become familiar with the data (Goodman, 2017). Within discursive research, this typically involves making general notes regarding the action orientations present within each interaction. For example, a preliminary reading of Gibson and Booth's (2017) data may identify actions such as 'avoiding accusations of prejudice', or 'defending UKIP immigration policy'. The context in which these actions are situated should also be made note of. This is because a politician is likely to orientate towards different actions when responding to a challenge from a member of the public than they would to a political opponent. Whilst this is a systematic process that involves engaging with all available data, analysts should prioritise identifying action that is relevant to the scope of their research question. This will involve reading and re-reading the data to discern areas of possible interest and identify notable features of interaction.

When conducting LDR, analysts should ensure that this preliminary reading takes place through a temporal lens. Building on the previous stage of this framework, this may involve steps such as ensuring that any extracts that are separated from the wider dataset and copied and pasted into separate word documents are labelled and organised chronologically. Attention should also be paid to at which point on the timeline each interaction occurs, with this including a consideration of the events that precede and follow each transcript. This will help to provide context for what speakers discuss, but may also begin to highlight differences in how these issues are discussed across transcripts. Here, any references speakers make to a specific event or time period should be noted.

This may include documenting the number of instances in which points on the timeline are invoked during talk. Through this, researchers can gain a preliminary understanding of which time points are treated as meaningful by participants with this being a potential starting point for further analysis.

Balmer et al. (2021) state that whilst time should be treated as fixed when organising the data, analysts should take a flexible approach towards understanding temporality within the dataset. This means that analysts should be willing to readjust their expectations of how events will unfold, and instead defer to the speakers understanding. Therefore, at this stage in the analytic process it is likely that that timelines will be readjusted to more accurately reflect the reality built by speakers with their interactions.

6. Generating results – discursive devices, change and stability.

Through this preliminary reading, researchers should have gained a good idea of how speakers talk is action orientated and temporally situated within the data. The next stage therefore involves generating results that reflect the longitudinal and discursive nature of LDR. This involves further examining extracts of interest to determine the discursive devices and rhetorical strategies speakers draw on to perform these actions through talk (Goodman, 2017). Gibson and Booth (2017) explain that to ensure that that their developing analysis was not divorced from its discursive context, selected extracts were analysed within in the context of the wider debate. Whilst this focus on discursive context is important, within LDR it is also necessary that this analytic process takes account of the temporal context of these extracts. Researchers should therefore seek to identify the role of temporality in the construction and employment of rhetorical strategies and discursive devices. As discuss in stage 5, this may include making note of the number of times each device is employed in relation to certain time points. Beyond identifying the temporal context in which these strategies are used, the way in which temporality itself is constructed is a key area of concern. If a specific point in time is treated as significant by speakers, then researchers should seek to examine how this action is achieved. Within

LQR, time is both a vehicle and object of study (Henwood & Shirani, 2011). The identification of temporality within the dataset should therefore not be used as simply a jumping off point to examine change, but instead the social construction of time itself is an area for analysis.

Alongside exploring speakers understanding of time, researchers can begin a precursory investigation of change throughout the dataset. This can be achieved in conjunction with analysis of discursive devices and analytic strategies. For example, if speakers treat an account as being new or surprising, this may mark that change has occurred. Likewise, if the analyst themselves finds an utterance as being particularly noteworthy, it is worth considering if this interaction is striking because it differs from what has come before or after it. These potential areas of change should be considered in relation to both their position on the timeline and their relation to other transcripts. Here it is also important to remember that the identification of stability across the data remains just as important to the practice of LDR as the identification of change. In Gibson and Booth's (2017) paper it is stated that the rhetorical commonplace of 'an Australian-style points system' was identified as a phenomenon of interest due to it being repeatedly invoked by speakers representing UKIP. From a longitudinal perspective this finding could reflect the stability of this strategy through time, with this being an interesting area for analysis.

In many ways, this stage of LDR does not differ greatly from the process of conducting a more traditional discursive analysis. For example, Gibson and Booth (2017) note that they compiled instances in which speakers invoked the strategy of an 'Australian-style points system' into a separate document to allow for "comparison across cases" (Gibson & Booth, 2017, pp.7). The key distinction in LDR is that instead of focusing on variation *across* accounts, researchers should instead focus on change *through* time. The next step of this guide will provide more insight into how this can be achieved.

