

THESIS

“WE WILL BE THE LAST MASS SHOOTING”: EMMA GONZÁLEZ’S TACTICAL  
SUBJECTIVITY THROUGH DIFFERENTIAL CONSCIOUSNESS, AFFECT, AND  
SILENCE

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## ABSTRACT

### “WE WILL BE THE LAST MASS SHOOTING”: EMMA GONZÁLEZ’S TACTICAL SUBJECTIVITY THROUGH AFFECT AND SILENCE

The purpose of this thesis is to uncover the rhetorical strategies employed by Emma González throughout her “We call BS!” speech (i.e., February 17, 2018) and her “March for Our Lives” speech (i.e., March 24, 2018). Chela Sandoval’s theorization of differential consciousness is used to uncover the ways González shifts her subject position from “kid,” “teenager,” and “student” in order to challenge “adults,” the “President,” and “lawmakers” to create systemic change. In this thesis, I argue Emma González uses the affective capacities of grief and silence to construct a counterpublic. Through González’s rhetorical strategies a moment of silence is transformed from a ritual to a political act. Public grief is used as a tool for healing and reconciliation allowing for a national community to contend with the harrowing effects of gun violence. To conclude, with gun violence continuing to be a pervasive social problem, I discuss contributions, limitations, and directions for future studies.

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## DEDICATION

*To my family, friends, and community*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE, THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS, AND CONCEPTS.....	20
CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS OF “WE CALL BS!” AND “MARCH FOR OUR LIVES” ...	31
CHAPTER FOUR: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS.....	56
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	69

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

*My name is Emma González. I am 18 years old, Cuban and Bisexual. I'm so indecisive that I can't pick a favorite color, and I'm allergic to 12 things. I draw, paint, crochet, sew, embroider--anything productive I can do with my hands while watching Netflix.*

*But none of this matters anymore.<sup>1</sup>*

Emma González, a student-activist from Parkland, Florida, has become a recognizable public figure in the United States along with several other students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Their collective call for an end to gun violence has reverberated, stirring debate between lawmakers, their constituents, and high school students across the United States. Although it was a group of students that contributed to the development of a movement, for the purposes of this thesis Emma González will be the primary rhetor of study. González's rhetoric functions as a consequential point of entry to the broader gun control debate and the Never Again Movement.<sup>2</sup> In this introductory chapter, I discuss the proposed texts for analysis and consider rhetorical agency, strategy, and avowed/ascribed identity to highlight the novel differences that merit González a worthy rhetor of study.

Later in the analysis chapter, I examine two speeches delivered by Emma González. I refer to them distinctly as her "We call BS!" speech and her "March for Our Lives" speech. I have chosen to focus on these two specific texts for reasons of saliency and practicality. "We call BS!" took place in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida just three days after the Parkland shooting (i.e., February 17<sup>th</sup>).<sup>3</sup> During each speech, González vehemently demands change by uplifting the voices of young people. González states, "companies trying to make caricatures of the teenagers these days, saying that all we are [is] self-involved and trend obsessed and they hush us into submission when our message doesn't reach the ears of the nation, we are prepared to call BS!"<sup>4</sup>

This speech, as she makes evident through her discourse, is an expression of her frustration with lawmakers, the NRA, and with the reoccurrence of such horrific gun-related events, ultimately foreshadowing the emergence of the Never Again Movement.<sup>5</sup> “We call BS!” became a slogan for protestors around the country.<sup>6</sup>

The second speech that I analyze was presented in Washington D.C. on March 24, 2018 during “March for Our Lives.” The march took place in several major cities across the United States with more than a million protestors.<sup>7</sup> As an organization, March For Our Lives is dedicated to the following goals: “to assure that no special interest group or political agenda is more crucial than the timely passage of legislation to effectively address the gun violence issues that are rampant in our country. We demand morally-just leaders to rise up from both parties in order to ensure public safety.”<sup>8</sup>

