

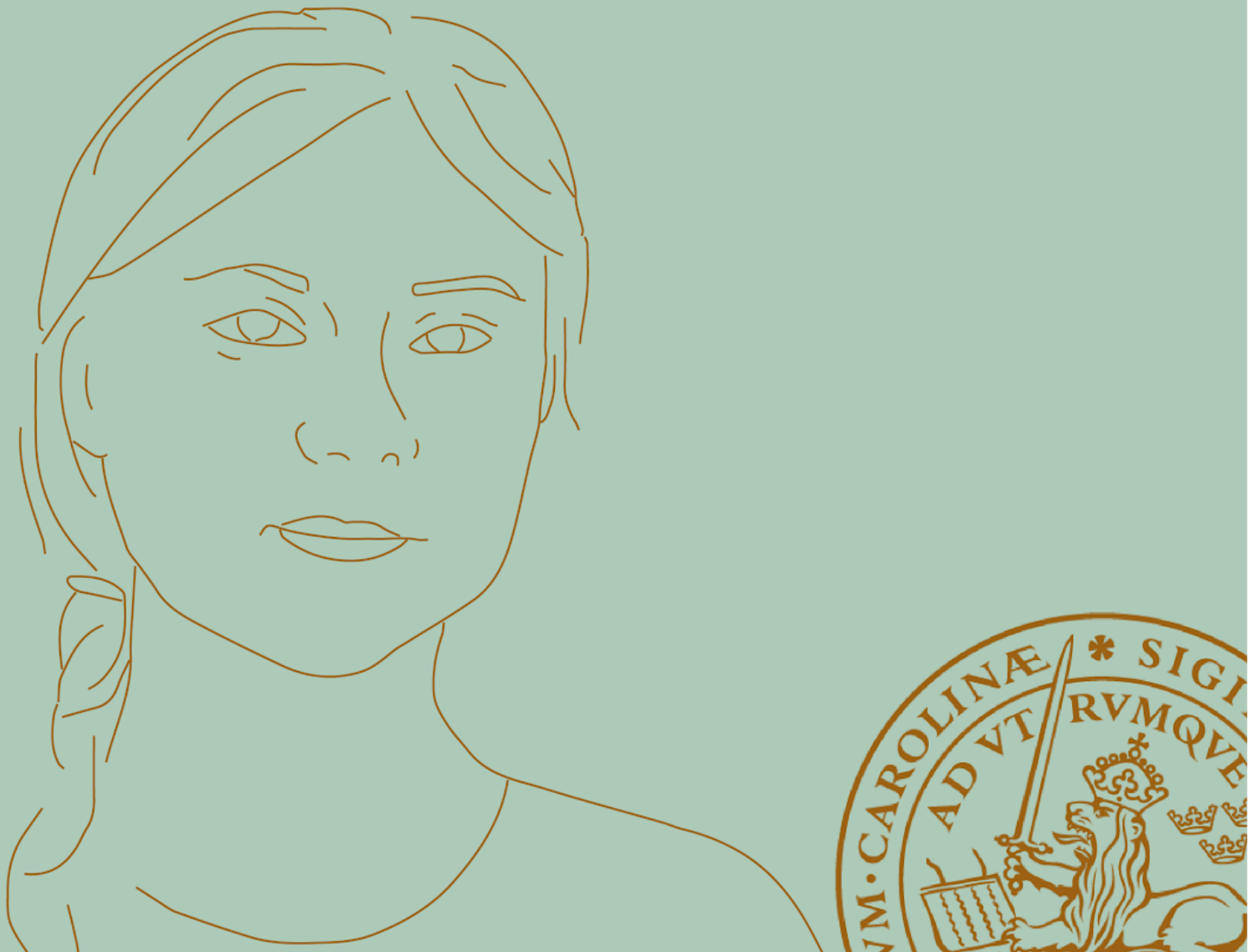
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TIME's Person of the Year 2019

*A framing analysis about Greta Thunberg
in the U.S. mainstream media*

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Bachelor's thesis



Abstract

The framing of Greta Thunberg in the U.S.' mainstream media

In 2019, the largest climate strike in human history took place, led by the Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg. Around the same time, the President of the United States, Donald Trump, declared that the U.S. was to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. A central concept in strategic communication is how the media frames certain issues and thus influences public dialogue and society. By reviewing a sample of 31 electronic news articles about Thunberg as TIME's "Person of the Year", this study aimed to explore framing and media bias in the United States. To achieve this aim, this study conducted a qualitative content analysis, which included framing and semiotic theory. Four framing themes were derived from the study's inductive approach, which included both frames and counter-frames. The four themes were: that Thunberg was framed as praised but also criticized; small but also big; normal but also different; and lastly, Swedish but also self-made. The semiotic analysis confirmed the framing of Thunberg visually. Moreover, the content analysis of this study showed differences in the framing of Thunberg, depending on the political biases of the media outlets. Even though the structure of media has changed over time, mainstream media continues to be powerful, and the study concluded that the framing of Thunberg is fragmented, and both unites people in the U.S. as well as polarizes them.

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Keywords: *Strategic communication, Mainstream media, Mass media, Media biases, Content Analysis, Media framing, Semiotics, Greta Thunberg, United States*

Sammanfattning

Amerikanska mainstream mediers gestaltning av Greta Thunberg

Under 2019 ägde världens största klimatdemonstration rum med den svenska klimataktivisten Greta Thunberg i fronten. Samtidigt meddelade den amerikanska presidenten Donald Trump att USA skulle dra sig ur Parisavtalet. Mediernas gestaltning påverkar samhällsdiskurser och utgör därmed ett viktigt koncept inom strategisk kommunikation. Genom att undersöka 31 elektroniska nyhetsartiklar om när Thunberg utnämndes till årets mest inflytelserika person av tidningen TIME, ämnade denna studie till att studera mediernas gestaltning och partiskhet i USA. För att uppnå studiens syfte genomfördes en kvalitativ innehållsanalys med teorier som inkluderade gestaltungs- och semiotisk teori. Fyra olika gestaltningsteman uppkom från studiens induktiva tillvägagångssätt, som innehöll fyra gestaltningar och dess motsatta-gestaltningar. Dessa visade att Thunberg gestaltas som hyllad men kritiserad, liten men stor, normal men annorlunda och svensk men sin egen produkt. Den semiotiska analysen bekräftade att Thunberg är gestaltat på liknande sätt visuellt, som i text. Därutöver visade studien att gestaltningen av Thunberg skiljde sig åt beroende på de olika mediernas partiskhet. Trots att medierna har utvecklats över tid, har massmedier fortsatt stor makt. Avslutningsvis visade denna studie att amerikanska mainstream mediers gestaltning av Thunberg är fragmenterad och både förenar samt polariserar det amerikanska samhället.

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1. Introduction

In this introduction, background about the accolade Person of the year is explained and the study's research motivation and problem area are discussed. Further, the study's purpose and research questions are presented, as well as delimitations and the outline of the thesis.

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change entered into force in 2016 and was adopted by consensus when 187 world leaders signed the agreement (Blau, 2017). In 2017, President Donald Trump announced that the United States was to withdraw from the Paris Agreement (US Department of State, 2019) having earlier proclaimed that “climate change is a hoax” (Blau, 2019). The U.S.’s withdrawal caused many reactions and Blau (2019) expressed that “the entire world is at risk if the United States abandons its responsibilities under the Paris Agreement” (p.7). While President Trump denies climate change, scientists and youth demonstrators, led by Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, declare the opposite. There are two polarized sides, one screaming for change and the other denying that climate change is even occurring (Chow, 2019).

Public dialogue, online as well as offline, is heavily influenced by mainstream media, and news coverage impacts politics all around the world (Robinson, 2020). Individuals rely heavily on mainstream media coverage in order to gain knowledge about specific issues (Strömbäck, 2014). How events (such as climate change), and people (such as President Trump or Greta Thunberg) are framed is crucial for what society takes for granted or considers to be true. Framing is also essential since reflections on previous experiences guide people on future actions. This is why media framing, which can be seen as the lens through which a story is being told or the inclusion and exclusion of certain points of view, is important and a field worthy of academic interest (Altheide & Schneider, 2017; Yannas, 2020).

1.1 TIME's Person of the Year

During 2019 Greta Thunberg gained worldwide media attention. She was seen by many as the most influential person in the world and was therefore given the title “Person of the Year” by TIME magazine. As a seventeen-year-old, Thunberg is the youngest person to be given the title in the 92-year-old history of the franchise (Alter, Haynes & Worland, 2019). Her journey took off during the fall of 2018 when she regularly school striked outside of the Swedish parliament with a handmade sign that read “Skolstrejk för klimatet”, which can be translated as “School strike for climate change”. Thunberg then started the global movement “Fridays for Future” through which millions of students from around the globe have participated in strikes with the aim to raise awareness about climate change (Carlisle, 2019). In September 2019, four million people joined in climate strikes worldwide, making it the biggest strike in human history (Alter et al. 2019). Thunberg has also been invited into many international political arenas such as the United Nations and The World Economic Forum. She has also been nominated for various awards, the Nobel peace prize in 2019, among others. Some have praised her climate activism and determination whereas others have heavily criticized her (Prignano, 2019).

The accolade of “Person of the Year” by TIME magazine is annually appointed to the most influential person, group, movement, or idea. It dates back to 1928 and is described by TIME as the following “the person or persons who most affected the news and our lives, for good or ill, and embodied what was important about the year, for better or for worse” (TIME, 2016). This means that the named person does not necessarily need to be a hero. For example, Adolf Hitler was given their previous title, Man of the Year, in 1938, and Stalin was nominated twice.

A reader poll is conducted each year where readers can vote on who they think had the biggest impact of the year (TIME, 2016). In 2019, 27 million people cast their votes in the reader poll and the Hong Kong protests won more votes from the readers than Thunberg. However, the nomination is decided by the editors of the magazine, who chose Thunberg with the motivation and recognition that she has had worldwide on youth demonstrations. Alter et al. (2019) from TIME magazine put it the following way: “Thunberg has become the biggest

voice on the biggest issue facing the planet”. In their explanation they describe that she sounded the alarm about climate change and, in doing so, spread a message that “transcends background and borders in a fragmented world”. They also motivate their choice of Thunberg by explaining that they see her as a leader of a new generation that has shown what the world could look like when they take the lead.

1.2 Research motivation

Thunberg stresses the emergency of climate change repeatedly by declaring that we need to listen to science (Buncombe, 2020). The announcement of her as TIME’s Person of the Year provoked many deniers of climate change, among them President Trump. The current denial of facts is a major challenge in today's society, not just in regards to climate change (Chow, 2019). People receive their knowledge and information about the world in part through media, and thus mainstream media performs vital functions in society (Potter, 2012). However, in the United States, the trust in the mainstream media to “get their facts straight” has declined over the years and even though citizens believe that the mainstream media is politically biased, scholars are divided on the matter (Greoling, 2013). Many scholars are interested in the role and effects of mass media on society and if media bias truly exists (Bennett 2016; Robinson, 2020; Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011; Greoling, 2013). There has therefore been an overwhelming number of academic studies on the subject, as well as about Thunberg and the climate activism movement (De Moor, Uba, Wahlström, Wennerhag, & De Vydt, 2020). Despite the fact that much has already been said, Thunberg is a highly debated figure representing a highly debated issue, and there are many reasons why it is important to keep studying Thunberg and the way she is framed.

