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The Greta Effect: How does Greta Thunberg use the discourse of youth in her movement for climate justice?

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Abstract

In Winter 2018, Greta Thunberg, a 15-year-old Swedish climate activist stopped going to school and started to protest outside of the Swedish Parliament with a sign that said, "Skolstrejk för Klimatet", which stands for "Schoolstrike for Climate". Fast forward to September 2019, with the help of social media, she led four million people around the world for the "Fridays4Future" global climate strike, and was named *Time Magazine*'s "Person of the Year" for 2019. Using the critical discourse analysis framework purposed by Fairclough and Janks, and drawing on Foucault's theorization on discourse, power and resistance, this thesis analyzes three of Greta Thunberg's speeches to understand the way she draws on different linguistic functions to form discursive frames about the identity and ideology of youth. Evidence from the analysis concludes that while Thunberg is politically resistant in her attempts to subvert the traditional social and familial hierarchies of power, she uses both dominant and counter discourses about youth to articulate her political position. The conclusion also suggests that the oppositional position of young people in the climate movement represents a counter-power, that mutually constitutes a power struggle along with the dominant power. This exploratory study sheds light on how power and ideological dynamics are embedded in the discourse of the ongoing climate justice movement.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently reported that human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels, and warned that we have 11 years to take action before we set off an irreversible chain reaction beyond human control (2018). Although climate scientists have been working relentlessly on solving issues caused by climate change for many decades, there is still a lack of large scale political action taken by the public to combat the climate crisis. This sparked my interest in studying climate change communication.

In Winter 2018, Greta Thunberg, a 15-year-old Swedish teenager, stopped going to school and sat outside of the Swedish Parliament with a sign that said, "Skolstrejk för Klimatet", which stands for "Schoolstrike for Climate". Her action has garnered attention through social media, especially on Twitter with the hashtag #schoolstrike4climate, and inspired many youths around the world to begin striking on Fridays. Thunberg's December 4, 2018 speech at the United Nation Climate Change Conference (COP24) in Katowice, Poland went viral on social media. In the 16 months since then, she has addressed heads of state at the U.N., met with the Pope, sparred with the President of the United States and Prime Minister of Canada, as the movement for climate justice has gradually gained international attention and more and more school-age children around the world have joined the school strike movement (Alter, Haynes & Worland, 2019). The discussions surrounding Thunberg's climate activism peaked in September 2019 with the launch on September 20 of her "Fridays4Future" global climate strike, which was believed to be the largest climate demonstration in human history, where four million people

took to the street in 150 countries around the world (Alter et al., 2019). In December 2019, Greta Thunberg was named *Time Magazine*'s "Person of the Year" for 2019 (Alter et al., 2019).

Thunberg's success has attracted attention from media and communication scholars to study the political influence of her speeches. The existing research on Thunberg's speeches reflects diverse theoretical frameworks, such as rhetorical analysis (Vavilov, 2019; Evensen, 2019) and frame analysis (Murray, 2020), but not many of them view her speeches through the lens of discourse and power, and much less with a critical perspective on how the concept of youth is portrayed. As an environmental advocate that was fortunate to witness the rise of her climate movement in different countries over the past two years, my interest in studying her speeches developed along with the momentum of the movement. I was particularly struck by the fact that despite ethnic and cultural differences, youth around the world have united together to speak up for climate injustice. The increasing accessibility and instantaneity of the internet and social media platforms has broken down the geographical barriers for youth from all around the world to participate in the movement for climate justice through their digital devices.

In light of these trends, my thesis provides a critical perspective on how Greta Thunberg uses dominant and counter discourses to construct the identity and ideology of youth as the key players of the climate justice movement. My research question for this thesis is: how does Greta Thunberg use the discourse of youth in her speeches about climate justice? Using the Critical Discourse Analysis framework proposed by Fairclough (1992), and later adopted by Janks (1997), through the lens of Michel Foucault's theories on power and resistance (McHoul & Grace, 2015), I analyze three of Thunberg's speeches to understand the way she draws on different linguistic functions to form discursive frames that establish the identities of the key players in the movement, and construct youth as future citizens and change makers. Ultimately, I

argue that while Thunberg is politically resistant in her attempts to subvert the traditional social and familial hierarchies of power, she also uses dominant discourses about youth to articulate her political position. I also argue, in accordance with Foucault, that the oppositional position of young people in the climate movement represents a counter-power, which is an essential structuring element that co-exists with the dominant power in order to create meaning within the power struggle.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter situates my study within an existing body of literature on climate change communication and climate activism and justice, with a focus on youth activism. This chapter also discusses the current research on climate change communication and discourse. Literature in climate change communication suggests that, following the shift from technical to technocratic communication, youth have emerged as powerful players in climate change communication and activism. By employing various discursive frames and emotional tactics, young people are encouraged to participate in the movement for climate justice to challenge the hegemonic power structure, forming a force of political resistance against the status quo.

Climate Change Communication

Climate change communication falls under the broad category of environmental communication, which can be traced back to the mid-to-late 1980s. Historically, the scope of environmental communication research was relatively narrow, focused on scientific findings, synthesis reports, particularly severe weather events, and occasionally some high-level conferences or policy meetings (Moser, 2010; Vavilov, 2019). With the increasing scientific understanding of anthropogenic climate change, the implications of climate change have begun to be recognized by different sectors across the political and economic spectrum. Modern environmentalism was first recognized through two historical events: the UNESCO Biosphere Conference in 1968 in Paris, with France holding the first intergovernmental meeting on environment and development; and the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) in 1972 in Stockholm, Sweden (Vavilov, 2019). The latter meeting resulted in the Stockholm Declaration, an intergovernmental statement affirming commitments to issues of "pollution, natural resource and wildlife protection, and sustainable development for

both wealthy and poor nations", which made climate change a global concern (Comfort & Park, 2018).

Social scientists have also become increasingly interested in climate change, including communication and media studies researchers. One of the most dominant themes in climate change communication is viewing climate change as a threat to the global population (Taylor, 2013). This threat can be manifested in various ways, ranging from pollution and resource degradation, to international peace and security (IPCC, 2018; Detraz & Betsill, 2009). One representative study on the media's role in portraying such threats shows that media perceptions have a direct association with climate activism, which is conditioned by individuals' political ideology (Feldman et al., 2017). The results of Feldman et al.'s study (2017) show that among liberals, hostile media perceptions promote activism, whereas among conservatives, they decrease activism. Feldman et al.'s (2017) study is indicative of the concern in climate change communication research with the efficacy of different modes of address with respect to influencing public opinion and behaviours. While media effects model is apparent in much of the literature on climate change communication, my project takes a different approach. In a broad sense, my focus on Greta Thunberg's speeches can be situated relative to the overlaps between risk communication, advocacy journalism, environmental communication, and communication for social change and development (Evans et al., 2018).

Risk communication considers how government agencies and organizations assess and manage risk and crisis situations, and how they communicate the nature of the crisis to stakeholders and the public (Lie & Servaes, 2015). Advocacy journalism positions journalists as the "voice of the voiceless", who are motivated by the desire to redress power imbalances in society (Janowitz, 1975). Environmental communication is a relatively new sub-discipline within

communications that analyzes "all the interactions of human interaction with the environment" (Cox & DePoe, 2015). The communication for development and social change approach can be divided into two paradigms, a top-down diffusionist paradigm and a bottom-up participatory paradigm, both of which stress the dialogue and actions that are essential for the process of conscientization that leads to emancipatory social change (Servaes & Lie, 2013; Rogers, 1995). At a contextual level, environmental communication theories have been developed from different conceptualizations of culture, media, rhetoric, pop culture, social movements and other areas (Milstein, 2009; Vavilov, 2019). While this thesis uses a discursive lens, it nonetheless draws from the broader imperatives of these interrelated areas in its assumption that Thunberg's speeches merit dedicated analysis in relation to the environmental crisis and social change.

Climate Activism

To study climate activism, the definition of social movements needs to be established. Rodger (2010) defines a social movement as "a group of people working together to change a situation they view as unjust or wrong" (p. 7). The creation of a social movement, as Endres, Sprain and Peterson (2009) argue, can be understood according to three theoretical strands: rhetorical strategies, modes of organizing, and practices of citizenship (p. 4). Media scholar Downing (2002) also defines social movements as a form of radical media. Radical media tell "'the people's' stories, challenge entrenched monopolies of power and knowledge, and further the more equitable distribution of cultural, political, and economic resources" (Downing, 2002, p. 556). Downing (2002) further explains that radical media can help constitute alternative public spheres, challenge prevailing hierarchies of power, and act as agents of counter hegemony and resistance, both by providing perspectives from the marginalized in dominant discourses, and through internally democratic decision-making that engages the excluded (p. 555). Downing's

definition of social movements is crucial for understanding climate activism as a process of the construction of knowledge and power.

A defining characteristic of social movements such as climate activism is the development of the narrative of collective identity. The sense of "us" is imperative to understanding activism and why people see themselves in a group with a common shared purpose (Rodger, 2018, p. 105). Members of such groups use language, dress, style and lifestyle choices as symbolic markers of membership, and the basis of their group identity is often formed based on the notion of affinity rather than discrimination. In many social movements, it is also crucial for groups to develop an oppositional identity, which defines the group against the dominant order, and in which activists "build communities around a common meaning that is focused on resisting the surrounding society", further strengthening and securing their in-group identity (Rodger, 2018, p. 108).