As one of the most anticipated speakers of the day along with Yolanda Renee King, Samantha Fuentes, Mya Middleton, and several others, González stunned the audience with an unyielding silence that accompanied her message.<sup>9</sup> Rebecca Mead from the *New Yorker* wrote, “In its restraint, its symbolism, and its palpable emotion, González’s silence was a remarkable piece of political expression.”<sup>10</sup> The veracity of her speech was heightened by the devastating silence that disrupted its progression. Rebecca Mead from the *New Yorker* wrote, “In its restraint, its symbolism, and its palpable emotion, González’s silence was a remarkable piece of political expression.”<sup>11</sup> Several other news outlets described the silence as “incredible” while gestured to the rhetorical function of silence. For example, “Parkland’s Emma Gonzalez Uses Silence as a Weapon Against Gun Violence,” and “What Emma González said without Words at the March for Our Lives Rally.”<sup>12</sup> The silence has been clearly marked as novel. This speech exemplified the breadth of gun violence, highlighting the shared pain and the essential need to heal.



In addition to saliency, I have chosen to focus on each text due to the conventional constraints of writing a thesis and the need to establish parameters for the study. In doing so, I want to briefly acknowledge the work of McGee who has argued:

Critical rhetoric does not begin with a finished text in need of interpretation; rather, texts are understood to be larger than the apparently finished discourse that presents itself as transparent. The apparently finished discourse is in fact a dense reconstruction of all the bits of other discourses from which it was made. It is fashioned from what we call “fragments.”<sup>13</sup>

I understand each of González’s two speeches to be fragments of a larger discursive structure. By studying them together I hope to unravel the rhetorical strategies used by González during specific moments of her campaign against gun violence. I recognize there is the potential for a broader scope of study that could account for a higher degree of fragmentation. However, the purpose of this thesis is to simply begin the process of uncovering the discursive patterns that constitute the framework of a larger structure. Therefore, an overarching question that helps guide this thesis is, in her two speeches, how has González reconstructed the gun control debate to move beyond a stalemate?<sup>14</sup>

In the upcoming sections, I briefly discuss rhetorical agency, strategy, and González’s identity to highlight the social and rhetorical constraints she faces. Then, I contextualize González’s rhetoric within the larger macro system of U.S. society by discussing argumentation, the significance of decorum and civility in the gun control debate, and identity.<sup>15</sup> To this end, I conclude the chapter by providing a chapter overview of the thesis.

### **Rhetorical Agency, Strategy, and Emma González’s Avowed and Ascribed Identity**

Rhetorical agency is a term that remains broadly defined in scholarship, however, when applied to a given rhetorical situation the precariousness of the theory can subside.<sup>16</sup> Scholars help us to stay rooted in the context, text, and rhetor as rhetorical agency is constantly shifting.

González occupies a unique socio-cultural context that fosters her enactment of rhetorical agency. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell describes agency as “polysemic and ambiguous, a term that can refer to invention, strategies, authorship, institutional power, identity, subjectivity, practices, and subject positions, among others.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, rhetorical agency is “promiscuous” and “protean” requiring the critic to situate the rhetor in context.<sup>18</sup> More specifically, Campbell argues, “culturally available subject-positions are, simultaneously, obstacles and opportunities, but they are shifting, not fixed identities.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, I am interested in studying how González’s subject positions shift, and if the shifts prove to be obstacles or opportunities for social change.

Rhetorical agency, as employed by Stacey Sowards, provides a theoretical framework to understand activist Dolores Huerta’s rhetoric.<sup>20</sup> Rhetorical agency in conjunction with Gloria Anzaldúa’s *haciendo caras*, Pierre Bourdieu’s *habitus*, and Chela Sandoval’s differential consciousness allows the boundaries of rhetoric to expand.<sup>21</sup> Ultimately, Huerta constructs *caras*<sup>22</sup> (i.e., *caras* of emotionality, *caras* of *familia*, and *caras* of courageous optimism) which functions as rhetorical styles or practices that allowed Huerta to negotiate the constraints of race, gender, ethnicity, class, and national origin status strategically.<sup>23</sup> As a result, the boundaries of rhetorical agency shifted—obstacles were transformed into opportunities.<sup>24</sup> Ultimately, the strategic use of *haciendo caras* with an understanding of differential consciousness provides a liberatory function by expanding the boundaries of rhetoric.<sup>25</sup> As a result, Huerta transcends the limitations and social constraints imposed on her by systems of race, gender, ethnicity, class, and national origin status.