By studying the framing of Thunberg as the world's most important person in 2019 (Alter. et al, 2019) we hope to gain new insight into the U.S. media climate by examining media bias and trying to understand whether Thunberg unites or fragments an already polarized debate. By using a strategic communication perspective, we hope to contribute with a new angle on the use of framing in the media climate in the United States. A fundamental element of strategic communication is having a holistic approach, in order to gain an understanding of the impact of communication (Heide, Von Platen, Simonsson & Falkheimer, 2018). The aim

of this study is to have such a holistic approach. Therefore, a discussion of the framing of Thunberg is put in a wider context where areas such as political communication, nation branding, and diplomacy are included; making it different from previous studies on the same topic.

1.3 Purpose and research questions

The aim of this study is to investigate how mainstream media in the United States framed Greta Thunberg when she was given the title “Person of the Year” by TIME magazine. By looking at this case, the study aims to explore media bias and understand how different media outlets in the U.S. frame Thunberg. In addition, this study explores the findings in a wider context, using a strategic communication perspective. As mentioned above, it is important to gain new insights into how Thunberg was framed in order to understand media polarization in the U.S. The study investigates this through a qualitative content analysis, reviewing 31 articles about Thunberg becoming TIME’s Person of the Year 2019. In the content analysis, framing theory as well as semiotic theory is applied to describe, analyze, and understand how Thunberg was framed in mainstream news media in the U.S. The semiotic analysis is a complement to the framing analysis and is used in order to examine how Thunberg was framed visually. Hence, the research questions for this study have been formulated as follows:

- How was Greta Thunberg framed in mainstream news media in the United States when she was given the title “Person of the Year” by TIME magazine?
 - What are the differences between mainstream media outlets’ framing of Thunberg?

1.4 Delimitations

This study has been delimited in many ways. Firstly, this study has been conducted from a strategic communication perspective, therefore the study lacks insight and knowledge from other research fields. Secondly, the studied material has included electronic news articles from mainstream media outlets in the U.S. National news coverage of global issues is heavily influenced by the country’s political circumstances (Bodker & Neverla, 2013). Thus, the way Thunberg is portrayed may have been different if mainstream media in other countries were

chosen. However, Reigert (1998, referred to in Bodker & Neverla, 2013), as well as Shoemaker and Reese (1996) points out that many scholars argue that the coverage of global issues in the news is remarkably similar between different countries due to shared professional norms and values among journalists, as well as globalization of information flows through news agencies. Even if the empirical data has only included electronic news media in the United States, it was considered to be sufficient to answer the research questions.

Furthermore, this study discusses media bias, and there are many definitions of media bias including the framing of class, geography, race, and other dimensions (Greoling, 2013). This study is limited to partisan media bias which means the portrayal of reality in accordance with the left vs. right political beliefs on the political spectrum. This study has also been delimited by choosing to focus on the specific case of Greta Thunberg being given the title TIME's Person of the Year 2019. This specific event has been chosen both since it has not previously been studied and since it was the event in our dataset with the highest Evergreen score¹, meaning it was the event with the greatest social engagement (Buzzsumo, 2020). Moreover, this study does not examine social media, videos, or Thunberg's communication on her own social media platforms because even though new media such as social media has evolved, mainstream media continue to be very powerful (Robinson, 2020). Lastly, these limitations have also been made as a consequence of available time and resources.

1.5 Outline of thesis

After this introduction, earlier research is presented where the literature on Thunberg, mass media, mainstream media, framing, and the framing of Sweden in the U.S. is reviewed. Thirdly, the theoretical framework for this study - framing- and semiotic theory - is put forward. Fourth, our method choices, dataset, and sampling are explained, as well as a reflection about the used methodology. Fifth, the results of the analysis are presented in four different sections, each representing a framing theme derived from the analysis. In the sixth and seventh parts of this study, a discussion is held reflecting on the study's research questions. Finally, we present our concluding remarks, as well as our suggestions for further research.

¹ Evergreen score measures the social engagement and backlinks an article receives 30 days after its publishing date (Buzzsumo, 2020)

2. Previous research

This chapter presents previous research on Greta Thunberg, mainstream media, and mass media, as well as an understanding of previous research on framing. It is important to emphasize that this literature overview does not cover all research conducted in the above-mentioned areas. In the selection of previous research our priority has been to outline what is most relevant in order to answer the study's research question.

2.1 Greta Thunberg

Both media and academia have been interested in describing, and understanding Thunberg as a phenomenon. Previous research about Thunberg assesses her in relation to climate politics, activism, and global movements. Others have also studied students' climate activism, participants in the climate strikes, how participants are mobilized and if the nature of protests has changed over time (De Moor, Uba, Wahlström, Wennerhag, & De Vydt, 2020). Previous research has also studied youths' motivation for participating in the climate strikes, the narrative of youth activists, and youths' ideas regarding the solutions and how to respond to the climate crisis (Han & Ahn, 2020). In addition, there are three bachelor's theses that examine how Thunberg is portrayed in Swedish mass media. The first one focuses on how charismatic leadership is constructed in mass media by doing a detailed study of mass media's portrayal of Thunberg (Arnald, Funegård, Johansson, & Liljedahl, 2019). The other thesis examines media framing of Thunberg's appearance, behavior, and mental ability, as well as the media's use of the protest paradigm theory in the reporting about Thunberg (Ahlén, 2020). The third study images of Thunberg in Swedish mass media from a gender perspective (Johansson & Alvetjärn, 2019).

2.2 Mass media and Mainstream news media

There are numerous previous studies about news media. In this section, previous research on mainstream media, gatekeeping, agenda-setting theory, framing as well as mediatization and mediation is presented.

First and foremost, mainstream media consists of many different channels and includes for example, newspapers, television, magazines, internet sites. Scholars and practitioners do not always agree on what constitutes mainstream media or not. This study is using Robinson's (2020) definition of mainstream media. According to her media qualifies as mainstream media when it reaches the widest audiences and contributes to shaping discourses in society. Some examples of media outlets that are often mentioned as mainstream media in the U.S. are TIME Magazine, the New York Times, and CNN. Nevertheless, it is not always clear what constitutes mainstream media and what does not. Fox News is an example of such a media outlet, yet as a conservative paper, Fox News usually criticizes other mainstream media. However, Robinson (2020) argues that some still view Fox News as mainstream media because of its impact and its wide reach. In this study Fox News is therefore regarded as a mainstream media outlet.

In order to understand mainstream media's effect on society, there are three key aspects to mention. These are *gatekeeping*, *agenda-setting*, and *framing* (Robinson, 2020). Gatekeeping refers to what is being reported and what is not, it is the selection of which issues make it to the news (Schoemaker & Vos, 2009). According to De Vreese (2005) individuals are dependent on mainstream media coverage to gain knowledge about specific issues. People rely on the media to select and narrow down billions of events, hence, gatekeepers influence people's view of the world and specific issues (Schoemaker & Vos, 2009). The theory of agenda-setting refers to what news is prioritized and explains the impact of news media on public opinion and political policies (Lancendorfer & Lee, 2020). Further, agenda-setting theory presumes that the more media coverage a political issue receives, the more the issue is prioritized by the public and by policymakers. Framing can be explained as the angle or lens through which the news is described (Robinson, 2020).

In addition to the abovementioned key aspects of mainstream media, it is also important to mention *mediation* and *mediatization* as two more key concepts in previous media research. Mediation can be understood as the neutral act of messages being transmitted through media. Whereas, mediatization is a concept that rather looks at media effects, trying to understand media impact on different political, cultural, and social processes (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011). It is also important to emphasize that media does not contribute to objective reflections

of reality. The content that the media cover depends on *mass media logic*. Mass media logic explains that the content media covers depends on how well it fits the media's format as well as professional norms, organization, and the need for attention. It is the tendency of mass media to report on what fits the format and the production conditions, and therefore not the news that necessarily captures reality, or what objectively would be considered as the most newsworthy issues (Landerer, 2013).

2.2.1 Mainstream media's effects on society

Bennett (2016) writes about mass media and how well mass media serves the needs of democracy. Further, he explains the desire of mass media to present a fascinating narrative that appeals to large audiences and influences the framing of news. Besides, Cho and Lacy (2000), as well as Mcnelly and Izacaray (1986) describe how the mass media give people access to information about other countries, stretching beyond their own community. In this way, mass media shape the public perception or misperception of other countries. Further, Bennett (2016) portrays how mass media do not always do its part to favor democracy due to different biases. Bennett (2016) continues to explain how structural biases, driven by motives of profit, rather than ideology, determine news coverage. These media biases by Bennett are further explained in the theoretical framework (see 3.1)

Similar to Bennett, Potter (2012) discusses media's effect on society and democracy. Potter explains that there have been divided opinions among scholars and researchers whether mass media fills a role to unite or polarize people in society. He continues by presenting that some scholars argue that mass media give a sense of community and unite people, that would elseways be separated. Mass media can provide people with the same message regardless of their geographical locations and by doing so, many people are receiving the same message and thus think about similar issues (Potter, 2012). In the long run, this has a uniting effect: media framing shapes society and therefore many people view the world alike. Potter (2012) argues that mass media unlike other institutions can integrate people in society well since they provide a common message and create a public sphere where many different voices can be heard. On the other hand, he also refers to other scholars that argue the opposite. They believe that mass media instead has a fragmenting effect on society and that the public sphere is reduced over time. For example, according to Dahlgren (1995, referred to in Potter, 2012)

mass media encourage social isolation since each individual can seek a media agenda that reinforces their view of the world. Moreover, they argue that there is less social and civic participation and that fewer values are shared that unite people in society. Lastly, Potter (2012) explains that previous research showcases that mass media has a role that could both fragment and integrate society.

2.3 Media Framing

Framing theory can be used in any discipline according to D'angelo and Kuypers (2010) and hence, there has been a lot written about framing. Moreover, framing is a central component of strategic communication, (Olsson & Ihlen, 2018; Zerfass, Verčič, Nothhaft & Werder, 2018) and is important in many different areas, such as political communication, media relations, crisis communication, and marketing. As mentioned above, Robinson (2020) describes media framing as the angle or lens through which news is described. In addition, Entman (2010) claims that framing is the most important theory to understand the media's effect on political communication. Some previous studies have explored media framing by looking at the whole framing-process, which starts in the newsroom, where frames are formed through internal factors like the editorial policies, news values, as well as external factors like interactions between journalists (Scheufele & Scheufele, 2015).