The development of climate activism as a social movement has been recent yet rapidly evolving. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was an exponential development of climate change activism locally and regionally in the United States due to various environmental problems such as air pollution and water contamination in these communities (Cox & Pezzullo, 2016, pp. 23-24). These conservation efforts slowly gained global visibility in the late 1980s, when climate scientists testified before Congress about the warming of the Earth's atmosphere in 1988 (Cox & Pezzullo, 2016, p. 24). As more data and increased computing power became available, the modelling of the implications of climate change became more and more accurate, which led to an overwhelming number of reports on the legitimacy of climate change science that were widely published from various scientific disciplines (Bodansky, 2001, pp. 24-26). Many of these scientific reports echoed the same findings, and even predicted more ecological,

economic and social consequences, which made the message of demanding climate action even clearer and stronger (Bodansky, 2001; Okereke & Coventry, 2016; Vavilov, 2019). Subsequently, climate change discourse transcended the scientific realm to enter public consciousness, and is generally visible in today's mainstream western media.

Climate Justice

One of the cornerstones of climate activism is the battle for environmental justice. Environmental justice can be defined in three parts:

(a) calls to recognize and halt the disproportionate burdens imposed on working-class and people of colour communities by environmentally harmful conditions, (b) more inclusive opportunities for those who are most affected to be heard in the decisions affecting their communities, and (c) a vision of environmentally healthy, economically sustainable and culturally thriving communities. (Cox & Pezzullo, 2016, p. 236)

This definition encapsulates the complexity of different problems derived from climate change. Climate change is not a stand-alone scientific crisis, but instead should be seen within a movement for climate justice as a vehicle to achieve a more democratically equitable world. As Okereke and Coventry (2016) argue, the theme of justice is tremendously complex and fluid. Therefore, in order to provide sound perspectives on the international climate regime, it is crucial to first understand how the international climate regime has developed, how it functions within the framework of global climate policies, and its influence on policy outputs.

The notable distinction between rich, industrialized countries and poor, developing countries reflects a principle of differentiation in successive international environmental treaties since the 1970s (Okereke & Coventry, 2016). In 1988, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

Change (IPCC) was set up by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the

World Meteorological Organization (WMO), in order to formally link climate change science

with intergovernmental politics on a global scale (Okereke & Coventry, 2016). The first IPCC

report in the 1990s outlined the major concept of North-South Equity, which according to

Vavilov (2019), refers to the socio-economic and political divide between the Global North and

the Global South, with the Global North being the more developed and affluent region. The

creation of the IPCC, as explained by Okereke and Coventry (2016), was crucial for setting the

stage to support climate justice on a global scale, as it provided the basis and legitimacy for

expressing justice arguments in the language and data of science. Furthermore, the

environmental and social implications of predictively modeled impacts, risks, adaptation

potential, loss, and damages has been claimed to be beyond our current understanding of nature

(O'Brien et al., 2018). More importantly, these potentially irreversible environmental risks will

have the greatest impact on the marginalized and poor communities in the Global South, who

have contributed the least to the buildup of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases linked to

the recent warming of the planet (Cox & Pezzullo, 2016, p. 249; O'Brien et al., 2018). This is

why activism for climate justice is an important subject of study to not only protect the

environment, but to ensure there are intergovernmental policies in place to secure basic human

rights in marginalized communities.

Youth-Led Movements

The young generation represents a powerful force in the global movement for climate

justice. Youth, as defined in the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN

DESA) (2010), include persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years (without prejudice to other

definitions by Member States). With the current trajectory of climate change science, youth are

the most likely to experience the consequences of climate injustice and inaction. For example, by

the year 2050, the earth is likely to be 0.8°C to 2.6°C warmer, with a 5-32 cm higher sea level compared with 1990 (O'Brien et al., 2018; IPCC, 2014). Therefore, with wider access to digital tools and communication channels, youth are emerging as powerful players in climate change communication and activism (Bassar & Yanindraputri, 2018; Vavilov, 2019; O'Brien et al., 2018). As O'Brien et al. (2018) describe, youth are "dutiful, disruptive and dangerous dissents" (p. 380). As "dutiful dissents", young people play a vital and constructive role in ensuring the visibility of conversations about climate change, and enactment of political actions through policies and practices (O'Brien et al., 2018). Often through direct protests and collective organization, youth take disruptive actions that explicitly challenge power relationships, as well as the actors and political authorities who maintain them. Their goals are to generate new and alternative systems of doing things, new types of economic relationships, and ultimately, new ways of organizing society, which can potentially pose a threat to current hegemonic power dynamics (O'Brien et al., 2018). The object of study of this thesis, Greta Thunberg's speeches, embody all of the above characteristics in their positioning of youth, offering an illustration of the way that these categories are constructed according to both dominant and counter discourses.

Climate Change Discourse

Cox and Pezzullo (2016), citing Fiske (1987), define discourse as "a pattern of knowledge and power communicated through linguistic and non-linguistic human expression; as a result, it functions to 'circulate' a coherent set of meanings about an important topic" (p. 64). Understanding climate discourses is important for media and communication scholars, as it stresses the role of language in informing social processes (Fairclough, 2001). A dominant discourse, according to Cox and Pezzullo's (2016) definition, occurs when "a discourse gains a broad or taken-for-granted status in a culture, or when its meaning helps to legitimize certain

practices" (p. 64). Dominant discourses are often invisible since they are normalized, popular or closely aligned with hegemonic power dynamics and values (Cox & Pezzullo, 2016; Janks, 1997). On the other hand, critical or counter discourse, as Cox and Pezzullo (2016) describe, challenges these "taken-for-granted" assumptions, and offers an alternative lens to view the prevailing discourse (p. 64).

As mentioned previously, climate change discourse was popularized in mid-to-late 1980s. In general, discursive formations in climate change communication have transformed from technical to technocratic (Taylor, 2013). One of the most widely used definition of technocracy is that experts have increasingly given salience and centrality within organizations (Burris, 1993). In the context of climate change discourse, Taylor (2013) implies that climate change discourse has moved away from technical discourse within scientific and environmental organizations, to other disciplines such as the media, governments and intergovernmental bodies such as United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Kyoto Protocol (KP), and the IPCC. Another notable shift in climate change discourse in the political arena is the conceptualization of climate justice. Climate justice has slowly gained popularity at the grassroots level (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014). Using Hurricane Katrina in 2005 as a turning point, Schlosberg and Collins (2014) argue that the key principles of climate justice before Katrina were generally focused within specific environmental interest groups, on topics such as slowing emissions and the use of fossil fuels, protecting vulnerable communities, and ensuring a just transition to renewable energy. However, the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 solidified the environmental justice framework by filling in the gaps with socio-cultural problems exacerbated by climate change, such as segregation, poverty, a failing education system, and substandard housing (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014). At this time, various

intergovernmental bodies called for expanding concerns about climate vulnerability and disaster relief, and helped environmental justice activists to connect with other communities threatened by climate change (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014).

As an alternative to the technocratic formation of climate change discourse, studies on the role of emotion have also contributed to an understanding of how climate justice is communicated. Interestingly, although there is a broad acceptance among scientists of the human causes of climate change, public opinion in the Global North on the causes of climate change is relatively segmented (Vavilov, 2019). A wide range of factors have influenced this division of opinion on climate change; one of them is the role emotions play in climate change discourse. Despite often being overlooked both in research and in media, Salama and Aboukoura (2018) argue that understanding emotions is essential to the understanding of the social processes that shape responses to climate change. The emotions involved in social activism, including how the speaker arouses emotions in the audience, are central factors in the recruitment to, motivation for, and sustainability of the social movement (Rodgers, 2010, p. 273). For example, the feeling of hope related to climate change will likely increase the probability of engagement with the issue, as well as promote the adoption of beliefs and behaviours that counter climate change (Salama & Aboukoura, 2018). On the contrary, there is experimental evidence from psychology that suggests fear framing, in general, produces a great level of attitude change. However, fearful messages in climate change communication do not empower actions, as fear often only momentarily grabs attention (Salama & Aboukoura, 2018, p. 142). Furthermore, highlighting the positive collective impact of small behavioural changes increases people's interest in taking personal action (Salama & Aboukoura, 2018, p. 142). Moreover, it is important to note that the value of sequencing emotional experiences can enhance persuasive effect (Nabi, 2018). Results

of Nabi's study (2018) suggest that messages that evoked fear and then hope had the strongest positive influence on advocacy behaviour, compared with a message structure that lacked emotional flow. Thunberg's speeches draw from both emotional and technocratic discourse, which intersect with the ways she constructs the category of youth as key climate justice actors.

Lastly, climate activism often frames youth as future citizens, rights bearers and change makers. Amongst the empirical data collected from a participatory action research project with children, Kjørholt (2002) identifies the discursive construction of "children as bearers of rights" and "children as future citizens to protect the environment" (p. 66, 69). Kjørholt (2002) further explains that the construction of childhood and how children participate in culture as a separate domain may be seen as a "prototype of egalitarian individualism" (p. 79). In this sense, youth are seen as individuals with sound critical thinking skills and capacity for social change. Thunberg's speeches draw upon this framing in situating youth as not only active, but a defining voice in climate activism.

In summary, this literature review offers an overview of how climate change discourse has shifted from the technical sphere to the technocratic public sphere due to multiple significant climate change-related events in the past 30 years. Young people, as "dutiful dissents", employ various discursive frames and emotional tactics in their activism to challenge the entrenched monopolies of power and knowledge of the political authorities, in hope of pressuring political leaders to shift their approaches in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Analyzing Thunberg's speeches to identify her uses of counter and dominant discourses can shed light on some ways in which climate activists construct knowledge about climate change and climate justice, and uncover the ideological dynamics embedded climate change discourses.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This chapter outlines the overall theoretical framework of the critical discourse analysis conducted for the analysis of Thunberg's speeches. The research question that this thesis aims to answer is: how does Greta Thunberg use the discourse of youth in her speeches about climate justice? This question was developed through an initial interest in the way that Thunberg portrays climate change in relation to broader power struggles.