González occupies a unique socio-cultural context that allows her enactment of rhetorical agency to operate differently from Dolores Huerta. More specifically, González’s rhetorical

styles are assembled in response to gun violence. Like Huerta, González faces similar structural constraints due to her race, gender, age, and sexuality. I use the term “social location” to describe Gonzalez’s identity as a means of recognizing “patterns of hierarchy, domination, and oppression based on race, class, gender, and sexual orientation [that] are built into the structure of society. Inequality, in other words, is structurally or socially patterned.”<sup>26</sup> Also described as “experiential cleavages,” social location is concerned with how attitudes and perspectives are generated based on historical differences.<sup>27</sup> As a result, the researcher avoids “universalization” and broad generalizations.<sup>28</sup>

González is a worthy rhetor of study beyond the media attention and notoriety she has received. As someone who self-avows as “18 years old, Cuban, and Bisexual” she is increasingly traversing the boundaries of what it means to be an activist.<sup>29</sup> She is a striking contrast to the NRA representatives, politicians, and even the President speaking on the issue of gun violence. Her youth and self-awareness have equipped her with the strategies to address the public in new and novel forms of rhetorical strategy. After my initial encounter of the “March for Our Lives” speech, I was reminded of Karlyn Kohrs Campbell’s essay, Stanton’s *“The Solitude of the Self”*: *A Rationale for Feminism*. Borrowing language from Campbell, González’s “unusual” and “startling departure” from political discourse offers new insights into the study of rhetoric and the public sphere as gun violence continues to take hold of the nation.<sup>30</sup> The informal nature of her style and ability to move the audience accompany the visceral aftermath of the Parkland shooting allows her to make an emotionally gripping and compelling speech.

In sum, González and her peers offer a new vision, ushering in change that does not abide by political bating but instead emerges from the experience of loss and despair. Barack Obama wrote of the Parkland students, “Our kids now show us what we’ve told them America is all

about, even if we haven't always believed it ourselves: that our future isn't written for us, but by us."<sup>31</sup> González contributes to this future by re-situating the past as more than tragedy but a turning point in the cultural tide. As will be evidenced in the analysis, by calling "BS!" she denigrates the arguments in favor of guns and resituates the gun control debate to change our engagement with gun violence. People are being killed across America and will continue to be killed unless restorative action is taken. Whether you are for or against gun control is no longer the precept guiding discourses of gun violence, instead, she reconfigures the question to be, are you for or against mass shootings?

Critics immediately brought attention to González's identity and made disparaging remarks about the way she looks. Leslie Gibson, a Republican candidate running for the House of Rep. in the state of Maine, called or ascribed González as a "skinhead lesbian" on Twitter.<sup>32</sup> Gibson's comments led him to drop out of the race, subsequently, his remarks speak to the presence of power relations between those on the margins and the oppressive ideologies and institutions that remain pervasive.

Although González is attacked on her identity, difference has simultaneously afforded her the capacity to appeal to a variety of audiences. In fact, Ed Morales asks, "can Emma González be the future of Latino politics in Florida as well as a new intersectional movement among America's youth to roll back conservative political trends decades in the making?"<sup>33</sup> Despite disparaging remarks Gonzalez's identity has also been celebrated as representative of a new political campaign. Her publicly avowed identities have been a defining act of resistance. González has invariably become the voice of a generation and continues to extend the issue of gun violence to consider racial disparities.<sup>34</sup> While González's voice is at the forefront of a social movement others fall to the wayside.

Ascribed Black students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas have critiqued the media and their peers for failing to “share the mic.”<sup>35</sup> Kai Koerber, Tyah-Amoy Roberts, are Mei-Ling Ho-Shing just some of the students who voiced concern over the movements lack of recognition of Black Parkland students.<sup>36</sup> While David Hogg and Emma González went to Chicago to discuss gun violence with other youth activists, their peers were left unseen. Ho-Shing stated, “It hurts because they went all the way to Chicago to hear these voices when we’re right here,” and continued by saying, “We go to school with you everyday.”<sup>37</sup> With dismay Black Parkland students are being overshadowed by their peers and disregarded by the media. González has been given a platform that could easily become a pedestal.

In this thesis I point to González’s social location as both a constraint and opportunity. This tension can be understood further as the difference between encapsulated marginals and constructive marginals. Encapsulated marginals are “trapped” by the margins, whereas, constructive marginal “thrive in their marginality.”<sup>38</sup> González’s rhetoric is characteristic of a constructive marginal. She is someone who has publicly self-avowed and is fully aware of her position as a young person in relationship to adult authority.