Continuing, according to Goffman (1986), all communication is framed. Companies frame what they are advertising in order to match the interest of different actors, and in similar ways, individuals frame daily conversation to make their point come across easier or to make their story more engaging (D'angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Zerfass, Verčič, Nothhaft & Werder, 2018). Similarly, news organizations must frame news, as they need to shorten their stories in order to make them understandable (Robinson, 2020). As a consequence, some issues need to be highlighted and some need to be downplayed (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Yannas, 2020). Hence, the media is never describing actual reality. Instead by framing information in a certain way, media can easily reproduce and spread a certain ideological worldview, which if successful could affect and change peoples and even society's values and beliefs (Entman, 2010). Furthermore, people remember negative news rather than positive news, hence media usually consciously exaggerates stories and creates conflict to get attention (Strömbäck, 2008).

2.3.1 Framing of Sweden in U.S. mainstream media

In the United States, news regarding Greta Thunberg was widely spread in 2019. During the same time period, other news related to Sweden that gained much media attention regards sustainability and Sweden's welfare state (Svenska Institutet, 2019:2). In regards to Sweden's political system, the U.S. mainstream media describe Sweden both as a successful example and as a less good example (Svenska Institutet, 2019:2). However, the general image of Sweden in the U.S. is overall positive. In a report conducted by the Swedish Institute (SI) in the U.S., Sweden is on average ranked 6,9 on a scale from 1 to 10. The study asked the correspondents to rank 5 countries and among those five Sweden was ranked the highest. At the same time, Sweden was ranked slightly lower in 2019 than in 2017. However, it is difficult to draw any general conclusions about whether Sweden's image has diminished since in the previous studies all countries were ranked lower in the study of 2019 (Svenska Institutet, 2019:2). A pattern in the answers can also be found in regard to the political sympathies of the respondents. The further out to the right on a political scale the respondents place themselves, the more negative they view Sweden, however, the differences seem to be relatively small (Svenska Institutet, 2019:2).

3. Theoretical framework

Below, a review of the study's theoretical framework is put forward which aids the analysis and supports answering the study's research questions. The theoretical framework consists of two important theories in the field of strategic communication, namely framing-and semiotic theory.

3.1 Framing Analysis

Olsson & Ihlen (2018) claims that framing is one of the most popular analytical concepts in communication studies. There are many different understandings and uses of framing, however, they all have in common the idea that frames are essentially about providing meaning (Olsson & Ihlen, 2018). Hence, framing is suitable for this study, since the study adopted a strategic communication perspective, which is a meaning-creating approach (Falkheimer & Heide, 2018). Having said that, it is also important to make a distinction between framing as a necessary communication process and frame analysis, which is a body of research methods (Carvalho, 2008). Humans frame communication in everyday life which is necessary when describing reality, and does not need to be a manipulative action (Carvalho, 2008).

As a body of research methods, framing analysis is a paradigm for the study of human communication, which has a wide range of appearances that influence society (Scheufele & Scheufele, 2015). Framing analysis can also be explained as a way to organize information, by the choice of words, perspectives, and sources (D'angelo & Kuypers, 2010). Fundamentally framing is however about the studying of frames, how to find them, understand their emergence, and what effects they have (D'angelo & Kuypers, 2010). Vreese (2005) argues that it is a dynamic process, and becoming aware of different types of frames is necessary in order to understand when and why different frames are at work. Entman (2010) adds that it is also interesting to study frames' counter-frames, which means frames that contradict the original frame and is introduced at a later date than the original. In this study, the original frames have been the ones presented by TIME magazine in the article by Alter et al. (2019), declaring Thunberg as Person of the Year.

Moreover, Lawrence (2010) has a political perspective on her framing research and emphasizes that studies of framing also mean studies of power. Framing involves the power to shape and distort general perceptions, the power to marginalize perspectives on universal problems, and the power to promote or inhibit the political goals of various social groups. Entman (2010) has further developed the idea of framing as a means of power. He defined the concept of media bias, which means that media not only frame phenomena in different ways, but also tend to have a biased approach towards them, consciously or unconsciously.

3.1.1 Media bias

Entman (2010) believes that public opinion, or political discourse, in a social context can cause the media to become biased. Levasseur (2008) brings up that political communication scholars have identified many different kinds of biases and Groeling (2013) further describes that news can be biased mainly through two kinds of actions, through *which* events and information are covered or *how* they are covered. This study has examined partisan bias, which is identified as the compositing of news when they present skewed reality which systematically benefits one political ideology or party over another (Groeling, 2013), defined by Groeling as “partisan media bias as a significantly distorted portrayal of reality that systematically and disproportionately favors one party over the other”. To clarify, this study focused on partisan bias defined by Groeling (2013), by using Bennett’s (2016) classifications on how bias can be manifested.

Bennett (2016) explains media biases in an American context, relevant for this study. He presents four biases, which are personalization, dramatization, fragmentation, and authority disorder bias. Personalization bias is how media concentrate on people engaged in political conflicts over the actual issues. Instead of mentioning the big picture, such as the social, economic, or political factors, the media tend to focus on the personas in the stories. Bennett (2016) also explains that it is faster and easier for journalists to write a coherent story when a smaller cast of characters are mentioned. He continues by stating that “American news often stops at the character development stage, however, and leaves the larger lessons and social significance, if there are any, to the imagination of the audience” (p. 37).

A simple explanation of dramatization bias is how the media tend to report events such as stories, inviting drama (Bennett, 2016). Bennett explains that reporting in the form of stories has become the norm, instead of reporting in the form of “analytical essays, political polemics, or more scientific-style problem reports” (p. 37). Iyengar (1991) further illustrates how storytelling is common in news stories, using episodic and thematic frames to cover a wide range of issues, such as crime, terrorism, poverty, and racial inequality. Iyengar (1991) also mentions that broader storytelling frames used by journalists can influence public opinion on policy matters. Gibson & Zillmann (2000) adds that “The use of images amounts to additional storytelling that journalists may not be aware of” (p. 365). Bennett (2016) also explains how news media is often fragmented or disconnected from larger political or economic contexts because they tend to focus on news primarily when it is possible to create a dramatic take on it.

Fragmentation bias is about the isolation of stories from each other and from their larger contexts. Bennett (2016) clarifies that “The fragmentation of information is further exaggerated by the severe space limits nearly all media impose for fear of boring readers and viewers with too much information” (p. 39). Reporting has shifted to a bias referred to as a tension between authority and disorder and involves how media frame politics as a game (Bennett, 2016). Authorities are framed as they are permanently in conflict, and their mistakes are framed as big problems, instead of focusing on the authorities' actual politics. This game-framing bias only captures part of the reality of contemporary politics, and Bennett (2016) concludes that “the posturing and cynicism of both politicians and journalists has turned off many citizens, who feel that Washington is out of touch with the people (p.12)”. These four media biases by Bennett (2016) have been used when analyzing the articles, to examine partisan media bias in an American context.

3.2 Semiotic theory

As a complement to framing theory, semiotics has been used to analyze the selected articles' thumbnail photos to understand how Thunberg is framed in the photographs. Semiotic theory is a commonly used theory within the field of communication, and, like framing theory, semiotics is a meaning-creating approach (Craig & Muller, 2007). From a semiotic perspective, the world is constructed of different signs, and people are driven by a desire to

make meaning of the world through interpreting these signs (Chandler, 2007). It is the way communication takes place; through interpretation and creation of signs (Fiske, 2011). Fiske (2011) further illustrates how we create meaning for ourselves when we communicate. When someone interprets communication, they also interpret the sender's intended meaning, and the more the receiver and encoder share the same sign systems, the closer the two meanings are going to be (Fiske, 2011). Chandler (2007) declares that “It is the meaningful use of signs that is at the heart of the concerns of semiotics” (p. 32).

It is also important to underline that the semiotic perspective is not primarily about the sender or encoder, rather it concerns itself with studying signs (Craig & Muller, 2007). An object, such as an image, sound, odor, flavor, action, and event become signs when someone invests them with meaning (Chandler, 2007) and can be expressed both in written and spoken language, as well as through pictures and gestures (Craig & Muller, 2007). There are many different theories within the semiotic perspective (Craig & Muller, 2007). Having said that, this study did not use semiotic theory to study signs in the articles’ text. It was exclusively used for analyzing the signs in the articles’ thumbnail photographs to examine the photographs’ meaning and framing.

To study the signs in the photographs this study used Roland Barthes’ theory about connotation and denotation, as it is a well-established theory in social science research (Craig & Muller, 2007). Barthes believes that words and text cannot be interpreted in the same way as photographs and pictures (Fiske, 2011). His theory divides how humans perceive meaning into two levels. Denotation is the first order of signification, and connotation is the second (Chandler, 2007). Put simply, denotation describes the *content*, which can be seen at once without interpretation, while connotation is the *interpretation* of the image that occurs when the signs meet the encoder's perceptions or feelings (Fiske, 2011). Chandler (2007) explains that certain connotations are widely recognized at an unconscious level, while others are not. When doing this study's semiotic analysis, the denotation of the signs are first identified, followed by the connotation of the signs, using set framing categories. This process is developed in the following chapter on methodology.

4. Method

The following chapter describes the choice of method for conducting this study. It starts with a general reflection on methodology, followed by a description of the given dataset. Further, it describes how the unit of analysis was chosen and later coded. The chapter is concluded by a method reflection, where a discussion of the study's reliability, validity, and ethical concerns takes place.

4.1 Methodological Approaches

The purpose of this study was to understand how Thunberg is framed in mainstream media in the United States. In order to answer the study's research questions a qualitative approach has been chosen. The study was written within the field of strategic communication and the epistemology for this study was social constructivism. Social constructivism presumes that reality is socially constructed and hence is in constant change (Bryman, 2016). This point of view is sometimes also referred to as a sensemaking perspective. The ontological approach of this study is that reality “should be interpreted as dependent on chaotic contexts that are impossible to describe in terms of simple cause-and-effect perspectives” (Falkheimer & Heide, 2018, p. 50). This approach was suitable for the study since meaning and sensemaking are fundamental aspects in most qualitative studies of documents (Altheide & Schneider, 2017).

4.2 Dataset and the unit of analysis

Since the aim of the study was to understand how Thunberg was framed in the U.S.'s news media, the data only include electronic news articles from the U.S. We received first-hand material from the Swedish Institute (SI), a public agency that has the mission to promote interest and trust in Sweden around the world (Svenska Institutet, 2019). SI gave us access to all electronic news articles from the U.S. mainstream media about Greta Thunberg for the period 2018-04-19 to 2020-04-14. We reached out to the Swedish Institute with the knowledge that they monitor the image of Sweden abroad, and since they have digital tools that can compile news about Sweden abroad. Since Thunberg is a Swedish citizen, reaching

out to SI and asking for their help seemed appropriate, and saved us time since data collection was not needed. Reaching out to SI also provided us with high-quality data that would not have been possible for us to collect given the time and resources.

