Framing a climate crisis

A descriptive framing analysis of how Greta Thunberg inspired the masses to take to the streets

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“The eyes of all future generations are upon you. And if you choose to fail us, I say we will never forgive you. We will not let you get away with this. Right here, right now is where we draw the line.”

Greta Thunberg, 23 September 2019
Abstract

During the twenty-first century attention towards climate change and its consequences has increased significantly and somehow it reached its peak when young activist Greta Thunberg started what has become one of the largest movements for the climate in 2018. Her school strike has created debate and given rise to demonstrations and collective actions around the globe. The purpose of this study is therefore to bring clarity to the framing processes which has contributed to this development. Consequently, this analysis has been conducted through a descriptive framing analysis with a focus on what frames Greta Thunberg has used to describe climate change, including a description of her goal with the strikes and a discussion of features associated with mass mobilisation. Building on the theoretical framework from social movement researchers Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow the results have revealed three main frames; a crisis frame, a parental frame and a hierarchical frame as well as features within Thunberg’s message has been discovered which ad insights to Benford and Snow’s discussion of what can create resonant frames. By describing how Thunberg has framed her cause this study concludes that the coherence between her actions, behaviour as well as who she is in relation to her frames has contributed to a message that emphasises collective and/or self-efficacy which encourages people to follow her lead.

Key words: Social Movements, Framing, Greta Thunberg, Participation, Mobilization, Fridays for Future, Climate change
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1. Introduction

The new geological era ‘The Anthropocene’ is the period where human activity stands for the main environmental influence and are causing the greatest challenge for life on earth, as a result of the human way of living. In the past century the planet’s average temperature has risen by one degree, and despite warning signs humans continue life and business as usual. In newspapers one can read about melting glaciers and rising sea levels, extreme weathers and record high concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere (WWF, n.d). The Anthropocene is an epoch where the peak for what the earth can handle will most likely be reached, as well as it is the time where real changes has to be made.

This is the main message in youth climate activist Greta Thunberg’s school strike for the climate who, in August 2018, initiated what has become the largest climate mobilisation to date. The Swedish 16-year-old became the figurehead for the climate movement within one year and in the final week of September 2019, six million people all over the world joined in strikes and demonstrations to demand action for the environmental “emergency”. (Taylor et.al. 2019).

Climate change and the following consequences, such as global warming, are one of the greatest challenges in contemporary times. It is an issue that easily fails to stay on the governmental agenda, despite widespread attention and acknowledgement, and requires cross-national cooperation, dedication and persistence with no easy solutions available (Pralle, 2009;782). However, during recent years attention for the environment has increased significantly. World governments have promised to limit global warming to 1,5 degrees Celsius, in accordance to the Paris Agreement, which is the first of its kind to bring all parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change into a common effort on how to strengthen global response and adaptation to climate change (UNFCCC, 2019). Unfortunately, there is a severe disparity between what has to be done and what governments of the world are planning to do (Naturskyddsföreningen, 2019). Attempts for international cooperation to find solutions has been made but evidently, dedication and persistence seem to be lacking.

In order for politicians and policy makers to realize that broad changes in society are needed, and demanded, the public is a driving force (Pralle, 2009;787-788). While environmental activism is nothing new, Greta Thunberg’s school strike, and the associated movement Fridays For Future, demonstrates a remarkable case that has engaged millions of people to bring attention to the political reluctance to act on climate change. With this in mind, the aim of this thesis is to understand the large mobilisation for Thunberg’s cause through a framing
perspective of social movements and thus add cumulatively to the contemporary literature on social movement framings for mobilisation and participation. Thunberg encourages people to take up action as well as she demands change and puts pressure on leaders to undertake serious action to limit climate change (Fridays For Future, n.d.). The framing perspective will attend to the process where Thunberg allocate meaning and understanding for the problem (Snow, 2008), which will be used to describe how she has constructed her cause followed by a discussion regarding the global mobilisation of adherents.

1.1 Purpose Statement and Research Question

Environmental awareness and activism are nothing new and people all over the world have struggled and managed to find ways to advocate for concerns regarding the climate in a pursuit for accountability and change. Amongst those leading the fight for climate change, since the 1970s, are youth, especially students, who organise networks and organisations to share and express their concerns (Cox, 2013; 27). The commitment has increased exponentially since, but none can compare to the mobilisation for Fridays For Future, a climate movement with proportions that has never been seen before, and that has already created significant effects on the international political agenda (Taylor et.al. 2019). Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to describe and understand this development, through the perspective of social movement framing processes. Framings has been argued to be an important aspect in order to comprehend the developments of social movements (Benford & Snow, 2000;612), as it directs focus on interpretations and meaning constructions that aims at mobilizing adherents (Lindekilde, 2014). Thus, this study will be conducted through a descriptive framing analysis in order to answer the following questions;

- From the perspective of framing theory within social movements, what frames has Greta Thunberg used in order to give rise to mobilization and action?

- Through the perspective of frame resonance, how can these frames have contributed to the masses taking to the streets to further the environmental agenda?

The actors of a social movement are important agents for creating meaning and furthering the agenda of the movement (Benford & Snow, 2000;612f). Therefore, the contribution of this study is to cumulatively add to the literature on social movement framings and mobilization, and to further understanding for how actors can strategically influence and engage people in a globalized world.
2. Background

The then 15-year-old Greta Thunberg started her school strike in August 2018 outside the Swedish Parliament, to demand that the Swedish politicians direct more attention towards climate change. She wanted to put pressure on politicians and policymakers to uphold their promises to the Paris Agreement, which she contends she will continue doing until the Swedish policies are congruent with the goal to limit global warming to under 2 degrees (Fridaysforfuture, n.d.). Subsequently, her message went viral through social media as other youth joined her side, which resulted in the global recognition of Thunberg’s school strike and cause. The strikes have continued every Friday since, and Thunberg has performed at the United Nations, the European Parliament and the American Congress (Watts, 2019), as well as participated in climate strikes all over Europe, the US and Canada (Taylor et.al. 2019).

Thunberg has not only received invitations to high-profile meetings or surprised other activists of her rapid transformation into an icon for the climate movement (Belam, 2019). The young activist has also created debate as her activism presents some unique characteristics. To begin with, her age and initiative to strike from school, in order to shame political leaders to address the ‘environmental emergency’, has brought attention as one could say that she is not the “typical” representative of a teenager nor activist. She is acting independently and has been depicted as a shy and quiet young girl, an ambitious high school student diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome whom has, according to media, suffered from depression due to her climate anxiety (Ibid). Already from a young age Greta Thunberg learned about climate change which became a lifechanging insight and priority for the young activist and her family. Media reports that Thunberg is vegan and when she travels to participate in school strikes and/or climate meets she refrain from flying (Watts, 2019). For example, on her journey to New York, for the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit, Thunberg crossed the Atlantic on a zero-emission sailboat as a substitute for flying (Zraick, 2019).

Greta Thunberg has been celebrated and awarded for her commitment, she has received several nominations and prizes such as the 2019’s “young environmental hero” (my translation) by the World Wide Fund for Nature (Världsnaturfonden, 2019), and later the same year Time Magazine titled her ‘person of the year’ (Kejerhag, 2019). Moreover, Thunberg has also sustained widespread criticism where contenders argue she is an inexperienced girl, manipulated by adults with hidden agendas. Additionally, as a figurehead for the movement she has also received personal attacks where opponents argue that she is unqualified, hysteric...
and “mentally ill” as similes have been made between Thunberg and Stephen Kings movie Children of the Corn as well as Nazi propaganda (Zraick, 2019).