I have used social location, identity, or “culturally-available subject positions” to discuss how González’s race, gender, sexuality, and age can enhance or limit her rhetorical agency. In addition, it is important to recognize how her Black peers have been disregarded by the media. Having now positioned the primary rhetor, I next discuss the larger socio-cultural-political macro-context that constitutes the speaker’s exigency.

### **Contextualizing Emma González’s Discourse in the Larger Socio-Cultural-Political Context**

*Teachers do not need to be armed with guns to protect their classes, they need to be armed with a solid education in order to teach their classes. That’s the only thing that needs to be in their job description. People say metal detectors will help. Tell that to the*

*kids who already have metal detectors at school and are still victims of gun violence. If you want to help arm the schools, arm them with school supplies, books, therapists, things they actually need and can make use of.*<sup>39</sup>

On February 14, 2018 Nikolas Cruz was dropped off at school by an Uber driver at 2:19pm.<sup>40</sup> At 2:21pm he entered Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School with an AR-15. Cruz never entered a single classroom; his victims were gunned down from the buildings' hallways.<sup>41</sup> Afterwards, Cruz was able to leave undetected by strategically joining a crowd of students as they ran out of the building. Before he was arrested, he stopped at a Subway inside of a Wal-mart and bought a drink followed by an additional drop-in at the local McDonalds.<sup>42</sup> Left in the wake of the aftermath were 17 students and teachers dead, 15 injured, and a community in devastation. The inability of the police department to identify the shooter and properly respond to the crisis was a point of contention for both local law enforcement, earning national attention.<sup>43</sup>

The FBI and local law enforcement had been made aware of Nikolas Cruz's violent behavior, including his interest in collecting guns and knives. His voiced aspiration to become a "professional school shooter" is disturbing and is just one of many incidents reported to police by community members.<sup>44</sup> After President Trump referred to Cruz as a "savage sicko" the National Alliance on Mental Health began to question the language used to describe mass shooters.<sup>45</sup> Studies have found that the majority of people who live with a mental health diagnosis are not violent.<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, the public response to the Parkland shooting represents a divergent course of reasoning that has become expected. As President Trump ascribed agency to Cruz and proponents of gun control placed blame on guns, there emerged a breaching divide. Scholars have described this as upholding technological agency over human agency and this tension remains prevalent in public and political discourse.<sup>47</sup>

A recent Gallup poll taken in March of 2018 found that 95% of respondents favor “increased training for police officers and first responders on how to respond to active shootings” and 92% favor “requiring background checks for all gun sales.”<sup>48</sup> On the contrary, there was a stark divide between the 56% of respondents who favored “banning the sale of automatic weapons such as the AR-15” and the 42% who opposed this proposal.<sup>49</sup> In addition, with regard to “having teachers or other school officials with appropriate training carry guns at school” only 42% were in favor and 56% were in opposition.<sup>50</sup> Scholars have considered the arguments on both sides of the debate to understand the cultural and political divide.

In the months following the Parkland Shooting the Pew Research Center found that the majority of U.S. teens and their parents feared the potential of a school shooting taking place. More specifically, 25% of all teens were “very worried” whereas 32% were “somewhat worried.”<sup>51</sup> There were also notable differences across race. For instance, 20% of white students were “very worried” compared to 27% of Black teens and 37% of Hispanics.<sup>52</sup> In regard to gender, 64% of girls (28% very worried and 35% somewhat worried) compared to 51% of boys (22% very worried and 29% somewhat worried) are fearful of a school shooting taking place.<sup>53</sup> These numbers reflect the growing concern for school shootings among U.S. teens and their parents. Although young people are disrupting the public discourse concerning gun violence, their political presence is highly underestimated.

