

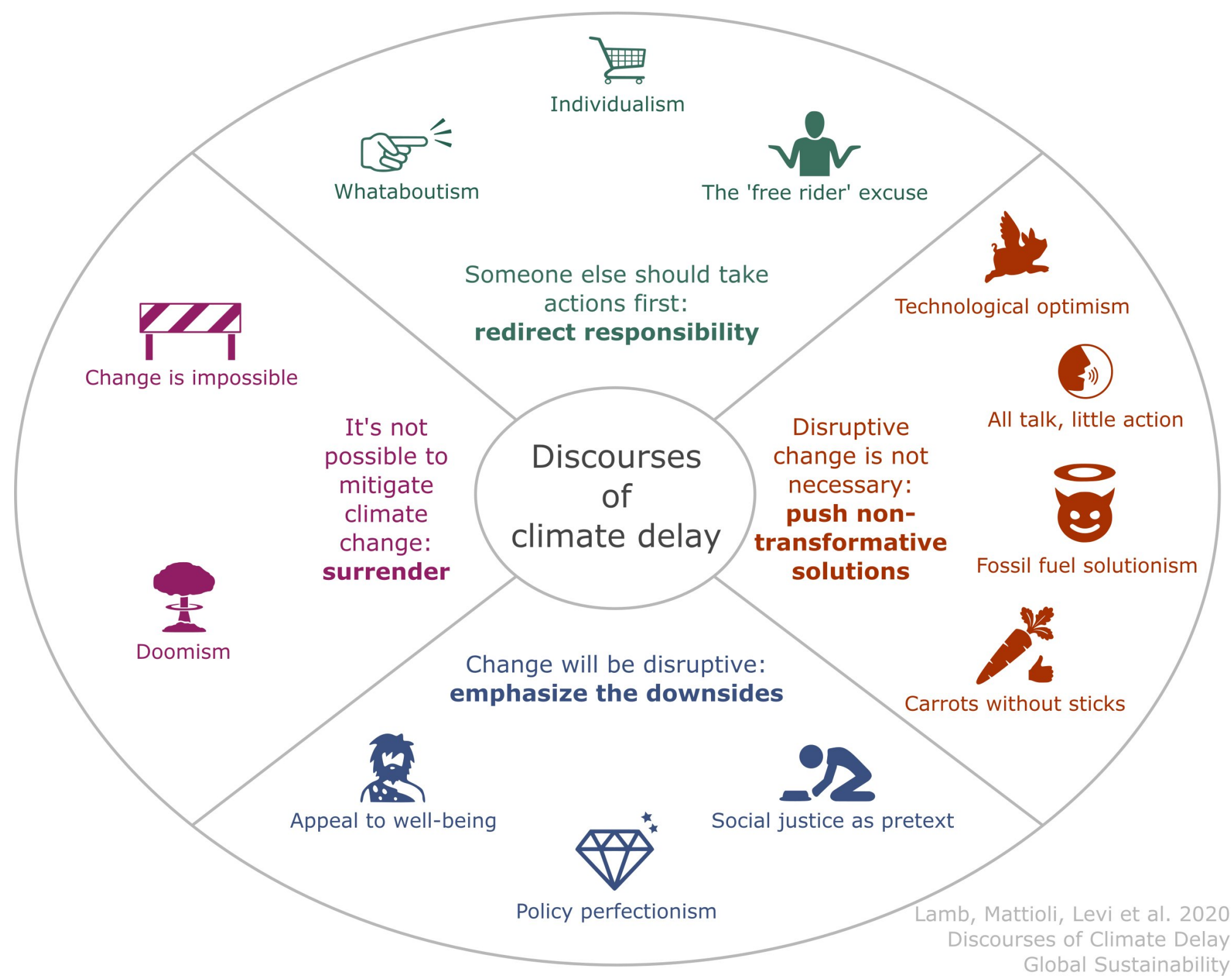
Discourses of Climate Delay

(Lamb *et al.*, 2020)

Martina Ward



MWard13@uclan.ac.uk



INTRODUCTION

- There are no empirically validated discourses of climate delay
- It is not clear how prominent and how effective these delay discourses are
- Also, it is not clear how they can be prevented from biasing public opinion
- So, delay discourses may be hindering climate policy acceptance
- Delay arguments typically:
 - misrepresent rather than clarify
 - raise adversity rather than consensus
 - imply taking action is an impossible challenge