However, Thunberg’s handmade banner saying “Skolstrejk för klimatet” (School strike for climate) has become a symbol for the movement with translations to dozens of languages (Watts, 2019), and following her first school strike protesters has joined around the globe, under the same banner, subsequently creating the network organisation #FridaysForFuture. People of all ages has joined and in November 2018 the movement had spread to 24 countries with 17 000 students participating in Friday school strikes, a number that increased up to 3.6 million, in 169 countries, during a period of 9 months (Taylor et.al. 2019).

3. Theoretical framework

This study draws upon previous research on framing theory within social movements and campaigns, in order to build cumulatively on the knowledge of how movements frame their cause, their proffered solutions and how these can be made resonant to the crowds. Sidney Tarrow’s (2011) research on contentious politics contributes with an understanding of the dynamics of social movement campaigns and collective actions, but Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow’s theoretical framework on movement framing processes will be the main focus and the basis for the analysis. In their article “Framing Processes and Social movements: An overview and Assessment” (2000) they highlight the importance of framing processes in the development of movement activities, including the creation of shared meanings that motivate participation. The choice to focus on Benford and Snow’s perspective on participation and mobilization is based on their well-established role within social movement research as well as the acknowledgement that their framework has proven to be analytically fruitful (Lindekilde, 2014;198).

3.1. Social Movement Campaigns and Contentious Collective Action

Social movements are important aspects of society as these are resources for ordinary people, without positions of power, to challenge and put pressure on elites and authorities and invoke social change. This is what Tarrow refers to as contentious collective action which underlies all social movements, however, movements are usually more than just contention as they subsequently help to form organizations, ideologies and collective identities in which collective action is maintained (2011;7f).
In his book *Power in Movement* Tarrow (2011) identifies three interlinked elements important for social movements campaigns, its cycles of contention and their potential outcomes. These are Political Opportunities/Constraints, Networks and Organizations and Cultural Artifacts and Frames. The first two refers to how movements adapt and seize opportunities in contemporary politics and how these are strategically organized (2011;121). However, the latter is what will be the focus of this thesis as it relates to what Benford and Snow (2000) signifies as the framing processes in which social movements guide action and movement participation through constructions of reality. Nevertheless, framing is not limited to the goals of a movement, but it also refers to the relationship between the contentious actors and the opponents (ibid;144) as well as the actor communicating the frames. Social movements depend on solidarity in order to mobilise, which entails three characteristic features; the framing, the construction of identity and/or emotion work. The first two concepts entail constructing boundaries and delimitations for an “us and them”, while the latter relates to how a movement shape emotional meanings and justifications for participation (Tarrow, 2011;143). Based on this and the idea that framing occurs on multiple levels (Lindekilde, 2014) it is reasonable to say that for mobilization to be possible an important aspect is who stands behind the message, in order to communicate believable and relatable frames.

### 3.2. Collective Action Frames

The term ‘frame’ originates from Erving Goffman’s sociology research who argues that a frame is an element within the culture and lives of people and groups, which affects everyday communications, interactions and explain different perceptions of reality. This concept was later adopted and further developed by Benford and Snow whose main focus is framings in relation to collective actions. This includes the intentional and methodical frames constructed by movement actors in order to create consensus for action and mobilisation (Lindekilde, 2014; 202). Based on Goffman’s definition, the researchers argue for their theory of collective action frames which they define as “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movements organization” (Benford & Snow, 2000;614). This includes a conscious reality construction, by movement actors, to create meaning to certain events and circumstances, where the purpose is to organize agreement and guide action (ibid). Based on this definition the authors have specified a framework in which they have sorted out the ground pillars of social movement framings. Their framework is the foundation for this analysis and three central categories have been selected for this analysis, and will be presented in the following sections.
3.2.1. Core framing tasks

According to Benford and Snow (2000) movement actors have to consider three core framing tasks; diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framings. The first feature refers to the process where a particular problem, or event, is identified that encourages agreement and creates an idea of who is to blame, and where the responsibility lies. This process usually includes creating a divide between antagonists and protagonists and a common characteristic of this is creations of so-called injustice frames, where the victims are identified within what is seen and/or constructed as unjust (ibid; 614ff). Hence, the diagnostic frames can be described as frames that identifies the issue, communicates an idea of the problems structure as well as it defines the attributes regarding the source of the problem.

Contrarily, prognostic framing is more directed towards defining strategies and goals in relation to possible solutions of the diagnosed problem. Pointing out the weaknesses of the arguments from adversaries as well as laying a ground for their own solutions and tactics. This feature includes the aspect of counter framing, the activity that occurs when actors interact with each other, advocating their own logic and remedies while refuting those of the opponents. This forces actors to continuously develop and elaborate their goals, motives and resolutions. These prognostic frames are dependent on the diagnostic and together they facilitate and/or foster agreement. (Benford & Snow, 2000;616f).

Furthermore, the final core task refers to action mobilization. This implies that motivational framings are undertakings which aims at constructing situations where potential adherents perceive a compelling rational for participating in a collective action, as well as ensuring a continuous engagement. Benford and Snow (2000) argues that the rational for participation and action in a social movement is generally highlighted through communicating situations based on four concepts; severity, urgency, efficacy and propriety. This means constructing a problem to convince audiences that it is the most important issue, and/or highlighting it as a threat if not dealt with. Moreover, it also refers to frames that call upon rules within accepted norms and moral standards in an attempt to guide behaviour and positions regarding the problem (2000;617).

These three core features should be considered simultaneously as they are important for both consensus and action mobilization, and the movement development depends on how well these are structured and integrated. Still, in order to understand the effectiveness of such frames one has to include further explanations since the resonance of the diagnostic frames are dependent
on the salience of the two other core tasks (Lindekilde, 2014;208). Therefore, the concepts of master frames and resonance have also been incorporated in the study.

### 3.2.2. Master frames

The above-mentioned components are characteristic; however, the literature also directs attention towards collective action frames that vary between movements and, rather than explaining how frames are created, they function as features attempting to explain differences in the construction that result in varied effectiveness. These are; how a problem has been targeted, how exclusive or inclusive a selected frame is, the depth as well as the degree of resonance within a chosen frame (Benford & Snow, 2000; 618f). The latter will be further explored under section 3.2.3. and below the former concepts will be discussed through a theory of master frames.

A master frame has been defined as a “master algorithm that colors and constrains the orientations and activities of other movements.” (Benford & Snow, 2000;618), which means it has a high level of inclusivity, and is flexible in the sense that it can adapt to different contexts. Additionally, this type of frame also has a broad scope, indicating that it is relevant and effective for a large set of issues and contexts (ibid). Master frames have been labelled as movement specific, a kind of primary frame which is the basis of other frames within the movement. Examples of such master frames that have expanded the boundaries of one movement are, for example, justice and/or injustice frames, rights frames and choice frames, amongst others (Benford & Snow, 2000).

Furthermore, social movement scholars have yet not studied these “master algorithms” to the extent to which one can say what type of collective action frame has the potential of becoming a master frame. However, studies have shown that expanding and wide-ranging master frames are important factors for mobilization of broad and diverse audiences (Benford, 2013). It is also an increasingly important feature to consider when studying social movements and mobilization within a globalized and transnational context (Snow, 2008; 405).