The material from SI consisted of 731 news articles about Thunberg and were coded into the following categories: Title, URL, published date, article type, Evergreen score, total shares, total shares on twitter, total shares on Facebook, total shares on Pinterest, total shares on Reddit, thumbnail, amount of Facebook comments, Facebook shares, count of facebook reactions (likes, love, haha, wow, sad and angry). The material from SI needed to be refined. This was done by removing articles from the dataset that were not about Greta Thunberg, but about other subjects or people with the same name². It was a necessary step to remove those articles, as well as news articles that could no longer be accessed from the news media outlet's websites since it would not be possible for us to do a qualitative content analysis on them. After ensuring that all selected data was about Greta Thunberg and could be accessed, the dataset included 582 news articles.

Thereafter, the newspapers were coded into the political affiliation, using the established AllSides Bias Rating page that filters news sources by bias. AllSides have a vision to strengthen American democracy by balanced news and diverse perspectives and they aim to expose the public to information from all sides of the political spectrum (Allsides, 2020). They use a patented bias rating system to classify media bias by surveys, internal research, research conducted by third-party sources such as universities as well as crowd-sourcing (AllSides, 2020). This methodology can be regarded as problematic since these classifications are subjective judgments. However, we adapted the open view presented by AllSides that point out the following *“Think of our bias ratings as points of view, each providing pieces of the puzzle, to help you gain a more holistic view”* (AllSides, 2020).

² For instance the rock band Greta van fleet and the movie Greta by Neil Jordan also made big headlines during the selected time period and were included in the dataset.

Below, all the analyzed mainstream media are illustrated in accordance with their classified media bias (see figure 1). On the political spectrum the dark blue is classified as “left-wing” and it is the most liberal media bias rating. These media outlets are most likely to show favor for tax increases on the wealthy federal, laws to protect the environment and to keep abortion legal. The media outlets within the light blue color are classified as “lean left” bias and this is a moderately liberal rating. The purple color stands for a “center” media bias rating. This does not mean that these sources are neutral and not biased, it means that the writer or media outlet is neither favoring conservative nor liberal perspectives. The center bias could also portray bias towards the left or the right at different times. The light red color represents “a lean right bias” and it is a moderately conservative rating, Lastly, The dark red color represents the right media bias or “right-wing” news and it is the most conservative rating. The right media bias is most likely to show favor for decreasing federal regulations in general, decreased taxes, and preserving the right of gun owners to mention a few examples (AllSides, 2020).

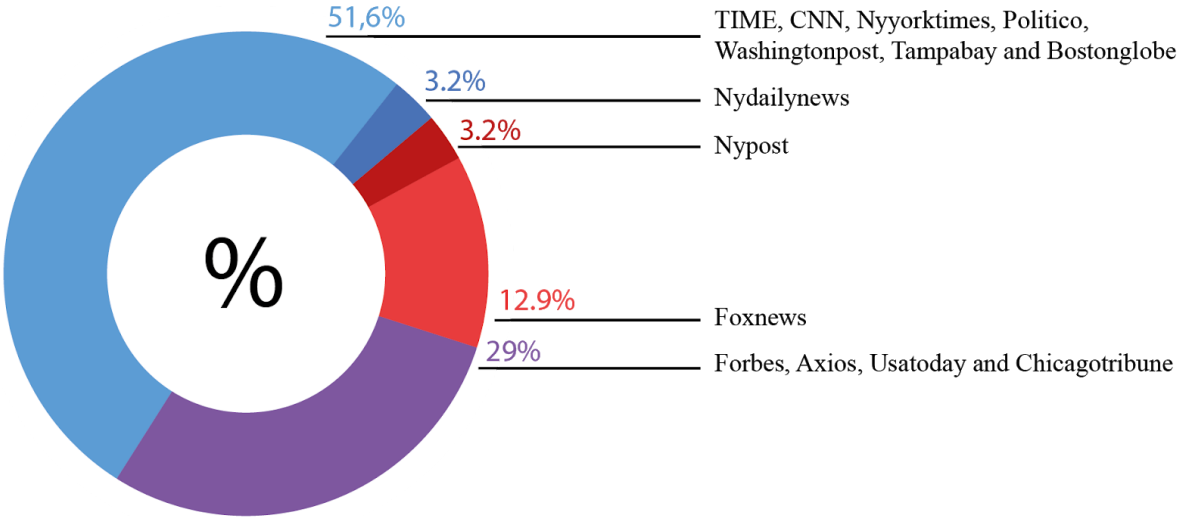


Figure 1. Political affiliation of media outlets (of selected articles) using AllSides classifications

Having said that, this study did not distinguish between left-leaning and left-wing, as well as right-leaning and right-wing outlets, as we did not plan to go into detail about the difference between them. Instead, we clustered them into left, center, and right media bias, which can be seen in the figure below.

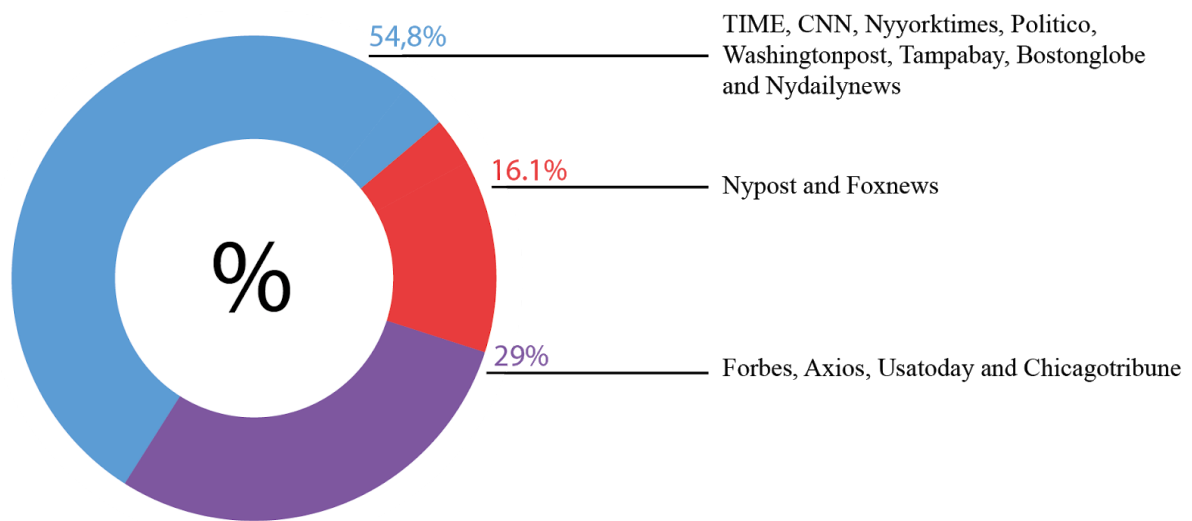


Figure 2. Political affiliation of selected media outlets with this study's cluster of media bias

Moving on, the research problem for this study helped to find the appropriate unit of analysis, which is what is to be analyzed. When newspapers are studied, the unit of analysis could also have been another event, the whole dataset, a particular page, or perhaps even paragraphs (Altheide & Schneider, 2017). The reason TIME's person of the Year was chosen, was since articles about this event had the highest evergreen score. Evergreen score is a metric that Buzzsumo, a data provider, calculates. It measures the social engagement and backlinks an article receives 30 days after its publishing date. The higher the number of social actions and links an article gets after the initial period of 30 days the higher the score is (Buzzsumo, 2020). For this study, we have used the Evergreen scores as we believe it is a better measurement for the impact the news articles about Thunberg has had, than by looking at total shares. The smaller sample was made by narrowing the dataset down from a total of 582 to 31 articles about Thunberg as TIME's Person of the Year. This event was chosen since it is the most impactful event in the United States and thereby the most compelling one to study more in-depth. A summary of the 31 articles can be found in the figure below, and additional information can be found in the appendix.

Figure 3. Selected Articles

	Title	Newspaper	Author(s)
1	Greta Thunberg: TIME's Person of the Year 2019	TIME	Alter, Haynes, Worland
2	The Story Behind TIME's Greta Thunberg Cover	TIME	Suyin, Haynes
3	Greta Thunberg's Twitter response to Trump proves why she's...	Chicagotribune	Stevens
4	Greta Thunberg Is Time Person of the Year for 2019	Newyorktimes	Taylor
5	Greta Thunberg named TIME's 2019 'Person of the Year'	Foxnews	Flood
6	Trump Jr. blasts Time for choosing Greta Thunberg as Person...	Axios	Ayesh
7	Greta Thunberg is Time's 2019 Person of the Year	Nypost	Frishberg
8	Trump mocks 16-year-old Greta Thunberg a day after she is...	Washingtonpost	Nakamura
9	Greta Thunberg is Time's 2019 Person of the Year	Axios	Ayesh
10	Trump calls Time's decision to name Greta Thunberg as Person...	Axios	Unknown
11	Time 2019 Person of the Year is Greta Thunberg	Washingtonpost	Knowles
12	TIME Person of the Year 2019: How We Chose Greta Thunberg	TIME	Felsenthal
13	Time Person of the Year: Climate crisis activist Greta Thunberg	CNN	Flynn
14	Greta Thunberg: Time magazine's 2019 Person of the Year...	Usatoday	Rodriguez
15	Why Time picking Greta Thunberg will drive Donald Trump...	CNN	Cillizza
16	Trump mocks teen climate activist Greta Thunberg after Time...	Politico	Marshall
17	Who is Greta Thunberg, Time's Person of the Year	Washingtonpost	Dennis
18	Greta Thunberg Named Time's 2019 Person Of The Year	Forbes	Voytko
19	Greta Thunberg Is on the 2019 TIME 100 List	TIME	González
20	Trump mocks Greta Thunberg for being Time's 'Person of the...	Usatoday	Jackson
21	TIME's 'Person of the Year' should have been the whistleblower...	Foxnews	Dorman
22	Choice of climate activist Greta Thunberg as Time's 'Person of...	Foxnews	Garcia
23	A girl named Greta and the sexist history of Time's Person of...	Washingtonpost	Brockell
24	Climate activist Greta Thunberg becomes youngest-ever Time...	Nydailynews	Sblendorio
25	Trump joins Nancy Pelosi, Greta Thunberg, whistleblower as...	Foxnews	Wolfsohn
26	Trump calls Greta Thunberg's Time's Person of the Year award...	Nypost	Lapin
27	'So ridiculous': Trump criticizes Time's selection of Greta...	Bostonglobe	Prignano
28	Time Names Greta Thunberg The Person Of The Year, But...	Forbes	Brandon
29	Climate activist Greta Thunberg 'a bit surprised' to be Time...	Bostonglobe	Unknown
30	Climate activist Greta Thunberg becomes youngest-ever Time....	Tampabay	Unknown
31	Greta Thunberg: 100 Women of the Year	TIME	Haynes

4.3 Analytic approach

The chosen articles from the figure above (see figure 3), were analyzed with a qualitative content analysis in order to answer the study's research questions. A crucial part of content analysis is coding (Bryman, 2016), and when doing a qualitative content analysis there are many possible methods to be used, depending on what the researchers want to study (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). In this study subjects and themes were studied to answer the research question: *How was Greta Thunberg framed in mainstream news media in the United States when she was given the title "Person of the Year" by TIME magazine?* Framing theory and semiotic theory were used to describe, analyze, and understand how Thunberg was framed. The semiotic analysis was a complement to the framing analysis and was only used in order to

analyze the selected news articles' thumbnail photographs from all the above-mentioned articles (see figure 3).

