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MASTER OF ARTS RESEARCH REPORT

The University of the Witwatersrand
Department of International Relations
Faculty of Humanities



"THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT": YOUTH ACTIVISTS AS NORM ENTREPRENEURS. YOUTH-LED ADVOCACY, SOCIO-POLITICAL JUSTICE AND POLICY CHANGE IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS.

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree

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Declaration

I declare that I have written the following research report and have not used sources or means without declaration in the text. Any thoughts from others or literal quotations are clearly marked. This research report is being submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. This research report has not been previously accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.



_____

(Signature of candidate)

Signed on the 17th day of September 2021, in Johannesburg, South Africa.

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I owe endless gratitude to everyone who offered me kindness during this challenging time. Thank you to my friends, family, and colleagues who inspired, supported, and pushed me.

To my supervisor, Dr Michelle Small, who epitomises the combination of professional wisdom and personal support. Thank you for the guidance and constant encouragement.

And to Daniel, a best friend and confidant who never let me forget the reason behind this research report – especially when circumstances made it so difficult to continue.

And finally, to my mother – an immigrant who sacrificed a life back home to ensure I receive an education of the highest standard.

Abstract

This research paper aims to better understand the role of, and relative degree of power held by, youth-led advocacy movements in regard to the creation of policy change discourse, analysed through the lens of norm theory. Empirically, this is significant as it allows for more focused thinking on agenda-setting within youth advocacy movements, while academically, prompts conceptualisations on the role of youth advocates as non-state actors and norm entrepreneurs in International Relations. The paper will analyse theory around norms, policy formulation and youth participation, attempting to find the nexus between the three. The #FridaysForFuture case study will be explored in-depth, paying particular attention to the agents involved and the contexts within the advocacy occurred. The paper will show that youth are norm entrepreneurs who have increasingly spearheaded norm emergence, and who consequently play an increasingly important role in the discourse on policy change

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List of Abbreviations

CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
FFF	Fridays for Future
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IR	International Relations
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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Chapter one: Introduction

Background

According to the 2019 United Nations (UN) global population estimate, youth, defined as people between the ages 15 and 24, account for 16 per cent of the global population. There are approximately 1.2 billion young people in the world, or around one in every six persons worldwide (United Nations, 2019). The African population is notably the fastest growing in the world – due to account for "nearly half of global population growth over the next two decades" (Bello-Schünemann, 2017).

The importance of these statistics cannot be understated: the growth of the labour force, the potential for economic expansion, the effect on educational infrastructure, the power of civil participation and an opportunity for societal change.

A fairly dichotomous discussion exists around this youth bulge. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) describes it as the "once-in-a-generation opportunity of a demographic dividend," but cautions that this may "be replaced by a demographic disaster" (UNICEF, 2017). Simply put, a demographic dividend could lift hundreds of millions out of extreme poverty, contribute to stability and peace and favour development. A demographic disaster would exacerbate unemployment and underemployment, leading nations to stagnant economic growth and fuelling social unrest.

Targeted and sustainable youth-focused policies play a fundamental role in realising this dividend, and youth-led advocacy plays a fundamental role in the creation and implementation of these policies. Ensuring the creation of policies which directly favour the development and wellbeing of young people is a key responsibility of global leaders to empower young people.

Throughout history, civically engaged young people have proven to be a powerful force for change. A 2018 article in the *Guardian* described young people as "angry," and whether it is attributed to anger, passion, frustration or fear, there is a growing youth activism movement.

Recent years have witnessed youth-led movements and campaigns that, through youth led advocacy, have successfully challenged, and changed established practices within public, private and not-for-profit organizations, and institutions. We see this in the Fees Must Fall movement in South Africa, where student-led protests resulted in increased funding allocations for tertiary education and changes to university protocols.

The growing youth population, paired with an increased necessity for meaningful youth involvement in the policy making space, creates a need to understand youth-led activism, the circumstances under which it works and its ability, or lack thereof, to shift domestic norms and influence the discourse around policy change. This paper centres around change: a changing global demographic, and the resultant need for changing global policies. There is a need to understand this change and determine whether young people can be leading agents in achieving this change, based on norm theory. This research sets out to understand the role of young people as norm entrepreneurs in creating change within their societies.

The introductory chapter sets out how the study will be done, the research problem, rationale and aim for the study. The chapter then turns to the research design and methods. Finally, the outline of the paper will be set out.

Research problem

Youth face immense challenges, many of which are not of their making, but have been left for them to deal with. These 'inherited problems' perpetuate the socio-political injustices youth face and further necessitate meaningful and effective youth advocacy.

According to the World Economic Forum, "youth unemployment is likely to be higher than that of the overall working population," (Fleming, 2020) with countries such as Italy, Spain and Greece seeing youth unemployment rates of 32%, 34% and 40% respectively. Notably, South Africa has a youth unemployment rate of 53% (Fleming, 2020). The deterioration of the environment and the effects of climate change are arguably the most notable threat to current and future generations – an issue around which youth are actively mobilising (Gharabaghi and Anderson-Nathe, 2018). The 2019 United Nations World Youth Report

outlines a lack of access to education, discrimination based on gender, race, and class, as well as inequality as other issues that youth are facing. There is a wealth of literature, news reports and data on the levels of debt, poverty, food insecurity, violence, and mental health concerns. These will be reviewed further in the research report.

As a population, young people have not been considered meaningful contributors within decision making spaces at the local, national, and international level. Traditionally youth are excluded and marginalised, and their opinions, while maybe heard, are not acted on and directly integrated into the policies that affect them. Rather, the status quo has policy created 'for' youth and 'about' youth, but not 'with' youth as equal, valuable contributors in the creation process. The implications of this on a state and international level are significant. For example, policies created in a vacuum without proper consideration and consultation with the main groups involved can be disjointed, ineffective and irrelevant. Young people want a seat at the table where decisions are made that have implications for their present and future.

There is a visibly expanding youth activism movement, be these under large youth-focused organisations (such as Reckless Development, the World Youth Alliance, and ONE Youth) or smaller local youth nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and youth parliaments or councils. Fridays for Future, March for Our Lives, Fees Must Fall, the Sunrise Movement, the Umbrella Revolution and youth parliaments and councils in Bangladesh, Mali and Rwanda are only some of the modern examples of powerful youth-led advocacy. From a purely statistical standpoint, youth are an increasingly important variable in public life and International Relations, actively playing their role as agents of social change and non-state actors affecting country policies. Youth advocacy movements have visibly disrupted public life to raise the profile on pressing social and political issues.

Rationale and aim

Set against this backdrop, understanding the *'youth advocacy – policy change pathway'* is particularly significant as it allows, on the empirical level, more focused thinking around agenda-setting and decision-making within youth advocacy movements on key issues. On an

academic level, such an understanding prompts a conceptualisation of the role of youth advocates as non-state actors and norm entrepreneurs in International Relations (IR).

It is still unclear why some issues raised by young advocates are able to take off at some point and others do not. Questions such as “why now?”, “why this issue?”, and “why this group?” have guided the thinking behind this research.

This research report aims to test norm theory in explaining change caused by young people. The paper aims to: (1) analyse the role of youth-led advocacy movements in influencing policy change discourse; (2) better understand the relative degree of power youth-led advocacy movements hold in policy change discourse; (3) determine whether youth-led advocacy movement can be considered substantial norm entrepreneurs. The empirical research will focus on the #FridaysForFuture movement, paying particular attention to the agents involved and the contexts within the advocacy occurred.

Research Question

The study asks:

Can youth advocates be considered substantial norm entrepreneurs in relation to policy change discourse?

Hypothesis

Youth advocates can be considered norm entrepreneurs who affect policy change discourse through their campaigning efforts, but the degree of power they hold is limited depending on the size of their movement.

Research design and methods

The research report will use qualitative data, gathered from theoretical research and the examination of the selected case study. A qualitative approach collects and analyses non-numerical data to understand different experiences, concepts and ideas. To understand the

theory of change in youth-led advocacy campaigns impacting policy, the paper will use process tracing.

The following section sets out how the study will be done. It will outline the research methods employed and discuss the sources which will be used, as well as how the data will be organised and analysed.

Research variables:

The paper will look at the notion of public policy change brought about by youth-led activism, with youth advocates seen as agents in this change process. Here youth led activism is treated as the independent variable, and public policy change is treated as the dependent variable.

Youth-led activism, the independent variable, can be understood as a movement or campaign which is initiated, planned, and executed by youth, defined by the UN as people between the ages of 15 and 24. Reference will also be made to children (those between 0 and 14 years old).

A movement is understood as a mass mobilisation of actors advocating for a specific issue under a shared banner. A campaign is understood as an umbrella term, including marches, lobbying, letters, media, sit-ins, lockdowns, and other tools to be considered. These can be local, national, regional, or international movements.

Public policy change, the dependent variable, is measured along 3 outcomes: (1) the creation of new policy – that is, an issue that did not exist in the political agenda, being added; (2) change in an existing policy – that is, an issue which does exist in the political agenda, undergoing some shift; (3) no change in or creation of policy.

Methodology

For the purposes of this research, the paper will use the theory testing aspect of process tracing, tracing the case of youth-led movements in an attempt to identify the causal link. This

entails knowing both A and B (i.e., we know that a youth-led movement took place, A, and we know that outcome B, some (or no) impact on global norms, and by extension policy discourse, has occurred), and we attempt to identify the causal link between A and B (Punton & Welle, 2015). The aim is to test the theory of change (itself based on norm theory) which explains the outcome of the intervention. The paper, which is y-centered, will follow an inductive approach, focusing on theory testing. Within norm theory, the norm life cycle will act as the central piece of theory which will be applied to youth-led advocacy movements. Inherent to this will be the inclusion of theory on norm entrepreneurs which will be applied to youth activists as actors in IR.

As this research report will look at youth as agents of social change, and their impact on public policy, the theoretical framework which will be used will be on norm theory in International Relations, norm entrepreneurs, social constructivism, social movements theory, policy change processes, as well as youth participation methods.

Empirical research: case study selection

This study uses a case study approach in which to trace and test variables. The case study which will be analysed for this research report is the climate movement, Fridays for Future (FFF), which began in August 2018. This case was selected based on the criteria of being a youth-led movement, having had some effect on norms, and subsequently, policy change discourse, with sufficient literature available for research.

#FridaysForFuture, which is constantly developing, is interesting as it allows for analysis of a more internationalized movement, which has resulted in several subsequent youth-led movement offshoots in several countries. Unlike many other student or youth movements, the #FridaysForFuture campaign was not initially structured, but rather began with a singular protest, inspiring others and organically growing into a global movement with millions of advocates behind it.

The research process collected both primary and secondary data sources. Data from multiple news sources, journal articles, advocate testimonials, and social media data will be used, as

well as other reliable written materials, using engines such as *LexisNexis* and statistical data from *UNData*.

Outline of the chapters

This paper consists of five chapters which will delve into the debates that currently exist on youth advocacy, norms entrepreneurship, and the Friday Futures movement. Following on from the introductory chapter, the second chapter will provide a theoretical framework for the study which is rooted in norm theory. Here a discussion of norm entrepreneurs and the norm life cycle will be provided and applied to the study. Thereafter, there will be an introduction to policy change theory, which will be followed by an analysis of youth participation. This second chapter aims to set the parameters of this research report and explain the key variables and concepts needed for the research. Once the role played by norms within change, and by extension, policy change discourse, as well as the relevance of youth as actors within International Relations, is established, the third chapter will proceed to discuss the linkages between youth activists and their role within the norms discourse, specifically as norm entrepreneurs. This chapter will discuss the importance of transnational advocacy networks in the experiences and interactions of norm entrepreneurs and leaders. The fourth chapter will introduce the empirical case study used in this research report. Here, there will be an analysis of the #FridaysForFuture youth movement on climate change, which has been able to mobilise millions of activists around the world. The final chapter will draw conclusions from the research provided, by analysing the relationships between young people, norms, and changes in policy change discourse. The conclusions reached in this section will respond directly to the research question on whether young people can be considered significant norm entrepreneurs within IR, by highlighting the role played by youth activists in the first stage of the norm life cycle, *norm emergence.*

Chapter two: Theoretical Framework

This chapter aims to introduce and discuss the key theoretical frameworks which the analysis of the research report will be based on. Here, the paper will look at norms theory, policy change processes and youth participation. This will provide the theoretical basis (norms), for the change being studied (policy change discourse), by the actors affecting this change (young people)

Traditional statist International Relations theory does not consider the role played by individuals in inter-state relations as significant. While this position is theoretically sound, in practice, increased globalisation and the proliferation of social media and internet access have given rise to identity groups, such as youth, that exert pressure on states to effect change (Milner, 1993; Cox, 1996; Rosenburg, 1990; Haynes, Hough, Malik and Pettiford, 2017). The conduct of states no longer relies solely on the realist understanding of the distribution of power, but rather more on soft powers and institutions, premised on norms, values and ideas.