### 3.2.3. Resonance

Frame resonance depends on its consistency and the degree of observed and articulated credibility, which is particularly relevant when considering the effectiveness of a movement’s frames, and their ability to mobilize and attract supporters (Benford & Snow, 2000:218). Within this concept the authors identify two factors with important implications and the first is the credibility of the proffered frame, which represents its trustworthiness and depends,
simultaneously, on the frame’s consistency, empirical reliability and the credibility of the responsible actors. The literature suggests that high frame consistency implies a correspondence between actions and claims to the inherent beliefs of the movement, and the higher degree of perceived coherence the more likely is movement mobilisation (Ibid:620). In addition, the reliability of a movement actor depends largely on their representativity and authenticity, signifying the perceived level of expertise and/or social respectively political status of the actor (ibid). Thus, one can assume that the level of resonance partly depends on who is responsible for the framings and how these people are observed. Moreover, the empirical credibility refers to the degree in which the frames corresponds with actual events that can serve as proof for a movement claim. These empirical justifications could be examples of successful outcomes of a political reform in one place, for another movement or, alternatively, events that serve as proof for the claim inherent in the framing of the movement (Benford & Snow, 2000:620f).

The second element within the resonance concept is the frame salience, which has been argued to be of equal importance as the credibility. Several components are identified based on how central an idea or philosophy is to the everyday lives of people, the more fundamental they are the more likely is participation. Additionally, the higher degree of relevance and amount of influence a particular issue is framed to have on the lives of potential adherents, the more likely it is to encourage action. Thus, according to the research, social movement actors should avoid constructing abstract framings in order to increase the likelihood for mobilization but also, they have to adjust and align frames depending on the context where it is active. For a frame to be resonant in different cultural settings it is important for it to achieve a high degree of conformance with the local context as well as cultural beliefs and values. (Benford & Snow, 2000:621f).

Resonant frames need to be successfully developed and speak to the audiences which would make them receptive to the message as well as prone to act upon it (ibid). This refers to the meaning-making and emotional work that aims at creating and providing solidarity between activist and adherents. Thus, it is the identification of a grievance followed by adjustments that link the injustice with cultural ideas and emotions, connecting to claims against, for example, significant others (Tarrow, 2011;153).

Concludingly, along with the above exploration of frame resonance it should be added that Benford & Snow’s definition is not very clear. Instead of indicating what a frame with high resonance is they discuss possible features that can contribute to the frame’s effectiveness. These features are mainly focused on the before mentioned concepts of salience and credibility,
which in turn is similarly elaborated in a complex structure. Thus, in order to clarify the following definitions have been regarded in relation to Benford & Snow’s discussion. Credibility as “the quality of being trusted and believed in” or “the quality of being convincing or believable” (Oxford University Press. 2019a) and salience as “the quality of being particularly noticeable or important.” (Ibid: b). Benford & Snow contends that it is these two factors that interact and “account for variation in the degree of frame resonance” (2000;619) However, they do not elaborate on how these factors relate to each other nor do they include the idea of collective-efficacy, something Albert Bandura (1982) considers to be an important feature for people to act upon demands for social change. In his deliberation of self-efficacy theory Bandura argues that people who have a stronger sense of ability to influence and/or create change are more likely to participate in action and mobilisation. This sense of self-efficacy is a necessity for perceived collective efficacy which influence what people recognise as something that is achievable, an important feature for social and political activism to prompt collective action and resource mobilisation (Bandura, 1982;143f). Therefore, one can argue that communicating proof and/or assurances that adherents can achieve desired goals is an important aspect to consider, including prognostic frames created within the boundaries of what is perceived as possible.

4. Design and methodology

4.1. Research Design and Case Selection

Since the purpose of this study is to understand how Greta Thunberg has framed climate change, and subsequently create a discussion regarding how these may have inspired millions to join the school strikes, this thesis will conduct a qualitative frame analysis focused on meanings, and the processes that create meanings (Esaiasson et.al. 2017;211). The choice to study Thunberg is based on the assumption that she is a front figure for climate change action however, the idea is not to explain why this is, nor to find an explanation for why the social movement #Fridaysforfuture has created such widespread attention to climate change. It is an ongoing process and before one can draw conclusions on causal processes one has to conduct descriptive studies which future research, with explaining intentions, can rely on (Teorell & Svensson, 2007;23). Therefore, the objective here is to create an understanding of how Thunberg has attempted to reach out to the masses built on the assumption that she is a key actor for this development, knowledge that can serve as a basis for future exploration within climate activism and social movements.
4.2. Frame analysis

Frame analysis is common within social movement literature because of its centrality when studying preference formation and opinion (Lindekilde, 2014; 201). This perspective emphasizes important practices for most social movements to reach desired results (Benford & Snow, 2000; 632), as well as it has implications on the responses they receive (Esaiasson et al., 2017; 218). In order to understand these processes frame analysis is a fitting method as it mainly aims at learning how activists have conformed their message in order to convince their audiences; “frame analysis offers an analytical tool to grasp the discursive practices of particular actors; that is, the ways particular texts are produced, distributed, and consumed.” (Lindekilde, 2014; 209). Therefore, from this perspective a framing analysis is compatible with the purpose of this thesis, which focuses on mapping out what frames Greta Thunberg uses in order to conduct a discussion on how these may have contributed to the mobilization for the climate movement.

This methodology is constructivist in its nature where the interest is not on actors’ motives or personal opinions but rather on the content of the framings, how opinions are formed and how the use of language affect meanings (Esaiasson et al. 2017; 218f). In order to study these researchers usually prepare strategically designed questions that are systematically posed to the chosen material. There are many different types of questions that can be put in relation to the texts, however, it is important that these align with the study’s theoretical framework and the idea of framing (Ibid). For this reason, instead of formulating specific questions the analytical framework in this study will consist of indicators of the main concepts brought up in the theoretical framework, which will be given further explanations under section 5. Analytical framework.

4.3. Material

The concept of framing is an actor centred term and within social movement literature actors are regarded as representative agents in the construction of meanings (Benford & Snow, 2000; 613) Thus, this analysis will only consider Thunberg’s frames as she is considered to be a key actor for the recent developments within the environmental youth movement. This actor centred perspective contributes with a rather narrow ground for material selection as well as it comes with limitations regarding the generalisability of the study (Esaiasson et al., 2017; 225f). However, the aim here is not to explain how environmental movements commonly frame climate change, nor how climate change is framed in general. Rather, this thesis intends to
explore Greta Thunberg’s frames by conducting a frame analysis with a main focus on her speeches, which will be the main material for this study, except from additional articles that contribute with knowledge of the actor as an individual and as an actor outside of her speeches.

Seven of Thunberg’s speeches, within the period of November 2018 till September 2019, have been selected for analysis and are as follows; 1.) Her Ted Talk in Stockholm November 2018. 2.) Thunberg’s speech at COP24 on December 3rd and 3.) Thunberg’s speech before the plenary assembly on December 12th. 4.) ‘Our house is on fire’ from the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos. 5.) Thunberg’s speech at the EU Parliament in Strasbourg. 6.) Thunberg’s speech at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels as well as 7.) Thunberg’s speech at the UN Climate Action Summit in New York, September 23rd, 2019. The length of the speeches varies, where the lengthiest speech is approximately twelve minutes while the shortest units have a scope of three minutes.

These speeches have been strategically chosen based on their popularity as well as their availability. Speech 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 where gathered from a network webpage for the movement Fridays for Future, with available transcriptions of the speeches as well as recordings. Speech 6 and 7 however, have been analysed from video clips and transcriptions from YouTube. Throughout the analysis the speeches are referred to the number in the order listed above, each speech can thereby be found under section 8.1. First hand sources, in numerical order where the sources for the transcriptions as well as the videos are accessible.