7. Creating data ponds

Drawing on Saldana's (2003) guidelines for LQR, the next stage of this process involves further organising extracts of interest into separate data 'ponds'. This involves creating subsets of data which reflect where these strategies or devices are situated in relation to different key time points. These key time points can be determined through re-visiting earlier notes on what is treated as significant by participants, or through the researcher's broader understanding of the dataset's temporal context. For example, a longitudinal analysis of Gibson and Booth (2017) data may include the creation of two data ponds that encapsulates instances of an 'Australian-style points system' that occurred before and after the start of the official campaigning period. This time point could be identified as being 'key' due to it being referred to by speakers, or because it is reasonable to assume that politician's discourse may shift as they now work to more actively and explicitly campaign for the public vote. If at this point in this analysis the researcher is still undecided on what are key time points within the data, it is advisable to create several data ponds that encompass the duration between each point on the timeline. This may make the temporal relationship between relevant extracts more apparent and can help to pin down their trajectory through time, something which will be explored more when analysing change.

Once these data ponds have been established, they can then be used by the analyst to identify change and stability through time. This process is not dissimilar to the way in which traditional DP approaches the existence of variation and contradictions in talk. However, here the focus in on how this variation occurs through time rather than across accounts (see Chapter 4 for further discussion of this distinction). When establishing which time points are 'key' to the analysis, there are several methods that researchers can use to identify change. First, each data pond should be further examined to identify any strategies or descriptions that are orientated to by speakers as representing a change from 'the norm'. The way in which this deviation is articulated may vary amongst speakers and contexts. For example, orientation towards change may take forms such as a speaker accusing their opposition of adopting a different attitude or constructing their understanding of an issue as having been changed by recent events. These types of utterances will typically be less prominent within the

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dataset than others rhetorical strategies used to denote change. For example, the employment of confusion or surprise in response to a speakers account may work to indicate that something 'new' or unexpected has occurred. This method reflects the principles of LDR, which beyond examining how change occurs is also interested in how change as a construct is represented and employed by speakers.

Next, speakers can also draw their own observations and knowledge to identify where change occurs throughout the different data ponds. Pettigrew (1990) suggests that the constructed nature of change should be understood through the lens of contextualism. The theory of contextualism proposes that change is situational, and therefore cannot be divorced from the wider context in which it takes places (Menard, 1991). Because of this, researchers, can use their familiarity with the broader dataset to make observations regarding when and how change occurs. For example, Gibson and Booth (2017) note that their analysis found that speakers representing UKIP employed various 'well-established' devices for justifying out-group exclusion alongside the more 'novel' strategy of an Australian-style points system. If this study had been conducting used LDR, it may have been identified that speakers gradually shifted from using these well-established devices to employing this novel strategy through the campaigning period. This would be an example of identifying *wha*t has changed (the rhetorical strategy used), which could then be followed by further investigation of how this change occurred. Whilst LDR is more sceptical than LQR of the question of 'why' change occurs, identifying how these changes developed in response to contextual or discursive factors should still be analysed. It may be determined that UKIP changed their strategy due to consistent accusations of prejudice and lack of policy, or this change may be judged as being a result of speakers working to validate UKIP as a legitimate political party. Regardless, all conclusions draw about how change occurs should be evident within the data.

LDR's approach towards identifying change draws on the conversation analytic method of a 'same-but-different' analysis. This approach proposes that to be considered as evidence of change

through time, the phenomena under scrutiny should be observed to take a different form at different time points yet be similar enough to be easily identifiable as a 'token of the same type' (Koschmann, 2013). The ways in these changes can be evidenced during the write-up of this report will be discussed in more detail during the next stage of LDR, but it is worth commenting on a few ways that researchers at this stage can ensure they have identified change rather than variation. For example, plotting relevant extracts on a timeline can help to illustrate how certain strategies become prominent or fall out of use at different time points. This can also be demonstrated using a table which documents the number of instances in which speakers employ different strategies at each time point (for example see Table 2).