Norms will play a central role in this paper. Finnemore and Sikkink give the generally agreed upon definition of a norm as being "a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). The importance of norms comes from the analysis that "they serve the purpose of guiding behaviour by providing motivations for action," taking a social constructivist turn (Björkdahl, 2002).

Most notably for this research, Finnemore and Sikkink introduce the idea of *norm entrepreneurs*, whom they define as a characteristic mechanism of the first stage on the "norm life cycle," a concept which will play a leading role in this research report. Norm entrepreneurs "attempt to convince norm leaders to embrace new norms," a key aspect in ensuring some form of behavioural change (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Norms are actively built by these agents who, in the case of this research report, are youth advocates.

Theory around the evolution and influence of norms is particularly important for this paper, and so the "norm life cycle" will form the premise for our analysis. Briefly, the theory of the norm life cycle characterizes norm influence as a three-stage process – "norm emergence, norm cascade, and internalization," with a tipping point, or threshold dividing the first and second stage (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). The argument raised, that "change at each stage…is characterized by different actors, motives and mechanisms of influence," (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998) as well as the norm life cycle, will be analysed against the case studies in an attempt to test the theory against the empirics. It is noted that the norm life cycle framework may be seen as slightly outdated in some academic circles, as the framework has been extended on and revised by scholars in the last few years, notably through debates on the impact of norm contestation. Nevertheless, this research report primarily focuses on the advocacy efforts of norm entrepreneurs towards the emergence of a new norm. Therefore, the outlined life cycle framework remains the definitive framework.

This framing has an implicit effect on the creation and implementation of policy. The discussion around the relationship between norms and policy is best described by legal scholars at the University of Chicago, as one where the creation of successful law and policy "requires an understanding of the pervasive influence of social norms of behavior" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

On policy change, authors such as Hall (1993), Howlett (2009), Lindblom (1959) and Sabatier (1988) have written extensively on the theory of policy change and processes. Four general theoretical perspectives exist, appearing either alone or in combination in various contemporary models and frameworks of policy dynamics (Hernes 1976, Van de Ven and Poole 1995). These include: (Copano & Howlett, 2009) (i)''cyclical,'' in which change occurs but returns to the status quo, (ii) ''dialectic,'' in which change occurs through a process of negation and synthesis, (iii) ''linear,'' in which change occurs in an evolutionary fashion without any clear endpoint, and (iv) ''teleological,'' in which change occurs in the direction of a final identifiable goal-state.

The relationship between norms and social practices are firmly established and can be seen as mutually constitutive – "norms have power in, and because of, what people do" (Keck &

Sikkink, 1998). When young people organise and mobilise around a specific issue, they are able to draw attention to these issues and influence the creation of emerging norms. The study of youth participation is a growing space of research, delving into the role played by young people as active agents in society who engage with and challenge the status quo.

Existing literature on youth activism mainly focuses on engagement approaches and participation models (Zittoun and Cooper, 2013; Ho et al., 2015; Marcus and Cunningham, 2016; Botchwey et al., 2019). Despite this evolution in theory, a strong narrative painting young people as "apathetic and disengaged with political processes" (Tsekoura, 2016) is still dominant in research. There is a lack of comparative analysis and specific analysis of youth-led advocacy, thus leaving scope for a more rigorous analysis of the role of young people in the processes and the impact of their participation.

The study of social movements is also significant in better understanding youth participation. Here, analysis of young people's ability to mobilise large masses of supporters through their engagement in transnational advocacy networks will be visited. Social movement organisations "organize events, mobilize participants, and recruit new activists into the movement" (Elliott & Earl, 2018) and as such, these social movement organisations and youth advocacy networks are an essential variable in the discourse of youth participation. A typology of youth participation will be addressed, specifically within the current 'age of dissent' in which we find ourselves. Understanding the ways in which young people express their disapproval, and act on this to create changes in society by creating new norms, is a central aspect of this paper.

The above literature is crucial in framing the relationship between norms and the influencing of policy – which is the relationship to be studied in this paper. The discussion on norm entrepreneurs will be used in characterising youth activists. This will be in conjunction with theory around social movements.

Norm Theory

Just 25 years ago, norm research was not considered a valid theory to be used in the study of IR. The role played by norms in international politics was dismissed, with academics rather opting for the explanatory power of more traditional and established IR theories, such as the realist theory on balance of power. Today, the application of norm theory exists across multiple disciplines and subdisciplines within the social sciences, cross-cutting political, legal, social, and economic issues. We see the application of norm theory in areas such as "political science (and IR), economics, sociology, history, military studies, demography, management, psychology, law, women, gender, and sexuality studies, and others" (Romaniuk & Grice, 2018).

This research report is driven by questions about changes in policy: norms play a significant role in policy making and policy change discourse. The following section will outline several aspects of norms and norm theory. Initially, norms will be defined, and norm theory contextualised within IR theory, followed by a discussion on where norms exist and where they originate. After establishing the parameters of discussion, the paper will analyse the strength of norms and their relative power on behavioural change. Following on from this, the theoretical framework will explore norms within constructivist research and introduce some of the limitations of norm theory. Thereafter norm entrepreneurs and the norm life cycle will be discussed – two crucial points of theory for this research report.

Defining norms and understanding norm theory

The question of 'how do we know a norm when we see one?' as well as 'how many actors must support the norm before it is titled a norm?' are interesting due to the intangible nature of norms. Finnemore and Sikkink outline that norms "leave an extensive trail of communication among actors that we can study" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998), an approach which will be adopted in this paper.

While several definitions of norms exist in academic, theoretical, and philosophical spaces, this research report recognises the generally accepted understanding of norms as "patterns of behaviour" (Björkdahl, 2002). Scholars such as Klotz, Gelpi, Raymond, Finnemore and Sikkink, and Axelrod offer a variety of definitions for norms which overlap and converge,

offering an extensive view of the topic. Finnemore and Sikkink give the generally agreed upon definition of a norm as being "a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). According to Klotz (1995), norms are "shared (thus social) understandings of standards of behavior," while Gelpi (1997) emphasised norms as "focal points for interpreting behavior as well as reputational constraints" (Romaniuk & Grice, 2018). An argument that norms "exist in a given social setting to the extent that individuals usually act in a certain way," is given by Axelrod, while Raymond states that international norms are "generalised standards of conduct that delineate the scope of a state's entitlements, the extent of its obligations, and the range of its jurisdiction" (Björkdahl, 2002). A notable thread across all these definitions is the understanding that norms do not necessarily denote actual behaviour, or behavioural change, but rather that norms lean towards a recognition of *oughtness* – norms "identify notions of what appropriate behaviour ought to be" (Björkdahl, 2002).

Interestingly, by definition, there is hypothetically no such thing as a bad norm from the perspective of those who support the norm. Norms surrounding racial superiority, slavery, and imperialism were "once powerful because some groups believed in the appropriateness…of the norm, and others either accepted it as obvious or inevitable or had no choice but to accept it" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). The perceived 'goodness' of the norm by actors in society contributes to its normative acceptance.

The typology of norms is generally divided into horizontal, which distinguishes between the types of norms, and vertical, which discusses the hierarchy of norms. Horizontal typologies categorise norms into types, such as "social, moral and legal," therefore classifying norms according to content and sphere of applicability, but this is done "without ranking their degree of importance" (Björkdahl, 2002). Vertical typologies make explicit that "some norms are more important than others" (Björkdahl, 2002).

An important analytical distinction to make is that between *norms* and *ideas*. The former, by definition, involves behaviour, while the latter may or may not have behavioural repercussions. The study of norms allows researchers to recognise behaviours linked to norms. Norm breaking behaviour "generates disapproval or stigma," while norm conforming

behaviour “produces praise, or, in the case of a highly internalized norm, because it is so taken for granted [it] provokes no reaction whatsoever” (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Furthermore, it is essential to isolate the existence of a norm from the actual behavioural change, specifically when research focuses on the effect of norms on state behaviour. The analysis on the strength of norms will be explored later in the paper.

The relationship between norms and social practices are firmly established and can be seen as mutually constitutive – “norms have power in, and because of, what people do” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). New norms emerge, and current norms evolve, as a result of common practices among actors, communities and states. As such, norms may be elusive in nature as they are continuously in a state of flux, “changing and evolving over time and in relation to other norms and other events unfolding at various points in time and places in the world” (Romaniuk & Grice, 2018). Gregory Raymond describes this dynamic by explaining that “over time all norms vary with regard to communal meaning, perlocutionary effect, degree of internalization, extent of conformity, patterns of deviance, and so on” (Raymond, 1997). Judith Goldstein describes how the origins of norms, ideas, and values, come as a response to demands or needs within society.

The most common distinction of norms exists between *regulative* and *constitutive* norms, where the former orders and constrains behaviour, while the latter creates new actors, interests, or categories of action (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Norms exist and operate on several levels within society, be it at a community level where they impact the behaviour and actions of citizens, or at the international level, affecting the actions of states. A key dynamic in the relationship between domestic and international norms is highlighted by Finnemore and Sikkink who note that “many international norms began as domestic norms and become international through the efforts of entrepreneurs of various kinds” (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). This is an important consideration for this paper, as it will explore the influence of norm entrepreneurs during the early stages of the norm life cycle on the emergence of norms.

The power of norms lies in their ability to assign praise or blame to behaviour, thus potentially causing change of some form. Friedrich Kratochwill describes how “states and non-state actors begin to formulate expectations about what is either acceptable or not acceptable in

the international realm," and thus "the behavior of actors can change, for better or for worse" (Romaniuk & Grice, 2018). Björkdahl notes how norms do not necessarily determine outcomes, but rather "create permissive conditions for action," affecting both the actor's interests as well as the way "actors connect their preferences to policy choices" (Björkdahl, 2002). As such, we have seen norm theory being used in the study of conflict, war, and the use of force; and the study of norm evolution theory being applied extensively to the study of states and international organisations (Romaniuk & Grice, 2018). For this research report, the role played by norms in political change is central, both that of the norms themselves and how they change and evolve, as well as their role in discourse surrounding change in the political environment. For example, emergent norms on gender equality and voting rights gave rise to the Suffragette movement who were able to, after years of protest, influence a critical mass to adopt this new norm.

The final aspect to be covered in understanding norms and norm theory is how to determine the strength and relative power of a norm. Recent writing by Michal Ben-Josef Hirsch and Jennifer M. Dixon attempts to provide conceptual clarity on the discussion around weak and strong, or weakening and strengthening norms, offering norm strength as a variable to be studied. While continuous references are made to the strength, or weakness, of norms, a lack of consistency in defining and measuring this perceived strength makes the study and analysis of norm creation and contestation difficult. The two indicators offered by Hirsch and Dixon for assessing the strength of norms, concordance, and international institutionalisation, as well as their conceptualisation of norm strength as "the extent of collective expectations related to a principled idea," will be used in this research report (Hirsch & Dixon, 2020). This is done to allow us to use norm strength as a variable when discussing the relationship between norm emergence and norm adoption, compliance, and violation. Furthermore, this framework acts as a tool in analysing why norms may be adopted at certain times and at varying degrees across different scenarios.

A variety of terms, such as *strength, influence, robustness, salience, power,* and *legitimacy* have been used by scholars when describing the strength of norms. The ambiguous nature of this topic leaves room for confusion between norms and ideas, particularly since the latter

may or may not become norms and have behavioural impact, as described earlier (Goldstein & Keohane, 1993).

Previous work on norms viewed them as static, but as previously mentioned, this is inaccurate. Rather, the meaning of norms "changes through processes of interpretation, contestation, and violation" (Hirsch & Dixon, 2020). Analysing the patterns of norm adoption, compliance, and violation as a measure for norm strength is problematic as it bases the measure of norm strength on behaviour – a variable which we know is not directly linked to norms. Behavioural change is not a direct embodiment of norms affecting society; rather, by definition, norms speak to oughtness, or expectations of what behaviour is appropriate, and thus should be adopted. It is important to note that universal compliance with norms is extremely rare, with even the strongest of norms concerning human rights, chemical weapons and violence occasionally being violated.

The framework offered by Hirsch and Dixon defines norm strength as "the extent of collective expectations related to a principled idea" (Hirsch & Dixon, 2020), and they offer concordance and institutionalisation as the two indicators for measuring norm strength, with the former capturing more informal, and the latter capturing a more formal process.