The strategic material selection conducted in this thesis follows the discussion of a “typical” material selection, meaning that there is no reason to believe that other choices would produce other results (Esaiasson et.al., 2017). Hence, it is based on the assumption that Thunberg’s frames are the same throughout all speeches. However, with this in mind one could also argue that the chosen material is mainly from high profile meetings which may have affected the formulation and performance of the speeches. More informal occasion and speeches may have contributed with other perspectives as it could allow for the actor to express other feelings and ideas (Esaiasson et.al., 2017; 226).

Furthermore, the analysis of the chosen material has been conducted through indicators drawn from the theoretical framework, which are specified in the analytical framework, and are systematically posed to the material. Because of the rather short length of each unit (speech) one can argue that it has been feasible to apply the coded categories thoroughly to all the material, looking for the different ways in which the indicators are empirically expressed. The results from this have subsequently been used as a ground for the analytical discussion which
has contributed to the possibility of conducting a thorough examination of the ways in which Thunberg’s frames are portrayed, and consequently, to make assumptions regarding the general frames and expressions.

4.4. Methodological limitations

This section provides consideration to the restrictions and critical aspects of the chosen method and design, which includes a discussion regarding validity, reliability and generalizability. First, since this analysis is based on Benford and Snow’s theoretical framework it is important for the reader to remember that this study will be conducted through the author’s interpretations of their framework. The frames discussed in their research are rather broad and intertwined and thus the understanding of these concepts is subject to preconceptions depending on the readers interpretations. This may affect the validity of the study, however, Benford and Snow’s contribution to the literature on participation and mobilization has been recognised as a common technique within the social movement scholarship (Lindekilde, 2014;198). Additionally, it has been argued that high validity can be achieved by “copying” more established researchers’ operationalisations and thus, by using Benford and Snow’s theoretical framework and their theoretical definitions of important framing concepts, this study has cumulatively contributed to their research and, despite potential subjective interpretations, it can be replicated which allows for other researchers to draw their own conclusions based on the same theoretical framework (Esaiasson et.al. 2017;59ff).

Moreover, one can question the generalisability of this study since the results regarding Thunberg’s frames cannot be used to say anything about other social movements’ framings. However, the limited generalisability does not outweigh the interest in studying the specific (Esaiasson et.al. 2017;28). Rather than aspiring to generalise the results regarding how Thunberg frame climate change this study focuses on the theoretical contribution to the social movement scholarship on mobilisation and participation where the results can hopefully ad new insights and contribute with theoretical generalisability.

As argued before frame analysis is characteristically an actor centred perspective and thus the material selection is limited to Greta Thunberg’s performances. However, although focus here is on her speeches, much of her communication is also conducted through social media platforms (Fridays for Future, n.d.). Therefore, arguably, the material is not completely representative as new communication technologies have extended the platform for studies of collective action frames (Lindekilde, 2014;15), which could have been beneficial to include in
this study. However, this limitation was carefully considered and the choice to not include Thunberg’s written communications was made in relation to the size and restrictions of this thesis along with the idea of a typical material selection previously argued for.

Concludingly, this thesis has been conducted with awareness of the limitations regarding case and material selection, including the sensitive preconditions of conducting a frame analysis. The results are dependent on factors such as the character of the research question as well as the interpretational perspective and the researcher’s relation to the texts (Esaiasson et.al. 2017;226). However, the requirements for validity and replicability are arguably high, which makes the subjectivity of interpreting the texts as well as the frames less problematic. Thus, despite the boundaries of this study the results accumulated here can hopefully build cumulatively to the literature, widen the discourse on social movements framings and contribute to future studies with similar focus.

5. Analytical Framework

An important feature when conducting a descriptive analysis is the analytical tool and how it is constructed. This should include critical aspects of the studied phenomenon as well as how it will be measured (Esaiasson et.al. 2017;137). This process includes allocating theoretical definitions to the most important concepts and indicate how these characteristics will be sought for in the material. This analytical framework will consist of two important themes; 1.) the Core framing tasks, and 2.) Resonance.

The first theme has been thoroughly explored in the theoretical framework and the indicators for the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames are built upon Benford and Snow’s definitions of the concepts. The two first refer to the most common questions within framing analysis, which are centred on a problems’ causes and solutions (Esaiasson et.al. 2017;218) while the latter focuses on emotion work and frames for creating a rational for action and/or participation (Benford & Snow, 2000;617). The second theme, however, is defined not as a frame, but as a concept which relate to the relative effectiveness of movement frames. Thus, the definition does not explain what a frame with high resonance is but rather, consider possible features within a frame with high resonance. These features have been defined in the theoretical framework in order to help formulate indicators that can contribute to a discussion regarding the resonance of Thunberg’s frames, rather than as proof that the frame is resonant.

Drawing on the definitions above and the conceptualizations of the collective action frames presented in the theoretical framework, the analytical framework is presented in table 1. The
indicators for each frame build cumulatively on the work of Benford and Snow and will be used to systematically go through the chosen material, which will make it possible to compare the results with other studies and increase the validity of this study (Esaiasson et.al. 2017;61). If any of these indicators, assorted to the different themes and/or concepts, are found it will suggest that the frame is used and/or that specific features of resonance are included. Additionally, it will help clarify how Thunberg has constructed a specific type of frame which can contribute to the discussion of how her frames may have influenced the possibility of a mass mobilization for the youth climate movement.

*Table 1.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame Characteristics</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Core framing tasks</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
| 1.1. Diagnostic frames | • The main problem is identified  
  • Responsibility is assigned  
  • Elements of “Us & Them”  
  • Expressing feelings of injustice  
  • Victims are identified |
| 1.2. Prognostic frames | • Possible solutions to the problem  
  • Plan of attack/goals for the movement  
  • The actor refutes the solutions of opponents |
| 1.3. Motivational frames | • Expressing fear  
  • Communicating reasons why people should take action  
  • Communicating a time limit, urgency  
  • Expressing notions of right and wrong  
  • Expressing social repercussions for non-action. |
| **2. Resonance** | • Correspondence between claims and behaviour?  
  • Does the actor provide evidences to claims?  
  • Is the actor believable and/or noticeable?  
  • Is the actor representative of the group?  
  • Arguments include referents to people’s everyday life  
  • Concrete and simple examples  
  • The actor is emotional |
6. Analysis

In this section the results will be discussed and analysed which has been made possible with help from the indicators listed above. Because of the limited extent of the material it has been possible to search for each indicator thoroughly throughout the speeches, which would not have been possible if the material would have been longer and richer. However, the speeches are rather concise and clear and many of the frames and expressions are recurrent. Furthermore, different empirical expressions have been identified and these have subsequently been used to make general assumptions of the main frames, grounded on the different expressions of each indicator for the different categories. Some of the expressions blend together and are hard to separate from each other, which is also apparent in Benford and Snow’s framework, and thus this approach has facilitated this process to help draw conclusions regarding Thunberg’s frames. The results will be presented below.

6.1. Core framing tasks

6.1.1. Diagnostic Frames

Across the speeches analysed in this study it is clear that Greta Thunberg acknowledges climate change as a human made problem, which has become a question of an existential crisis. She refers to the planet as “our house” (Speech 4), talks about the future living conditions for human kind and the high price for doing nothing. This sets the mood and the direction of her message, which is focused towards a wide audience as she recognises the protection of the environment as a worldwide concern where ‘homo sapiens’ are the victims, but also those responsible. However, this is not the actual identified problem in Thunberg’s perspective. The real matter is framed as the silence and lack of action, appropriate politics and rules regarding climate change rather than climate change itself.