There are three distinct approaches to qualitative content analysis. They are conventional, directed, or summative, according to Hsieh and Shannon (2005). For this study, a conventional analysis was used, since conventional content analysis is commonly used in studies that aim to describe a phenomenon. Another characteristic of conventional analysis is that categories for the framing themes are derived from the data as new insights emerge along the way, which also is called inductive category development (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In accordance with how conventional text analysis is described, this study followed the steps presented by Hsieh and Shannon (2005). The first step was to read the text carefully and highlight key words in the text so as to understand and pick up central concepts and ideas. By doing so, codes and meanings were derived from the text (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Thereafter, notes were taken from our initial analysis and first impressions when reading the news articles. In the process of reading all the articles, labels for codes were developed that reflected key thoughts in the articles, which later created the first coding schemes. The next step was then to organize the codes into relevant clusters (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). We ended up with four clusters of framing themes, all regarding different frames, with respective counter-frames. These framing themes are described in-depth in the analysis of results (see 5).

4.4 Reflection of method choices

The following section is devoted to a reflection of the identified weaknesses of this study's choice of method. Due to the nature of the data, a quantitative analysis could have been conducted instead, or mixed-methods methodology could have been adapted. If a different method were to have been chosen, the outcome of this study might have been different. Our current results might have been strengthened by the quantitative data, giving a more nuanced result. The initial ambition for this study was to use a sequential design of mixed methods and to quantitatively and qualitatively analyze the dataset. However, due to the scarcity of time and resources, a mixed methodology was not possible to conduct. In addition, a qualitative approach was regarded as more suitable since we intended to study framing more in-depth. Since a qualitative approach was chosen it was not relevant to analyze other parameters in the dataset, such as the amount of Facebook comment, or total shares in different platforms. In

addition, other theories could have been applied to analyze the material within the chosen method. For example, other media bias than the four put forward by Bennett's (2016) could have been used to highlight other aspects of the studied articles.

Having said that, it is also important to mention that there is a wide range of research methods in the field of strategic communication and news media. Many different approaches can be adapted in qualitative content analysis and our chosen methods had some weaknesses that needed to be taken into account. Occasionally, content analytic studies are called to be atheoretical (Bryman, 2016) and in this study we have underpinned the work by academic theories, and previous studies. Another limitation is that it is difficult, almost impossible, to construct coding manuals that are not affected by the interpretation, everyday knowledge, and bias of the researchers (Bryman, 2016), and we have therefore tried to be as transparent as possible throughout this study.

4.4.1 Reliability and Validity

Bryman (2016) acknowledges that the concepts, reliability, and validity, were established in order to qualify quantitative research. Therefore, many researchers argue that it is not necessary to assess them in qualitative research or when using social constructivism (Bryman, 2016). Nonetheless, it can still be relevant to discuss them in qualitative research, to motivate the researchers' method choices (Bryman, 2016). Reliability usually refers to if a study can be replicated by other researchers and still produce the same results (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). LeCompte & Goetz (1982) argue that it is impossible, since "it isn't possible to freeze a social setting and the circumstances of an initial study to make it replicable" (p. 384). This is of relevance for this study because reliability could be affected when there is more than one researcher (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). This study included interpretations from both students and had a systematic and transparent approach in order to suppress personal bias (Bryman, 2016). We are aware that other researchers doubtlessly would interpret the material differently, and would thus also find different framing themes. Knowing that we strove to be coherent and transparent about the study's sampling process, coding, and analytic approach in order to increase the reliability (Silverman, 2017; Yardley 2000, referred to in Bryman, 2016).

Mason (1996, referred to in Bryman, 2016) argues that validity can refer to whether the researchers are observing, identifying, or measuring what they actually are saying that they do. This study has tried to be clear with what we intended to examine and to show a clear correspondence between our interpretations and discuss them in relation to the study's aim. Further, LeCompte & Goetz (1982) argue that validity also means that the researcher's findings should be possible to generalize across social settings. Yardley (2000, referred to in Bryman, 2016) adds that it is also important for the researcher's conclusions to have an impact, and importance for practitioners to the field on which the research is conducted. We are aware of the fact that this study could not draw any general conclusions on media framing or the media climate in the U.S., from only looking at the case of Thunberg being named TIME's Person of the Year. However, we believe that the content of this study brought some new knowledge to the field of strategic communication, as well as raised interesting questions to further research.

4.4.2 Ethical concerns

According to Bryman (2016), content analysis is a flexible method that does not require participants and hence, the researcher usually does not have to go through the same level of ethical scrutiny. Still, ethical considerations are important to keep in mind when conducting a research project (Bryman, 2016). As previously mentioned, the data for this study was provided by an external organization (see 4.2). However, it is important to clarify that the data are not sensitive in nature since they can be accessed online, so the information is already publicly available. Nevertheless, it was very helpful to receive a dataset with a summary of all the articles about Thunberg in the U.S. A content analysis can, according to Bryman (2016), only be as good as the documents used, and by reaching out to SI we could ensure that the news articles would be representative of all mainstream news media in the U.S. Having provided us with qualitative data, SI did however never interfere with the design of the study nor the purpose or content of it. Lastly, another important ethical dimension is politics in social research (Bryman, 2016; Greuling, 2013) and how it is common to take sides on the political spectrum. Bryman (2016) strongly emphasizes having an objective and systematic approach when conducting a content analysis and throughout the study we have been careful not to take sides. Bryman (2016), however, claims that some researchers argue that the process of taking sides is pervasive in many studies.

5. Analysis of results

In the following section, selected publications from mainstream media about Thunberg as TIME's Person of the Year 2019 have been analyzed. The analysis is structured in four parts according to four recurring framing themes to answer the study's research question: How was Greta Thunberg framed in mainstream news media in the United States when she was given the title "Person of the Year" by TIME magazine?

We have analyzed the media's framing effects in order to understand how Thunberg is portrayed through the theory of mediatization (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011). As earlier mentioned (see 3.1), the original frames for this study are the ones presented by TIME magazine in the article by Alter et al (2019). Having said that, we can see that the media coverage of Thunberg is fragmented in our data about Thunberg as TIME's Person of the Year. The issue is covered more, and hence prioritized more by media outlets from the political left (see figure 1 & 2, in 4.2). It is clear that the journalists had different motives and mindsets when producing the articles (Entman, 2010), which resulted in the inclusion and exclusion of certain perspectives. The difference between those perspectives reveals a fragmentation between the different media outlets. An example of the fragmentation is described by Forbes:

“In case you haven't heard, the political right doesn't like Greta Thunberg. They've called the climate change activist bratty and undeserving of accolades. They've called her out for being a spokesperson for the dangers of climate change but without a scientific background. And, they don't seem to like the way she speaks” (Brandon, 2019).

Another contrasting example that shows the vast difference between media outlets' framing regards Thunberg's own thoughts on receiving the prize. The frame presented by the left's media is that she is surprised and honored to receive the accolade, whereas a counter-frame is put forward by the right that writes that she had been aspiring to it and that it was predicted. There is a visible difference in tonality depending on the news media outlet, wherein the left's

news media is generally more positive towards Thunberg and her receiving the accolade, whereas the political right's media criticizes Thunberg and the left's media for their coverage of her. This is expressed through which perspectives are included and excluded and by the choice of words. The center biased news outlets focus primarily on describing facts and events, such as what Thunberg has accomplished rather than assessing her personality and her worthiness of the prize. However, center media bias does not mean neutral, as mentioned earlier (see 4.2). The debate surrounding Thunberg as TIME's Person of the Year is therefore slightly polarized.

5.1 Praised but criticized

The fragmented framing can also be seen when Thunberg is praised but also criticized. In the original article by TIME magazine that announced her as the person of the year the framing of Thunberg was positive. However, the analysis of the articles also shows a counter-frame to the praise. Thunberg is also heavily criticized, and a recurring theme is President Donald Trump's criticism of Thunberg and the issue of climate change. President Trump ignores climate change by calling it a “hoax” (Prignano, 2019) and called it “ridiculous” that Thunberg received the prize (Prignano, 2019; Lapin, 2019). Right news media also backs up his criticism, explicitly or implicitly, by criticizing Thunberg's persona and by framing Thunberg as not worthy of the accolade. By including the bravery and importance of the Hong Kong protestors, a frame is also presented about the Hong Kong protests being more worthy of the prize than Thunberg. In addition, the right media outlet Fox News calls TIME's naming of Thunberg “predictable” and writes the following about their choice:

“Here's the reason why this choice is made, it makes white liberal editors and media hacks feel like they're doing something by reporting it, even though it's wasteful energy because she's saving no lives” (Garcia, 2019).

By including this perspective, Fox news intended meaning is to point out that liberal news outlets frame Thunberg as important only because it serves their agenda. Garcia (2019) includes a quote from Katie Pavlich where she expresses the following: “The hard truth is that the liberal media only cares about her because she serves their climate change agenda”. Further, Pavlich says:

“If this was a young person who had questions about climate change or is doing other things in a reversal of what the left wants everyone to believe, she wouldn't be as famous as she is” (Garcia, 2019).

The framing of the event from right biased media suggests that the political left's media should not prioritize and spend as much time reporting about Thunberg. They claim that it distracts from Thunberg's cause and also “serves as bait to entice critics to go after a child” (Garcia, 2019). Further, there is a contrast between President Trump's presidential power and Thunberg being framed as a small child. She is portrayed as even more courageous when she responds to President Trump's criticism, and thus the power dynamics between them are intensified. To mention an example of President Trump and Thunberg's recurring conflict, Lapin (2019) mentions that the official Twitter account of President Trump posted a version of the cover photo of TIME, exchanging Thunberg's face for President Trump's. In addition to President Trump's version of the cover photo, the photo was accompanied by the following text: “When it comes to keeping his promises, there's only one Person Of The Year” (Lapin, 2019). Lapin also mentions why President Trump thinks he deserved the award, for example due to his effort in destroying the Islamic State, for building the wall towards Mexico, creating record job opportunities, and for boosting the economy.