Discourse as Knowledge

The concept of "discourse" has been defined, used and interpreted in virtually all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, including communication and media studies (van Dijk, 2003). Hall (2001), a cultural theorist, conceptualizes the meaning making process of media based on French philosopher Michel Foucault's foundational framework on the interrelationship between knowledge, power and discourse. Departing from the classical Marxist model of economic determinism, Foucault was interested in how societal rules and discursive practices produce meaningful statements (Hall, 2001, p. 73; McHoul & Grace, 1997, p. 4). Foucault sought to reconceptualize the definition and interrelationship between discourse, power, and knowledge, as well as determine the role of subjugated knowledges and resistance, which marked a significant development in the constructionist approach to representation (McHoul & Grace, 1997 p. 3, 15; Hall, 2001, p. 74).

To put it simply, as Foucault suggests, discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. Foucault posits that there are rules and practices that produce meaningful statements and that regulate discourse in particular historical periods (Hall, 2001, p. 73). In other words, the ways knowledge is constructed and represented in a particular time period is governed by how the subject is being talked about, how people understand and interpret ideas, and how

ideas are put into practice. In essence, Foucault (1970) believes that discourse defines and produces the objects of our knowledge and "regimes of truth", and that nothing has meaning outside of discourse. Thus, in theory, "truth" can be radically different in different times depending on the social context and institutional settings of the time.

Power and Resistance

To analyze discourse related to environmentalism, it is important to understand how power operates within discourse. Foucault describes knowledge as put to work through discursive practices in the institutional apparatus, and explores how knowledge is used to regulate the conduct of others (Hall, 2001, p. 75). Discourse itself can embody power in the way that it conditions the perceptions and values of those subject to or resisting it, such that certain interests are advanced and others suppressed (Foucault,1980; Dryzek, 2013). In short, the discursive formation of knowledge though the use of language legitimizes the power structure and dynamics between the institutions and the people of the time, which provides a theoretical lens for approaching the way Thunberg's speeches relate to power through her invocation of youth.

Furthermore, Foucault considers the question of transgression and resistance (McHoul & Grace, 1997, p. 15). He sees power not as negative and repressive, but instead, positive and productive, with a capacity to produce the cultural forms and social stratifications that people have come to recognize in any given society (McHoul & Grace, 1997, p. 82; Foucault, 1990). McHoul and Grace further elaborate on Foucault's work in the *History of Sexuality* that with power comes resistance (p. 83). In Foucault's conception, as disciplinary power continually multiplies its centers and localities, resistance cannot simply be a reaction to a pre-existing power, but rather, an opposition to the states of power, or counter-powers which coexist with

them (McHoul & Grace, 1997, pp. 83-4). For Foucault, power needs to be directed through the use of "techniques" that allow for the exercise of power and the production of knowledge (McHoul & Grace, 1997, p. 86). On the other hand, resistance "refuses" these techniques, which requires the active interrogation of the techniques employed in a problem situation (McHoul & Grace, 1997, p. 86, 87). In this thesis, the use of power techniques are identified, and the dynamics between power and resistance are examined through the lens of environmental and climate change discourse in the chosen texts.

Climate Change Discourse Classification

Given the wide and complex terrain of environmental discourses, classification systems are used by researchers to identify techniques deployed, which in turn allows them to effectively analyze the power relations in different areas of environmental discourse (Dryzek, 2013; Novikau, 2016; Doherty, 2005). Dryzek (2013) classifies environmental discourse along two dimensions: reformist versus radical, and prosaic versus imaginative (See Figure 1 for the visual comparison).

	Reformist	**Radical**
Prosaic	Problem solving	Limits and survival
Imaginative	Sustainability	Green radicalism

Figure 1. Classification of environmental discourses along two dimensions: reformist versus radical and prosaic versus imaginative (Dryzek, 2013, p. 16).

Reformist discourse is the first dimension that centers around conventional advocacy, which means that it recognizes the existence of ecological issues and problems, but treats them as tractable within the basic framework of political economy in industrial society (Dryzek, 2013; Brulle & Norgaard, 2019). In contrast, radical discourse is the wide spectrum of radical beliefs

that range from the looming tragedy of Earth's limited resources, to the discourse that advocates for total system changes from an industrial to a completely green society (Dryzek, 2013). It is also worth noting that a recent study from Brulle and Norgaard (2019) adds one more category into this dimension: reactionary, which centers on the effort to oppose climate change action through the development and promulgation of climate misinformation.

The second dimension is prosaic versus imaginative. Prosaic discourse takes the political-economic reality and the desire for economic growth set by industrial society as a rigid and unchangeable structure, and posits that environmental problems are seen as troubles encountered by the established industrial political economy (Dryzek, 2013). In contrast, imaginative departures seek to redefine the industrial reality, by framing environmental problems as opportunities for a more harmonious society rather than a conflict-ridden one (Dryzek, 2013). The four discourse sub-categories are problem solving, limits and survival, sustainability and green radicalism, which define the overlapping areas of these dimensions (Dryzek, 2013, p. 14). Dryzek's model of environmental discourse classification serves as a backbone structure for the critical discourse analysis of this thesis. While my objects of study, Greta Thunberg's speeches, generally fall into the green radicalism category, with emphasis on green consciousness and green politics, the type of discourse she employs often shifts depending on the context. This will be discussed further in the analysis section.

A more recent conceptualization by Novikau (2016) also encourages environmental politics and communication scholars to view environmental policy problems through the lens of environmental ideologies. He uses Dryzek's (1997) classification of environmental discourse as a grounding theory to develop his proposal for the classification of environmental ideologies. He proposes a formula – environmental discourse = environmental issue + environmental ideology –

to combine these three core concepts of environmental politics (Novikau, 2016). This thesis further blends a new element, the ideology of the climate movement's main demographic, youth, into the environmental ideology component to shed new light onto how youth participation in the climate justice movement informs the existing environmental discourse.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis

As inspired by Foucault's work, in order to analyze a text or a practice, it is necessary to first analyze the whole discursive formation to which a text or a practice belongs. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a qualitative analytical approach for critically describing, interpreting, and explaining how discourses construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities through the analysis of text and talk in the social and political context (van Dijk, 1985; 1993). Fairclough (1992; 2001) also stresses the semiotic and linguistic aspect of the given social problem in a given context. Fairclough (1992) proposes a model of discourse that is comprised of three components: text, discursive practice, and social practice (see the three frames shown in Figure 2). Janks (1997) further elaborates on Fairclough's model by giving each frame a more user-friendly label: the description of object of analysis, the interpretation of the producing and receiving processes, and the socio-historical conditions that explain and govern these processes (the labels on the right in Figure 2). The analytical procedures of CDA will be explained further in the Data Analysis section.
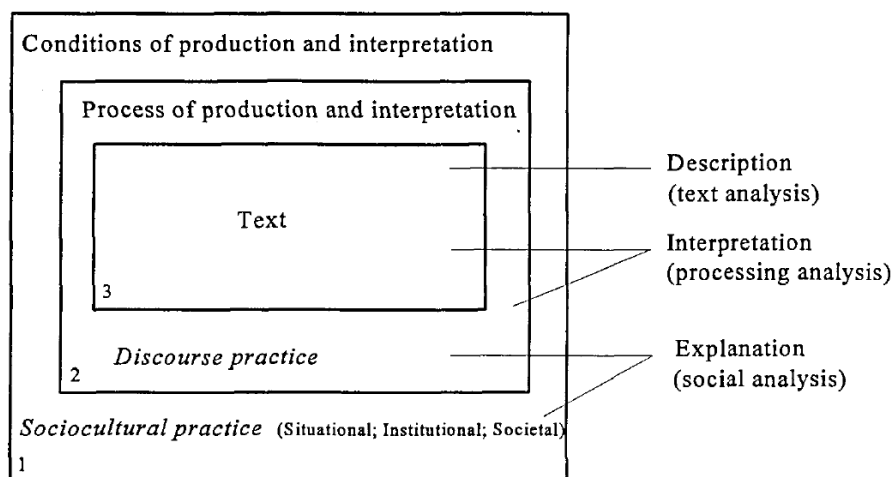

Figure 2. Fairclough's three-dimensional conception of discourse.

Data Collection

This thesis employs CDA to examine three public speeches delivered by Greta Thunberg. Thunberg has delivered many public speeches during her #Fridays4future campaign. To determine the speeches for this thesis, I searched "Greta Thunberg Speech" on YouTube and chose the top three public speeches by using the "Highest Views" filter on October 8, 2019. Due to the nature of the campaign and how quickly information was circulating on social media, I decided that the amount of reach is the most appropriate way to estimate its impact. I didn't use the "relevance" filter because I didn't want YouTube's algorithms to affect my results. I also didn't consider the "rating" filter because it can be biased. After excluding the videos that were irrelevant and outdated, the three speeches analyzed in this thesis are:

1. "School Strike for Climate – Save the World by Changing the Rules TED Talk" (TEDx Talks, 2018, December 12) (see *Transcript 1* in Appendix)

2. Greta Thunberg's speech during the UN COP24 climate talks, in Katowice, Poland (Connect4climate, 2018, December 15) (see *Transcript 2* in Appendix)

3. "WATCH: Greta Thunberg's full speech to world leaders at UN Climate Action Summit" (PBS NewsHour, 2019, September 23) (see *Transcript 3* in Appendix)

The limitations of choosing these speeches are, first, that these public speeches are only analyzed textually. This thesis does not include analysis of visual, structural and contextual cues of these three speeches. Secondly, these speeches are delivered in major international conferences with very different audiences. While this thesis considers audience in general as a factor that influences the speeches, it does not dive deeply into the type of audience in its respective occasion. In this thesis, when audience is mentioned, it refers to the general public that is either viewing Thunberg's speeches on YouTube or in person.