“People keep doing what they do because the vast majority doesn’t have a clue about the actual consequences of our everyday life. And they don’t know that rapid change is required. We all think we know, and we all think everybody knows. But we don’t. /.../ If there really was a crisis and this crisis was caused by our emissions, you would at least see some signs. Not just flooded cities, tens of thousands of dead people and whole nations levelled to piles of torn down buildings. You would see some restrictions. But no. And no one talks about it.” (Speech 1).
Throughout her speeches Thunberg problematizes the contemporary political system, the media and the lack for political will and/or interest in facing climate change. Thunberg claims people have been unsuccessful about creating political and public concern for the climate; “[W]e have failed. All political movements in their present form have done so. And the media has failed to create broad public awareness.” (Speech 4). Thus, one can argue that she creates an “us and them” where us is ordinary people and them is the media, our world leaders and politicians. Additionally, Thunberg frames the issue as a conflict between generations where she represents the younger generation versus the older generation. From this perspective one can argue that Thunberg has integrated a kind of injustice frame where the older generation has had the ability to grow up in a world with hope for a future while, for her generation, that is not possible. This she explicitly states in her speech at the UN climate summit; “How dare you, you have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words” (Speech 7, 00:54). This indicates a type of victimization of the younger generations and the generations to come, while putting blame on the adults, which is a fundamental part of Thunberg’s diagnostic framings. She argues that politicians have failed to stop carbon dioxide emissions and claims that it is because “there are no politics to change that. There are no rules to keep the oil in the ground” (Speech 2). Also, the reason for the lack of appropriate regulation is because legislators “are not mature enough to tell it like it is. Even that burden you leave to us children.” (Speech 3). The anger directed towards adults, with political influence, is recurrent in Thunberg’s communication and can be interpreted as an attempt to frame climate change as an injustice, but also to clarify the nature of the problem which according to Greta Thunberg is the failure of contemporary world leaders. “[O]ur leaders are behaving like children, we will have to take the responsibility they should have taken long ago.” (Speech 2).

When Thunberg refers to “grown-ups” she refers to individuals with positions of power or influence and it becomes clear that a central part of her problem identification is that these actors are participating in a political game where climate change is overlooked. As mentioned in her speech at the EU parliament in Strasbourg;

“I believe that the biggest danger is not our inaction. The real danger is when companies and politicians are making it look like real action is happening, when in fact almost nothing is being done, apart from clever accounting and creative PR.” (Speech 5).

In the extraction above Thunberg moves away from climate change inaction as the main problem, towards acknowledging that the inactivity itself is just a symptom of what she frames
as the primary problem. The main intention seems to be for Thunberg to frame world leaders as immature and irresponsible, which then opens up for her arguing that they cannot be responsible for climate change action, something which will be further discussed in relation to her prognostic frames.

Concludingly, throughout the material it has become clear that Thunberg has not only defined the problem she wishes to address but she has also drawn a clear line and delineates protagonists and antagonists. Mainly the problem is recognised as lack of action for the climate which is highlighted by Thunberg’s choice to communicate through a conflict between generations frame. She refers to a world that is “backwards”, where children are forced to face the errors of their elders and the idea of parents taking care of their children is compared to politician’s responsibility to take care of the people, our civilisation and the planet. She claims they have failed at this and thus Thunberg foremost frames the issue as a political problem, but she does, however, also frame climate change as an emergency/crisis which she emphasises by communicating physical and personal risks that also makes it a social issue. She creates an idea of villains and victims and directs blame toward anyone who have or will have the ability to act for the climate but choose inaction.

### 6.1.2. Prognostic frames

Bearing on the idea that the problem is political and social inaction and/or unwillingness to face climate change, if one examines Thunberg’s speeches from the perspective of prognostic framings this message is strengthened as she refers to the solution as creating opinion, changing the rules and taking action. Thunberg does not bring any concrete solutions to fix climate change, rather she argues for how people can affect politicians to start acknowledging existing solutions. Thunberg encourages people to talk and learn about climate change, and act according to the available science. For example, she argues;

“[M]ost politicians don’t want to talk to us. Good, we don’t want to talk to them either. We want them to talk to the scientists instead. Listen to them, because we are just repeating what they are saying and have been saying for decades. We want you to follow the Paris agreement and the IPCC reports. We don’t have any other manifests or demands, just unite behind the science, that is our demand.”

(Speech 6, 0:49).

Furthermore, it appears like Thunberg wants the whole political system to change, more specifically, she argues that it is no longer a question of hoping for leaders to listen and change
their behaviour, but instead she insists that the only solution is for people to take the control, for the many instead of the few to set the political agenda.

“[W]e have not come here to beg the world leaders to care for our future. They have ignored us in the past and they will ignore us again. /.../ The people will rise to the challenge.” (Speech 2)

Additionally, Thunberg claims that “the real power belongs to the people” (Speech 3) and this could be seen as a technique to create consensus considering the expressed disappointment in politicians and thus support her proffered solution. Just like it has been argued in social movement research before, Thunberg contends that the public is the driving force in order to achieve change in environmental politics which resonates with Sarah Pralle’s (2009) claim that the public is an important aspect of society which lets policy makers realize that change is demanded and necessary (2009;787f).

Furthermore, Thunberg contends that the key is “instead of looking for hope, look for action” (Speech 1). This may seem more like a motivational frame, but it is also a prognostic frame where Thunberg, instead of giving a concrete solution to climate change, delivers a clear answer on what she wants and how she believes real change can happen. Thunberg contends that there are no solutions available where “ordinary” people do nothing, instead she articulates a direct “plan of attack” which Benford and Snow (2000) argues is a typical characteristic of a prognostic frame where Thunberg advocates for a school strike or rather, a strike from ‘business as usual’. Thunberg frames climate change as something that requires immediate response, while highlighting simple remedies, such as not going to school or work;

“And if you think we should be in school instead, then we suggest you take our place in the streets, striking from your work. Or better yet, join us so we can speed up the process” (Speech 6, 06:55).

One could say that this is a form of counter frame towards opponents who have argued that Thunberg should return to school instead of striking. However, instead she uses this counter argument to further argue for her solution that the public has the power to force political action to solve climate change, just like parents force their children to go back to school. Additionally, much of the critique towards Thunberg has been regarding age, appearance and education (Zraick, 2019), and it seems as if this has had a significant effect on how she articulates and frames her cause. For example, she refers to her own age when she argues that the solution is “so simple that even a child can understand it” (Speech 4) and;
“[Y]ou are never too small to make a difference and if a few children can get headlines all over the world just by not going to school, then imagine what we could do together if we really wanted to.” (Speech 3).

Mainly, Thunberg states that no matter how small you are, in a sense of both age and social status, you can make a difference and by doing this she supports her claim that simple solutions are available. Moreover, Thunberg creates an understanding of the plans and goals of the movement by emphasising that she is not expecting any concrete solutions or new scientific facts, but instead she wants to create opinion for the environmental agenda. She urges people to learn about climate change and then act accordingly;

“[W]e are after all just children. You don’t have to listen to us, but you do have to listen to the united science, the scientists. And that is all we ask, just unite behind the science!” (Speech 5).

Thunberg attempts at eliminating the idea that it is out of the control of the individual, rather she is emphasising that it is the individual responsibility to make the ‘right’ choice, which will help the masses carry the burden of creating actual change for the environmental agenda.

