

Since the 2010 General Election, the U.K. Labour Party has remained in opposition, electing three different leaders and, as a result it has experienced significant changes in its policy positions. Yet, there has been little up to date literature produced on Labour's approach to the welfare state, controlling poverty or its plans to reform social security policy. Addressing these gaps in academic research is important at a time when the Labour Party is actively seeking to strengthen its credentials as a party of potential government and there are signs that it has been narrowing the gap with the Conservative Party in opinion polls of voter intention. It is also particularly urgent given the implications that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has for the welfare state.

My research would build on the work of Ruth Levitas, who identified three foundational discourses of Social Exclusion used by the Labour Party (Levitas, 2005):

- The Redistributionist Discourse (RED).
- Moral Underclass Discourse (MUD).
- Social Integrationist Discourse (SID).

This area of the academic research has been overlooked since the research of Levitas. Empirical research into the relevance of these categories of discourse is now required in order to assess if and how the Labour Party has adapted and what the public can expect from the party going forward into the 2024 General Election, as well as assessing if the legacy of past leaders, such as Jeremy Corbyn, continues to have implications for rhetoric today.

This project engages with the current socio-economic political landscape and promotes the University's research theme of Justice and Equality. It connects to my passion for the subject and my mentors' ongoing research on the Labour's Party's policies and leaders. Within this project, I will ask:

- How does the Labour Party discursively construct issues related to social exclusion? (e.g., what is seen to cause poverty?)
- What current policy solutions does the Labour Party propose to address poverty? (and how are these justified?)

- To what extent has the Labour Party altered their discourse in relation to domestic equality and poverty? And why have these changed?

To address these questions and working within the Laidlaw Scholarship time frame, this project would conduct a discourse analysis of Labour Party social policy documents, politician speeches and official party media statements. The documents will be coded for the discourses identified above and to identify changes in approach. The timeframe will include the leaderships of Ed Miliband, Jeremy Corbyn and Keir Starmer to ensure scope and accurate time for policy development.

Levitas, R. (2005). *The inclusive society? Social exclusion and new labour*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.