When defining concordance, we are looking at "the degree to which international actors refer to and accept a principled idea as appropriate" (Hirsch & Dixon, 2020). This definition suits this research report, as this proposed contextualisation of concordance is not limited to diplomatic contexts, allowing us to adopt this framework and assess collective expectations beyond states and international organisations. Specifically, adopting this definition supports this paper's focus on individuals and norm entrepreneurs. There are three ways given for the observance of concordance:

> *(1) via an analysis of the frequency and nature of references to a principled idea in a corpus of reports or resolutions issued by international organizations (IOs) and international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs); (2) via an assessment of the extent to which relevant INGOs and IOs support the adoption of and compliance with the practices associated with a principled idea; and (3) via an analysis of the frequency*

and nature of IOs', INGOs', and states' responses to violations of the relevant behavior (Hirsch & Dixon, 2020).

Institutionalisation is defined as "the degree to which a principled idea is codified and ensconced in international law" (Hirsch & Dixon, 2020), and is assessed in two ways: through "the existence of international treaties, conventions, and/or judicial precedents codifying a principled idea in international law"; and through "the existence of international bodies that promote the adoption or implementation of a principled idea, monitor or evaluate compliance with it, and/or sanction violations" (Hirsch & Dixon, 2020).

Three key considerations must be put in place before using this framework. Firstly, the discussion on institutionalism as described above can be seen as short-sighted, limiting it to the existence of treaties and possible customs. It is worth exploring the differing levels of institutionalism which exist, covering codification, interpretation, and compliance, until the norm becomes one of unconscious behaviour within the institutional context. Secondly, it is important to note the *relative* nature of strength and, consequently, that the assessment of a norm's strength at a specific moment in time and place "is neither practical nor desirable" (Hirsch & Dixon, 2020). Rather, this analysis of concordance and institutionalization should be done over a period of time, or through comparative methods across geographical locations. Finally, the two indicators should be analysed "in relation to the actors and institutions most relevant to a given principled idea" (Hirsch & Dixon, 2020). The characterisation of norm strength is most appropriate, therefore, as a relative measure of '*weaker* or *stronger'* over time or space.

Further to the framework presented above, reference must be made to the 2019 writing of Zimmerman and Deitelhoff, focusing on the robustness of norms. Their paper aimed to "understand how contestation and norm robustness are related in the area of security politics, traditionally viewed as a particularly weak field for norms and institutions" (Zimmermann & Deitelhoff, 2019), by assembling "case studies on central norms in security and humanitarian law that have become contested in recent years, or are said to be on the verge of decay" (Zimmermann & Deitelhoff, 2019). Simply put, Zimmerman and Deitelhoff's approach examines robustness through both practice and discourse by defining norm

robustness based on validity and facticity – where a norm's claims are generally accepted, and these norms will normally guide the behaviour of actors. As with Hirsch and Dixon, Zimmerman and Deitelhoff also refer to concordance as one of the dimensions affecting norm robustness. But in addition to this, Zimmerman and Deitelhoff offer "third-party reaction to norm violations, compliance and implementation" (Zimmermann & Deitelhoff, 2019), as additional dimensions in the study of norm robustness.

The four dimensions offered are divided into mainly discourse-based and mainly practice-based discourse. When discussing *concordance*, the framework refers to "acceptance of a norm's legitimacy by a state and the general public," while *third-party reactions* refer to the "reactions of other norm addressees to norm violations" (Zimmermann & Deitelhoff, 2019). *Compliance* indicates the "level of behavior consistent with norms," and *implementation* speaks to "level of norm inclusion in policy papers, protocols, standards of international and regional organizations, creation of domestic, regional, international institutions, and adoptions into domestic law" (Zimmermann & Deitelhoff, 2019). One must bear in mind the inherent limitations of this framework which cannot "derive a fully satisfactory, standardized quantification of norm robustness according to these indicators for all types of norms" (Zimmermann & Deitelhoff, 2019). Three categories of factors can affect the framework: actors, structures and processes. For example, the reactions of some, more powerful actor, may have a stronger impact on norm robustness, as opposed to one with less influence. Or, the manner in which a norm is applied and the 'legal character' it holds can also affect the amount of contestation received.

This level of analysis is important when considering the effect of norm contestation and violation on the longevity of a norm – will a norm or institution 'die' due to increased contestation? Furthermore, it is important to develop an understanding of the point at which the reinterpretations of a norm, or changes made to the norm, signify a replacement of said norm. therefore, the interrelated nature of norm change and norm robustness is of value for this research.

Norms within IR theory – constructivist approaches

Finnemore and Sikkink argue that the movement away from norm theory and normative concerns came as a result of the desire of scholars for theories which have explicit methods for measurement. Due to the fact that norms and ideas were difficult to measure, in the traditional sense, normative and ideational phenomena were "pushed aside for methodological reasons" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). An extensive methodological debate within international relations theory exists around the "complex and nuanced area" of norm theory, including scholars such as Campbell, Laffey and Weldes, Klotz, and Jacobsen (Björkdahl, 2002). Mearsheimer focuses on the balance of power when explaining the causes of war and peace, and categorises norms, ideas, and institutions as intervening variables in the process. Meanwhile, regime theorists argue that norms have a direct impact on the behaviour of actors, and therefore see norms as "an explanatory variable that intervenes between underlying power distributions and outcomes" (Björkdahl, 2002). Finally, neoliberal institutionalism ascribes a limited causal role to norms and ideas. But there are a growing number of academics and theorists who are beginning to acknowledge norms as having "irreducible ontological status" (Romaniuk & Grice, 2018). Constructivist literature offers two points, relevant for this paper. Firstly, constructivists argue that norms do in fact have explanatory power which is independent of situational and structural constraints. It is argued that "norms are not simply an ethical alternative to or constraint on self-interests," but rather, the constructivist perspective views norms as playing an explanatory role, with "the shifting importance of contending global norms offer[ing] a theoretical explanation of interest (re)-formation" (Björkdahl, 2002). Secondly, constructivists highlight how approaching debates from a normative or ideational perspective "is always a valuable supplement to interest-based rational actor models" (Björkdahl, 2002).

Norm theory's central problem exists when trying to determine how to recognise a norm empirically – an issue which can be solved by studying the influence of the norm, specifically through "analyzing the norm-induced pattern of behavior" (Björkdahl, 2002). A further criticism exists, arguing that norm research "provides no substantive hypotheses about which norms will be influential in world politics and under what conditions they will be influential" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). As such, constructivist scholars focus "both on analysing the

norms themselves and the causal mechanisms stemming from the norms" (Romaniuk & Grice, 2018). This difficulty in explaining why some norms are entrenched in normative structure over others can be overcome by focusing on the relative nature of norms, acknowledging their elusive nature. A key consideration for constructivist scholars is that "norms entail a collective evaluation and future expectations of behaviour in terms of what ought to be done" (Björkdahl, 2002). The criticisms discussed in the analysis above are indicative of the fact that the value of norm theory falls outside the priorities and objectives of the critics.

Defining norm entrepreneurs

When discussing the emergence of norms, a key consideration is that norms do not simply appear out of nowhere, nor do they appear into an 'empty space'. In most cases, actors play an important role in norm emergence, with interaction between structures and other actors arguably being the primary driving force of norm creation and evolution. These actors, or norm entrepreneurs, are significant for the emergence of norms and, by extension, the creation of policy, as they call attention to, or even create issues by "using language that names, interprets, and dramatizes them" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). According to social movement theorists, norm entrepreneurs, who have a strong view of appropriateness and desired behaviour, use the process of '*framing*' to draw attention to the issues they are fighting for by reinterpreting or reimagining them. The implications of this are key and are clearly visible in the political and social strategies of norm entrepreneurs. By constructing these cognitive frames, norm entrepreneurs ensure that if they are successful in promoting their norm, these new frames "resonate with broader public understandings and are adopted as new ways of talking about and understanding issues" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). A simple characterisation of norm entrepreneurs is that "they provide the information and publicity that provoke cognitive dissonance among norm violators" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

Furthermore, norm theory explains how "new norms never enter a normative vacuum," but rather "emerge in a highly contested normative space where they compete against other norms" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Most notable for the empirical research of this paper is the conclusion that, through facing these firmly embedded alternative norms, norm

entrepreneurs may need to be explicitly inappropriate – a concept which will be explored in more detail in the following chapter.

Naturally, the question arises as to what motivates norm entrepreneurs to act. Scholars have identified three key aspects by which most, if not all, norm entrepreneurs are motivated by: empathy, altruism, and ideational commitment. When discussing empathy, we refer to the capacity of an actor to "participate in an other's feelings or ideas" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). As such, Finnemore and Sikkink argue that this empathy may lead to *empathetic interdependence*, where actors, and in this case norm entrepreneurs, "are interested in the welfare of others for its own sake, even if this has no effect on their own material well-being or security" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Next, altruism can be defined as taking action which would benefit another actor or group, even if said action has the potential of harming the actor's own wellbeing. Altruism speaks essentially to putting others ahead of oneself or, as described by Kristen Monroe, "a shared perception of common humanity… a very simple but deeply felt recognition that we all share certain characteristics and are entitled to certain rights, merely by virtue of our common humanity" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Finally, ideational commitment refers to the belief held by norm entrepreneurs that the ideals and values exemplified by a specific norm which they promote is important, even if their pursuit thereof has no direct effect on their personal wellbeing.

Finnemore and Sikkink discuss how all norm entrepreneurs "need some kind of organizational platform from and through which they promote their norms" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). These platforms can be specifically created or constructed for the purpose of norm promotion, but in most cases, norm entrepreneurs work within existing platforms and organisations. International organisations act as a central source of influence in norm theory due to "their use of expertise and information to change the behaviour of other actors" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Securing the support of states, actors and other organisations is key in norm emergence, as will be discussed in detail later. Therefore, different platforms, depending on the amount of power they hold, the availability of resources, and their degree of leverage, offer norm entrepreneurs different tools. These organisational networks and platforms provide norm entrepreneurs with "information and access to important audiences for that information, especially media and decision makers" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

Resistance towards norm entrepreneurs

While norm entrepreneurs are a vital actor in the study of norm theory and, specifically within the scope of this research report, youth activists are the central actor, there is an arguably understudied resistance to norm entrepreneurs – norm antipreneurs. In simple terms, these opponents to norm entrepreneurs would defend the normative status quo when norm entrepreneurs introduce a new norm to compete with an existing norm, thus contesting the strategy of 'framing' used by norm entrepreneurs.

Alan Bloomfield describes the existence of a "spectrum of roles that actors play when moves are afoot to change global norms" (Bloomfield, 2015). He places norm entrepreneurs, as *pure changers*, and norm antipreneurs, as *implacable resisters*, on either end of the spectrum. By definition, other roles would exist along the spectrum, set between these two extremes. For example, "'competitor entrepreneurs' sit closer to the entrepreneur, while 'creative resisters' sit closer to the antipreneurs" (Bloomfield, 2015).

This acknowledgment of the role played by the norm antipreneur grants researchers conceptual and theoretical benefits. Having the capacity to identify the different roles played by various actors in the norm contestation process will allow academics to "draw and then test hypotheses on the sorts of interactional dynamics that characterise the cases they study" (Bloomfield, 2015). For this paper, acknowledging the opposition to youth activists as they attempt to influence norm leaders to embrace new norms, is useful as this can lead to a better understanding of the tactics used by youth activists.

The norm life cycle

In 1998, the seminal piece by Finnemore and Sikkink in *International Organization*, which has played a fundamental role in this research report, introduced a model for explaining the process of norm diffusion – the norm life cycle. Numerous academics have applied this framework to their studies and research, across a variety of disciplines. Briefly, the theory of the norm life cycle characterizes norm influence as a three-stage process – "norm emergence,

norm cascade, and internalization," with a tipping point, or threshold dividing the first and second stage (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). There is an acknowledgment that each stage is characterised by varying actors, motives, and mechanisms of influence. The norm life cycle is an important tool for the analysis of theoretical debates, including "debates about the degree to which norm-based behavior is driven by choice or habit, specification issues about the costs of norm-violation or benefits from norm adherence" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). As this is a central concept for the analysis of this research report, an in-depth explanation of the life cycle will be given and then analysed as a determinant in the discourse surrounding policy change as a result of norm emergence, spearheaded by the specified norm entrepreneurs, youth activists.