Based on the assumptions argued for above, Thunberg removes the sole responsibility of world leaders, media and elites to focus on climate change and, instead point out who will be held responsible moving forward. She argues that politicians and media can no longer be held accountable for the environmental agenda and stopping climate change and thus she redirects responsibility towards the public and highlight that this is the goal of the movement, to create opinion for the environment. She wants people to “wake up and change” (Speech 1), acknowledge established facts and recognise their own responsibilities instead of waiting for action to happen.

### 6.1.3. Motivational Frames

To begin with, an important motivator for Thunberg’s cause is based on her message that climate change is a crisis, which is emphasised throughout her speeches. She refers to existential threats, extinction rates, sufferings, hazards, hopelessness, as well as describing a situation requiring pulling an “emergency brake” (speech 1, 3, 5). Thunberg compares it to how people would act during a world war and to climate change as if “our house is on fire” (speech 1, 2). By using these types of phrases associated with disaster and crisis she creates feelings of fear and urgency;
"I want you to panic, I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act, I want you to act as if you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if the house was on fire, because it is.” (Speech 4).

Furthermore, within this motivational frame Thunberg does not only make comparisons with the intention to scare people, but also, she uses this to create reasons for why people should act rather than just “letting their house burn down”. In her speech at the World Economic Forum Thunberg argues that non action is equivalent to sacrificing the earth and our civilisation as well as sacrificing all of ‘human kind’;

“[T]here are no grey areas when it comes to survival. Now we all have a choice. We can create transformational action that will safeguard the future conditions for humankind, or we can continue with our business as usual and fail.” (Speech 4).

Above it becomes clear that Thunberg regards public climate action as a choice between survival or not. Therefore, presumably she uses the crisis/existential threat frame to create action and participation as something motivated by fear for the consequences of climate change. This feeling of urgency is further emphasized when she refers to herself, highlighting that her action is grounded in her personal feeling of urgency and severity; “I was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome, OCD and selective mutism. That basically means I only speak when I think it is necessary. Now is one of those times (Speech 1). This message clearly exemplifies how important the environment is for Thunberg and could be seen as a mechanism that demonstrates her view of climate change as a crisis.

“You cannot solve the crisis without treating it as a crisis, without seeing the whole picture. You cannot leave the responsibility to individuals, politicians, the market or other parts of the world to take. This has to include everything and everyone.” (Speech 5).

Thunberg urges the audiences to follow her example, while emphasising people’s joint responsibility, thus creating a sense of obligation to act. Instead of only arguing for who is to blame up till now, Thunberg highlights that anyone who chooses inaction will be held accountable moving forward. This creates an idea that part of her motivational framing is to build a sense of fear of being held responsible for climate change consequences, and thereby motivate action based on the idea that the opposite will create negative social consequences, both for the earth, human kind and the individual. Thunberg creates several motives for action but an integral part in her argumentation is that people have to make a choice between right and
wrong, where the right thing is framed as participation in action for the climate. Thunberg aims at putting the environment high on the political agenda and contends that nonaction is immoral, a message which is highlighted by negative connotations such as “villains”, “failure”, “disappointment” and “betrayal” (Speech 4, 5, 6). Thus, she motivates action through framing the issue as both an individual crisis as well as a collective.

Another motivational frame is here referred to as a parental frame for motivation, which is based on Thunberg’s arguments that focuses on the relationship between a parent and a child, and the moral and ethical responsibilities to take care of your child and consequently, the younger generation. Initially, she indicates that adults put too much faith in the younger generation; “They are hopeful that the young people are going to save the world. But we are not.” (Speech 6, 00:26). She argues that parents have failed their children by removing their issues and responsibilities to their children, an idea which permeates most of her arguments and underlies the idea of a school strike. Throughout her speeches there are also elements where she compares grown-up’s ignorance of climate change with her school strike, where she is “ignoring” her future and education, just like she argues parents are neglecting their children’s future. Thunberg argues that “why should I be studying for a future that soon may be no more” (Speech 2) but also she contends that it is wrong; “I shouldn’t be up here, I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you all come to us young people for hope, how dare you.” (Speech 7, 00:36). One can say that through this frame Thunberg motivates action by referring to what is morally wrong in the current approach towards climate change, and thus argues for participation in her cause to correct this ‘wrong’. She also expresses anger towards adults with phrases such as, “you say you love your children above all else and yet you’re stealing their future in front of their very eyes.” (Speech 3) and “you are not mature enough to tell it like it is” (Speech 7, 04:02). This implies a notion of disappointment which presumably indicates that Thunberg attempts to phrase and direct feelings of shame and wrongdoing towards parents. Therefore, this parental frame mainly focuses on creating motives for the older generation to participate in action for the climate, in order to make up for their “mistakes” by joining the movement as a kind of redemption.

In connection to the above, Thunberg refer to this unjust behaviour of people with positions of power, as a general trait and part of what, according to her, is wrong in the contemporary political system. Besides the roles between parents and children as well as politicians and the people, Thunberg also argue for equity and climate justice in the global perspective;
“[H]ow can we expect countries like India, Colombia or Nigeria to care about the climate crisis if we, who already have everything, don’t care even a second about our actual commitments to the Paris Agreement.” (Speech 2).

Here Thunberg managed to create an additional motivational frame, further highlighting responsibilities and urging action as an obligation to fulfil promises and live up to expectations and roles from a moral and ethical perspective.

Throughout the speeches the separation between “children” and “adults” are quite clear and is a vital part of her argumentation based on the notion that contemporary leaders are acting childishly. Therefore, one can assume that the previously discussed ‘conflict between generations’ is used as a motivational frame in combination with the message through a parental ideal. It is an important frame since it does not only emphasize young people’s responsibility and need to act to fight for their own future, but also it reflects the relationship between generations and creates a picture of a ‘backwards’ reality. In addition, one can also say that this generational conflict frame motivates a feeling of community and solidarity when she frames political leaders as ‘them’, and everyone else as ‘us’. For example, as Thunberg states about world leaders;

“They have ignored us in the past and they will ignore us again. /.../ And since our leaders are behaving like children, we will have to take the responsibility they should have taken long ago.” (Speech 2).

She furthers a message that in a social aspect action and participation is the “right” thing to do, and anything else would imply social costs “You can’t just sit around waiting for hope to come, then you are acting like spoiled irresponsible children.” (Speech 5). Hence, Thunberg frames inaction with promises of social costs in an attempt to outweigh the advantages from the disadvantages of participation.

In sum, the main motivational frames identified here are (1) an existential crisis frame, (2) a parental frame and (3) a conflict between generations frame. Action is motivated through notions of fear and hopelessness, stressing the urgency and severity of climate change as well as emphasising the injustices that comes with inaction. It is also motivated through creating claims to take care of significant others and a need to take care of one self. Moreover, she also establishes an idea that it is possible to turn a rather negative future outlook into something good as she contends that all that is needed is to; “[L]ook for action. Then, and only then hope will come” (Speech 1). Here she re-establishes an idea of hope for the future as well as a way
to escape the rather negative picture of reality, which she has emphasised in her diagnostic framings, and then provides the audiences, and potential adherents, with a rational to participate as the only remedy.