Further, the limitation of choosing Greta Thunberg as my object of study is, first, the repetitiveness of some elements in her speeches. These three speeches have many repetitive sections due to the need to repeat the same messages to different audiences upon different occasions. While some quotes selected for analysis are repeated, some are not, as it will be noted in my analysis section. Second, while Thunberg's messages are figuratively and ideologically sound, it is important to note that her perspective is not representative of all climate activists. The main goal of her speeches, as she describes it, is to mobilize youth. Consequently, the focus of this thesis is to address the discourses of youth in relation to the climate crisis in her speeches. I acknowledge that it is also crucial to consider her personal attributes of being a teenaged, white girl from middle-class Sweden. However, to stay within the scope of this thesis, my analysis will only focus on the discursive elements she uses in her speeches and how the ideology of youth informs her usage of certain linguistic functions, therefore, these personal attributes will not be analyzed.

Data Analysis

All three speeches were transcribed into text by myself. To analyze these speeches, a coding scheme was created using Fairclough's three-dimensional conception of discourse model (see *Figure 2* on page 23). I used the tracking function in Microsoft Word to annotate words, phrases and paragraphs that fit into one or more categories in Fairclough's model. The purpose of using this model and coding procedure is first, to refine the research question, and second, to try to answer the research question, and third, to relate the themes to the broader socio-cultural context. The coding schemes are:

- "3" = text analysis (description);
- "2" = processing analysis (interpretation);

- "1" = social analysis (explanation).

While my analytical framework employs Fairclough's (1992) model as a visualizable model, the coding scheme and analytical framework adhered more closely to Janks' (1997) description of how to deploy Fairclough's approach as a research tool. Stage one, labeled as "3" in the outer box in Fairclough's model (1992), was text analysis. As suggested by Janks (1997), I borrowed the grammatical framework from Halliday and Matthiessen's book *Introduction to Functional Grammar* (2013) to identify textual signs. I then looked for patterns that emerged across different linguistic functions to refine the research question about discourses at work with reference to the context of stage two: production and reception (Janks, 1997). The linguistic functions I examined are:

1. Lexicalization (word choice)

2. Patterns of transitivity (relationship of a verb with direct objects)

3. The use of active and passive voice

4. The use of nominalization (conversion of a clause into a nominal or noun)

5. Choices of mood

6. Choices of modality or polarity (speaker's judgement on the status of what is being said)

7. The thematic structure of the text

8. The information focus

9. Cohesion devices (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; 2013; Fairclough, 1992, pp. 25-30)

Stage two, labeled as "2" in the middle box, is the analysis of the process of interpretation (Janks, 1997). In this stage, I constantly asked questions about time, place, and other contextual factors that may have influenced the production and interpretation of the texts. I also cross-

referenced the three texts, and interpreted the use of language by connecting their meanings to broader social-historical conditions.

Finally, in stage three, labeled as "1" in the inner box, is the social analysis that explains the broader socio-cultural norms and ideologies in which the texts operate. Janks (1997) points out that the working of the dominant ideology stabilizes the dialectical flux in a social generative process, resulting in the invisibility of other ideological signs, making this stage the most difficult one of all (Janks, 1997). Ideology is the most powerful when discourses have been naturalized and become part of our everyday common sense (Janks, 1997). From a Foucauldian perspective, this section brings in the inquiry of how discursive formations construct regimes of truth in a given context, and how power operates within the discourse.

In summary, my theoretical framework draws from Foucault's work that aims to explain the ways in which knowledge is constructed discursively, and that power and resistance are the two major forces governing discourse in a given society. In addition, a body of research in environmental discourse studies sheds light on how to classify and talk about discourses related to nature and the environment, which helps to build a framework of describing, interpreting and explaining for the analysis chapter. I use CDA to analyze the power relations and work of ideology in Greta Thunberg's speeches, in order to address my main research question of how her speeches use dominant and counter discourse to reproduce and construct the identity and ideology of youth as the key players of the climate justice movement. The limitation of this methodology is that it does not address the effectiveness of a speech like other communication research methods such as rhetorical or frame analysis, in which the main goal is to analyze how effective the speaker is in conveying a message to the audience. However, CDA is well-suited to

answer questions related to how ideology is embedded in discourse, and how it informs the

construction of discursive frames in media texts such as speeches.

Chapter 5: Analysis

In this chapter, I employ Fairclough's (1992) three-level model of critical discourse analysis to discuss my findings using specific quotes from the transcripts of Thunberg's speeches. This chapter is divided into four major parts: first, in "The Past", I discuss how Thunberg uses historical analogies to addresses the complexity of the climate crisis and the urgency for action; second, in "Identity and Ideology", I discuss her use of counter discourse to create resistance; third, in "Power in Question", I discuss the dominant discourse Thunberg uses to construct the regimes of truth regarding youth and their role in the movement of climate justice; finally, in "The Future", I discuss how Thunberg constructs the future with a changing climate. Ultimately, I argue that while Thunberg is politically resistant, she uses both counter and dominant discourse to construct the category of youth in relation to climate justice.

The Past – Use of Historical Analogies

First, Thunberg makes her argument by defining the problem of climate change as an imminent planetary crisis faced by all living beings on Earth. By using historical analogies to paint a dystopian and apocalyptic picture of the climate crisis, Thunberg capitalizes on the audience's fear to interrogate the unsustainability of past and current economic and political systems. This section illustrates the world that will be left behind for youth based on the trajectory of inaction, and serves to bolster Thunberg's position of resistance against the oppositional group in her activism.

Quotes:

"We are in the beginning of a mass extinction." (see *Transcript 3* in Appendix)

"Headlines, radio, newspapers, you would never read or hear about anything else, as if there was a world war going on." (see *Transcript 1* in Appendix)

"No one is acting as if we were in a crisis." (see *Transcript 1* in Appendix)

"Especially when it comes to the sustainability crisis, where everyone keeps saying climate change is an existential threat and the most important issue of all, and yet they just carry on like before." (see *Transcript 1* in Appendix)

Text analysis:

In these quotes, Thunberg uses phrases such as "sixth mass extinction", "crisis", as well as comparing the climate crisis with the World Wars to convey the relationships between humans and nature as at-risk and violated. In general, these lexical choices convey meanings of threat, danger and catastrophe, and unstable situations.

In a lexical sense, "mass extinction", "world war", and "crisis" all have the practical utility of evoking negative sentiment. As biologist Wilson noted in his book *The Future of Life* (2002), mass extinctions are characterized by the loss of at least 75% of species within a geologically short period of time. World Wars refers to international conflicts that involve multiple nations in the world. Further, in a crisis situation, people often feel that their lives are at risk, and that the outcome of the crisis is unpredictable. Crisis is also a form of psychological stress that aims to evoke a sense of urgency and encourage immediate action to be taken in order to solve the crisis as fast as possible.

Further, to elaborate on the use of threat and crisis frames, the use of polarizing and contrasting frames is also common in depicting the dystopian future she envisions. In the last quote above, she juxtaposes our beliefs of the reality, the "sustainability crisis", "existential threat", to our inaction, "just carry on like before", to highlight the discrepancy between them.

Process Analysis:

Interestingly, while "sixth mass extinction" is a legitimate scientific term used amongst climate scientists, and "world war" and "crisis" are socially constructive analogies that can be decoded differently depending on the situation, Thunberg employs all of these terms to tap into the mental schema that are associated with the fearful emotion.

The sixth mass extinction is a widespread scientific consensus that human activities are accelerating the extinction of many animal and plant species through the destruction of their habitats, the over-consumption and contamination of plants and animals, and the elimination of species that humans view as competitors or threats through means such as pesticides. Thunberg constructs herself as messenger of science by introducing this message from the scientific community to the public, reminding them that the effects of climate change are not going to only affect a certain population, but create a planetary catastrophe that will cause damage to all species on the planet, including all of her audience.

In terms of "World War", people generally associate it with the two international wars that happened in the 20th century, World War I and World War II. These two wars left fundamentally scarring economic, political, social and cultural effects on nations who were involved. Thunberg uses the concept of world war as a reference point for her audience to gain a more vivid and solid grasp of how climate change will impact all living beings in the world.

"Crisis", on the other hand, is a metaphoric concept that taps into a mental schema of dangerous and unstable situations such as health crisis, financial crisis, and even personal crisis.

The word "crisis" frames climate change as a dangerous threat that is close and imminent. It invites the audience to conjure and relate to a crisis situation, and puts environmental problems in play with other crises that may be more familiar to them. Risk and crisis communication is an

important tenet in climate change communication (Evans et al., 2018; Lie & Servaes, 2015), which explains why Thunberg would capitalize on the fearful emotion evoked to promote a sense of helplessness and hopelessness that all humans should experience in the time of "crisis" (see also Salama & Aboukoura, 2018).

Further, by using antithesis and juxtaposition in the last quote, the gap between beliefs and action creates a narrative of guilt and discomfort caused by cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance is the mental discomfort humans experience when presented with conflicting attitudes, beliefs and values. When this inconvenient truth of climate change is told, it invites the audience to re-evaluate their existing belief system, attitude and behaviour towards climate change. Due to the invisible and complex nature of climate change, it is difficult for people to visualize the tangible actions that need to be taken. Thunberg uses an antithesis again to point out two polarizing facts in order to further deepen the guilt experienced by her audience, and it pressures them to make appropriate decisions and take actions to address the issues derived from climate change.