Contrary to the political right's media, the left's newspapers criticize President Trump for his outspoken criticism, framing President Trump in a negative light. Thunberg is framed favorably as she is described as a phenomenal person truly worthy of the accolade. TIME magazine describes how she has been praised “Her image has been celebrated in murals and Halloween costumes, and her name has been attached to everything from bike shares to beetles” (Alter et al., 2019). The majority are eager to take Thunberg's side and defend her from President Trump. President Trump is called “a bully and a punk”, as well as a “despicable person” for mocking a child and not behaving as a global leader (Jackson, 2019). In many ways, one can say that he is framed as an immature child by attacking her. Reading between the lines one could reference David and Goliath, Thunberg being the underdog that manages to defend herself in an improbable victory against the giant President Trump.

Another example of how Thunberg is honored and framed in a respectful manner by the political left's media is that The New York Times addresses her as "Ms. Thunberg" (Taylor, 2019). By calling her Ms. Thunberg, she seems older than she is and is taken seriously.



Photograph 1. TIME cover photo (Photographed by Arbugaeva, 2019)

When looking at how Thunberg is framed visually, the cover photograph of TIME's Person of the Year, which can be seen above, is used in the majority of the articles. The denotations that we see in the photograph are Thunberg standing on a rock in Portugal with a big ocean behind her, with waves smashing towards the rock she is standing on. Thunberg is wearing simple and oversized clothes, and she has a natural look as her hair is let down. The colors of the photograph are a soft blend of ocean blue and a soft peach color from the horizon. Thunberg is standing on the rock with a steady pose. Her facial expression is focused, she has closed fists and is gazing up towards the sky. The photograph is taken as a long shot, allowing us to see the environment behind her as well as her position.

The photograph is taken from slightly below which creates the connotation that she appears bigger than she is. On one hand, Thunberg seems small in comparison to the massive ocean behind her and her oversized clothes. On the other hand, the perspective and her pose make her seem powerful. She has an upright posture making her look confident. Another connotation is that this photograph is symbolizing the future. Since she is gazing upwards and forward and is young, one could say that Thunberg is looking towards the future. In this photograph Thunberg is framed as a powerful individual, with a passion for the climate as the photograph is taken in nature, with the ocean. The ocean has become an important symbol for climate change and is often connected to Thunberg as she “repeats the unassailable science: Oceans will rise” (Alter et al., 2019). Thunberg’s symbolic connection with the ocean was strengthened further when she in 2019 crossed the Atlantic Ocean twice, travelling to the U.S. from Europe and then back again in an attempt to attend the UN climate conference. Moreover, despite that Thunberg has not dressed up for the cover photo of the Magazine and even though her clothing might make her look younger than she is, the photograph still frames her as powerful. The framing of Thunberg as small but also big is elaborated below.

5.2 Small but big

The next discovered framing theme is Thunberg's age and appearance. She is regularly framed based on her small appearance and young age, where her age is emphasized, and thus the image of her as a child is conveyed. Commonly, the representation of her age is done in the form of a numeric figure, where many of the articles start by describing her as the 16-year-old Swedish climate activist (Cillizza, 2019; Marshall, 2019; Brockell, 2019), instead of just a climate activist. Almost all of the articles also mention that she is a child, kid, or young and that she is the youngest ever to become TIME’s Person of the Year. For instance, Flynn (2019) describes how she is the youngest individual to be recognized, and Rodriguez (2019) writes: “This is the first time the magazine has honored a teenager, which makes the 16-year-old Swedish climate change activist the youngest person to ever be named”. Further he writes about the 25-year-old Charles Lindbergh who was the youngest recipient to receive the accolade before Thunberg. By mentioning the nine-year older Lindbergh, and presenting him next to Thunberg, she is framed as even younger.

By starting the articles by mentioning her young age, the reader is reminded of the fact that Thunberg is still a child. The reader may have a different view of her actions when reminded about her young age. On one hand, by framing her as a kid the reader may gain more respect for her achievements, since she has accomplished remarkably much at such a young age. On the other hand, her achievements could also be dismissed due to her young age. In addition, Thunberg's parents are mentioned in some articles. One interpretation can be made that Thunberg is the daughter of two adults, rather than an independent individual with her own drive and ambition. An example of this is presented when Thunberg's parents' thoughts about her activism are included (Alter et al., 2019). By including her parent's point of view, one interpretation could be to cast doubt on Thunberg's legitimacy, and the framing of Thunberg as a child dependent on her parents is reinforced. However, another interpretation that can be made is that Thunberg has the wholehearted support of her parents. This interpretation can be linked to the framing theme portraying her as an ordinary child, with parents that care for her. The framing theme portraying Thunberg as normal but different is further discussed in 5.3.



Photograph 2. Greta with the crowd (Photographed by Kamm, 2019)

Similar to the texts' content, many of the newspaper's thumbnail photos also frame Thunberg as young. In the picture above, the denotations that can be seen are Thunberg standing with a megaphone in front of an emotional and diverse crowd, she looks emotional, happy, and proud. Even though there are a lot of people, Thunberg is clearly in focus and the whole

crowd is looking at her. The connotation that can be drawn is that Thunberg influences big crowds and are heard by a large number of people. In this photograph, as well as in almost every picture of her, Thunberg is seen wearing simple clothes and no makeup, which reminds the viewer of her young age, and that she regardless of her age has a big influence.

The articles that mention her looks describe her as very small, even smaller than the average girl at that age. Alter et al. (2019) described her as “Thunberg is 16 but looks 12” further, they write “Thunberg is maybe 5 ft. tall, and she looks even smaller in her black oversize wet-weather gear seeming barely bigger than her backpack.” Her simple hairstyle consisting of one or two braids is sometimes mentioned, as it is a part of her signature look (Dennis, 2019). Her outfit is usually described as what the teenager usually wears, it's also mentioned that Thunberg is favoring more practical clothing like hoodies, jeans, and tracksuits (Haynes, 2019).



Photograph 3. Greta with the ocean (Photographed by Quicler, 2019)

In the photograph above, the denotations that can be seen are Thunberg peeking out, with crossed arms, and a pretty curious face behind a big screen, picturing a moving sea. One can also see adults opening the screens for Thunberg. However, the adults are not in focus, Thunberg is. From Thunberg's crossed arms, the connotation can be drawn that she is a bit hesitant and shy, but another connotation could also be that she is determined and strong-willed. The moving sea could represent movement, power, and nature, which can easily be connected to Thunberg's climate activism. Similarly to the cover photo of TIME

magazine (photograph 1.), we can once again see her with the symbol of a big ocean. However, the big sea and Thunberg peeking out behind it also makes her look small in comparison since she might appear as just a small drop in the massive ocean.

Another frame that reinforces the framing of Thunberg as young, is the description of her language. Her language is described as blunt (Voytko, 2019), honest and very emotional, using anger and dismay (Taylor, 2019), just like a child. Thunberg's messages are also described as simple without any fuss, which also could be a way to say that she has a simplistic view like a child, or that she is straightforward. Her voice is also described as small, reinforcing the framing of her smallness. However, her childlike rhetoric is mostly framed positively, one example mentioned by Alter et al. (2019) is that “Thunberg speaks quietly but forcefully” further, Dennis (2019) writes “she vowed in a blistering three-minute speech that lit a fire under the otherwise sleepy proceedings”. This frame shows that Thunberg is different from other voices represented in the debate since her rhetoric is framed as refreshing, which makes her messages stand out.

Having said that, it is also important to mention that her childish look, blunt language, and age is not described in a belittling way. By emphasizing her youngness and smallness, she appears bigger. Some articles even mention this themselves, for instance, Alter et al. (2019) write “Thunberg approaches the world's problems with the weight of an elder, but she's still a kid”. They also compare Thunberg with the heroine and national symbol of France, Joan of Arc, and therefore Thunberg is further portrayed as a powerful and influential young girl. Alter, et al. (2019) further describe how “the best way to change a mind is to see the world through the eyes of a child”. As a young person she is also described to influence world leaders and the French President Emmanuel Macron told TIME that he has been affected by Thunberg's activism. He said the following “When you are a leader and every week you have young people demonstrating with such a message, you cannot remain neutral” (Alter et al, 2019).

Others frame Thunberg as young, by writing that she is going to grow up one day, implying that she is young and naive. Voytko (2019) mentions “because sooner or later she's going to be an adult and where are all her fans going to be?”. One interpretation is that Voytko implicitly says that Thunberg would not have gained popularity, and fans if she was not young

and that her fame is temporary, by indicating that the fans will not stay by her side. Another interpretation that can be read between the lines is that Thunberg will change. To be an adult is to change, and by changing, she will grow up, mature, and her passion for the climate may soften or even fade away. Children are often portrayed as immature and irrational, in comparison to experienced adults “that know better”. Having said that, there are other conscious and unconscious effects of framing her as young. In one of the articles by Fox News (Dorman, 2019) Thunberg is not taken seriously due to her age and is being criticized as not worthy of the accolade. An excuse is raised by Megan McCain (in Dorman, 2019) who mentions “It's hard for me to talk about Greta Thunberg because she's 16 and I still don't believe in attacking underage people”. At the same time as it is described as morally wrong to attack underaged people, Thunberg is still being heavily criticized. By some in explicit terms, and by others implicitly.

5.3 Normal but different

Another frame and counter-frame found is how Thunberg is portrayed as normal or different. Thunberg is described as a normal girl, that through her concern for the environment crafted a hand-painted sign, and somehow managed to gain worldwide attention as just “an indignant teenager with a sudden burst of rebellion” (Felsenthal, 2019). However, she is also described as different from other youth in many ways, related to her personality and blunt childlike way to speak, but also related to her Aspergers diagnosis. Thunberg explains how she “sees the world in black and white” (Alter et al., 2019), and that she doesn't like to compromise. Alter et al. (2019) also talks about how Thunberg doesn't process information in the same way neurotypical people do, thus indirectly saying that she is different. Paradoxical, Thunberg also expresses that she does not find herself special. Thunberg mentions that “I have just acted on my conscience and done what everyone should be doing” (Haynes, 2019), implying that everyone should be able to do the same.

In addition, Thunberg is described as an introverted and quiet girl that “dislikes crowds, ignores small talk; and speaks in direct, uncomplicated sentences” (Alter et al., 2019). However, she is also described as strong-willed, that she stands up for herself and does not back out of a fight (Stevens, 2019). Further, Thunberg is framed as brave in many ways. Dennis (2019) writes about how she has endured waves of online vitriol, tangled with

President Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, as well as testified before Congress. Alter et al. (2019) writes about when Thunberg was sailing across the Atlantic Ocean, and describes the event the following way “Another time, she was awakened by the sound of thunder cracking overhead, and the crew feared that lightning would strike the mast. But Thunberg, in her quiet way, was unfazed”. By including that the crew was afraid Thunberg seems even braver.