Whilst the emphasis of this stage has been on change, the existence of stability is equally important to the practice of LQR. The process of identifying stability is also informed by many of the same analytic concerns as change. First, researchers should first explore what issues are treated as 'known' or taken-for-granted by other speakers. For example, speakers may directly articulate that an account is familiar to them (e.g., 'we've heard it all before'), or may instead perform actions such as groaning to indicate that they are 'bored' with this information. Stability may also be identified through the *lack* of response received from other speakers. For example, if Gibson and Booth (2017) analysed discourse surrounding both the 2015 and the 2017 general election, the finding that opponents no longer challenge the details of UKIP's 'Australian-style points system' policy may indicate that this construct has become stable, and to a degree accepted through time. Researchers should also draw on their own observations of the data to draw conclusions regarding stability. If a phenomenon of interest is consistently present at different key time points, this is likely to suggest that it has remained the same throughout this period. However, absence of change does not necessarily indicate stability. Because of this great care should be taken to ensure that just as variation is not mistaken for change, prominence is not mistaken for stability.

8. Writing the analysis

For the most part, the write-up of a LDR study will require the same features as a traditional discursive report. For example, the inclusion of an abstract, introduction, conclusion. However, due to the longitudinal nature of this practice, there are some additional considerations to be made. First, when describing methodology, the temporal context of the dataset should be treated as central to the analysis. This will involve providing insight into how the duration of the data was determined and how key time points were identified. Furthermore, it is advisable that researchers include some discussion of how their study conceptualised and identified both 'time' and 'change' within this study. A unique contribution of LDR is its consideration of how these concepts are constructed through talk, and this should be highlighted in order to distinguish this approach from other longitudinal qualitative methods.

When writing the analysis, researchers should consider which of their findings best represent change and/or stability through the data. The analysis of selected extracts should orient towards temporality by how this change or stability is being produced through talk. This can be achieved using 'typical' DP practices, such as examining rhetorical strategies and discursive devices. However, these features of talk should not be static objects that exist outside of time or context. Instead, their temporal relationship to each other and development throughout the dataset should be evident to the reader. For example, Gibson and Booth (2017) paper might analyse how speakers construct an 'Australian-style points system' through drawing on the resources of their prevision rhetorical strategies. Extracts included in the analysis will typically be ordered chronologically in order to illustrate this longitudinal narrative of change. A further tool than can be used to illustrate change (as seen in this thesis) is the use of tables documenting when and how often strategies occurred. This can also help to provide transparency regarding how analytic decisions regarding change and stability were made.

However, whilst tools such as this can be useful for demonstrating that change is occurring, findings generated by LDR do not require any more evidence or 'validation' than a traditional discursive analysis. Ultimately, in the same way a DP researcher would seek to demonstrate how their

phenomena is situated sequentially, rhetorically, and institutionally, LDR should also empirically illustrate how their findings are temporally situated.

Discussion

In conclusion, this framework has offered DP with a framework through which the issue of temporality within discourse can be approached. The fact that many of the stages present in this guide seem new our unusual to a DP informed analyses does not indicate the practice of LDR is going against its discursive root. Instead, that such a guide is needed can be seen as evidence that DP has largely neglected temporality as a feature of talk. However, by discussing the process of LDR in relation to Gibson and Booth's (2017) study, I illustrate that many of the concerns discussed here are already present within traditional discursive research. As is common within the DP literature, Gibson and Booth justify their analytic focus by suggesting the strategy being scrutinised was frequently employed by speakers. This focus on 'prominence' or 'frequency' can often be found to actually relate to the temporal concern of 'stability'. Similarly, researchers may support their analysis by suggesting it draws on well-established rhetorical strategies. However, there is seemingly very little interest in examining how and when 'well-established' strategies shift to being 'novel', or how devices that were once novel is now taken-for-granted by speakers and researchers alike. These developments are something that can only be understood using a longitudinal lens. Increased engagement with LDR is therefore beneficial for the field of DP at large.

I will next discuss how this framework has practical applications for the analysis of political discourse.

9.4 Practical Applications

The methodological framework developed within this thesis has various practical applications. Whilst this approach is perhaps most relevant to the field of DP, LDR is a valuable tool for exploring a wide

range of political issues. A key reason for this is that the temporal perspective of this approach allows researchers to track the evolution of political phenomena through time. This concern with temporality and political phenomena is present across different academic fields, with disciplines such as political science, sociology, and history being particularly interested in explaining and engaging with societal change (Gokmenoglu, 2021). From my review of the literature, I observed concerted efforts within these fields to develop conceptual tools for engaging with change through time (see Gokmenoglu, 2021; Howlett, 2019). This research can aid in the development of these tools by demonstrating the importance of talk as a medium through which this change occurs and lending support to the constructivist perspective of the sociopolitical sphere. For this reason, a practical implication of LDR is that it can be used to provide interdisciplinary insight into political phenomena. This framework is well-suited to collaboration between researchers who share a similar conceptualisation of time and change and can help foster a deeper understanding of political dynamics. Due to the interdisciplinary potential of LDR, this methodology can be used to bridge the theory-practice gap within political analysis (Altinkas, 2022).