Social Analysis:

These fear-evoking analogies serve to paint at stark mental picture of the effect of climate change by using different large-scale natural, political and social historical events. According to Dryzek's (2013) classification of environmental discourse, Thunberg's speeches fit under the limits and survival discourse, since she portrays the future of the planet by its finite boundaries and the limits of the nature and living beings in the world. This serves to prime her audience about how the current systems in place are not sustainable in the long run, hinting that climate change will threaten, or is already a threat to our current capitalistic system that relies heavily on fossil fuels and the exploitation of natural resources for humans' own benefits.

Thunberg frames climate change in crisis terminologies to highlight the fact that despite knowing all the consequences of the climate crisis, people are continually ignoring the these crises to "carry on like before". "Carry on like before" has close resemblance to the famous slogan "keep calm and carry on", a poster that was popularized in the United Kingdom during the Second World War, and was rediscovered in early 2000, as an important symbol of the recent times of recession (Lewis, 2012). According to Lewis (2012), propaganda posters like this evoke a shared sense of national identity that had to be mobilized amongst a nation, encouraging more and more people to identify themselves as active citizens and members of the nation. The use of this phrase may not only arouse a sense of familiarity in the audience, but also allow the audience to recall the tolls that Word Wars brought to nations around the world, juxtaposing it to the tolls the climate crisis is going to bring in the distant future if no action is taken to combat the crisis now.

Thunberg's lexical choices beg the question of the purpose of this ideological struggle on a planetary crisis that may, in the near or distant future, affect everyone on Earth. The stark contrast between the fear invoked by these lexical choices and the indifferent attitude towards it, first, helps address the complexity of the climate crisis, and second, reminds her audience that if humanity does not unite behind science and combat the climate crisis together, history will repeat itself. The analysis of these lexical choices helps to set the stage for the next analyses, where counter and dominant discourses used in Thunberg's speeches are discussed.

Establishing Identity & Ideology

As a teenaged climate activist, Thunberg repeatedly emphasizes her youth. In her speeches, there is a strong sense of group biases manifested through the narratives she creates. I

argue that by using hostile and threatening tones, voices and other linguistic functions to portray "us" as children, versus "you" as adults, she attempts to subvert the existing power relations of adultism and situates herself as a force of political resistance against the traditionally dominant power of adults. Further, through the ideological struggle between youth and adults, I also argue, in accordance with Foucault, that the oppositional position of young people in the climate movement represents a counter-power, which is an essential counter element that co-exists with the dominant power in order to give structure to that power.

Establishing Differences in Identity: Us vs Them

Quotes:

"My message is that we'll be watching you. (see *Transcript 3* in Appendix)
"How dare you!" (see *Transcript 3* in Appendix)
"You are failing us. But the young people are starting to understand your betrayal. (see *Transcript 3* in Appendix)

Text Analysis:

The first quote opens the speech in at the Climate Action Summit (see *Transcript 3* in Appendix). "Watching you" means being closely observant of someone. It can also mean keeping surveillance or spying on someone, which may evoke an eerie and disturbing feeling. She begins speech by warning the "you" that it will be monitored by her, holding the actions of "you" accountable.

"How dare you" is perhaps the most famous quote from Thunberg. It is a versatile sentence that can be expressed as both a question or an exclamation. *"Dare"* is a semi-modal verb, which means it can be used as either a main verb or a modal verb. In this case, *dare* is used

as a modal verb to convey negative and interrogative meaning. "How dare you" is an expression of disapproval regarding an action taken by the subject, the "you". It is unclear what the "you" has done solely based on this sentence, but it is definitely used to address an unacceptable behaviour in question.

For the last quote, both "failing" and "betrayal" have a negative connotation. The word choice of "failing" means deficiency and neglect, which causes disappointment in "us". "Betrayal" means violation of presumptive trust and contract, conveys the feeling of hostility against the betrayer, as well as the subject being tricked and deceived. "But" is a contrast conjunction that forms an adversative relation to extend the meaning of the first clause.

Active voice is used all three quotes, which means that the subject of the sentence comes first and performs the action that the rest of the sentence describes. The use of active voice results in shorter, sharper, and more convincing sentences. "How dare you", "you are failing us" and "we'll be watching you", are all direct and punchy, making her argument highly persuasive.

Process Analysis:

The first quote is a powerful hook to establish Thunberg's power position over the "you". Adversarial framing is a communication technique that is commonly employed in social movement communication where protagonists and antagonists are clearly constructed to attribute blame for the perceived cause of a problematic situation (Snow & Benford, 1992; Gamson 1995). Establishing her positionality against the "you" at the beginning sets the stage for the audience to expect more condemnatory claims toward the "you".

Throughout her Climate Action Summit speech (see *Transcript 3* in Appendix), Thunberg capitalizes on fear-framing and accusatory claims to express her three major concerns: first, leaders that are not listening to climate science; second, leaders that are incompetent and

have not made large-scale systematic changes to address problems caused by climate change; lastly, leaders who value economic growth over a sustainable planet. With the above contextual information, her quote "how dare you" can been seen as an expression of disapproval regarding the climate inaction led by adult leaders. This confrontational statement clearly defines adult leaders as the "out-group" or oppositional identity, and youth as her collective "in-group" identity with shared values and purpose. Every time Thunberg juxtaposes "we" or "us" and "you" or "them", she reinforces the boundaries between her in-group and the oppositional group. As Rodgers (2018) describes in her theory on boundary formation in social movements (p. 106), the distinction between group membership creates hostility towards the oppositional group, regardless of the variation of individual qualities that the oppositional group members possess.

The phrase "how dare you" occurs three times in the Climate Action Summit speech (see *Transcript 3* in Appendix). The use of repetition adds emphasis, encourages the acceptance of the idea, and most importantly, makes the phrase more memorable to the audience. As well, the use of repetition further polarizes the opposing views and group memberships, reinforcing the boundaries between "us" and "you".

Lastly, the direct antithesis between "young people" and "your betrayal" in the latter clause helps to establish a thematic structure of two oppositional groups. "Your betrayal" is adult leaders' irresponsible climate related decisions. The accusation of adult leaders' wrongdoing in contrast with the awakening of young people creates a logical plot in the audience's mind, persuading the audience to be allied with her.

Social analysis:

There are two ways in which the construction of oppositional collective identities resonates with Foucault's theories: discourse as knowledge and power versus resistance. First,

the polarization of positionality in climate change movement discourse can arguably come as a result of polarizing group identity. By using a threatening and fear-mongering strategy to depict climate change, she demonizes adults solely based on the fact that a small group of powerful leaders have the power to make decisions that determine the future of the planet. On the other hand, counter to the dominant power of society, she portrays young people as the stewards of the environment solely for survival purposes. In a conceptual sense, she attributes the inability for young people to survive in the future to adults' failure to make appropriate climate decisions in the present. The clear line drawn between the two opposing groups is the knowledge, or "regimes of truth" that she constructs discursively using her language, which is a powerful resistance technique, proposed by Foucault, to condemn the hegemonically powerful actors (McHoul & Grace, 1997, p. 86), who in this case are the adults.

Second, "how dare you" is a powerful statement of positionality that puts young people in the position of power. The construction of two opposing collective identities mirrors Foucault's idea of incorporating both dominant discourses and counter discourse in order to form the full picture of a power struggle (McHoul & Grace, 1997, p 84). In Foucauldian language, this subversion of power of children over adults is indeed a form of counter-discourse that is not only essential to environmental discourse, but a productive form of resistance that in fact, coexists with the dominant discourse in modern forms of struggle (McHoul & Grace, 1997, pp. 84-86). By portraying herself as a subjugated voice for the future generation, Thunberg is resisting the dominant power techniques that are enforced on her and young people. The co-existence of dominant and subjugated power within the two oppositional identities Thunberg constructs discursively in these three quotes exemplifies one of the modern power struggles that Foucault proposes (McHoul & Grace, 1997, p. 86).

A limitation of this resistance technique employed by Thunberg, however, is that she puts all adults in the same oppositional out-group, despite their diverse backgrounds and views on climate change related issues. This ontologically reductionist view, while efficient and effective in getting a point across, it is highly contested as it assumes all adults subscribe to the same hegemonic ideology. This may, in turn, undermine her stated goal of creating an intergenerational coalition of climate justice supporters.

Establishing Differences in Ideology: Climate Justice vs Economic Growth

Quotes:

"You are too scared of being unpopular" "But I don't care about being popular. I care about climate justice and the living planet." (see *Transcript 2* in Appendix)

"All you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth." (see *Transcript 3* in Appendix)

Text Analysis:

In the first quote, the word choice of "unpopular" has a strong youthful, or perhaps childlike, undertone. Being unpopular is a undesirable social position in a group setting, as opposed to its antonym, popular. Being popular can mean a form of acceptance by desirable social group or the public that the subject is associated with. Furthermore, an antithesis is used again in the form of "I don't care" versus "I care" to juxtapose her position compared to the "you". By presenting a stark ideological contradiction that aligns with the overarching thematic structure, she is making her position in the climate justice movement apparent to her audience. The use of "and" for "climate justice", and "and" for "the living planet" as a cohesive device frames climate change as both political and physical, weighing both of them as equally important.

"All you talk about" is a hyperbole, an overly exaggerated statement to signify the repetitiveness of something being talked about. "Fairy tales" are often designed for children, and

the story often leads to a happy ending. "Economic growth" is the increase in the production of goods and services of an economy, measured by increase of market value in units such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP). "Fairy tales of eternal economic growth" is a hyperbolic metaphor that describes economic growth as a unrealistic social construct that only exists metaphorically. The phrase "eternal economic growth" has a strong positive connotation of never-ending prosperity and advancement in a socio-economic context.