Each stage in the three-stage process of the norm life cycle is characterised by a dominant mechanism. The first stage, norm emergence, is characterised by persuasion by norm entrepreneurs who attempt to "convince a critical mass of…norm leaders to embrace new norms" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). The second stage, where the norm cascades, is characterised by "a dynamic of imitation," where norm leaders focus on the socialisation of the norm, creating new norm followers (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). The final stage, internalisation, if reached, is characterised by conformity, where norms "acquire a taken-for-granted quality and are no longer a matter of broad public debate" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Of course, not all norms complete the life cycle, and emerging norms may fail at any stage of the process. The reasons for this will be discussed later in this paper.

	Stage 1 ***Norm emergence***	***Stage 2*** ***Norm Cascade***	***Stage 3*** ***Internalisation***
Actors	Norm entrepreneurs with organisational platforms	States, international organisations, networks	Law, professions, bureaucracy
Motives	Altruism, empathy, ideational, commitment	Legitimacy, reputation, esteem	Conformity

Dominant mechanisms	Persuasion	Socialisation, institutionalisation, demonstration	Habit, institutionalisation

Table 1: Summary: Stages of norms (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998)

Stage one: Origins or Emergence of Norms

As previously mentioned, norms do not enter a 'normative vacuum,' but rather are forced to compete with other existing norms when they emerge. For the first stage of the norm life cycle, two key elements are needed: norm entrepreneurs and the organisational platforms from which these entrepreneurs act. First, norm entrepreneurs will draw attention to an existing issue, or frame a new issue, that they believe will require the emergence of a new norm to influence the behaviour of actors, specifically states. The efforts of norm entrepreneurs to promote their emergent norm occur within "the standards of appropriateness defined by prior norms" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). As such, norm entrepreneurs will contest existing norms within society. To do so, norm entrepreneurs will deliberately act in a manner that is seen as inappropriate within their context, as a tool to send a message and reframe an issue. Examples of activists purposefully ostracising themselves from society are clear throughout history: The Suffragettes went on hunger strike, refused to pay taxes, and chained themselves to fences; university students in South Africa burnt tires, shut down campuses and destroyed government property; protestors in the Sudanese revolution broke windows of government buildings, shut down businesses and disturbed transport routes to convey their message.

The aim is to influence a 'critical mass' of actors to accept this new norm. Those that support the norm, norm leaders, will then move to diffuse the new norm widely. This will allow the emergent norm to reach a tipping point.

The tipping or threshold point

Once this critical mass has been persuaded and these states emerge as norm leaders, the norm is said to have reached a threshold or tipping point. A recognition and understanding of the nature of the norm leader is important. Finnemore and Sikkink do not give an exact prediction of the number of states needed to accept the norm to cause it to 'tip,' as states

are simply not equal in terms of political power and normative weight. They go on to state, however, that "empirical studies suggest that norm tipping rarely occurs before one-third of the total states in the system adopt the norm" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Depending on the issue being contested, specific 'critical states' may be needed to ensure the norm is adopted, but unanimity is not necessarily required. There is no clear definition of a critical state, as this is context dependent, but one criterion is "that critical states are those without which the achievement of the substantive norm goal is compromised" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

Stage two: Norm Cascades

The second stage of the norm life cycle actively focuses on socialisation which aims to convince norm breakers to become norm followers. This process can occur in several ways, including emulation, praise and ridicule, as discussed by Kenneth Waltz. Those opposed to the norm can succumb to the pressure to conform, or "may be intrinsically motivated to conform in pursuit of legitimacy and/or self-esteem" (Bloomfield, 2015). Finnemore and Sikkink argue that the concept of state or individual identity underpins the process of socialisation. The identity of states exists within the international society, and so "state identity fundamentally shapes state behaviour, and that state identity is, in turn, shaped by the cultural-institutional context within which states act" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). This argument does not only hold true for states, however. As James Fearon explains, identity also exists within the individual who is a member of a specific social grouping, and therefore all members of said grouping would be socialised to follow certain, and similar, norms.

When looking at socialisation from the perspective of international politics, the process is led by states and "involves diplomatic praise or censure, either bilateral or multilateral, which is reinforced by material sanctions and incentives" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). It is important to note, specifically within the context of this paper, that states, while playing a major role, are not the sole agents of socialisation. International organisations and networks of norm entrepreneurs can also play a key role in pressuring actors to become norm followers. The success of this socialisation is based on evaluative relationships between states and between

actors. In their pursuit for legitimation, conformity and self-esteem, states and actors are motivated to become norm followers.

Stage three: Internalisation

The final stage of the norm life cycle, which is not always reached, is internalisation, where the norm forms part of the actors' identities, is generally accepted within society and is institutionalised within national or international policy. At the extreme, norms can become so commonly accepted that conforming to the norm is "almost automatic" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). This level of internalised norm has been described as both extremely powerful and difficult to discern, as behaviour which conforms to the norm is rarely questioned or debated, developing a deep habit of trust between actors. Once at this point, these issues tend to fall away from political debate and are ignored by scholars.

While the framework of the norm life cycle offers academics with an organised and logical structure for analysing where norms come from, and how they develop and become socially accepted, the question of what determines which norms matter still stands. Initially, Finnemore and Sikkink offered three hypotheses in response to this question. Namely, (1) *legitimation*, where a state or actor aim to improve or strengthen their reputation are more likely to accept new norms; (2) *prominence*, where norms which are adopted by more important and influential states or actors are more likely to be emulated; and (3) *the intrinsic characteristic of the norm*, which is based on the clarity and specificity of the norm, as well as the content of the issue. A more specific explanation is developed by Keck and Sikkink who argue that "norms involving (1) bodily integrity and prevention of bodily harm for vulnerable or "innocent" groups, especially when a short causal chain exists between cause and effect, and (2) legal equality of opportunity are particularly effective transnationally and cross-culturally" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

Norm theory, while being an established space of research, is still constantly being debated, adapted for current contexts, and challenged by scholars. Moreover, norm theory has a fundamental shortcoming as its narratives around norm emergence, diffusion, change, and implementation are viewed, analysed, and applied from a Eurocentric or Western vantage

point, excluding the perspectives from the global south. As with all theoretical approaches, norm theory has its limitations, but this framework offers academics a powerful tool for analysis in examining the behaviours and influences of state and non-state actors.

Policy Change Process

The discourse on policy change processes is vast and complex, with Copano and Howlett highlighting how many studies of policy change fall short "when it comes to understanding their epistemological and methodological premises, resulting in an equally remarkable variety of unnecessary theories and frameworks" (Capano & Howlett, 2009). Sabatier describes how public policy research is characterised by "the absence of a commonly accepted, clearly articulated, and empirically verified body of theory" (Sabatier, 1991)**,** Considerable debate exists around issues such as the nature and classification of policy change, the understanding of the impact of time and scope of policy change, the differing views on the drivers of change and the need to adjust the theoretical framework based on the example studied (Capano & Howlett, 2009). Despite its challenges, there are some common spaces of agreement among scholars and fundamental theory which is generally accepted that will be visited in this paper.

While there are a variety of theories and frameworks in the policy change discourse, any theory which attempts to understand the formulation and implementation of policy will require "an understanding of the behaviour of major types of governmental institutions (legislatures, courts, administrative agencies, chief executives), as well as the behaviour of interest groups, the general public, and the media" (Sabatier, 1991)**.** Researchers have given a vast list of phenomena which may influence policy change. These include "the complexity of decision-making processes; the fragmentation of power; the weight of constraints – be they institutional, systemic or cognitive; and the role of experts, networks, and special interest groups" (Zittoun & Cooper, 2013). For this paper, we are most interested in the final two categories mentioned – that of networks and special interest groups. These actors, or policy communities and subsystems, have recently emerged in modern theory as crucial as they act as the "basic unit of study," in understanding the policy process (Sabatier, 1991)**.**

For the purposes of this paper, an in-depth understanding of the policy change process is not necessary for our analysis, as the research question seeks to identify *a growing importance of youth-led advocacy in relation to policy change discourse.* This distinction between policy change and policy change discourse is important given the nature of the theoretical framework in which this paper is situated. In this paper, policy change refers to the outcome of a number of different processes and interactions, such as community engagement, lobbying efforts and legal challenges. Policy discourse is one of these constitutive elements, particularly because discourse is instrumental in informing and shaping the opinions of potential participants in the policy change process. This process of 'enlightenment' will be discussed in the next paragraph.

Policy change rarely occurs in a sudden fashion, unless the change is instigated by some external shock in society which necessitates an immediate policy change. Rather, it is argued that policy change is a process, which takes place over a period of time, influenced by a variety of actors and circumstances. Sabatier discusses the process of 'enlightenment' as a more standard process, whereby "the findings accumulated over time gradually alter decision-makers' perceptions of the seriousness of the problems, the relative importance of different causes, and/or the effects of major policy programs" (Sabatier, 1991)**.** This is an important consideration when discussing the role played by non-state actors in accumulating and sharing information. It is quite rare that a single piece of research or information will strongly influence an important policy decision, rather, this influence is the result of a cumulative effort. Even in the rare case that it is a single source of research which influences the policy decision, this is usually "because a source respected by all participants has done an excellent job" (Sabatier, 1991)**,** once again proving the importance of communal engagement.

The role played by the general public in formulating and implementing policy is arguably more modest when compared to that of institutions and experts in the field. But, Page and Shapiro (1983) argue that there is a "fairly strong correlation between important shifts in public opinion and changes in the *general direction* of governmental policy" (Sabatier, 1991)**.** So, while the general public may not have individual agency and power in the policy change process, there is a notable strength in masses. Furthermore, influence is greater if citizens are given a platform to express their concerns are represented within an organisation or network.

These varying levels of influence held by the general public will therefore affect policy change on different levels. The categorisation of policy change in this paper as either the creation of new policy; change to an existing policy or; no change or creation of policy, falls somewhere within the spectrum of influence held by citizens.

Youth Participation

Naturally, there are differing views within communities and across cultures on who can, and should be, considered 'youth'. Given this consideration, Karen O'Brien, Elin Selboe, and Bronwyn M. Hayward highlight that when discussing 'youth', we are not only looking at an age group, but rather "a developmental stage characterized by expanding capacities and broadening perspectives, alongside the personal challenges associated with moving into adulthood" (O'Brien, et al., 2018). The attitudes, beliefs and values of children, adolescents, and youth can be influenced by several factors, including "gender, class, social expectations, ethnicity, life course, values, and education" (O'Brien, et al., 2018). It is important to note that, while this research report discusses 'youth' as a generalised group and subject of IR, young people should not be conceived as a homogenous group, who share similar desires and aspirations. Rather, there must be a conscious recognition that young people are active citizens, and thus social actors, who through their individual life experiences, hold complex identities and social standings.

The study of youth participation has gained prominence within academic debates and literature in the past decade – an evolution which should not come as a surprise, considering the potential power held by this group in society. Despite this growing space for literature, the existing discourse regarding youth participation and involvement often "portrays young people as apathetic and disengaged with political processes" (Tsekoura, 2016). An interesting binary exists around the complex relationship between young people and modern politics, with youth often "chastised as the apolitical harbingers of an emerging 'crisis of democracy', while simultaneously heralded as the authors of sophisticated new forms of politics" (Farthing, 2010). This preoccupation with the level of interest and engagement of youth in

the political space is inherently dependent on “how widely or narrowly politics is defined” (Roberts, 2015).

The shift towards the acknowledgment of youth as active agents in society implicitly leads researchers to study youth civic engagement and, by extension, active citizenry within younger populations. This can be defined as “individual or collective actions in which people participate to improve the well-being of a community or society in general, and which provide opportunities for reflection” (Bertozzi, 2015). Participation is inherently beneficial to the individual, in that it “fosters a sense of belonging to the community, and social and personal skills for political action” (Bertozzi, 2015), as well as being beneficial in the long-term, ensuring a better future for the community as whole.

When looking at youth participation, the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a significant treaty, which is a “source of a growing visibility and voice for children and young people in national societies and political institutions as well as in international organisations and policy-making” (Holzscheiter, 2018). The CRC emphasized and institutionalised the rights of children and young people in several spheres including birth rights of children, their right to care and adequate protection, their access to information, and several freedoms, including the freedom of expression, thought, religion, peaceful assembly. For the purposes of this report, the main Article of interest is Article 12, which revolutionized the human rights of children by “codifying political rights for children, most notably their right to participate and to be heard in all matters directly relevant to them” (Holzscheiter, 2018).

Article 12

> *1. State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*
> *2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.*

Over the last decade, the international community has made considerable progress in their understanding of young people as a "social group with its own value" (Tsekoura, 2016). This directly reflects the wider shifts in the conceptualisation of active citizenship, viewing children and young people as citizens within the public and social domain. Yet, when researching youthful political participation, an extreme binary exists – one which, due to its limited nature, fails to comprehensively explain young people's involvement and power held in the political space. One is confronted with either a disengaged paradigm "which sees young people as passive and devoid of political interest," or the engaged paradigm "which sees young people as actively political in new forms" (Farthing, 2010).

