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The research conducted with the research grant was on the topic of intergenerational climate justice. Listening to speeches by the youth climate activist Greta Thunberg, I noticed that in many of them there is seemingly a perception of a generational divide on climate change issues between younger and older generations. The youth is calling for the “grown-ups” – as they often are referred to by Greta – to commit to more climate action on their behalf. However, still in research on the topic, focus tends to be on the youth and their mobilization, rather than how the “grown-ups” apprehend of their responsibility to act on the youth’s call.

To examine this overlooked issue, I realized that I first had to develop a theoretical framework to define what is meant with “grown-ups” within this context. To my knowledge, no previous research has examined this before. Thus, I had to take an inductive approach and that meant first reading up on everything pertaining to the topic. Thanks to GSGS research grant I was able to access all the books and articles needed for this research, that I would not have been able to afford otherwise. Most of this literature was the latest books by well-known sociologists that had started to examine climate change from a sociological perspective, such as Ulrich Beck, Bruno Latour and Dipesh Chakrabarty, in addition to all the literature on the topic of intergenerational justice. The literature review that I conducted of these became the foundation of my theoretical framework, in which I tried to define, operationalize, and term the “grown-ups”. This theoretical framework that I managed to develop is one of the main contributions of my research, since it now can be used to look at these questions further in future research. “Grown-ups” in my research are defined as: *people that know of a world before the threat of climate change was made apparent*. It is operationalized as anyone born in 1974 or before, and the term *Bloomers* is given to designate this population – a wordplay with the two terms *Baby Boomers* and *Late Bloomers*.

With the theoretical framework developed, the second part of the research could be conducted. Due to climate change being a global issue that goes beyond the borders of the individual nation, I had decided to interview older climate activists in three different countries – the United States, Sweden, and Japan – all part of the Global North, which is deemed as being most responsible for causing the climate crisis due to historical emissions. Since this research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic all my interviews took place on Zoom. They were semi-structured and in-depth, about one hour long each. In total I had 22 interviews, and thanks to the research grant I was able to conduct them all in the native tongues of the interview subjects. The English and Swedish ones I did myself, but due to my limited Japanese, I hired an interpreter/translator with part of the research grant to interpret for me during the Japanese interviews, and to translate the transcriptions into English.

In total, the transcribed interview data for all interviews amounted to around 250 pages – a massive amount of data for me to apply a thematic analysis on in order to generate themes as answers for the research questions I had for the interviews, which were the following: 1) What do the interviewees perceive as their “turning points” in becoming engaged in climate action? 2) How do the interviewees reflect on issues pertaining to the generational divide of climate change? In addition to the interviews, I also collected some demographic data through Google Forms to present the demographic context from which the interviewees emerged from. This showed that the climate activists that I had interviewed were likely to be a woman, retired, middle-class, well-educated, financially stable, politically leaning to the left, and a grandparent.

The themes generated from the thematic analysis gave me some ideas to work with to construct hypotheses for future research. The themes uncovered for my question of “turning points” were: *Biographical Availability*, *Exposure to Environmental Change*, and *Care for Posterity*. *Biographical Availability* means that there is an absence of personal constraints for participation; *Exposure to Environmental Change* is the witness of a lot of environmental degradation over the years; and *Care for Posterity* is the will to care for future generations. The first two themes are commonsensical factors when applied to an older population who also

happens to be retired and financially stable. The third theme ties into the concept of legacy concerns which much other research also points out as being a strong factor for climate action among elders. This is most often happening through people's own progeny. However, the most interesting finding within this theme was that the *imagery of the child* seemingly is a potent factor in inducing these legacy concerns. Some interviewees shared experiences where even upon just seeing other children than one's own – fictional or not – feelings of caring for posterity arose. Looking further into the impact of the *imagery of the child* is suggested for future research.

The themes uncovered for my question of the reflections of the generational divide of climate change were: *Generational Naivety*, *Reflexive Responsibility*, *Wisdom Carriers*, and *Willful Optimism*. *Generational Naivety* means that the interviewees experienced a sentiment of naivety of the development of the climate crisis, that they did not know how bad things were, or were going to turn out. *Reflexive Responsibility* I defined as the self-critical scrutiny of current modes of taking responsibility, for both the past and the future. *Wisdom Carriers* was a term used by one of the interviewees and I used it to describe this theme that the Boomers predominantly play a supporting role to the youth, providing support based on their knowledge and experience. The theme of *Willful Optimism* is the mindset that all the interviewees expressed, that despite all the predicted hardship, there is hope and belief in a positive future. Further, I concluded that all these themes fit into a conceptual framework developed by the ethics scholar Sarah E. Fredericks on environmental guilt and shame. She argues that guilt and shame are feelings that will be inherent to anyone that recognizes the climate crisis, and sometimes they could be obstructive in making people commit to further climate action. But one way to overcome that is by conducting environmental rituals, where one tries to reduce environmental degradation and communicate with the ones dealt most harm by the degradation caused in the first place. The themes form a psychological process aligned with this framework: *Generational Naivety* is the guilt and shame experienced because of historical responsibility; *Reflexive Responsibility* is the recognition and attempt of "correcting" those feelings to something productive; *Wisdom Carriers* is the practical realization of "corrected"

responsibility by supporting the youth; and *Willful Optimism* is the operating mindset needed for the whole process of environmental rituals. The question of blame and shame in climate communication is something that is often discussed. The suggestion from my research is that one should wary about employing it, especially on the Bloomer population. There needs to be a balance between how the call for more climate action towards them is communicated. Too much emphasis on blame might make people reject the call completely to begin with, because few would be able to deal with the psychological pressure of that “the future of all coming generations rests on your shoulders” as Greta expresses in one of her speeches. A focus on “aftercare” therefore needs to be included to explain that climate change responsibility is a complicated issue and highlight what possible outlets for exculpation exist, in order to reduce that psychological pressure.

The next step suggested for future research is to conduct experiments or focus groups of intergenerational conversations, where Bloomers and children interact with each other. This is to further examine the role that the *imagery of the child* has on climate action, but also what impact guilt and shame have pertaining to this interaction. A thread that were not picked up in this research due to limitations in time but that could be looked at next, is Trump’s role in inducing climate action in the United States. When speaking with the American interviewees, Trump’s presidency seemed to have played an impact in many of the interviewees personal trajectory towards engaging in climate action. Another topic that would be very interesting to examine is the dimension of gender among the Bloomer generation. In the country context of Japan, all the female interviewees saw their caring for their children through food security as the initial seed towards climate awareness. Gender is a therefore a factor worth looking more into.

The GSGS Research Grant that I received for this study made it possible for me to pursue the scope that I initially imagined for this research; to be able to sit down for a long period of time with a large number of older climate activists from three different countries. It enriched this research, as well as me personally. I imagine that I will continue to conduct research on this

topic in my next endeavors. Thus, I feel very grateful for the support I received from GSGS. Other than the research result itself, the process of applying for and receiving the grant was also a useful experience in that it taught me how this process usually works, which I consider to be very important knowledge in moving forward in my academic career. I hope that many more students take the opportunity to apply for this grant to continue furthering the field of global studies with exciting new research.