Process Analysis:

In these two quotes, Thunberg is projecting her own worldview as a teenager on the way she describes the world around her, including her oppositional group, the adult leaders. In the first quote, she uses "unpopular" as a figurative description to describe an undesirable position in a group setting. In contrast, being "popular" means gaining acceptance by in-group members or the public. It can also be interpreted as fitting into the standard and a desired stereotype that are commonly sought after. In the contextual level, being "popular" means to conform, to blend in, and to allow oneself to adhere to the dominant hegemonic ideology, without being critical about its implications. As Thunberg describes, adult leaders are scared of being "unpopular", meaning that they are afraid to go against the current of mainstream hegemonic ideology. The juxtaposition of her own positionality after describing adult leaders this way serves as a strong contrast to the dominant hegemonic discourse, securing her ideological position of viewing a "living planet" is over profit, despite it being an "unpopular" belief. Further, the lexical choice of "a living planet" frames the planet as a living organism. This assumption can be classified as a green consciousness discourse that falls under the green radicalism discourse category in Dryzek's (2013) classification system of environmental discourse. This discursively constructed

relationship between humans and nature encourages her audience to view planet Earth as a relatable "being" to our lives, and to recognize that this this relationship has been violated.

In the second quote, the word choice of "growth" is an empty signifier, which means it can be assumed and interpreted differently depending on the situational context. To put it in the context of environmentalism, the concept of eternal economic growth contradicts with the limited and finite planet in reality. Thunberg sees our economic system that views mass production and consumption as the means of growth as a flawed assumption. Similar to describing the planet as a "living" being, the concept of "eternal economic growth" also falls under the green radicalism discourse category (Dryzek, 2013). Due to the complexity of this unnatural socially constructed economic system, Thunberg uses a familiar and recognizable concept of the fairy tale to depict the irrationality around this unrealistic concept, making this inconvenient truth more digestible for her audience.

Social Analysis:

Thunberg portrays two opposing groups' ideologies by criticizing the representation of power that operates through discursive mechanisms. By rejecting the mainstream hegemonic political correctness through the use of juxtaposition of two polarizing views in "I don't care" versus "I care", she is, politically, portraying herself as a force of resistance to the dominant ideology, and condemning the irresponsibility of adult leaders for only doing what is "popular", not what is correct. Further, Thunberg's ways of framing climate change and the injustice surrounding it in simple and direct language draw on climate realism. While it is effective for tapping into the audience's moral codes of doing the right thing at the right time, portraying the planet as a living being also displays her seemingly innocent and humanist worldview in order to evoke empathy in her audience.

The second quote interrogates the ideological position of adult leaders by the use of irony. By using digestible concept like "fairy tales" to describe a complex notion like humanity's desire to achieve "eternal economic growth", Thunberg alludes the need to redress the interconnection between human activity and the acknowledgment of its ecological functioning limits. She leverages youth as an ideological position to problematize adults' political decisions that are harmful to the environment, and to call for attention on their climate injustice action against children. This is a direct challenge to the dominant discourse of using the Growth Paradigm in society, in which economic growth is at its core and GDP is the main performance measure (Martin, Maris & Simberloff, 2016). Ecologists Martin et al. (2016) suggest that by extending the frontiers of dominion and access to resources, colonial states contributed greatly to the emergence of a paradigm of unlimited growth. Martin et al. (2016) further explain that to address the climate crisis, we as a society need to fundamentally shift our growth-centered and technologically driven values to one that acknowledges biophysical limits, human well-being and biodiversity conservation. Relating back to Thunberg's speech, she proposes that the ideology of "eternal economic growth" is something to critique, echoing Foucault's conception of power, both dominating and resisting, as positive and productive (McHoul & Grace, 1997, p. 82). Thunberg's critique is directed toward the powerful adult leaders, while she portrays herself and the young generation as the victims in an inferior position. Here she draws on the hegemonic structure of society where adults are the dominating power, in order to set up a further reversal of the traditional social and familial hierarchies of power. This is a form of political resistance that counters what Foucault describes as a technique of power (McHoul & Grace, 1997, p. 86). Thunberg brings forth the message of demanding climate justice for youth, the endangered

counter-power, demonstrating a power struggle that is constructed through environmental discourse.

Dominant discourse: Youth as Future Citizens

In contrast to the conclusions drawn from previous sections, I argue that Thunberg also capitalizes on conforming to some dominant ideological elements to appeal to her audience and incite action within her in-group. Two of these dominant discourses are: youth as future citizens, as suggested by Kjørholt (2002); and youth can make a difference.

Youth as Future Citizens

Quote:

"You say you love your children above all else, and yet you are stealing their future in front of their very eyes." (see *Transcript 2* in Appendix)

Text analysis:

This quote is an antithesis that contains several lexical emphases. "Lov(ing) your children above all else" emphasizes how much the subject cares about its children more than anything, but instead, the subject takes away their right to have a future. Both parts of the sentence are metaphors, with the latter using personification to strengthen the meaning of an abstract concept of children's future. "Stealing" has a negative connotation of taking away something without permission. It is commonly referred as an illegal and criminal act. "Very" is degree adverb that is also added before a "eyes", a noun, to add precision and importance.

Process Analysis:

This quote's metaphorical richness invites the audience to feel the overwhelming cognitive dissonance that Thunberg feels when adult leaders say they love their children, yet they commit this criminal act of "stealing away their future". Thunberg's use of antithesis and personifications bring the audience closer to the complexity of the changing climate by describing it through something that all adults hold very dearly to their hearts, their children. This is used to sentimentalize this scientific truth encourage conceptual acceptance and behavioural changes. Resonating with the previous section, she uses this threatening frame to address the fact that children are the victims in this situation, and adult leaders are the ones to blame. By accusing adult leaders for committing the serious crime of "stealing" children's future away from them, she is policing adult leaders for their climate action in order to hold them accountable for their decisions and actions.

Social Analysis:

Using sentimental language that mirrors the underlying stereotype of children being future citizens, which intrinsically, is a vague but widely-used emotional tactic to incite action. Thunberg uses this dominant childhood paradigm that is prevalent in the western world, suggests Kjørholt (2002), to construct a regime of truth that mirrors some of the dominant perspectives within the sociology of childhood (James et al., 1998; Kjørholt, 2002). In Kjørholt's (2002) study, she identifies that the discursive construction of "children as bearers of rights" and "children as future citizens" is deeply embedded in various discursive fields. Thunberg's portrayal of children as future citizens capitalizes on the dominant ideology of protecting the young and vulnerable population because they are the rights bearers of the future. This further exemplifies the fact that she is in fact not countering the dominant discourse, but instead, taking advantage of the

sensationalizing dominant discourse of children to evoke a feeling of culpability in adults. On the

other hand, while Thunberg capitalizes on the embedded ideology of children as the future to

evoke a sense of empathy, she is also invoking that idea that children deserve a certain level of

autonomy and self-determinism in participatory movements. Kjørholt (2002) argues that the

discourse of children participating in society can be seen as a "prototype of egalitarian

individualism" (p. 79). The participatory nature of the youth-led climate movement promotes

independence in children, gives permission to children like Thunberg to sentimentalize the harsh

truth of climate change in ways that will be advantageous to her and "us", the children, and

disadvantageous to her out-group, the "you", the adult leaders in the movement for climate

justice.

Youth Can Make a Difference

Quotes:

"And if a few children can get headlines all over the world just by not going to school, then

  imagine what we could all do together if we really wanted to." (see *Transcript 2* in Appendix)

"But I've learned you are never too small to make a difference." (see *Transcript 2* in Appendix)

Text Analysis:

Counter to the hostile and threatening tone in the previous quotes, these two quotes are

rather hopeful and positive. "Imagine" has a strong hopeful, trusting and future-oriented

undertone that arouses positive emotions in the "we", the children or young people that are

"getting headlines all over the world". Thunberg's emphasis on "if we want to" is a simple and

straightforward description of how their determination and willpower will help them to thrive in

facing powerful opposition. In the second quote, "small" can mean tiny in size and age, but also

in meaning, significance and power. "Never" is a negative time adverb meaning "no at any time".

"Make a difference" means changing or affecting a subject matter, often used as in persuasive communication.

Process Analysis:

"Getting headlines" here refers to how her school strike for climate movement gained momentum and media exposure, thanks to her allies and movement participants, the children from around the world. As Rodgers argues (2018), "the collective identities… do not automatically arise; they are constructed" (p. 110). In this quote, Thunberg is using a common activity of youth – "not going to school" – as a common marker of affinity to construct a sense of collective youth identity to resist against their common oppositional identity, the adult leaders.

The second quote is one of very few sentences in her speeches that has a hopeful connotation, and arouses positive emotions. "Small" can be interpreted as "insignificant", "powerless", or "young". Even though she is small, young and powerless, she portrays herself as a youth voice that can somehow change the status quo in the system in the future. Drawing from the last section where the emotion of fear is analyzed, introducing hope right after, according to Salama & Aboukoura (2018), has the strongest positive influence on advocacy behaviour in climate change communication. It is evident that Thunberg believes young people have the power to "make a difference", therefore, she encourages young people to join the movement and resist against the dominating power for a better future. This sentence is setting the stage for "change is coming, whether you like it or not", one of the most powerful statements in the COP 24 speech (see *Transcript 2* in Appendix).