The characterisation of young people as disenfranchised and disengaged, in addition to being problematic at its core, is also particularly limited and biased. The criteria used to determine the level of apathy of young people is adult-centric – the older generation "define what a good citizen is, and young people, unsurprisingly, emerge as troubled and troublesome yet again" (Farthing, 2010). This view overlooks and undermines the capability of young people to (re)invent their individual forms of politics, thus "ignoring the youth-led creation of new forms of political participation" (Farthing, 2010).

There has been an attempt by those in leadership to include young people in decision making spaces and educate apathetic youth, but paradoxically, a "daunting array of discriminatory practices that marginalize young people in political practices" (Farthing, 2010), has resulted from these attempts. The debate around meaningful versus tokenistic youth participation has been explored by researcher Roger Hart who, almost 30 years ago, developed a model to describe the different forms of youth participation. His work built on earlier writing by Sherry Arnstein in 1969, where she discussed the ladder of citizen participation – an idea Hart adapted to the context of young people. Hart argued that participation was the process of sharing decisions that affect people's lives and the communities they live in. He believed that participation is the fundamental right of citizenship and an integral part of democracy.

At the centre of Hart's definition is decision-making. His interpretation of the ladder of participation divided youth participation into eight levels – with the bottom three representing "non-participation, where young people have no real understanding of the

issues but are engaged with in a very basic way to show they were involved" (UNICEF (multiple youth authors), 2019). The top five levels represent "genuine participation, where young people participate meaningfully by thoroughly understanding the issue and being directly involved in the decision-making process" (UNICEF (multiple youth authors), 2019). The final rung of the ladder, the highest level of participation, signifies situations where young people are able to use their full capacity by designing and managing their own initiatives and share these decisions with adults.

Processes within youth participation

Scholars studying social movements have long considered the importance of social movement organisations as a vital aspect in the potential success of a movement. Social movement organisations "organize events, mobilize participants, and recruit new activists into the movement" (Elliott & Earl, 2018). This paper will focus on transnational advocacy networks, which bring together actors "working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). These organisations do not simply come to exist as a result of oppression or injustice – their existence is dependent on activists who actively work to form these networks as they believe these platforms will further their advocacy mission(s). Activists are "people who care enough about some issue that they are prepared to incur significant costs and act to achieve their goals" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998), a characterisation which fits that of norm entrepreneurs. As such, these networks are voluntary, created by activists, for activists, with the goal of proliferation to influence behaviours of states and actors. Transnational advocacy networks "are organized to promote causes, principled ideas, and norms," and are centered on "principled ideas, the belief that individuals can make a difference, the creative use of information, and the employment by nongovernmental actors of sophisticated political strategies in targeting their campaigns" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

Specifically, within youth activism, these organisations and networks play a critical role in politically socializing young people. Social movement organisations are a primary 'vehicle' that collects, organises, and directs resources, both material and cognitive, towards advocacy. It is imperative that the power dynamics related to movements hailing from different parts

of the world are taken into consideration when discussing these spaces for youth activism. Specific movements and their accompanying norms hold more of a social and political currency in the global community depending on their origin and that of the norm entrepreneurs leading the movement. For the purposes of this research report, these social movement organisations and youth advocacy networks are an essential variable in the discourse of youth participation. This is for multiple reasons: firstly, these organisations and networks act as "primary supplier[s] of opportunities to engage in protest and advocacy" (Elliott & Earl, 2018). By playing a leading role in mobilising resources, these organisations and networks hold the power to frame their issues and the tactics used in their engagement. Secondly, by having a diverse group of organisations – a phenomenon made possible due to the varying issues and groups of activists present – these organisations and networks have a "diversity of ideology, strategy, tactics, and organizational forms within the same movement (Clemens & Minkoff, 2004), allowing these differences to attract more members to the movement overall as individuals find organizations that fit them well" (Elliott & Earl, 2018).

Finally, a key dynamic which must be noted when discussing modern processes in youth participation is the power of the internet and social media platforms. The transnational access afforded to youth activists through the internet is immeasurable – they have "new powerful tools for inquiry, analysis, self-expression, influence and play" (Holzscheiter, 2016). An unprecedented level of mobility exists, where the planet has been made so small, accessible from the palm of their hands. The internet and social media platforms give young activists important communications tools, making mass messaging and mobilisation easier than ever before. The use of digital platforms has been a defining characteristic of modern-day youth mobilisations. Being a highly digitally literate population, protesters have been able to communicate and share information instantaneously. Purbrick interestingly characterises the use of digital platforms by young protesters as a "gamification of protests" (Purbrick, 2019), due to the use of multiple platforms such as messaging app *Telegram* and sharing platform *AirDrop*. These spaces offer protesters secure spaces, facilitating exchanges of information which cannot be traced back to them. Even apps like *Tinder*, *Uber* and *Pokémon Go* have been repurposed to allow information to reach more people. The easy resharing of information allows content to quickly reach millions of users

A typology of youth participation

With growing displays of youth mobilisation and widespread manifestations of the anger and despair felt by young people, some academics have described the current global period as a new *age of dissent*. Dissent can be defined as "a conscious expression of disagreement with a prevailing view, policy, practice, decision, institution, or assumption" (O'Brien, et al., 2018). From a philosophical lens, Henry David Thoreau argues that "rather than perpetuating an injustice, citizens should follow their own conscience by doing what is right, even if this requires breaking the law" (O'Brien, et al., 2018). Simply put, Thoreau sees dissent as a duty of citizens, who should not simply obey unjust laws or governments which typically benefit a small group of political elites.

Within democracies, dissent materialises through processes of formal politics – political activism and political opposition. Karen O'Brien, Elin Selboe, and Bronwyn M. Hayward propose a typology to summarise the diverse ways young people are expressing their dissent. The typology, based on literature on youth activism and political theory, identifies three "interrelated ways of dissenting from the policies, systems, and relationships" (O'Brien, et al., 2018). These are: dutiful dissent, disruptive dissent, and dangerous dissent, and are not necessarily mutually exclusive, nor static in nature. This categorisation aims to "capture the different ways that youth activism engages with political power and is likely to contribute to desired changes in the status quo" (O'Brien, et al., 2018).

Dutiful dissent

This type of dissent "represents cases in which young people's concerns are voiced within existing or newly created institutional spaces" (O'Brien, et al., 2018). Here, youth activists participate in 'established cultural practices, political institutions, and decision-making processes' as a resistance to the status quo. A key feature of this dissent, however, is that it "seldom disrupts the underlying causes [of an issue]" (O'Brien, et al., 2018). Dutiful dissent obeys the contexts in which institutions, powerful actors, and the economic systems, exist, remaining "dutiful to their logic and existence" (O'Brien, et al., 2018). Finally, dutiful dissent allows for the provision of skills and insights to young activists. This better understanding of

the social, economic, and political landscape “may inspire or motivate engagement with other types of dissent, including more disruptive modes” (O'Brien, et al., 2018).

Disruptive dissent

The second type of dissent refers to a “type of activism that arises when young citizens…question and seek to modify or change existing political and economic structures, which include norms, rules, regulations, and institutions” (O'Brien, et al., 2018). This is an explicit, and direct, challenge to power politics, through forms of collective mobilisation against political authorities and actors who hold power over an issue. This dissent highlights the underlying origins of the issue from a political, social, and economic perspective. Disruptive dissenters “are more interested in critiquing, challenging, and changing the system than working dutifully within it,” in direct opposition to dutiful dissenters. Through their process of direct critique and action, this type of dissent can “create new spaces for alternative political voices and actors and “unveil” the underlying power dynamics and interests behind what might seem as neutral, unavoidable, or common-sense arrangements and policies” (O'Brien, et al., 2018).

Dangerous dissent

The final type of dissent comes in the form of “political activism that defies business as usual by initiating, developing, and actualizing alternatives that inspire and sustain long-term transformations” (O'Brien, et al., 2018). While this can include a wide array of tactics, ideas, and actions, the underlying focus of dangerous dissent is the degree of threat this behaviour presents to established actors and institutions. The ‘danger’ of this type of dissent is found in its generation of “new and alternative systems, new ways of doing things, new types of economic relationships, and new ways of organizing society,” coupled with young activists claiming back their own power and political agency (O'Brien, et al., 2018). While not always strategic, dangerous dissent by a group usually involves clear goals and a vision of the future they want, going beyond the critiques of disruptive dissent. Dangerous dissent emerges when the values and perspectives of young people deviate from those in power, then flourishes “when young activists learn how to sustain these new values and actions, gaining not only a sense of self transcendence that can support activism in the face of repeated

disappointment…but also new solidarities with other groups that enrich and re-energize the process of effecting desired change" (O'Brien, et al., 2018).

The discourse on youth participation is still growing, with several debates ongoing and much space for the development of theory. Expanding on this field of research is beneficial to all actors. Empirically, the research may guide one towards more focused thinking around agenda-setting and decision-making within youth advocacy movements on key issues. Academically, the research may prompt conceptualisations of the role of youth advocates as non-state actors and norm entrepreneurs in IR.

Chapter three: Youth Movements and Advocacy in IR

In their pursuit to gather support for an emerging norm, norm entrepreneurs do not exist as sole actors, on their own. Rather they form part of larger groups, networks, and communities which support them in challenging existing norms, influencing actors to adopt emergent norms, as well as holding those who have already adopted the norm accountable. These networks can exist on a local, national, regional, or international level, and have the capacity to gather hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people around a single cause. In modern displays of youth-led advocacy, specifically within an increasingly globalised world, networks are a powerful tool for mobilisation, able to transcend borders and connect actors who would have previously never interacted.

Youth movements are not new – the student movements of the 60's and 70's, anticolonial movements led by young activists, anti-communist revolutions in Eastern Europe, the Colour Revolutions, the Occupy Movement, the Umbrella Revolution, and the Arab Spring, are only but some examples of young people coming together in protest, calling out issues they are passionate about. These are only a few of the higher profile mobilisations which have had some effect on (recorded) global history; it is important to note that "coverage of youth mobilisations since the beginning of the twentieth century is neither exhaustive nor representative" (Roberts, 2015).

Understanding Transnational Advocacy Networks

While the frequency, size and professionalism of transnational advocacy networks have impressively developed over the past three decades, they are not a new phenomenon, having existed, and played a vital role in historical issues such as the abolishment of slavery, the LGBTQ+ movement and those fighting for voting rights. Transnational advocacy networks are better organised, larger, denser, and able to act in a faster manner than ever before. Their ability to disseminate information quickly, gain greater visibility, and in turn access to greater numbers of potential supporters, and the multiplication of channels for institutional access, are what make transnational advocacy networks so powerful and important.

The act of advocacy, which from its etymology, implies "speaking on behalf of or pleading the cause of others" (Adebayo, 2017). For this article, we conceptualise advocacy by young people as actions and activities started by them directly or facilitated by youth-led groups to influence norms, societal behaviours, the allocation of resources, political decisions and polices. Transnational networks are exceptionally influential is this regard as they have the capacity to link local activists with other activists and media sources abroad. This creates an interesting 'shopping' dynamic where activists can explore the "entire global scene for the best venues to present their issues and seek points of leverage at which to apply pressure" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). This amplification of voices and garnering of support internationally strengthens the advocacy efforts of youth activists and has the potential to legitimise the efforts of these activists to influence norms.

These networks add specific value in contexts where the political structure in a specific country is closed, with limited or blocked channels for participation. In this case, these activists aim to connect, through these networks, with other activists who "have better access to their own governments or to international organizations." Keck and Sikkink conceptualise the efficacy of these networks in various stages: (Keck & Sikkink, 1998)

> *"(1) by framing debates and getting issues on the agenda; (2) by encouraging discursive commitments from states and other policy actors; (3) by causing procedural change at the international and domestic level; (4) by affecting policy; and (5) by influencing behavior changes in target actors."*

The mechanisms of transnational advocacy networks – approaches, tactics, and actions

Understanding how these advocacy networks work – their tactics, methods, and strategies – assists scholars in better understanding the nature of the issues covered, what these networks add to the movement, what they need to succeed, and what has aided their success in the past, and by extension, what would support their success in the future. Ordinarily, many of these advocacy networks tackle issues surrounding rights, or some kind of manifestation of an issue surrounding rights. They primarily target governments, as well as leading

organisations and key actors. This is not a surprising occurrence as those in power are seen to be the primary guarantors of rights, but they are also the primary violators of these rights. And so, these networks work to uphold the social contract between citizens and those in governance. Keck and Sikkink offer a typology of the tactics used by transnational advocacy networks in their efforts to persuade, socialise and pressure:

> "(1) *information politics,* or the ability to quickly and credibly generate politically usable information and move it to where it will have the most impact; (2) *symbolic politics,* or the ability to call upon symbols, actions, or stories that make sense of a situation for an audience that is frequently far away; (3) *leverage politics,* or the ability to call upon powerful actors to affect a situation where weaker members of a network are unlikely to have influence; and (4) *accountability politics,* or the effort to hold powerful actors to their previously stated policies or principles" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

As introduced, networks "bring new ideas, norms, and discourses into policy debates, and serve as sources of information and testimony," as well as "promot[ing] norm implementation, by pressuring target actors to adopt new policies, and by monitoring compliance with international standards" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Technological and cultural advances have significantly contributed to the emergence and success of transnational advocacy networks, allowing for "faster, cheaper, and more reliable [distribution of] international information" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998), removing the monopolies held by those in power over this information.