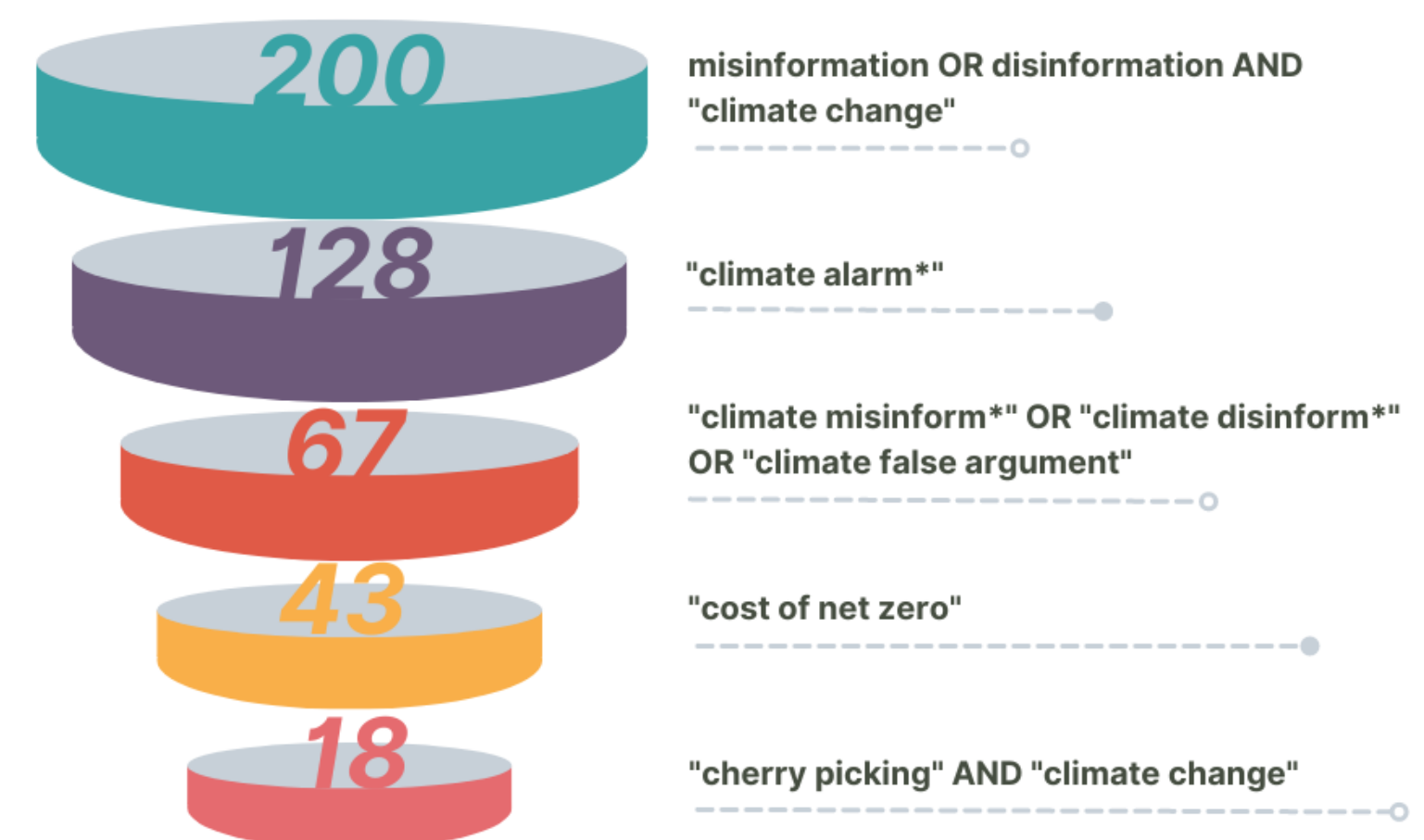
OBJECTIVE

- To systematically identify the dominant discourses prevalent in UK online mass news media, using the climate delay discourses proposed by Lamb *et al.*, (2020)

METHOD

- Qualitative media discourse analysis using LexisNexis database
- Search parameters:
 - Timeline: 24 February 2022 to 30 May 2023
 - Publication Location: Europe
 - Country: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
 - Publication Language: English
 - Publication Type: Newspapers

SEARCH RESULTS



It's 2 minutes to midnight, but still...



the perception of climate change is marred by people displaying whataboutism, using the free rider excuse, and blaming social justice as a pretext to avoid taking action

FINDINGS



EXAMPLE 'APPEAL TO SOCIAL JUSTICE' DISCOURSES

- "the cost of net zero by 2050 will be £3 trillion, or £108,000 per household"
- "decarbonisation...is vastly costly and troublesome in domestic, societal, industrial and financial terms"



EXAMPLE 'THE FREE RIDER EXCUSE' DISCOURSES

- "most of the rest of the world have no policies to curb CO2 emissions and so maintain and boost their industrial, financial and domestic strengths"
- "large emitters of CO2 such as China and India have policies to rule out decarbonisation so helping their industries and finances compared to the West"

EXAMPLE 'WHATABOUTISM' DISCOURSES

- "the UK has a miniscule 1.13% of global emissions...China, India, Russia and Saudi Arabia account for well over 70%"
- "the UK contributes less than 2% of global emissions; even if we hit net zero tomorrow it would have little effect on climate change"



CONCLUSION

'Letters to the Editor' provided deep, rich and personal insights about climate change, and these discourses were mapped onto Lamb's taxonomy and used to generate delay discourse themes. 'Traditional' news stories were generally fact-based and did not allow for a deeper thematic analysis.

Many letters were based on the writer's concerns around the costs of achieving carbon net zero, followed by trivialising the UK's emissions compared to other countries, particularly China, India, Russia and Saudi Arabia, and highlighting that these countries are unwilling to make a difference, so 'why should we'. Interestingly, neither the war in Ukraine or the Covid-19 pandemic had a marked effect on the delay discourses.

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