Social Analysis:

As mentioned in the previous section, a dominant ideology that is especially salient in Thunberg's speeches is that young people are the future citizens, therefore they have the power

to make a difference in the planet they want to live in. Developing in parallel with the climate justice movement, there is an ongoing interest in youth inclusion, participation and civic engagement, as well as the understandings of the student voice within a democratic and participatory framework (Bernard, 2016; Taylor & Robinson, 2009). The second quote encapsulates the idea of youth having the power to change the course of political outcomes in the future despite being powerless politically. Although O'Brien et al. (2018) suggest that youth are "dutiful, disruptive and dangerous dissents" (p. 380), they also argue that as dutiful dissent, youth activists often work within existing systems to express their discontent with business-as-usual and to promote alternative responses to heated political topics like climate change. While dissents represent resistance to the status quo, they adhere to the "script" of current institutions, hegemonic powers, and economic systems (O'Brien et al., 2018). Many argue that youth have the agency and ability to imagine a different future and express opinions or actions that deviate from dominant or commonly held beliefs, but in reality, the absence of a rigid belief system does not mean they are free-reign radical dissents, as many of them remain a reformist in voicing their concerns over climate justice (Dryzek, 2013; Brulle & Norgaard, 2019). In more recent social movement studies, collective-action scholars also argue that meaningful resistance is limited to those practices that have some ability to "effect large-scale, collective changes in the domains of state policy, corporate practice, social structure, cultural norms and daily lived experience" (Ganesh, Zoller & Cheney, 2005, p. 177). With very little to none of this power to leverage and solely relying on the individualization of resistance, Thunberg's movement may contribute to the paucity of attention to protests and social movements, as Ganesh et al. (2005) argue. Further, sociologists James et al. (1998) frame children's language, play and interactions as are significant symbolic markers of developmental progress, since these activities are seen as a

prefiguration of their future participation in the adult world (pp. 59-60). Therefore, the power techniques children learn and employ in the movement building process are likely to be taught by adults, which are greatly constricted within the structure of the "adult world".

All of the above evidence supports the fact that viewing children as central actors of participatory movements is in fact a dominant paradigm in developmental studies, and that "making a difference" is a culturally appropriated empty signifier that can have different meanings depending on the surrounding hegemonic structure. In western society where freedom is the centrepiece of many dominant discourses, "making a difference" is a commonly used change narrative that is often naturalized as it is embedded in the discursive terrain. Thunberg depicts the fact that children are able to "make a difference"; while this may be situated in her generally politically oppositional position against the dominant power, I argue that she is in fact adhering rigidly to the dominant freedom discourse in the western political paradigm, and the purpose of using this phrase is to appeal to a western audience.

The Future - Use of Imaginary Future Scenario

Finally, Thunberg uses imaginary future scenarios to push the urgency of climate action. While her ideological stand seems well-orchestrated through the elements that were analyzed in previous sections, the unstable depiction of the future as a sign in this hypothetical scenario illustrates her uncertainty for the future, and the role youth plays in changing the course of future.

Quote:

"The year 2078, I will celebrate my 75th birthday. If I have children maybe they will spend that day with me. Maybe they will ask me about you. Maybe they will ask why you didn't do anything while there still was time to act." (see *Transcript 2* in Appendix)

Text Analysis:

This hypothetical future scenario conveys a sense of blame in a retrospective. "Maybe" is used three times, not only in a parallel sense, but also as a cohesive marking (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). Thunberg uses both "the year 2078" and "my 75th birthday" to describe the future, showing the textual hybridity of how the future can manifest itself through different lexical selection. Further, the repetitive use of "maybe" as an anaphora can be categorized into three of the four main types of surface cohesive marking identified by Halliday and Matthiessen (2013). The first one is references: it allows the possibility to refer back to an earlier part of the text (Fairclough, 1992, p. 176). The quote starts with a scenario, and "maybe" is used as a reference point for the latter clauses to expand on its meaning. Lexical cohesion is cohesion through the repetition of words (Fairclough, 1992, p. 176). The parallel repetition of "maybe" gradually builds up anticipation, guides readers to her very last and the most important claim: our climate inaction. By using these cohesive markings, Thunberg connects fragments of her imagination to convey a linear sequence of thoughts that seems logical and likely to happen.

Process Analysis:

Thunberg reverses the situation by using her future self to ask our present selves a question, *"why you didn't do anything while there still was time to act"*. The future is an abstract tense that is defined by uncertainty. Thunberg uses two different ways to describe the future as a concept to strengthen the novel retro-perspective for her audience to think about the importance of taking action now. By using this hypothetical scenario from a reversed perspective, she prompts the audience to think deeply about the impact our action will have on the future generations. And in a sense, she also offers a glimpse on how she feels about the past generations that did not take any action to prevent climate change from happening in the first place. In

addition, mentioning children in this scenario further evokes a sense of empathy and compassion, which as mentioned, are two strong driving forces to incite action.

Social Analysis:

In this imaginary future scenario, Thunberg speaks for her oppressed self and the future generation who will also suffer from systematic oppression from a profit driven society. Children of the future will question why people of the present prioritized economic growth that profits from the exploitation of nature. Thunberg establishes her political viewpoint by resisting voice of the dominant discourse to emphasize the fact that taking climate action is not a choice, but our duty in living on this planet. However, one observation that is worth highlighting is the illogical assumption of the children's age in the scenario. In the year 2078, she will be 75 years old, then her children will very likely be adults, which is not how people typically imagine "children". Thunberg uses the dominant discourse of children as the future, but she seems to neglect the logic behind her choices of dates, leading to a disjointed scenario. This logical fallacy shows the instability of the future as a sign. As Janks (1997) suggests, when the sign is unstable, it is possible to see the workings of ideology. After she paints a dark and gloomy picture of the future using all the dystopian terminology analyzed in the first section of this thesis, the future Thunberg unfolds here seems to counter her well-orchestrated ideological stand of youth being future citizens and youth can make a difference. The inconsistency of future as a sign shows that even Thunberg herself, a strong youth voice for climate justice, is unsure about how climate change is going to affect the planet's future, let alone being able to "make a difference". As Janks (1997) further elucidates, in a time of change, new discourses become available to offer new subject positions from which to speak and read the world, therefore, signs may become unstable at this time. In the time when the climate crisis is becoming more apparent to the public

than ever, perhaps the increasing understanding of the problem may offer new insights on how the future should be portrayed. What is certain is that the discourse on climate change will change with time, which may offer possibilities for further critical discourse analysis.

To conclude, using Fairclough's (1992) model of critical discourse analysis and Foucault's theories on the discursive formation of power and knowledge, I argue that while Thunberg is politically resistant, she uses both counter and dominant discourse to construct the category of youth in relation to climate justice. Thunberg first establishes her positionality against the dominant power of the society through the use of "us" versus "you" narrative, drawing a clear ideological boundary between herself and her allies, the children, and the adult leaders. She portrays herself as a force of political resistance to the dominant power, and condemns the adults leaders for only doing what's "popular" that will aid economic growth, but not what is right. The dominant discourses she uses aim to appeal to her audience's empathy towards youth and portray children as the citizens of the future, which evokes a sense of familiarity with her audience by drawing on existing regimes of truth. Finally, Thunberg portrays the future as a dystopia if no climate action is taken, yet the unstable sign of future in the imaginary scenario offers an alternative insight that herself, as the face of the movement, is uncertain about what the future holds.

The ideologies embedded in discourse are always shifting. According to Foucault (1980), power is "always circulating…never localized here or there, never in anybody's hand" (p. 98). There are many situational factors that determine how individuals form their argument discursively. In Foucault's (1980) words, "individuals are the vehicles of power, not the points of application" (p. 98). In the case of Greta Thunberg's movement for climate justice, some of the

discursive frames Thunberg uses can be seen as tools of political resistance that refuse the

exercise of dominant power, and some can be interpreted as discursive techniques of power that

adhere to dominant discourses about youth that are widely-used in western culture.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis provides a critical insight on how Greta Thunberg uses dominant and counter discourse to construct the identity and ideology of youth as the key players of the climate justice movement. Using the three-level Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework purposed by Janks (1997), I analyze three of Thunberg's speeches to understand the way she draws on different linguistic functions to form discursive frames, how meaning is produced and interpreted, and the ideology at play. I conclude that while Thunberg is politically resistant and her movement attempts to subvert the traditional social and familial hierarchy of power to create resistance, she in fact uses both counter and dominant discourses to articulate her political position by invoking regimes of truth about youth. Further, relating to Foucault's concept of power and resistance, the discussion also suggests the oppositional position of young people in the climate movement represents a counter-power, which mutually constitutes a power struggle along with the dominant power.

To stay within the scope of an undergraduate Honour's thesis, only a limited amount of content with the most textual richness in the three public speeches were selected for the analysis. This was due to my inability to see the level of depth required for the analysis and the methodological constraints in the early developmental stages of the thesis. A recommendation for future research is to focus on a smaller data set, perhaps on only one speech, to allow a more in-depth and thematically focused critical discourse analysis.

Another limitation of this thesis is the potential blurred boundary between the three different levels of analysis. Language is incredibly fluid, therefore textual interpretation can vary depending on individual factors, values, and societal circumstances. In Janks' (1997) guide to critical discourse analysis, she also recognizes this limitation and claims that it is incredibly

difficult to isolate the analysis only to text without any contextual clues (p. 333). To clarify, it is important to note that this thesis is written from a western perspective and in particular, a North American one. Therefore, arguments made and conclusions achieved in this thesis may contain biases towards a western ideological paradigm.

Additionally, a major limitation of this thesis is the lack of in-depth understanding and knowledge of linguistic functions. As a communications major, my knowledge repertoire in linguistics prior to this thesis was very limited. This analysis is my first attempt to analyze a media text through the lens of functional linguistics. Due to my unfamiliarity with functional linguistics, some analytical tools such as basic figures of speech and other literary devices are employed to help with the analysis of the speeches, resulting in an inconsistent analytical voice throughout the analysis. To improve this, a deep understanding of linguistic functions is highly encouraged, and it can be achieved by conducting a more extensive literature review, particularly on functional and structural linguistics.