First, LDR can play a pivotal role in informing and shaping the policy development process. By tracking the evolution of political discourse through time, policymakers can gain valuable insight into the changing expectations, sentiments, and issues that exist within society. In turn, this will allow them to adapt their policy to better align with the shifting public priorities. Furthermore, by exploring change and stability in how policy is responded to, policymakers can begin to identify which communication strategies are most effective at invoking acceptance and support among the public. Likewise, by identifying the grounds on which previous policy has been undermined, politicians can pre-empt the challenges their accounts will face. This will further aid in developing strategies that lead to desired political actions, such as gaining public support (Bull, 2010). Identifying these strategies will also offer valuable lessons for improving the processes of policy implementation within the public sphere.

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For example, the confusion regarding Labour's Brexit policy observed in this analysis could indicate the need for increased transparency or the construction of more accessible accounts. This suggests that alongside being a useful tool for policymakers, this approach can also benefit the other stakeholders involved in this process. In particular, LDR can be used to hold politicians to account by exposing shifts in their rhetoric and actions. Whilst LDR should not be used to make a value judgement regarding apparent inconsistencies between accounts, revealing changes in the political narrative surrounding specific policies can allow the public to hold politicians accountable for how their past statements relate to their current actions. The application of this methodological framework can therefore offer an in-depth understanding of the role of discourse in shaping policy decisions and outcomes.

A further practical application of this approach relates to the role of the media within political discourse. Previous research has examined how the media is influential in shaping and promoting certain political narratives. For example, Goodman, Sirriyeh and McMahon (2017) identified how the evolving categorisation of people attempting to enter the UK during the 2015 refugee crisis within newspaper headlines had a corresponding impact on how these individuals were treated as 'deserving' or 'undeserving' of support. Similarly, media coverage can work to implicitly legitimise or delegitimise political ideologies and positions. In 2009, the then-leader of the right-wing British National Party (BNP), Nick Griffin, was invited to appear on *Question Time*. This was the first time that an 'extremist' politician from a fringe party had appeared on the Question Time panel, which resulted in much controversy. Bull and Simon-Vandenbergen (2014) note that Griffin's inclusion worked to normalise his far-right ideology as a contestable issue, with this shifting the Overton window of what positions are acceptable within mainstream political discourse. LDR can therefore be used to track how public perceptions shift through time in response to media framing of political phenomena.

Identifying shifts in how vulnerable groups such as refugees are constructed within media discourse can also provide organisations with the tools to tackle the perpetuation of prejudice (McKenzie, 2003). For example, demonstrating that the current media discourse surrounding trans identities and the Gender Recognition Act draws on many of the tropes that were characteristic of past debates regarding the legislation of same-sex marriage works to highlight that this is a continuation of 'old' forms of prejudice (Baker, 2014). These observations could contribute to developing media literacy programmes that encourage the public to engage in critical thinking regarding the information they encounter.

These practical applications therefore demonstrate the value of LDR for understanding the evolving dynamics of political discourse, The political landscape is ever-changing, and therefore the tools used to examine political discourse need to be able to account for this evolution through time. However, the practice of LDR should not be confined to the analysis of political discourse. The findings of this thesis can be said to be transferable in that they have implications for the analysis of talk in other settings. This will be discussed in more detail next.

9.5 Transferability

In qualitative research, transferability concerns the extent to which the knowledge and conclusions obtained from a particular study can hold relevance or significance in other settings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Transferability is often closely associated with the quantitative concept of 'generalisability', which is concerned with determining if the results of a study are representative of the wider target population (Popper, 1959). The generalisability of analytic findings is typically not a concern for discursive researchers, who are critical of the notion that there is one 'true' representation of how individuals experience psychological phenomena (Speer & Potter, 2002). However, Goodman (2008) demonstrates how discursive findings can – to some extent – be considered generalisable. He notes that well-established discursive devices such as the 'Us and Them' distinction can be seen to

produce similar rhetorical effects across different contexts. For example, across political contexts, the construction of this dichotomy works to justify the exclusion of 'them' to serve the interests of 'us'. From this, it is suggested that researchers can make claims regarding whether specific rhetorical strategies will be used in various settings to perform a similar discursive action. Whilst transferability is distinct from generalisability, Goodman's (2018) overview of how the findings of one analysis can be applied to other rhetorical contexts is relevant to this research.