6.2. Resonance

Moving on, interesting features have also been identified in Thunberg’s speeches through the perspective of resonance, while including who she is in relation to her message. To begin with, throughout her speeches Thunberg uses a frame that victimizes children, for example; “[Y]ou say you love your children above all else and yet you’re stealing their future in front of their very eyes.” (Speech 3) or “The eyes of all future generations are upon you, and if you choose to fail us, I say we will never forgive you.” (Speech 7, 04:24). Arguably, this victimization aims at sending out an emotional message towards both young people, in order to create anger and disappointment, but also towards adults in order to direct attention to the accountability of parents for the future of their children. It becomes rather clear that she aims at representing the younger generations with a stake in the future, a message one can argue is strengthened by the fact that she is a child herself. Thunberg maintains her role as a 16-year-old school girl, striking every Friday with her homemade cardboard sign, even though she is speaking at high profile meeting and are surrounded by political leaders, as well as she is continuously subject to media attention. She is acting within the frames of how a child “should” appear and does not dress to look older nor wear make-up. In addition to this, in her speeches she uses similes that can be assumed to be rather “childish” such as “they haven’t done their homework” (Speech 6, 02:12) or “they sweep their mess under the carpet” (Ibid, 06:27). Thus, based on the above one can assume that she is not only an appropriate representative for children, but she also makes references to issues and circumstance that are understandable and relatable to youth. Thunberg compares her school strike with political ignorance for scientific facts regarding climate change as well as she refers the inaction for climate change to issues within everyday life and what parents try and teach their children. She creates clear and concrete metaphors to illustrate her idea of what is the real problem while the rather abstract, global, issues related to climate change are framed within domestic and familiar perspectives making her message more salient to the audiences.

The frame that has been previously identified as a conflict between generations is further emphasized by these characteristics. It becomes clear that she is not trying to act older than she is, but rather Thunberg is strengthening her claims that politicians and world leaders are not acting their part, making her at least as qualified and forcing her to do their job. For example,
she contends that; “our leaders are behaving like children, we will have to take the responsibility they should have taken long ago” (Speech 2) as well as she claims that politicians are immature for ignoring the science (Speech 7). Thus, one could say that Greta Thunberg, as an actor, is quite noticeable on the political arena. As it seems she has no interest in “fitting in” but rather she argues that “we can’t save the world by playing by the rules” (Speech 1) and neither will she.

One question relevant to discuss is whether she is believable or not. According to Benford and Snow (2000) this would require an authentic and credible actor, in the sense that he or she possesses a perceived level of expertise or status when it comes to the environment. One could consider this a flaw, since Thunberg is not a scientist nor an expert in the area. However, Thunberg never claims that she is particularly qualified to give solutions, but rather in her framing it seems like her believability can be seen as derived from the fact that she is acting upon and refers to the science that is available, as seen in the following extractions; “The science is clear and all we children are doing is communicating and acting on that united science” (Speech 5), “the climate crisis has already been solved. We already have all the facts and solutions” (Speech 1). Additionally, Thunberg also contends that it is not her place nor up to children in general to solve the environmental ‘emergency’; “There is simply not enough time to wait for us to grow up and become the ones in charge” (Speech 6, 00:33). Thereby, since she argues that the expert knowledge is behind her, and all she wants is to create opinion, one could say that the believability and authenticity is instead strengthened by the conceivable transparency and acknowledgement of her own capabilities and role. It can also be said to derive from her frame of a conflict between generations as well as the parental frame, where she is an “expert” in being a child. By using the available science as a base she increase her agency and credibility within the environmental issue, since her personal interest and concern can be assumed to be genuine and authentic.

“If I live to be 100, I will be alive in the year 2103. When you think about the future today, you don’t think beyond the year 2050. By then, I will in the best case, not even have lived half of my life. What happens next?” (Speech 1).

It is reasonable to assume that the audiences are more inclined to believe her commitment and acknowledge her trustworthiness when it comes to stopping climate change, since she highlights her personal investment. However, as previously discussed, a considerable amount of critique towards Thunberg consists of remarks regarding her age and educational level which argues for Benford and Snow’s perspective on what is important for an actor’s agency. In this
perspective these individual incentives alone cannot increase her trustworthiness, but one can argue that together with the apparent coherence between what she claims and how she acts officially and in private adds to her credibility. As mentioned previously, Thunberg has chosen a climate conscious lifestyle and avoids acting different from what she encourages adherents to do, which creates another kind of believability that resonates with the level of dedication Thunberg manifests for her cause. She argues that people have to do the same; “[W]e have to stop emissions of greenhouse gases.” (Speech 4) and “[K]eep the fossil fuels in the ground.” (Speech 3) as well as “No one is acting as if we were in a crisis. Even most climate scientists or green politicians keep on flying around the world, eating meat and dairy.” (Speech 1). She claims that people have to change their behaviour and take action and based on the knowledge that Thunberg is doing exactly what she is urging her spectators to do, it creates a firmer ground for her claims and thus a more persuasive framing and rational for movement participation.

In addition, as discussed in the theoretical framework Benford and Snow (2000) highlights that providing evidence and possibilities to verify claims is important for a message to be resonant. By referring to scientific facts and reports it is reasonable to say that Thunberg has managed to do this; “I would like to refer to page 108, chapter 2 in the latest IPCC report. There you will find all our ‘opinions’ summarized” (Speech 5). However, she does not give empirical evidences where her solutions can be validated and strengthened. What she does include however, is that she appeals to emotions and refer to images and catastrophes associated to climate change. One occasion that stands out is her speech at the UN Climate Action Summit where Thunberg not only communicates disappointment and anger with phrases such as “How dare you”, “You are failing us”, “We will not let you get away with this” (Speech 7), but also she presents the speech with tears in her eyes and an upset expression. Here one could say that her body language and word choices contributed to what has been referred to as the emotional work adding to the resonance within this frame. Contrastingly, this emotional framing has also received widespread critique and decreased support as it has been argued by some that Thunberg was exaggerating (Zraick, 2019). Nevertheless, this is criticism from her opponents which also has to be regarded when analysing the effect of her emotions.

Framings to create emotional reactions have been present in all of the speeches considered in this analysis and can be reflected as an additional part of the salience of Thunberg’s frames. For example, she has expressed emotional framings though phrases such as; “the sufferings of the many which pay for the luxuries of the few” (Speech 3), “people are suffering, people are dying” (Speech 7, 01:01) including the frame which makes parents into villains and children
as victims. This victimisation and blaming, arguably, aims at creating an emotional need to act as she indirectly focuses attention on the notions of biological urges, social norms and obligations for parents to take care of their children. This could be included in the parental frame which creates emotional ties for both those held responsible as well as the identified victims.

One last remark regarding the resonance of Thunberg’s message is that she, as an actor for the climate movement, contends that she is not acting on the influence of an organisation or the urgings of others (Thomsen, 2019). But rather, her school strike and engagement for the climate is built upon individual decisions and incentives which subsequently resulted in the social movement inspired and motivated through her actions (Fridays for Future, n.d.). This characteristic sends a message that it is possible for people to make a difference, and that social and/or political status is not always relevant. A message that is highlighted through phrasings such as; “Many people say that Sweden is just a small country and it doesn’t matter what we do. But I’ve learned that you are never too small to make a difference” (Speech 3). This may not have been resonant if the actor speaking were someone else, however in this case it was highlighted by the fact that Thunberg is a 16-year-old girl who started a strike on her own, and urges people to act based on an idea that if she can, everybody can. This frame communicates an idea which promotes self-efficacy, something psychology researcher Albert Bandura (1982) argues is important for people to choose to act as well as how they perceive their capabilities. Possibly, because of Thunberg’s background and her own agency the audiences perceive that her proffered solutions are believable and within their abilities. This could be argued to be a motivational frame but also, since what is true for self-efficacy is also true for collective efficacy one can also say that this frame increases Thunberg’s resonance as she indirectly uses her own achievements as an empirical example that supports her claims that the power is in the public sphere, and that everyone can make a difference. This message of self- and collective-efficacy increases the believability of Thunberg as an actor and that it is up to ‘normal’ people to make a difference for the climate, and that it is possible to be ‘small’ and create something big.