Finally, given that Greta Thunberg and her school strike movement is a relatively new climate justice movement, there is a lack of peer-reviewed academic research on this movement as of April 2020. Although this thesis is grounded in a strong theoretical framework and has a sufficient amount of reviewed literature to guide its direction, it employs an open and exploratory approach to investigate Thunberg's speeches. Further research could examine how personal attributes such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status can influence a speaker's ideological orientation, as well as how these personal ideological values are embedded in speeches. A closer examination of discursive interactions on social media between other key players such as the movement's supporters and deniers would also further illuminate not only the study of the climate justice movement, but also the field of environmental communication.

My hope for this thesis is to spark some constructive conversations on how the regimes of truth about youth in the movement of climate justice are discursively constructed, and how power dynamics of a given social context play a role in influencing a speaker's portrayal of societal problems caused by climate change. This thesis investigates the power and ideological dynamics embedded in Thunberg's speeches, and the conclusions drawn in this thesis serves as a starting point for future research on the ongoing climate justice movement and in the field of climate change communication.

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Appendices

Transcripts of Greta Thunberg's public speeches:

Transcript 1 – TEDx Speech

Greta Thunberg's TEDx speech, titled "School strike for climate - save the world by changing

the rules | Greta Thunberg | TEDxStockholm" (TEDx Talks, 2018, December 12).

 [YouTube video: 11:11 minutes].

"When I was about eight years old, I first heard about something called climate change or global warming. Apparently, that was something humans had created by our way of living. I was told to turn off the lights to save energy and to recycle paper to save resources. I remember thinking that it was very strange that humans, who are an animal species among others, could be capable of changing the Earth's climate. Because if we were, and if it was really happening, we wouldn't be talking about anything else. As soon as you'd turn on the TV, everything would be about that. Headlines, radio, newspapers, you would never read or hear about anything else, as if there was a world war going on. But no one ever talked about it. If burning fossil fuels was so bad that it threatened our very existence, how could we just continue like before? Why were there no restrictions? Why wasn't it made illegal?

To me, that did not add up. It was too unreal. So when I was 11, I became ill. I fell into depression, I stopped talking, and I stopped eating. In two months, I lost about 10 kilos of weight. Later on, I was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome, OCD and selective mutism. That basically means I only speak when I think it's necessary - now is one of those moments.

(Applause)

For those of us who are on the spectrum, almost everything is black or white. We aren't very good at lying, and we usually don't enjoy participating in this social game that the rest of you seem so fond of.

(Laughter)

I think in many ways that we autistic are the normal ones, and the rest of the people are pretty strange,

(Laughter)

especially when it comes to the sustainability crisis, where everyone keeps saying climate change is an existential threat and the most important issue of all, and yet they just carry on like before. I don't understand that, because if the emissions have to stop, then we must stop the emissions. To me that is black or white. There are no gray areas when it comes to survival. Either we go on as a civilization or we don't. We have to change.

Rich countries like Sweden need to start reducing emissions by at least 15 percent every year. And that is so that we can stay below a two-degree warming target. Yet, as the IPCC have recently demonstrated, aiming instead for 1.5 degrees Celsius would significantly reduce the climate impacts. But we can only imagine what that means for reducing emissions. You would think the media and every one of our leaders would be talking about nothing else, but they never even mention it. Nor does anyone ever mention the greenhouse gases already locked in the system. Nor that air pollution is hiding a warming so that when we stop burning fossil fuels, we already have an extra level of warming perhaps as high as 0.5 to 1.1 degrees Celsius. Furthermore does hardly anyone speak about the fact that we are in the midst of the sixth mass extinction, with up to 200 species going extinct every single day, that the extinction rate today is between 1,000 and 10,000 times higher than what is seen as normal. Nor does hardly anyone ever speak about the aspect of equity or climate justice, clearly stated everywhere in the Paris Agreement, which is absolutely necessary to make it work on a global scale. That means that rich countries need to get down to zero emissions within 6 to 12 years, with today's emission speed. And that is so that people in poorer countries can have a chance to heighten their standard of living by building some of the infrastructure that we have already built, such as roads, schools, hospitals, clean drinking water, electricity, and so on. Because how can we expect countries like India or Nigeria to care about the climate crisis if we who already have everything don't care even a second about it or our actual commitments to the Paris Agreement?

So, why are we not reducing our emissions? Why are they in fact still increasing? Are we knowingly causing a mass extinction? Are we evil? No, of course not. 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. Because how could we? If there really was a crisis, and if 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 leveled to piles of torn down buildings. You would see some restrictions. But no. And no one talks about it. There are no emergency meetings, no headlines, no breaking news. 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. 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? The year 2078, I will celebrate my 75th birthday. If I have children or grandchildren, maybe they will spend that day with me. Maybe they will ask me about you, the people who were around, back in 2018. Maybe they will ask why you didn't do anything while there still was time to act. What we do or don't do right now will affect my entire life and the lives of my children and grandchildren. What we do or don't do right now, me and my generation can't undo in the future. So when school started in August of this year, I decided that this was enough. I set myself down on the ground outside the Swedish parliament. I school striked for the climate. Some people say that I should be in school instead. Some people say that I should study to become a climate scientist so that I can "solve the climate crisis." But the climate crisis has already been solved. We already have all the facts and solutions. All we have to do is to wake up and change. And why should I be studying for a future that soon will be no more when no one is doing anything whatsoever to save that future? And what is the point of learning facts in the school system when the most important facts given by the finest science of that same school system clearly means nothing to our politicians and our society. Some people say that Sweden is just a small country, and that it doesn't matter what we do, but I think that if a few children can get headlines all over the world just by not coming to school for a few weeks, imagine what we could all do together if you wanted to.

(Applause)

Now we're almost at the end of my talk, and this is where people usually start talking about hope, solar panels, wind power, circular economy, and so on, but I'm not going to do that. We've had 30 years of pep-talking and selling positive ideas. And I'm sorry, but it doesn't work. Because if it would have, the emissions would have gone down by now. They haven't. And yes, we do need hope, of course we do. But the one thing we need more than hope is action. Once we start to act, hope is everywhere.

So instead of looking for hope, look for action. Then, and only then, hope will come.

Today, we use 100 million barrels of oil every single day. There are no politics to change that. There are no rules to keep that oil in the ground. So we can't save the world by playing by the rules, because the rules have to be changed.

Everything needs to change -- and it has to start today.

Thank you."

(Applause)

Transcript 2 – COP 24 Conference

Greta Thunberg's full speech at UN Climate Change COP24 Conference (Connect4climate, 2018,

December 15). [YouTube video: 03:30 minutes].

"My name is Greta Thunberg. I am 15 years old. I am from Sweden. I speak on behalf of Climate Justice Now. Many people say that Sweden is just a small country and it doesn't matter what we do. But I've learned you 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 all do together if we really wanted to.

But to do that, we have to speak clearly, no matter how uncomfortable that may be. You only speak of green eternal economic growth because you are too scared of being unpopular. You only talk about moving forward with the same bad ideas that got us into this mess, even when the only sensible thing to do is pull the emergency brake. You are not mature enough to tell it like is. Even that burden you leave to us children. But I don't care about being popular. I care about climate justice and the living planet. Our civilization is being sacrificed for the opportunity of a very small number of people to continue making enormous amounts of money. Our biosphere is being sacrificed so that rich people in countries like mine can live in luxury. It is the sufferings of the many which pay for the luxuries of the few.

The year 2078, I will celebrate my 75th birthday. If I have children maybe they will spend that day with me. Maybe they will ask me about you. Maybe they will ask why you didn't do anything while there still was time to act. You say you love your children above all else, and yet you are stealing their future in front of their very eyes.

Until you start focusing on what needs to be done rather than what is politically possible, there is no hope. We can't solve a crisis without treating it as a crisis. We need to keep the fossil fuels in the ground, and we need to focus on equity. And if solutions within the system are so impossible to find, maybe we should change the system itself. We have not come here to beg world leaders to care. You have ignored us in the past and you will ignore us again. We have run out of excuses and we are running out of time. We have come here to let you know that change is coming, whether you like it or not. The real power belongs to the people. Thank you."

Transcript 3 – Climate Action Summit

Greta Thunberg's full speech to world leaders at UN Climate Action Summit (PBS NewsHour,

September 23, 2019). [YouTube video: 05:20 minutes].

"My message is that we'll be watching you.

This is all 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!

You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I'm one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!

For more than 30 years, the science has been crystal clear. How dare you continue to look away and come here saying that you're doing enough, when the politics and solutions needed are still nowhere in sight.

You say you hear us and that you understand the urgency. But no matter how sad and angry I am, I do not want to believe that. Because if you really understood the situation and still kept on failing to act, then you would be evil. And that I refuse to believe.

The popular idea of cutting our emissions in half in 10 years only gives us a 50% chance of staying below 1.5 degrees [Celsius], and the risk of setting off irreversible chain reactions beyond human control.

Fifty percent may be acceptable to you. But those numbers do not include tipping points, most feedback loops, additional warming hidden by toxic air pollution or the aspects of equity and climate justice. They also rely on my generation sucking hundreds of billions of tons of your CO_2 out of the air with technologies that barely exist.

So a 50% risk is simply not acceptable to us — we who have to live with the consequences.

To have a 67% chance of staying below a 1.5 degrees global temperature rise – the best odds given by the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] – the world had 420 gigatons of CO_2 left to emit back on Jan. 1st, 2018. Today that figure is already down to less than 350 gigatons.

How dare you pretend that this can be solved with just 'business as usual' and some technical solutions? With today's emissions levels, that remaining CO_2 budget will be entirely gone within less than 8 1/2 years.

There will not be any solutions or plans presented in line with these figures here today, because these numbers are too uncomfortable. And you are still not mature enough to tell it like it is.

You are failing us. But the young people are starting to understand your betrayal. 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. The world is waking up. And change is coming, whether you like it or not.

Thank you."