Beyond political discourse, LDR is transferable to various interactional settings. This is because, like within the political sphere, the mundane activities of everyday life are also governed by socially constructed temporal cycles—for example, the experience of starting and graduating from university. The meaning of such 'events' is constituted through talk and is therefore subject to change through time. Likewise, speakers across contexts will draw on similar temporal resources to perform specific actions. In this analysis, the failure of the UK to leave the EU on the initial withdrawal date of the 29th of March was treated as evidence of poor leadership. Similar 'lateness' strategies can also be observed in institutional contexts such as the workplace, where failure to meet deadlines may be invoked to suggest that an employee is not effectively performing their role.

Furthermore, a key finding of this analysis is that the strategies speakers used to construct their accounts were subject to change through time. For example, the strategies speakers used to defend Labour's Brexit policy shifted at specific time points to respond to the audience's challenges. This finding can be seen to reflect the broader function of talk, in which speakers work to build a representation of reality that is more convincing than alternative accounts. In order to construct a more 'convincing' account, speakers must work to situate their talk with a temporal context by building on what has come before and pre-empting potential future challenges. LDR therefore provides researchers with the opportunity to capture the evolution and nuances of discourse within its rhetorical, institutional, sequential, and temporal setting. Through this, we can identify rhetorical patterns that are not limited to a particular moment in time. This enhances the potential for

transferability, as the temporal conditions under which certain strategies become more or less prominent can be observed across contexts.

As researchers further develop LDR, there is potential that this framework may need to be adjusted to better meet the needs of different rhetorical settings. However, the core principle that underlies this approach – that talk is temporally situated and thus subject to change through time, applies to all aspects of the social world. In my discussion, I will provide suggestions for how this approach can be developed through future research. However, first, it is worth acknowledging the limitations of the current study.

9.6 Limitations

A key limitation of this research relates to how I became interested in longitudinal research. As discussed in Chapter 5, this project was initially designed to be a 'traditional' discursive study examining how key issues relating to Brexit were constructed and contested in 2019. My decision to shift to a longitudinal framing of this research came later in the analytic process when I had identified three areas of interest and made preliminary notes regarding the discursive devices and action orientation in relevant extracts. The observation that motivated this change in approach was that whilst speakers drew on various strategies to defend Labour's Brexit policy, each iteration of this strategy was consistently treated as humorous and confusing by the audience. This led me to investigate the temporal order of these extracts to identify how these strategies related to each other and the timeline of Brexit events. Through this, I was able to pinpoint patterns in when these strategies occurred. This led me to review the discursive literature to identify how this pattern could be approached from a longitudinal perspective. When it became evident that DP had not systematically addressed the issue of change through time, I and a range of other sources (e.g. organisational psychology). With this information in mind, I then revisited the data to determine if a longitudinal approach would be suitable for this analysis.

. This decision was informed by the assumption that as I had seen evidence of longitudinal change within the construction of Labour's Brexit policy, it would also be reasonable to apply the same framing to my initial observations regarding the discourse surrounding the prospect of a second referendum. However, this action was somewhat problematic for the integrity of my analysis. One reason for this is that as I had already generated preliminary findings, the process of applying LDR was inadvertently biased towards confirming my preconceived expectations of what was relevant within the dataset. For example, I employed LDR in my analysis of Labour's Brexit party to support my prior observation that the strategies speakers used to defend this policy changed through time. Because of this, it could be argued that rather than conducting a longitudinal analysis, I simply reframed the findings of a 'traditional' DP analysis through a longitudinal lens.

The distinction here is that the framework for LDR I developed throughout this thesis requires temporal concerns to be intentionally built into the research design. However, here, my analytic engagement with temporality was initially incidental. By revisiting areas of interest I had already analysed, I treated LDR as a novel 'add-on' which could be used to gain further insight into what I had already concluded were the most important aspects of my research. Whilst I employed several strategies to ensure that I was not misrepresenting the data to support my emerging analytic narrative (see Chapter 5), there is a possibility that I may have missed the 'bigger picture' regarding the temporal aspects of this data. Because of this, once I had developed an interest in longitudinal research, the most appropriate course of action would have been to reshape my analytic approach entirely. This would have involved developing a research question appropriate LDR and analysing the data again without assuming that the areas of interest I had identified using a traditional DP approach would remain relevant.