7. Concluding discussion

In order to discuss how Greta Thunberg’s framings has reached such a wide audience there are several interesting features brought up in this analysis. First of all, to answer the question regarding what frames Thunberg uses, one can say that there are some important empirical
messages in the core framing tasks that leads one to assume that Thunberg uses three main frames to conduct her argumentation and motivate action and mobilization. Drawing from the empirical expressions of the indicators in the analytical framework these have been identified as; a conflict between generations, a parental frame and a crisis frame. In addition to this, Thunberg has also constructed a strong moral obligation to act for the climate as well as communicated determination and dedication for her cause.

In Thunberg’s diagnostic framing an apparent message is that she regards climate change as a crisis where the eminent liability is directed towards politicians and media outlets for not treating climate change as an emergency. She also victimises children and directs special responsibility and accountability for the environment on the older generation as well as she makes similes between politician’s responsibility for the people and parents’ accountability towards children. While the diagnostic frames focus on the injustices between the generations her prognostic frames mainly contend that the power belongs to the people and children have to start taking care of their own future, just like people have to start acting for the climate rather than waiting for politicians to act. That there are inconsistencies in what is being done and what is expected is a fundamental argument in Thunberg’s message, where she contends that there are social rules that have to change because they are incompatible. This is something she claims both in relation to parents and their children as well as contemporary politics and official scientific facts regarding climate change. This can be incorporated in Thunberg’s motivational framing which encourages movement participation based on the idea of injustices and inconsistencies, as well as a moral obligation to create awareness and opinion for the climate to fix what she identifies as wrong in society.

Moving on, there are some factors discovered within the perspective of resonance which can be understood as important features for the mobilisation for Fridays for Future. Thunberg’s message is packaged through the school strike idea from which she illustrates how leaders are ignoring the future, just like she has been accused of neglecting her own future when not attending school. This is a continuous reminder that Thunberg is a child which corresponds with her actions, behaviour and message. Her claims, social status, age, life style and other personal attributes correlate and strengthen her message and thus it seems like Thunberg is not only an actor within the environmental movement, but she is also an actor that has created a message that communicates self-efficacy. Drawn from the analysis regarding her resonance it can be argued that Thunberg’s actions and frames have not only created a response, increased interest and a sense of necessity to act for climate change but also, her place and influence on
the political arena has encouraged an idea and understanding that activism works. Thus, from the perspective of resonance one can say that Thunberg’s frames together with her behaviour and actions creates this sense of self- and/or collective-efficacy, which can have an effect on the prospects for movement mobilisation (Bandura, 1982).

With the above in mind, an interesting aspect to consider in relation to the results of this analysis is Benford and Snow’s (2000) discussion regarding master frames as a sort of master algorithm which extends beyond the particular movement. One could argue that there are indicators suggesting that the frame which proffers a generational conflict could also be considered a possible master frame. To begin with, as explained above master frames expand the boundaries of one movement and can be applied to a wide range of issues. This generational frame is an inherent part in all of Thunberg’s arguments and is used in different ways to argue for several issues. For example, when she argues for climate justice and equity on an international level, she uses the same claim that there is a conflict between those in charge and those with less influence. In addition to this, the same argument is used when she mentions that the older generation is expecting too much from youths. Arguably, Thunberg has created a master frame built on an idea that the world is ‘backwards’ and maybe instead of calling it a conflict between generations frame it should rather be referred as a hierarchical justice frame. Thunberg’s use of the frame calls upon the cultural, normative as well as biological role of a parent which one can assume is a perspective in which a wide range of people can relate. Also, it is an integral part of all her claims which lead one to wonder whether this type of frame have contributed to how Thunberg’s frames received a broad global resonance and response. However, Benford and Snow does contend that there are no known indicators for a master frame, more than that frames with broad scope and flexibility tends to have implications for mobilization. Nevertheless, perhaps this frame could be used as an additional example of ways in which master frames can take form in order to contribute to the rather limited knowledge of these types of “master algorithms” within social movement frames.

Furthermore, in this study one can, through the analysis, also see that all the indicators from Benford and Snow’s theoretical framework could be identified in one way or another in the analysed material and has contributed to the identification of her main principal frames. However, there are some lessons that goes beyond their framework. From the result of the discussion regarding the resonance of Thunberg’s frames some additional points can be identified which can serve as a contribution to the theoretical knowledge. First of all, as mentioned previously Benford and Snow presents a rather unclear definition of what a resonant
frame is, where they only argue that there are two sets of factors that interact and account for the resonance of movement frames. These were identified as credibility and salience; however, here one could argue that in addition to this it has been identified that factors such as the coherence between actions and behaviour and who the actor is in relation to his or her frames also accounts for the degree of resonance. Benford and Snow focuses more on who the actor was before contention rather than on who the actor is, and how he/she is constructed. In this analysis it has been argued that by also looking at the interaction of these three factors, one can assume that resonance can also be constructed by creating and sending out feelings of self-efficacy and collective-efficacy. Thus, this conclusion could be used as a contribution to their theory as examples of additional features to be considered within social movement framings, and how a resonant frame can be constructed as well as what characteristics resonant frames comprises. Thereby, this lesson can help clarify Benford and Snow’s description of the concept resonance.

7.1. Final remarks

The purpose of this study was to describe what frames Greta Thunberg has constructed in order to create an understanding for how this may have contributed to the mass mobilisation and participation in the schools strikes, and the youth climate movement Fridays for Future. It has been established that Thunberg mainly identifies climate change through a crisis frame which entails an idea that there is an inherent political and moral issue in our current political and social system. Moreover, Thunberg has also framed her cause as a need for opinion, engagement as well as established a conflict between those in power and people with less influential authority. Through this frame as well as Thunberg’s relation to them and the problem she has created a sense of self-efficacy and agency which have been communicated to her audiences. In line with this, based on her actions, her identity and the consistency between claims and behaviour one could say Thunberg has become a symbol of the lengths to which a young person can reach through activism and determination. Thus, this thesis concludes that there are some factors inherent in Thunberg’s framings which has contributed with a possibility for a mass mobilization which is the coherence of who she is, how she acts and behaves. In addition to this, the assumptions drawn from these results adds cumulatively to the theoretical knowledge of how one can study social movement and their framing processes, and what features may be of interest when studying the resonance of a movements proffered frames. Based on these results however, one cannot assume that this is a definite explanation for her and Fridays for Future’s impact on the environmental agenda as well as Thunberg’s success to
reach out to wide audiences. There are several aspects not included in this analysis, such as what political opportunities existed before Thunberg’s first school strike as well as organisational features or the fact that this analysis is only based on Thunberg’s speeches. A closer examination of the social and political interactions through social media would have served additional insights into Thunberg’s framings and its effectiveness and could be an idea for future studies. The idea is for this analysis to be a contribution and a first step in order to conduct such studies, as well as one with a more explanatory intention, where the assumptions made from this thesis can serve as a starting point and inspiration.
8. Bibliography

8.1. First hand sources


8.2. Second hand sources


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