Information is the most powerful currency when it comes to advocacy networks and the work they do, specifically as these networks do not hold as much power as states do, in the traditional understanding of the word. Framing is a key tactic used here to make the issues advocated for "fit into particular institutional venues and that make them resonate with broader publics" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Norm entrepreneurs work to raise awareness around their issues by reframing these using more vivid or intense language to grasp the attention of actors. Examples of this can be seen in advocacy around female circumcision, which advocates titled female genital mutilation; or advocacy on climate change, which has been reframed as the climate crisis. This reframing invokes some kind of emotional response – anger, disgust,

shock, urgency – which is used by norm entrepreneurs to persuade and socialise actors to adopt an emerging norm. Advocacy networks do not only reason with opponents, but they also bring "pressure, arm-twisting, encouraging sanctions, and shaming" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

The efficacy of these networks is further influenced by their strength and density, which can be understood as "the total number and size of organizations in the network, and the regularity of their exchanges" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). The strength and density come from both the identity of the network and their structural relationships they hold. Another key consideration when analysing the effectiveness of these networks lies in their targets. Specifically, the vulnerability of these actors to material and moral issues which can be leveraged by the advocacy networks. This vulnerability can manifest as a result of prior normative commitments made by the targeted actor which can be scrutinised and called out by activists. The sense of vulnerability can increase around times of crisis or major change in the global context. Finally, this vulnerability "may simply represent a desire to maintain good standing in valued international groupings" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

Transnational advocacy networks within IR theory

Being driven by morals and values instead of material concerns, these activist networks fall outside the traditional categories explored by academics, and so, scholars and researchers have "been slow to recognize either the rationality or the significance of activist networks" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Advocacy networks are significant, in that they do not only work towards policy and behavioural changes but go further to "to transform the terms and nature of the debate" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). If they succeed, these networks can be considered crucial actors in explaining changes in global politics.

Theoretically, when discussing the global context wherein these advocacy networks operate, Keck and Sikkink argue that the international system should not be understood as anarchical, but rather an 'international society'. Subscribing to this framing of an international society entails that states "conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another and share in the working of common institutions" (Keck & Sikkink,

1998). As such, the constructivist narrative, stressing norms, social relationships and intersubjective understanding between actors is particularly strong.

As subjects in IR, transnational advocacy networks, who are non-state actors, gain influence, and thus power, through their position as sources of not only alternative information, but of personal testimony. Being able to use the voices of real people, activist networks tell stories to simply frame their issues, in terms of right and wrong. This clear 'black and white' setup notably arouses strong emotions allowing the networks to "recruit volunteers and activists and infuse meaning into these volunteer activities" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

Ultimately, the notion of transnational advocacy networks plays a vital role in understanding the relationships and interactions between states and non-state actors in an international system. This conceptualisation offers "domestic actors a degree of agency that a more state-centric approach[es] would not admit" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998), as transnational advocacy networks provide multiple entry points into the international political arena, which is typically limited to those elite in power. While states are still central actors in IR, advocacy networks provide domestic actors with support and allyship outside of their own communities.

Chapter four: Empirical Research

#FridaysForFuture

Climate change is an issue that is rapidly changing the world, with rising temperatures, melting ice caps and the loss of natural life – scholars claim that "we are experiencing a 'tipping era'" (Knops, 2021) (Citton & Rasmi 2020). Determining policies to deal with the effects of climate change will have a profound effect on the future – one where young people are at the centre.

In the year 2019, the world witnessed an unprecedented social movement which "succeeded to grasp the attention of the world and its political leaders" (de Moor, et al., 2020). The global movement, #FridaysForFuture (FFF), also known as the School Strike for Climate (*Skolstrejk för Klimatet)* started in August 2018, and was notably started by a young person, Greta Thunberg, and continues to be led by young people. According to their website, the global strike takes place on Friday every week "with fellow students and activists uniting around the world to protest outside their local parliaments and city halls" (Fridays For Future, 2021).

This empirical chapter will provide climate and environmental movements which came before the FFF movement, as to create an understanding of the field of advocacy to be discussed. Thereafter, a specific focus on FFF will follow, analysing the history of the movement as well as the tactics used as part of the movement. The leading activist, and arguably norm entrepreneur, Greta Thunberg, will then be discussed. Finally, a discussion will follow on whether the FFF movement can truly be considered 'special'. This will allow us to explore the research question of whether youth advocates can be considered substantial norm entrepreneurs in relation to policy change discourse.

This case study aligns with the research, as the ultimate goal of the movement, according to their lead activists is "to put moral pressure on policymakers, to make them listen to the scientists, and then to take forceful action to limit global warming" (Fridays For Future, 2021).

Furthermore, this case is interesting as it was not a coordinated effort to begin with, but the norm was able to spread globally.

The history of climate movements

Advocacy around climate issues is not new. Since the 1960s, and arguably before, countless grassroots groups used their voices to highlight the necessity of preserving the earth. The focus on environmental conservation and preservation of the planet for the next generation, was a central advocacy point for many. When looking at this from the lens of social movements theory, it is clear that "the groundwork for environmentalism as a social movement was laid in the last decades of the twentieth century" (García, 2020). Global warming "intermittently received attention as an urgent social problem in the 1970s and 1980s" (de Moor, et al., 2020), expressed through several considerable protests throughout the 1990s, but it was the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties 15 (COP15) summit, which took place in Copenhagen in 2009, which is considered a critical turning point for transnational mobilisation of climate activism. More than 100 000 protesters took part in demonstrations in Copenhagen – but globally, several simultaneous protest events occurred. The failure of countries to adopt a strong agreement, rather only proposing an 'accord' drew widespread condemnation.

While COP15 is heralded for its significance, the history of large climate summits finds its origin in the 1979 World Climate Conference which took place in Geneva, which led to the formation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1998. This group, formed by the UN, was "devoted to factfinding and scientific assessment of anthropogenic climate change" (García, 2020). The UNFCCC, a principal multilateral agreement, was issued and has been in effect since 1994. Following from this, all signatories of the Convention have convened annually for COP – the supreme decision-making body of the Convention. Environmental organisations have been present at every meeting, calling for stronger and more stringent climate agreements. The shift to specific interest in, and advocacy around, climate change, comes as a result of more widely available and discussed scientific findings.

The adoption of the Paris Agreement at COP21 in 2015 notably "agreed to reduce CO2 emissions and maintain global average temperature rise well below 2°C" (García, 2020). Despite the general hesitation around this high-profile COP, Paris was seen as "another opportunity to generate momentum and attention," by activists (de Moor, et al., 2020). The narrative around climate change had in itself, changed. Instead of purely focusing on the effects of global warming, advocates and climate scientists highlighted the "imminent and irreversible change," that would result from a lack of action (García, 2020). A sense of urgency now marked the movement.

When analysing this social movement, the rise in climate activism can be attributed to several corresponding causes. Three key triggers are discussed by Joost de Moor, Michiel De Vydt, Katrin Uba & Mattias Wahlström. Firstly, the increase of easily accessible scientific research highlighted the urgency of the situation. This was paired with an increasing level of media attention, allowing the issue to spread easily and widely. Secondly, it is argued that a process of 'climatization' occurred, where "actors…increasingly realized that climate change was the talk of the town and presented a necessary hook to advance their causes" (de Moor, et al., 2020). And finally, the climate movement managed to 'spill over' into the more prominent global justice movement, who in turn significantly strengthened the climate justice division of the social movement. Overall, there was a rise in the prominence, size and reach of the climate movement.

History of #FridaysForFuture

Skipping school to sit with a single poster in protest, in the Mynttorget, or 'Coin Square' in her hometown Stockholm, Greta Thunberg started her Skolstrejk för Klimatet on 20 August 2018. She has stated that her motivation to start the protest, which in turn became a global movement, was a scientific paper published in 2017 that highlighted that world leaders had three years left to meet the goals laid out in the Paris Agreement. Thunberg continued her protest in front of the Swedish parliament up until the parliamentary election on September 9th. She received vast amounts of publicity, both within Sweden, but also internationally, which resulted in "people joining in, demonstrating with her, and raising their voices online as well as offline" (García, 2020). The global movement, #FridaysForFuture was born on Friday

7 September, where every Friday, protesters – notably children and youth – would boycott school, work, or their usual plans to strike and raise awareness around climate change. These climate strikes, sometimes taking place under different names such as *Youth for Climate* or *School Strikes for Climate*, where fundamentally linked to Thunberg's FFF movement.

According to their website, the movement has over 14 million people involved, in 7 500 cities, across 210 countries. These strikers have collectively organised and partaken in 96 000 strike events (Fridays For Future, 2021). When describing what it is that they do, the website states:

> *"We are fighting for our future and our lives because they are directly threatened by the climate crisis and the ecological breakdown. We are taking action against it because we want to protect the beauty of the earth, the diversity of species and the lives of all beings. Our goal is to overcome the climate crisis and to create a society that lives in harmony with its fellow beings and its environment"* (Fridays For Future, 2021).

The movement held their first Global Climate strike on 15 March 2019, where an estimated one million protestors were mobilised globally. The media attention which the movement received allowed the movement to expand "outside the Global North, with emerging voices asking for change also coming from the Global South" (García, 2020). The largest global mobilisation, and subsequent peak in media attention for the movement, occurred in September 2019, where, from the 20th-27th of September around the UN Climate Action Summit, over six million people came together in a global strike, calling out the climate emergency, under the banner of FFF. Their goals are outlined as: (Fridays For Future, 2021)

> *"The goal of the movement is to put moral pressure on policymakers, to make them listen to the scientists, and then to take forceful action to limit global warming.*
> *Our movement is independent of commercial interests and political parties and knows no borders.*
> *We strike because we care for our planet and for each other. We have hope that humanity can change, avert the worst climate disasters and build a better future.*
> *Every day there are more of us and together we are strong. Everyone is welcome. Everyone is needed. No one is too small to make a difference."*

Just as the movement was gaining a great deal of attention, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in societal lockdowns internationally. The 'new normal' forced the movement to move away from their signature street protests and turn to online protests, a dynamic which played a significant role on the global movement.

Advocacy tactics used in #FridaysForFuture

As mentioned, the FFF movement was able to mobilise young people, and allies, across the world, in their masses, around norms including climate justice and youth activism. Their approach to advocacy began as physical mobilisation of protestors through marches, rallies, and meet-ups, but soon grew to be one which focuses on awareness raising through the sharing of critical scientific data in a manner that anyone can understand. The use of social media has been a notable feature of the movement. A simple Twitter search for *Fridays For Future* accounts yields hundreds of results – from the international page, to country level, and even community level accounts.

FFF have been particularly successful in framing their advocacy issue – a key tactic employed by social movements and norm entrepreneurs. Climate activism in previous years focused on a personalised, 'do it yourself' rhetoric, where individuals were called upon to change the behaviours and the development of grassroots solutions was advocated for. With FFF, we see a "return to state…[where] FFF explicitly demands that politicians "listen to the science," and follow the Paris agreement" (de Moor, et al., 2020). The movement claims that it is not the responsibility of young activist citizens to come forward with solutions to a crisis which was caused by the older generation – this falls on politicians and the gatekeepers of policy change. Activists rely on more aggressive emotions, such as anger and outrage, to denounce behaviour which they see as unethical and immoral – a tactic notably used by the lead norm entrepreneur in the movement, Greta Thunberg.