Thunberg is framed as a brave and as a young girl who dares to stand up to adults, which creates an image of her as unique in comparison to her peers. Most probably, other young people might have been starstruck, smiled, and been nice to the world leaders Thunberg has had the opportunity to meet. In contrast, Thunberg is not trying to please anyone, and her messages are regarded as very straightforward and inconveniently honest. Thunberg is framed to not operate on the same emotional level as her peers, and her diagnosis makes her appear as different. Alter et al. (2019) mention that these very qualities have helped her become a global sensation. Most of the articles that mention her diagnosis, frame it positively, and as a unique trait for Thunberg. She was once called “a mentally ill Swedish child” (Voytko, 2019) by conservatives on Fox news. However, Voytko (2019) points out that Thunberg has described her Asperger's diagnosis to a “superpower”. Thunberg says the following “I have Asperger's and that means I'm sometimes a bit different from the norm. And given the right circumstances being different is a superpower” (Voytko, 2019). Her diagnosis may have been a factor in her huge success, but Dennis (2019) also mentions that Thunberg had good timing, “undertaking her strikes at a time when the United States had made clear it would withdraw from the Paris accord and climate impacts were becoming more clear”.

One reason for Thunberg's success and for her becoming a global sensation could have been her timing. However, she is framed implicitly and explicitly as a phenomenon and an icon. This may be because Thunberg is framed as a normal girl, simultaneously as someone different. Describing her as a normal teenager makes her relatable and brings hope to others who also wish to change the world. At the same time, framing her as unique makes her someone out of the ordinary, and thus someone people can look up to as their role model. The reason why Thunberg became an icon and a role model could be due to her passion for the

climate and her hard work. It could also be due to her background and privileges which are discussed further below.

5.4 Swedish but self-made

Most articles have placed Sweden in the introduction of the article, labeling Thunberg as “the Swedish climate activist”. By placing Thunberg's nationality as Swedish in the title, and by having it written in the beginning of the articles, it could be interpreted as being intentional, a way for news outlets to remind the reader of her home country. Further, news media also use Swedish terms such as “Skolstrejk för klimatet” (school strike for climate change) and “flygskam” (shame of flying) which also remind the reader of her home country.

Moreover, the mainstream media frame Thunberg's success by reminding the readers of how her journey started. Thunberg's journey took off in Sweden, outside of the parliament in Stockholm (see 1.1), and was meant to last until the Swedish parliamentary election in September 2019. As Bennett (2016) and Iyengar (1991) explain, media tends to report events as stories. By using storytelling as a frame, the reader receives respect and understanding for Thunberg's progress and conviction. Thunberg is framed as an ordinary child, that had the motivation to make a homemade sign, and the courage and determination to make a stand every week, by skipping out on school in order to cast the spotlight on the issue most close to her heart; climate change. Alter et al. (2019) also provide a background to the issues leading up to Thunberg's first climate strike. It is described how Thunberg understood the urgency of the matter in primary school, when her teacher showed a video of the increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. In May 2018, Thunberg wrote an essay about climate change that was published in a Swedish newspaper. Thereafter, activists started to contact her and the idea for the climate strikes was born in Thunberg's mind (Alter et al., 2019).

Thunberg is framed as an inspiration for young people worldwide. Alter et al. (2019) writes “Because of her, hundreds of thousands of teenage “Gretas,” from Lebanon to Liberia, have skipped school to lead their peers in climate strikes around the world”. At the same time as she has inspired millions of teenagers to follow in her footsteps, not all teenagers have gained the support nor the possibility or opportunity to do the exact same thing. TIME magazine mentions two examples, “In Guilin, China, 16-year-old Howey Ou posted a picture of herself

online in front of city government offices in a solo act of climate protest; she was taken to a police station and told her demonstration was illegal”. Teenagers in China, Russia, and other countries have been arrested for responding to the climate crisis in similar manners, namely by demonstrating and raising their voice. “In Moscow, 25-year-old Arshak Makichyan began a one-man picket for climate, risking arrest in a country where street protest is tightly restricted” (Alter et al., 2019).

When it comes to climate change, indigenous teenagers have long been acting for the protection of the earth, without gaining the same worldwide influence. TIME adds that “She has focused the world's attention on environmental injustices that young indigenous activists have been protesting for years” (Alter et al., 2019). In other media outlets, critique has been raised towards Thunberg, as a white European girl, by people of color and indigenous activists that have been working on the same issues for a century to century. However, in the mainstream media this critique is raised rather neutrally or positively. Thunberg is still framed as the hero of the story since she is framed as a person using her platform to broaden the conversation, giving a voice to others. The news media also frames Thunberg as not caring for fame, rather she appears frustrated at all the attention placed at her. It is further raised that Thunberg encourages journalists to ask questions to other teenagers involved in the Friday for Future movement, and also encourages the media to target their focus on science and the scientists.

Thunberg's privileges are acknowledged, both by the news media as well as by herself. She is framed as conscious and aware of them. Fox News (Flood, 2019) and TIME (Felsenthal, 2019) refer to her speech in Davos where Thunberg said “yet, I am one of the lucky ones”. Fox News does not elaborate more on the speech, whereas Felsenthal (2019) writes the following:

“She is also the first to note that her privileged background makes her “one of the lucky ones,” as she puts it, in a crisis that disproportionately affects poor and indigenous communities”.

Felsenthal (2019) continues by stating that “But this was the year the climate crisis went from behind the curtain to center stage, from ambient political noise to squarely on the world’s agenda, and no one did more to make that happen than Thunberg”. Many news articles frame her as a privileged youth, using her many privileges to give a voice to others. Another example can be found in The Washington Post when “The Greta effect” is being discussed with a professor at Uppsala University in Sweden. “The Greta effect helped encourage young people worried about climate change, and in particular young women, to speak out for the first time. A large proportion of these activists had never been active in protests or in the environmental movement before” (Dennis, 2019). Hence, Thunberg is also framed as a role model for many girls and young women.

Even if it is not written explicitly, one can read between the lines that her privileges are not only framed as privileges, they are framed as Swedish or European privileges. She has these privileges because she is white and was born and raised in Sweden. The Swedish society allowed her to pursue her ideas and practice democratic rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of press, freedom of assembly, and exercising the right to protest. What she has accomplished is possible because of her privileges growing up in a free and open democratic society. The contrast TIME makes to young people in China and Russia, frames and clarifies that even if other teens have had similar dreams and aspirations, they have not had the support nor the right to accomplish the same thing. The indigenous teens that had the opportunity, have on the other hand not gained worldwide media attention for it. Once again, this is a way to frame Thunberg as a privileged Swede.

6. Discussion

In this part, a discussion is held from the observations made in the analysis and is based on providing answers to the study's purpose and research questions. The discussion consists of two parts, firstly the framing of Thunberg is discussed in relation to different media bias. In the second part of the discussion, we discuss the framing of Thunberg in a wider context, where we touch upon other disciplines within the field of strategic communication.

6.1 Thunberg and Media biases

To start with, we want to return to the research questions and discuss them in relation to each other, in order to gain new insights about the media climate in the United States. As mentioned in the previous research, mainstream media is never describing actual reality. Instead, news, issues, and people are always framed in certain ways, including some perspectives and excluding others (Entman, 2010). As presented in our analysis, the framing of Thunberg is fragmented, consisting of many frames and counter-frames. The fragmented picture of Thunberg seems to arise from partisan bias, personalization bias, as well as dramatization bias (see 3.1.1).

In many cases our findings showed personalization bias, since there is a clear pattern where media outlets concentrate on Thunberg instead of the actual issue, which is climate change. Instead of directing the spotlight on the issue she wants to highlight, the public eye is directed on Thunberg and her personality, rhetorics, looks, and age. Nevertheless, media might have focused on describing her as a person, to uncover who she really is, since we chose to study this specific event which is called "Person of the Year". Moreover, Thunberg might be prioritized in the news media coverage over the issue of climate change due to the mass media logic and because she fits the media format. As mentioned in the previous research (see 2.2), mass media have a tendency to report on stories that fit the format and the news might not be the ones that objectively would be considered as the most newsworthy issues (Landerer, 2013).

Further, Thunberg's attributes were framed as positive, neutral, or negative. The media outlets with a positive framing described Thunberg as someone out of the ordinary, with attributes such as inspiring and persuasive. In some of the articles' thumbnail pictures, Thunberg is seen with big crowds of people listening to her. She appears to be someone people have gathered to listen to, and she has all the attention and spotlight. She is framed as a phenomenon and an icon, both in the texts and the photographs which frame her as a compelling symbol for youth and the climate movement. In some of the photographs, such as the cover photo for TIME magazine (photograph 1), Thunberg is seen with the ocean behind her, further reminding the reader of her connection with nature and the climate movement.

In contrast, the criticism directed at Thunberg frames her as a young and ignorant girl, by portraying her as a vulnerable child, to undermine her achievements. However, not only does the right media frame her this way, the left media also frames her as young and small, yet the result of this frame usually makes her seem more outstanding and powerful. Thunberg is also framed as young and small in the photographs (see 5.1 & 5.2), her hair is usually braided, and she has no makeup or fancy clothes. Drawing from our own experience, which has influenced the analysis due to the social constructivist approach of this study, most girls in Thunberg's age appear older by their choice of clothing and by having layers of makeup. One could also ask if a boy or young man in her age, would have been described with the same detail in regards to his looks.

Continuing from personalization bias, another bias that we have found when studying the articles is the dramatization bias. Looking back at what Bennett (2016) says about dramatization and storytelling, journalists usually do not include more people than necessary for the story to be coherent, as the story is faster and easier to write, for the journalists. In addition, nearly all media have a fear to present too much information, since readers might be bored (Bennett, 2016). In our studied material we can also see that many of the articles are short and quite shallow, which might be because of the reasons put forward by Bennett. We can clearly see dramatization bias since the articles focus much on Thunberg's persona and her progress, which means that the readers are able to follow Thunberg's development as a character. The storytelling frame is also visible when the media present her victories, and as earlier mentioned (see 5.2), a comparison can be drawn to David and Goliath, where

Thunberg represents David and President Trump the giant Goliath. After all, one can say that she is an exciting story since an innocent girl who suddenly dares to stand up to irresponsible adults is a good opening to a story. The use of images adds to additional storytelling, that journalists may not be aware of (Bennet, 2016). Seeing such a young girl being able to move and inspire large numbers of people, shows how far she has come, from being a depressed teenager (Alter et al., 2019) who sat alone outside the Swedish parliament to leading the biggest climate strike in human history.

Furthermore, many of the articles invite conflict by mentioning the tension between Thunberg and world leaders such as President Donald Trump, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, and their verbal attacks on her. Referring back to Strömbäck (2008) the articles mention this because people remember negative news rather than positive. Hence, the media is more inclined to frame news as negative by inviting conflict. Another example is the debate regarding Thunberg's worthiness of the accolade, which also invites drama. In addition, the repeated coverage of Thunberg's buckles with President Trump invites authority disorder bias (Bennett, 2016), by reporting that President Trump and Thunberg are in permanent conflict. According to Bennett (2016) when a permanent conflict is reported upon, focus is drawn from the authorities' actual politics.