A further limitation of my findings is the lack of an existing framework for longitudinal discursive research. Despite DP and LQR providing valuable tools for conceptualising and analysing 'change' and 'time' (see Chapter 4), problems persisted when applying these tools to the data. The

distinction between change through time and variation across accounts was typically clear. However, I was often uncertain about how to approach temporal variations that existed *within* discursive strategies. For example, in Chapter 8, I outlined how speakers employed the strategy of 'new information' to justify their support for a second referendum. Here, I noted that this strategy remained stable throughout the data but drew on different resources through time as events unfolded. For example, the failure of the government to pass their withdrawal bill through parliament in March would be an example of 'new information', as would Boris Johnson being appointed Prime Minister in July. For the purpose of this analysis, both of these were treated as existing under the umbrella of the same strategy, with this therefore demonstrating stability. However, it is also possible that by drawing on different resources through time, this strategy is an example of change within the data, as speakers work to construct 'new-er' information. Whilst I have been careful to both justify my analytic decisions and provide a thorough overview of how this research conceptualised 'time' and 'change', it is clear that many elements of longitudinal discursive research still need to be teased out. Future longitudinal discursive research could therefore contribute to the development of this framework by more systematically addressing the distinction between 'variation' and 'change' through time.

9.7 Conclusion and future research

The key contribution of this thesis is that the analytic findings presented here demonstrate that time is not an incidental aspect of talk. Instead, time is both a medium and resource central to shaping interaction. From this, our understanding of psychological and political phenomena is temporally situated. For example, common political tropes such as 'the will of the people' may, at any given time, be defined as referring to material conditions or conceptual ideals (see Chapter 8). Whilst this could reflect variation across accounts, it could also indicate change through time. The only way in which to appreciate this distinction is through the employment of a longitudinal approach.

By providing a framework for LDR, I aim to provide researchers with the tools to further explore and develop this approach. From my previous discussion of the limitations of this study, it is evident that there is more that needs to be teased out, particularly regarding how 'change' should be conceptualised from a DP perspective. Likewise, the implications of stability within talk require further investigation. Due to the ever-changing sociopolitical climate both in the UK and worldwide, there is plenty of opportunity for this approach to be applied. For example, political commentators have noted that the construction of the COVID-19 pandemic within political discourse has shifted from being the 'greatest crisis in our lifetime' to now being treated as having little relevance to current events (Delaney, 2022). Regardless of the issue researchers choose to examine, the analytic priority of this approach should be to gain insight into what the presence of change and stability suggest about the nature of talk.

In conclusion, the purpose of this thesis is to encourage the field of discursive psychology to engage more systematically with conceptual and methodological questions of change through time. In its toolbox, DP has the resources necessary to make a meaningful contribution to the ongoing development of longitudinal qualitative research. Whilst DP is often quick to critique the taken-for-granted way other disciplines treat talk, it is evident that we have our own 'temporal skeletons' to contend with (Levine, 2003).

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Transcription Conventions (adopted from Jefferson, 2004)

(.) A full stop enclosed in brackets indicates a micropause. [ ] Square brackets denote overlapping speech.

(0.2) The number inside the brackets indicates a timed pause

> < < > Arrows surrounding text indicates that the pace of the speed has increased or decreased (( ))

Double brackets denotes a description of a nonverbal activity such as ((clapping))

 Underlined text indicates speaker emphasis

CAPITAL letters denote loud speech

= Equal sign represents speech latching, which refers to a continuation of talk

:: Colons represented elongated sounds

Appendix 2

Brexit Timeline 2019 – Key Time points

January

- 15th January – Theresa May's government lost first meaningful vote on withdrawal agreement.

- 16th January – Theresa May and her government survive a vote of no confidence put forward by Leader of the Opposition Jeremy Corbyn.

- 29th January – The 'Brady Amendment' passes through the House of Commons with support from the government. This amendment calls on the May to reject the Norther Irish Backstop in its current form and instead negotiate an alternative arrangement with the EU. The 'Spelman Amendment', which rejects the possibility of a no-deal Brexit, also marginally passes through parliament. However, this amendment is not legally binding and no deal remains the default option.