Through their mass protests, school boycotts and informational campaigns, these activists have successfully been able to place pressure on politicians, with German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, having passed a climate package that, among other things, "bans the sale of new oil

heaters from 2026 onward and put a price of 10 euros, for each ton of carbon dioxide emitted from transport and heating fuels" (Braw, 2019). Merkel stated that "they (Fridays For Future protestors) certainly drove us to speed up." According to European Union Ambassador Riina Kionka, the EU is now turning its political aim of becoming the first climate neutral continent by 2050 into a legal commitment.

The move to a remote, notably online version, of protest has caused a fundamental shift in the tactics of the movement. Different options are available in different countries, with some activists able to host socially distanced protests, while others are forced to only use social media, radio, and the internet to host #DigitalStrikes. Even with the initial viral nature of these online strikes, social media proved to be a much less effective approach. Due to the nature of the platforms, posts are seen and simply fall away to make room for the next. This, combined with the phenomena of echo chambers – where users see content they already engage with – meant that the messages of the global digital strike where not likely to reach new audiences. This is a core issue for the movement whose foundation rests upon visible public events, where mass mobilisation was used to gain media attention and momentum.

But the current scenario is not all bad. This sudden global shock has forced the movement to reframe their issue once again, which, if the norm entrepreneurs behind the movement capitalise on, can have far-reaching positive effects. This is a time for leaders to rethink their approaches and narratives and create new content to disseminate.

A leading norm entrepreneur: Greta Thunberg

One cannot discuss the FFF without discussing Greta Thunberg. When analysing the movement, the message of protestors is not new, nor are their methods of civil disobedience through mass demonstrations and awareness raising campaigns. But it is notable that Thunberg's approach stands out, where she was "demanding attention, at least at the start, on her own: her own life was at stake" (García, 2020). Thunberg is known for her emphatic speeches which call out global leadership on the climate crisis. Her remarks at the New York Climate Action Summit, where crucial in bringing the climate movement to the forefront. Thunberg, who had famously travelled to America on "a zero-emissions vessel," used her

opportunity to speak to global leaders in politics, business, and international organisations, as well as millions of youth activists and citizens around the world to emotionally denounce the empty promises which had been made at previous global climate meetings. Her words resonated with youth around the world, and pushed the agenda forward: (García, 2020)

> *This is all wrong. I shouldn't be up here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet, you all come to us, young people, for hope. How dare you? You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words – Greta Thunberg, September 2019*

Thunberg's role as a norm entrepreneur and leader is one of a "bullied, vulnerable girl, who has been diagnosed with depression, an eating disorder, OCD, Asperger's and selective mutism, among other issues" (García, 2020). But it is her ability to embody her vulnerability which makes Thunberg's action more rebellious – outside the view of appropriate behaviour – as a norm entrepreneur. Thunberg has been extremely vocal about her struggles, reworking and framing her reality as one of a young woman, exercising her socio-political rights, as opposed to a victim of circumstance. This reframing "strategically casts her story as one of "testimonial agency" (García, 2020). An example of this is seen in her 2018 Ted Talk where Thunberg described her trauma, but strategically concluded on an unmistakeably powerful note: (García, 2020)

> *"when I was 11, I became ill. I fell into depression, I stopped talking, and I stopped eating. In two months, I lost about 10 kilos of weight. Later on, I was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, OCD and selective mutism. That basically means I only speak when I think it is necessary. Now is one of those moments."*

Greta Thunberg's role in the (re)emergence of the climate movement is undeniable. She has indirectly mobilised millions of people, from all walks of life, in the pursuit of a climate just world. And she did this all as a young person.

The perceived novelty of #FridaysForFuture

While the FFF movement has made notable strides in the climate change advocacy space, one must be cautious not to laud this as a novel occurrence, with little or no prior interest in climate change existing before the movement. As with norms, social movements do not emerge within a social vacuum, and so, the characterisation of the movement representing "a new climate activism" (de Moor, et al., 2020), needs to be scrutinised before commending it as a novel phenomenon.

The prominent use of social media platforms to mobilise children and young people suggests "a link between 'children's use of digital media' and 'their embodied performance of rights'" (García, 2020). The movement's strategic use of memorable messaging and catchy hashtags has played an integral role in its proliferation. But this depiction of FFF as being a leader in this regard may be misdirected. Two significant movements, Zero Hour, founded in 2017; and Extinction Rebellion, founded in 2018, share similar tactics to that of FFF, and within the norm life cycle have reached the second stage, norm cascade. With this in mind, one questions "why Fridays for Future has subsequently been portrayed as such a novel enterprise" (García, 2020). Determining this perceived novelty requires an analysis of the actors involved, methods utilised and motivation behind the movement.

When we look at the FFF movement, the framing of those involved, with a focus on children and youth, strategically "garners support for children whose welfare is at stake" (García, 2020). This is opposed to Zero Hour which is (older) youth-led and Extinction Rebellion which is adult-led. Furthermore, the efficacy of FFF can also be attributed to the fact that the act of disobedience committed by children purposefully skipping school to protest is much more impactful as children are treated as minors within society. Children and youth hold a distinct position on activism as they are able to "showcase the transnational and transgenerational potential of activism" (García, 2020). Furthermore, when analysing the actors involved, the FFF activists, over and above being young, are also 'first timers' to civil disobedience. Usually, participants of protest events are rarely new to the advocacy space, but the FFF movement has mobilised young people, women, girls, and children who "experience activism for the first

time, potentially putting them on track to remain politically engaged throughout their lives" (de Moor, et al., 2020).

The approach of FFF "emphasizes the generational aspect of climate justice more strongly than any previous campaign" (de Moor, et al., 2020), and as mentioned earlier, blame is placed on politicians and global leaders, as opposed to calling on citizens to bear the responsibility to act. As with Extinction Rebellion, FFF targets local, national, and international actors. This focus on governments, NGOs, INGOs and institutions on all levels has acted in the favour of the movement which is led by impassioned activist who are ready and willing to directly call out leadership. The movement is faced with new challenges, in light of the global changes brought forward by the Covid-19 pandemic. This potential for radical change will make for compelling research in the months to come.

Chapter five: Conclusion

This research report aimed to better understand the role of, and relative degree of power held by, youth-led advocacy campaigns in influencing policy discourse, analysed through the lens of norm theory. By analysing the theory surrounding norms, policy formulation and youth participation, the paper aimed to find a nexus between the three, in an attempt to gain clarity as to why some issues raised by young advocates find emergence at some point and others do not.

In the second chapter, the paper outlined the theoretical framework which underpinned the research; namely, norms, policy change, and youth participation theory. Here, the various theoretical debates in existence were acknowledged, and the research report was framed within the social constructivist narrative which recognises the value of ideas, norms and institutions within IR. This chapter set the parameters of this research report and explained the key variables and concepts needed for the research.

The focus of the discussion of norms theory was on understanding the norm life cycle proposed by Finnemore and Sikkink. This analytical framework is a vital tool in understanding how norms influence change within society. Particularly within this research scope, which is driven by questions of change, norm theory played a considerably important role. This section of the report defined norms and norm theory, then moved into a discussion on norms within IR theory, under a constructivist approach, followed by an analysis of norm entrepreneurs, who in this paper are characterised as youth activists.

Thereafter the chapter gave a brief overview of policy change theory, where the important process of “enlightenment” was introduced. Here, it is argued that increased exposure to research and information can, over time, influence decision makers. This is an important conclusion to reach as the paper explicitly differentiates between policy change and policy change discourse.

Finally, the chapter discussed youth participation theory, with a focus on acknowledging young people as active agents within society. The discussion on meaningful youth engagement was introduced and the an analysis of the processes within youth participation was given. The section concluded by providing a typology of youth participation, framing the engagement of youth as acts of dissent.

The third chapter identified the role played by norms within change, and by extension, policy change discourse, as well as the relevance of youth as actors within IR. The third chapter proceeded to discuss the linkages between youth activists and their role within the norms discourse, specifically as norm entrepreneurs. Here, the importance of transnational advocacy networks on the experiences and interactions of norm entrepreneurs and leaders was discussed. This framing spoke directly to the characteristic mechanism of the norm emergence stage: organisational platforms for norm entrepreneurs.

The empirical case study of the #FridaysForFuture climate movement was analysed in chapter four. This youth-led advocacy network has succeeded in mobilising millions of activists around the world. The FFF movement has clearly illustrated that children and youth are important agents for change within IR, actively engaging on issues that affect them, as opposed to simply being recipients of action and change.

This final chapter aims to draw conclusions from the research provided, by analysing the relationships between young people, norms, and changes in policy discourse. This will address the questions: *Is there a growing importance of youth-led advocacy in relation to policy change discourse? Can youth advocates be considered substantial norm entrepreneurs in the field of norm theory?* The chapter will speak to the relationship between the determinants, the findings of the research report and the relevance of such findings for future research and engagement with youth, as well as a consideration of recommendations and next steps.

Determinants: youth activists, norm entrepreneurship and policy change

Norms and their capacity to create change

It has been established that the conduct of states, who are seen as the main actors in IR discourse, can no longer rely on the explanatory capacity of a realist understanding of power balances. Rather, there is a growing space in literature which points to the role played by soft power and institutions, premised on ideas, values, and norms. This narrative has been met with significant resistance from scholars who do not recognise the explanatory power of norms in relation to change, and in the situations where these scholars do acknowledge the role of norms, they limit this to a recognition of norms as intervening variables. The research examined the views of different IR scholars on the role and relative importance of norms within the discourse of change, with realists categorising norms and ideas as intervening variables in processes of change, and neoliberal institutionalism ascribing a limited causal role to norms and ideas. The view of regime theorists and constructivists is better aligned with this research report. Here the argument is made, firstly, that norms have a direct impact on the behaviour of actors, as they hold some explanatory power as a variable that intervenes between underlying power distributions and outcomes. The acknowledgement that norms never enter into a vacuum, and rather emerge by competing with existing norms, highlights the additional power norms have in shifting the importance and prioritisation of competing global norms, therefore compelling states to (re)form their behaviours based on these changes. Furthermore, the key characterisation of norms as not denoting actual behaviour, but leaning rather towards a recognition of oughtness, aligns with the argument that norms have the power to compel states to change or adapt, through the behavioural influence which an assessment of oughtness exerts.

As this paper focuses on change, the first conclusion to be reached from the research is that the relationship between norms and policy change is not linked in a manner which allows for the use of norm theory to track a direct, independent, and quantifiable causal relationship between norms and policy change. As will be reiterated later, however, this does not prove that such an assessment is impossible, but rather that the analytical and methodological tools

provided by norm theory and research hold a different capacity. Specifically, the research has demonstrated that norms play a significant role in the creation and proliferation of conversations surrounding change, fuelling crucial debates and deliberations on issues for which actors believe some form of change is necessary. This leads to a recognition that the creation of successful laws and policies is dependent on an understanding and acknowledgment of the power and importance of social norms. And so, while norm theory cannot necessarily establish a direct and measurable link between norms and policy change, one can conclude that norms are capable of greatly affecting the discourse around policy change, where that discourse is itself an important component of the change process. This conclusion is supported by the policy change theory of "enlightenment," where it is argued by Sabatier that the information gathered, and discussion held on an issue gradually affects the perceptions of decisionmakers on an issue. Therefore, it is the discourse surrounding an issue which ultimately establishes and changes perceptions on the seriousness of issues, and on the causes which emerge as dominant norms in society.

The second conclusion to be reached is that the power of norms is primarily situated within actors and individuals, but that the social and political contexts of said individuals inherently affects the influence they will have and the power of the norms they will impact. This should be recognised on two levels: primarily, norms originate as a response to the needs and desires of actors within society. Secondly, these actors in society are the main groups who adopt and support norms, and then influence other actors and states to do the same. As norms are linked to actors and individuals, who are themselves constantly evolving along with their needs, this consideration complements the fact that norms are, by definition, elusive in nature and constantly change at various points of time and place in the world. Ultimately, one may conclude that the individuals, and by extension norm entrepreneurs, play a critical role and therefore have considerable power in policy change discourse.

The final conclusion to be drawn, regarding the capacity of norms to create change, is that the framing around the strength of norms must be considered as a relative measurement. As opposed to conceptualising weak and strong norms, it is preferable to discuss weaker or stronger norms over a period of time. This is integral in analysing a norm which has existed within society but has undergone some sort of change as a result of norm entrepreneurs or

antipreneurs. This is seen in the empirical study of Fridays for Future explored in this paper, where the norm around climate change has existed for a significant period of time, but has become noticeably stronger in recent times, specifically after a new norm entrepreneur, young people, engaged with the norm. This conceptualisation of norm strength allows for a conclusion that the existence of young people and youth-led advocacy networks has a positive impact on the existence, emergence, and institutionalisation of norms.