The constant reporting about Thunberg's and President Trump's back and forth disputes could be compared as a game-framing bias, that only captures some part of the reality of contemporary politics. As explained by Entman (2010) in the theoretical framework (see 3.1), media outlets can spread and reproduce ideological worldviews, which can lead to the successful change of people's convictions, as well as the beliefs and values of society. Lastly, the issue of climate change is highly political, and many conservatives in the U.S., such as President Trump, ignore climate change, by calling it a "hoax" (Prignano, 2019; Blau, 2019). Other conservative voices such as Pavlich from Fox news also mentions that the liberal media only cares about Thunberg as she serves their climate change agenda (Garcia, 2019), which implies it is different from the conservative agenda and hence a decision-making bias.

Moreover, media framing is important as it shapes people's knowledge and information about the world (Yannas, 2020). Looking back at our research motivation (see 1.2), it is difficult to say whether the framing of Thunberg polarizes or unites people, in regard to the issue of climate change. Does the framing of Thunberg unite people across the world for the cause of climate change, or does the framing of her lead to the polarization in an already fragmented media society? She is loved and praised at the same time as she is provocative and criticized. As earlier mentioned, Potter (2012) explains that the mass media both can fill a role to unite people in society or polarize them. Nakamura and Wagner (2019) point out that “TIME's selection of Thunberg as its 2019 honoree has prompted praise among many liberals, but the president's conservative allies have joined him in denouncing the decision”. For some, Thunberg seems to have a uniting power, as she organizes young people worldwide for the cause of climate change, that elseways would have been separated. As mentioned above, depending on media bias and political affiliation we can see differences between how the left and right view Thunberg and her achievements.

Felsenhal (2019) the editor of TIME magazine describes their selection of her with the motivation that she brought “a voice that transcends background and borders in a fragmented world”. The selection of her also shows the gatekeeping power of the editors of the magazine to select her. As earlier mentioned (see 2.2), gatekeeping is the selection of which issues make it to the news (Schoemaker & Vos, 2009), and an individual's knowledge and opinions are dependent on mainstream media coverage in order to gain knowledge about specific issues (De Vreese, 2005). Despite the fact that many of TIME's readers voted for the Hong Kong protestors to win the naming as having the biggest impact on the world in 2019, the editors and gatekeepers of TIME magazine decided to select Thunberg. By doing so, they set the agenda of what becomes people's view of who had the biggest impact (Schoemaker & Vos, 2009). However, even if the editors of TIME made the selection of Thunberg, other media can frame the issue in accordance with their worldview and beliefs. From our studied material it is clear that the framing of Thunberg does unite, as well as polarize. As the previous research shows (see 2.2.1), individuals can seek a media agenda that reinforces their view of the world. Our analysis is therefore in line with previous research that shows that mainstream media has a role that could both fragment and integrate society.

6.2 Framing of Thunberg in a wider context

Many articles frame Thunberg's impressive journey as a product of determination and hard work. She started off completely alone, and regardless of the weather conditions and regardless of what she missed out on in the school curriculum she continued to protest outside the Swedish parliament every single Friday. Her journey is quite astonishing as she went from being a depressed solo activist to later gaining both joy, fame, and support (Knowles, 2019). The media has been interested to discuss how she managed to accomplish what she did, and how her influence and school strikes have had massive growth (Felsenthal, 2019). Is Thunberg a product of her own hard work, worthy of praises and prizes, or is she overrated? Does it matter that she is called “The Swedish climate activist” and how does this debate affect the image of Sweden?

As earlier mentioned (see 5.4), we can see that Sweden is mostly mentioned when Thunberg is introduced. She is called the Swedish climate activist, and not just a climate activist. Besides including the nationality of Thunberg when introducing her, some articles elaborate more on her background and how her journey started in an ordinary Swedish high school in Stockholm, which later took her to the impressive power corridors in Washington DC and Davos, to mention a few examples. In some articles we can read between the lines, and make the interpretation that Thunberg is a so-called product of Sweden. It is not written explicitly, however, one can understand the underlying meaning that the Swedish society allowed her to pursue her ideas and practice democratic rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and exercising the right to protest. What she has accomplished is possible because of her privileges, growing up in a free and open democratic society.

However, the comparisons mentioned in the analysis, about indigenous teenagers, could on the other hand also be a symptom of white saviorism. In regards to media framing in the U.S., mainstream media have been criticized for portraying white people in a more positive light than black citizens³ (Robinson, 2020). Earlier research about framing by mainstream media shows that they contribute to stereotyping different groups in society (Robinson, 2020) and previous research also shows that the mainstream media in the U.S. historically operates to

³ For example in cases of crime (Robinson, 2020).

maintain a system of white supremacy (Hawkins, 1998). One could ask if Thunberg fits the media logic well because she is white and if she would have gained the same influence if she was someone of color. In some ways, Thunberg is portrayed as a hero that raises the alarm about climate change, and confronts the villainous politicians. From western media, including Hollywood movies, we are used to seeing the cinematic trope of white saviorism, where white heroes are seen rescuing non-white people from disastrous situations. This parallel can be drawn to Thunberg and the indigenous activists.

When conducting the analysis, questions for us arose, about if and how, the media coverage of the Swedish climate activist Thunberg, influences the image of Sweden. What does all the media coverage of Thunberg mean for the general image of Sweden in the United States? As earlier mentioned (see 2.3.1), when the Swedish Institute investigated the image of Sweden abroad, news reporting about Thunberg had a large impact in the U.S. (Svenska Institutet, 2019:2). Moreover, Sweden's nation brand focuses on four profile areas, namely: society, innovation, creativity sustainability as well as four core values, which are: innovative, open, caring, and authentic. These are areas where Sweden is regarded strongly (Sweden Ministry of Foreign affairs, 2017). Sweden's formal nation branding strategy is focusing on the above-mentioned areas, by a nationalistic storytelling that influences the citizens of Sweden to actively and consciously want to represent them (Pamment & Cassinger, 2018).

“Each Swede who travels abroad and each foreigner who visits our country is, to some extent, an ambassador for Sweden...To facilitate this task for our ‘ambassadors abroad’, the Swedish Institute places its resources at their disposal (Swedish Institute 2006: 8)”

Moreover, the Swedish branding strategy points out that Sweden and Swedish organizations strive to be innovative in order to tackle global challenges and to be an inspiration for others (Sweden Ministry of Foreign affairs, 2017). In some ways, the media framing of Thunberg shows that this is what Thunberg is doing. She is tackling the global climate crisis by both initiating innovative solutions, and by being an inspiration to others. The media also frames her as innovative and creative, since she’s managed to think outside the box and push boundaries, like not going to school, speaking up and mobilizing millions of youth. Therefore,

one can say that Thunberg to some extent, through the framing of U.S. mainstream media, is personifying Sweden's values. It is most probably not done intentionally, however, she seems to be aligned with the values of sustainability, creativity, innovation, and authenticity. In contrast, one could ask how Thunberg would have been framed if she represented the opposite values or values that Sweden would not support. A report by the Swedish Institute (2019:2) shows a connection regarding the general image of Sweden in the U.S. in regards to the political sympathies of the respondents, where the respondents are more negative to Sweden the further right they place themselves on a political scale. Likewise and as earlier mentioned, we see that the further the media outlet is to the right, the more negative the framing about Thunberg and climate change.

7. Concluding remarks

In this chapter our findings are summarized and reconnected with the study's aim and research questions. Further, we conclude what research contributions we have made, as well as propose suggestions for further research.

7.1 Research Questions and Aims revisited

Since this study had a social constructivist perspective, many different interpretations have been possible to make from the studied articles. As earlier mentioned (see 4.1), with this perspective everyday knowledge and bias of the researchers are impossible to avoid (Bryman, 2016). We understand that our own background and biases have affected how we have interpreted the media framing, nonetheless, we have tried to be open and transparent in how we have conducted the content analysis. It is also important to underline that we have done our utmost to be critical of our own biases. Given this, and as shown in the analysis and discussion part of this study, we have managed to answer our main research question which was: *How was Greta Thunberg framed in mainstream news media in the United States when she was given the title "Person of the Year" by TIME magazine?* The answer to how Thunberg was framed is shown by four mainframes, with respective counter-frames: she is praised but criticized, small but big, normal but different, and Swedish but also self-made.

Returning to the study's research motivation, we hoped to gain knowledge about the media climate in the U.S., by investigating the media's framing of Thunberg. We have managed to answer our second research question: *What are the differences between mainstream media outlets' framing of Thunberg?* by using Bennet's (2016) theory about media biases and by applying AllSide's categorization of media biases in the United States. From this, our answer is that media bias is visible in our material. Nonetheless, we can not draw any general conclusions about structural media bias, how Thunberg is framed in the news media or the overall media climate in the U.S. since we only have studied one event. Our concluding remarks however show a fragmented framing of Thunberg, depending on the media outlet, and our analysis is therefore in line with previous research that shows that mainstream media in the U.S. has a role that could both fragment and integrate society.

In the second part of the discussion, we reviewed our findings from a holistic approach and asked questions about if the framing of Thunberg can influence the perception of Sweden's nation brand. Our discussion pointed out that Thunberg to some extent, through the framing of U.S. mainstream media, is personifying Sweden's values, and thus, makes a good representative of Sweden. However, we can not draw any conclusions about this from our studied data, selected method, or applied theories. Instead we open up for further research on the topic of media framing, nation branding, and citizen impact.

7.2 Research contribution and suggestion for further research

Our aim with this thesis was to make a contribution to the field of strategic communication by asking questions that can pave the way for further research. As mentioned above, we cannot draw any conclusions about whether or not Thunberg has had an impact on the nation brand of Sweden, and if she has, in which way that might be. However, by looking at Thunberg's case we have seen an indication that citizens might be important ambassadors for their countries and the brand of a nation. The research field of nation branding is novel, but nevertheless an important area of strategic communication. A strong nation brand is regarded as important in a globalized world, as it contributes to stronger diplomatic ties, trade, investment, tourism, and talent attraction (Dinnie, 2016). We suggest that future research investigate this further by looking at more cases and by asking questions about what kind of influence public figures such as Greta Thunberg can have on a country's nation brand, as well as what it might mean for the strategic communication efforts led by that country. How should nations respond and adapt their nation brand strategies when political public figures such as Greta Thunberg rise up and are framed in the media with connections to their country?

Besides further research on the topic of nation branding, we suggest future studies could include a more in-depth exploration of social media and videos in comparison to the framing of mainstream media. The same event could also be studied in more detail, for example by exploring how President Trump instead of Thunberg is framed in mainstream media. Further, a comparative study could be conducted by comparing the media's framing of Thunberg in different countries in order to compare the results of this study in a wider context. Can similar frames and counter-frames be found in the framing of Thunberg elsewhere? Are these frames

systematic or anecdotal and episodic for the U.S.? One could also consider using theories about personality traits to analyze how mainstream media frame Thunberg's persona more in detail. Lastly, other interesting perspectives that can be applied for future research could be a feminist perspective, or a more detailed analysis of white privilege.

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