February

- 3rd February – Leavers and Remainers within the Conservative party agree to the 'Malthouse compromise'. This compromised agreement proposes the EU transition period is extended until 2021, and that parts of the withdrawal agreement relating to Northern Ireland are redrafted.

- 6 th February – Jeremy Corbyn sends letter to Theresa May outlining Labour's demands for a future withdrawal agreement.

- 7 th February – Theresa May and President of the European Council agree to continue talks •

- 14th February – Parliament debate motion put forward by government. Theresa May asks the house to demonstrate commitment towards supporting the governments negotiations with the EU, This motion is rejected.

- 18th February – The Independent Group 'Change UK' is formed •

- 26th February – May announces to parliament that if her withdrawal bill fails pass through parliament, MPs will be able to vote for either extending Article 50 or leaving the EU without a deal

March

- 12th March – Second meaningful vote on the government's withdrawal agreement. This bill again fails to pass through parliament.

- 14th March - Parliament votes to extend the Article 50

- 21st March – The European Council agrees to extend the Article 50 period until the 22nd of May on the proviso that May's withdrawal agreement is approved by parliament.

- 29th March – The original end of the Article 50 period – would mark the UK's departure from the European Union. May's withdrawal agreement is rejected by parliament for a third time,

April

- 5th April – Theresa May writes to the EU council requesting a further extension to Article 50.

- 10th April – EU council agree to extend Article 50. The UK must now leave the European Union by the 31st of October.

- 12th April – Nigel Farage forms the 'Brexit Party' with the intention of standing for the upcoming EU election.

May

- 14th May – Theresa May announces plan for a forth parliamentary vote on withdrawal agreement.

- 23rd May - EU parliamentary elections are held – both the Labour and Conservative Party perform poorly. The Brexit Party and The Liberal Democrats finish first and second respectively.

- 24th May – Theresa May announces her plan to resign from the position of party leader on the 7th June. Leader of the Liberal Democrats Vince Cable also announces his plan to step down.

June

- 7 th June – The Conservative Leadership election begins.
- 28th June- The Liberal Democrats Leadership election begins.

July

- July 22nd – Jo Swinson is elected Leader of the Liberal Democrats
- July 23rd – Boris Johnson wins Conservative Leadership election and is appointed Prime Minister
- July 24th – Theresa May resigns.
- July 25th – Parliament goes into recess.

August

- 9th August - Boris Johnson writes to the EU council requesting that the Northern Ireland backstop agreement is amended.

- 28th August – At Johnsons' request, the Queen agrees to prorogue parliament between the 9 th of September and the 14th November. This means that all parliamentary and legislative action would be paused during this time. Johnson states this will allow him to secure a new

favourable Brexit deal in the weeks leading up to the end of the Article 50 period (31st October

September

- 4 th September - The 'Benn Act' passes through parliament. This bill would require the government to ask the EU for an extension to the Article 50 period in order to avoid the threat of no deal.

- 9 th September – the governments motion for a General Election is rejected. • 23rd September – Labour announces their support for a second referendum in which party leader Jeremy Corbyn will remain neutral.

- 24th September – the Supreme Court deems that Johnson's prorogation of parliament was unlawful.

October

- 17th October - Johnson negotiates an 'alternative backstop' with the EU council. This arrangement allows Northern Ireland to leave the customs union with the rest of the UK.

- 19th October - The 'Lewtin amendment' passes through the House of Commons. The amendment ensures that Johnson's Brexit deal cannot be implement before the withdrawal agreement has been agreed to by parliament. Johnson sends unsigned letter to EU Council asking for an extension to Article 50. This occurred as a result of the Benn Act.

- • 22nd October – Governments revised withdrawal agreement is passed on its second reading. However, parliament reject a motion that would enable the UK to leave the EU before the 31st of October.

- 28th October – EU Council agrees to extend Brexit to the 31st January 2020.

- 29th October – MPs vote to approve the governments Early Parliamentary Election bill, allowing for a General Election to take place on the 12th December.

November

- 21st November – The Labour Party releases their election manifesto promising a second referendum on Brexit.

- 24th November - The Conservative Party produce an election manifesto that pledge the UK will leave the European by the 31st of January 2020.

December

- 12th December – General Election is held. The Conservatives regain their majority, winning seats from constituencies that historically voted for Labour.