Youth as actors in International Relations

This research report draws attention to the need for scholars to view young people, and specifically youth activists, as important agents for change within the study of IR and not simply recipients of action and change. The binary which exists when describing the relationship between young people and modern politics, either as apathetic and disengaged or as heroes of new sophisticated forms of politics, must be dismantled. The research has shown that young people exist on a spectrum of engagement, which changes in response to the personal growth of young people and the contexts in which they exist and interact with policy. Furthermore, young people can engage under different typologies of dissent, where they are either (1) dutiful to the status quo and engage within the limits of actors and institutions; or they are (2) disruptive in their dissent where they explicitly challenge power dynamics and seek to change existing social structures; and finally, they can be (3) dangerous in their dissent by threatening the status quo and fighting for alternative systems which would fundamentally change the way society functions. The empirical study on the FFF movement is an example of disruptive dissent, where activists have directly targeted global leaders and request for a change in social structure, in their response to the climate crisis

Young people are a particularly interesting actor to have in the space of IR due to their changing nature. While the term ‘youth’ denotes a specific age group in society, the research has introduced the idea that ‘youth’ relates to “a developmental stage characterized by expanding capacities and broadening perspectives, alongside the personal challenges associated with moving into adulthood” (O'Brien, et al., 2018). This characterisation implies that, as young people develop and mature, their perspectives evolve in response to the influences of different factors in their lives. The geographical, social, and political contexts of

young people add a further layer of complexity to them as agents of social change. For example, the lived experience of a young woman living in the global south holds levels of complex analysis when compared to her counterpart in the global north. The situations of different young people will further influence their interaction with society, and by extension, their interactions with social norms. When young people are considered as active social actors within IR research who hold complex identities and social standing, scholars are better able to understand the influences they may have on society – an imperative dynamic to which this paper has alluded.

A second conclusion to be drawn from the research on youth within IR is the notable gap in theory with regards to meaningful youth engagement and participation, as opposed to that which is tokenistic in nature. It is noted in the research that the debate on meaningful vs tokenistic engagement has been led by individual actors and organisations. The internalisation of the principles of meaningful engagement and participation has had a considerably slow uptake within organisations and platforms for youth engagement, but there is a notable lack of discourse on this within political contexts, specifically within governments who attempt to engage with their citizens.

Research on youth participation is still being explored, with several debates ongoing and much space for the development of theory. As discussed earlier, an expansion of this field of research would be beneficial academically, as the research may prompt conceptualisations of the role of youth advocates as non-state actors and norm entrepreneurs. Furthermore, empirically, it would guide more focused thinking around agenda-setting and decision-making within youth advocacy movements on key issues.

Youth activists within the norms discourse

After deducing the role which norms play within research on change and the relevance of youth as actors within IR, the final link to be made is between youth activists and their role within the norms discourse, specifically as norm entrepreneurs. The conclusions reached in this section will respond directly to the research question on whether young people can be

considered significant norm entrepreneurs within IR, by highlighting the role played by youth activists in the first stage of the norm life cycle, *norm emergence.*

Firstly, this paper has explored the study of norms in IR and how young people fit into the frameworks provided by norm theory. While norms themselves are not tangible variables, scholars are able to study them through the "extensive trail of communication" that is left behind among actors who engage with these norms (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). When applying this logic to young people within norms discourse, the potential 'trails' of communication which are left behind and can be studied by scholars is extremely vast, especially considering the technologically advanced context in which many young activists operate, as well as the increasingly interconnected nature of society. Young activists strategically use the internet and social media platforms to distribute information about their causes through the sharing of images and videos in real time, to be seen by thousands of followers around the world. Young activists also leave behind trails of communication in the form of manifestos and youth statements created and shared at large events. These are resources that may be studied to map the influence which norm entrepreneurs have on an emergent norm.

Another key area of discussion within norm theory is the relationship between domestic and international norms. Here the research shows that many international norms began as domestic norms and became international as a result of the efforts of norm entrepreneurs. This contextualisation is interesting in terms of youth-led advocacy, as most youth-led campaigns do not start off as global movements, but rather start small, locally, or regionally, and slowly gain prominence. Examples of this can be seen in the case of the FFF movement, the #MilkTea movement and the Arab Spring, among others. Then there is the consideration that norms are elusive by nature. While this changing nature might be seen as detrimental for some, the nature of young people in being quick to adapt to change aids this group in being effective norm entrepreneurs, as they are able to 'keep up' with norm changes. As discussed, the period of 'youth' is one signified by growth, and so these constant changes and adaptations which young people undergo act in their favour in this context.

Secondly, this paper has examined the dynamics of norms within norm theory and how young activists employ different methods and tactics within their activism. When discussing norms, scholars refer to the distinct ability of norm entrepreneurs to call attention to or even create issues through framing – where language is strategically used to name, interpret, and dramatize the issues being raised. This tactic is one which is clearly used by youth activists during their advocacy campaigns to mobilise support. This can be seen in the creation and use of catchy hashtags which quickly gain momentum online, drawing attention to the issue. Some examples of these include #FeesMustFall in South Africa during student protests for free tertiary education, #NotTooYoungToRun in Nigeria during protests for younger political representation in government, #FightForHongKong in Hong Kong during the Umbrella Revolution and #BlackLivesMatter in the United States demanding racial justice, equity and liberation. In addition to hashtags, youth activists are successful in framing issues in a way that evokes an emotional response from potential supporters. The example given in the empirical case study on climate change saw the reframing of climate change as a climate crisis – a move which draws out the urgency and impending sense of doom when thinking about the climate.

A fundamental point within the dynamics of norms is that, when attempting to introduce a new norm, norm entrepreneurs must move against firmly embedded alternative norms, thus challenging the robustness of said norm. The research outlines how norm entrepreneurs may need to be explicitly inappropriate in their actions and behaviours to oppose these norms. When applying this narrative to youth activists, we have historically seen that youth-led movements are willing and ready to do whatever is necessary to succeed. This can be traced to the motivation of these norm entrepreneurs to act – empathy, altruism, and ideational commitment. Most youth-led advocacy movements concern themselves with current issues affecting communities, such as financial constraints, racial injustice, political abuses, and environmental concerns, but these issues can also have far-reaching negative effects on future generations if not dealt with now. As such, we can conclude that young people as norm entrepreneurs are driven by the feelings and welfare of others (empathy), they do put others ahead of themselves (altruism), and they are driven and passionate about the issues they advocate for (ideational commitment).

The final key consideration regarding norm entrepreneurs is their need for some kind of organisational platform, from (and through) which they can promote their norm. The research explains how these platforms can be "specifically created or constructed for the purpose of norm promotion" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998), or norm entrepreneurs may join and work with existing organisations. In the research, there was a specific focus on transnational advocacy networks as a key example of these organisational platforms needed by norm entrepreneurs. These networks offer youth activists with a variety of resources, both material and cognitive, that support them along their advocacy journeys. The limitless communication spaces, the support from like-minded actors, the opportunities for networking, and the structural integrity are only some of the benefits young activists reap from their involvement in these networks. These organisations are also more likely to succeed as, by definition, joining such a network is voluntary, and so those who become a part of these spaces have an implicit drive to be engaged, active and meaningful in their work. Finally, networks and organisations have the potential to close the gap between youth who have many resources and freedoms, and those who do not – bringing them all together to be supported under one banner.

Ultimately, the analysis above leads to two key conclusions: young people within youth-led advocacy networks can and should be considered significant norm entrepreneurs; and youth play an important role in the first stage of the norm life cycle and have the capacity to influence the emergence and adoption of norms. One may conclude, therefore, that youth are norm entrepreneurs who have increasingly spearheaded norm emergence, and who consequently play an increasingly important role in the discourse on policy change.

The case for #FridaysForFuture

The empirical case study examined in this report is an ideal example of youth-led advocacy affecting change, which connects all the areas of research in this paper. #FridaysForFuture is a youth, and child-led movement which has mobilised millions of activists around the world around the climate crisis, calling on world leaders to act urgently to ensure climate justice. By framing itself as a climate justice movement where young people are active actors within

society, the movement is able to successfully diffuse and strengthen existing norms, while allowing new norms to emerge through their advocacy work. The nature of the norm entrepreneurs in FFF, specifically children of school-going age, can also attribute to the efficacy of the movement. As they are traditionally seen as being minors within society, who inherently have limited amounts of power and influence, when they step into the role of youth activists, their impact is increased as a result of their acts of disobedience. The case study has yielded specific examples of change by government, companies, and individuals at different levels – but these changes cannot be directly attributed to the protests. Rather, the protests were instrumental in placing pressure on norm leaders and drawing public attention to the issue. Their actions influenced the discourse on the climate change agenda. As discussed, discursive influence is a powerful form of influence to hold. The FFF movement has clearly illustrated that children and youth are important agents for change within IR, actively engaging on issues that affect them, as opposed to simply being recipients of action and change.

The FFF movement has coined several creative sayings and protest slogans which have been shared across the world. These young activists have been increasingly creative with their communication tools, framing their messages with references to popular culture, dark humour, and witty language. The movement is also extremely active online, with a social media presence on almost every platform available. Their approach to having localised chapters of the movement representing different countries and communities has increased their reach, while also legitimising their work. While the FFF movement can be considered a norm entrepreneur, the leading norm entrepreneur, Greta Thunberg, allows for interesting analysis on the motivation behind these actors. Her public displays of vulnerability as a young woman have been used to frame this issue as one which affects everyone, not just the scientific elite. She is actively behaving outside of the standards of appropriateness by missing school every Friday for the sake of the protest. Thunberg embodies what it means to be a norm entrepreneur.

Findings: relevance for future research, recommendations, and next steps

Due to the nature of this paper, the research report was only able to engage with a limited amount of data and draw restricted conclusions. There is scope, however, for further development of the questions posed in this paper, as the basis for an extended piece of research.

This research report has established the importance of youth, as norm entrepreneurs, within policy change discourse. It is important to note that this is separate from an assessment and quantification of the impact that young norm entrepreneurs have on policy change itself. Essentially, it is beyond the scope of this paper, or the capacity of norm theory, to provide clear links between norm entrepreneurs and specific policy change outcomes. Two fundamental points should be noted.

Firstly, as has already been established, policy change discourse is not merely a description of the policy change process, but is in fact a constitutive element of it, because of the role it plays in the 'enlightenment' of potential actors in policy change processes. In this sense, while norm theory may not allow for a measurement of the extent to which young norm entrepreneurs influence the achievement of specific policy change outcomes, it can assess the relative strengths of different norm entrepreneurs in influencing policy change discourse, which is itself influential in determining policy change. Therefore, the research questions posed in this paper, and the norm theory which has been used in answering the questions, shed light on matters of tangible importance, even if the tangible outcomes cannot themselves be measured.

Secondly, the limitations of norm theory in measuring the impact of young norm entrepreneurs should not be understood as an indication that such research would be impossible to conduct, nor should it lead to a conclusion of weakness on the part of norm theory. This limitation might simply be understood as an indication that other methodologies are better suited to the treatment of such a question. Ultimately, an appropriate approach to analysing youth as norm entrepreneurs would be to utilise different analytical and

methodological frameworks where they are most effective. In extended research on the topic, collaboration among researchers with expertise in different fields of study may be useful.

A framing of youth as apathetic and disengaged has, for too long, been favoured within mainstream literature on youth activism and advocacy. This assessment is especially concerning when considering the capacity of scholars to create space for more meaningful engagement with youth in academia and policy development. In this sense, this paper's contribution does not only lie in its demonstration of the influence which young norm entrepreneurs have on policy change discourse, which is itself a constitutive element of policy change. The analysis of the preceding chapters has, additionally, made clear that there is a need for introspection on the part of scholars who discuss matters concerning young people. Given that this paper has established that young people may operate at all points along a spectrum of political agency and power, there is a case to be made that mainstream literature on youth engagement and advocacy has an ethical and academic obligation to reassess its framing of young people.

As a young scholar, writing this research report was personally significant as it tackled harmful narratives surrounding young people within decision making spaces. As someone who has had her agency questioned when representing the views of young people, and who is familiar with the experience of being a token to be displayed in the name of meaningful youth engagement, the findings of this research report extend beyond the academic context. For far too long, young people have been made to feel that they do not have the necessary qualifications or skills to take up space in important international discourse. While we may be at the beginning of our educational and professional careers, young people add a distinctive value to discussions on change. We may not be the heads of organisations, or holders of PhDs, but young people have expertise in being young. The lived experiences of young people cannot be constructed or sourced from anyone other than young people themselves. Consequently, it is imperative that the voice and views of youth, in all capacities, are heard and acted upon.

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