Mass shootings in the United States have become a part of the nation’s landscape, with every passing tragedy the nation is gripped by a moment of fear, loss, and reflection. Fleeting engagement has led to an incoherent message that mass shootings are both devastating and short-lived.<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, it is a dynamic-complex social issue that is riddled within the larger socio-cultural-political context. After searching key terms such as “guns and rhetoric” along with “gun

control and rhetoric” in Communication & Mass Media a set of 46 journal articles surfaced and they were used as reference points for further inquiry. I specifically used Communication & Mass Media Complete to narrow my search and position my thesis as contributing to the broader conversation in Communication Studies about gun violence. The background research included here highlights three major contextualizing themes related to argumentation, decorum and civility, and identity as constructed by gun rights advocates. Each theme is not mutually exclusive, but rather, they are interwoven—even appearing simultaneously within research articles. Together, they reveal and set the stage for how modern civil society is failing to adequately contend with the need for change in producing a fruitful debate or dialogue about gun violence. As a part of her rhetorical exigency in the two speeches assessed, González is called to transcend the constraints of political inaction and the naturalization of gun violence.

#### *Theme One: Argumentation*

The purpose of including argumentation as a relevant topic of this thesis is not predicated on the frequency of articles I found, but instead, this topic is highlighted to provide an understanding of the arguments made by González. In several instances she specifically addresses the more popularized arguments of pro-gun advocates, such as, “a good guy with a gun stops a bad guy with a gun.”<sup>55</sup> By discussing argumentation as a significant topic my aim is to provide a clear depiction of the political and social climate González’s rhetoric within the two speeches is constructed upon.

Christopher Duerringer and Z.S. Justus analyze three common arguments made by pro-gun advocates, more specifically: “guns don’t kill people, people kill people”; “the only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun”; “if you outlaw guns, only outlaws will have guns.”<sup>56</sup> As these scholars point out, each argument “work[s] by violating implicit norms of



rational argument and, thus, short-circuit[s] the process of rational critical debate.”<sup>57</sup> For example, “guns don’t kill people, people kill people” creates an either/or dichotomy that functions to make a nuanced and complicated issue simple. This specific argument minimizes the capacity of guns for the sake of protecting the individual rights of gun owners. This argument compliments “the only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.”<sup>58</sup> The error in this argument emerges from the assumptions made about who is ‘good’ and who is ‘bad.’ Duerringer and Justus argue, “meanwhile, the choice to name shooters ‘bad guys’ seems to do other rhetorical work. Where ‘good’ seems to substitute for competent, ‘bad’ appears to define shooters as irreconcilably evil.”<sup>59</sup> To create definitional parameters of ‘good’ vs. ‘bad’ assumes that action will be taken. Given the events during the Parkland shooting, we know a “good” guy with a gun taking action may not always happen. Scot Peterson, for example, the school’s resource officer, did not enter the building.<sup>60</sup> He stood waiting outside for four minutes while Cruz roamed the hallways.<sup>61</sup> Labeled a “coward” by a victim’s father, he contradicts the logic presupposed for those who believe there are good guys willing to act.<sup>62</sup> Lastly, “If you outlaw guns, only outlaws will have guns” is irrelevant because an argument to outlaw all guns has not been proposed.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, the discussion remains gridlocked and the stagnation of critical debate comes to a political stalemate.

The political gridlock has been explored further by Justin Eckstein and Sarah Partlow Lefevre. In a comparative analysis of NRA Executive Wayne LaPierre’s (NRA Executive Vice President) speech delivered in 2012 and Barack Obama’s speech following the events of the Sandy Hook shooting, it was argued, “the Sandy Hook critical discussion failed to produce meaningful change because neither side would accept the other’s aforementioned starting point.”<sup>64</sup> Then President Barack Obama and LaPierre differed in terms of technological agency,

that is, “Obama ascribed agency to guns while LaPierre held people accountable.”<sup>65</sup> Their opposing worldviews make it difficult for political and cultural strides to be made on the issue of gun violence.<sup>66</sup> A critical discussion cannot move forward until opposing views on the issue of guns can agree on a starting point. In an effort to further critical discussion, the authors suggest cross-arguing, when both speakers argue each other’s starting point.<sup>67</sup> Ultimately, the need to develop new rhetorical strategies that begin “burrowing deeper into the gulf between starting points” is a necessary point of intervention that I believe González rhetorically attempts to bridge.<sup>68</sup> By recognizing arguments that have been previously made, both for and against gun control, In Chapter Three I delineate when González’s rhetoric diverges from the presupposed scripts of argumentation that have come to define the gun control debate.

#### *Theme Two: Decorum and Civility*

Rhetorical scholars approached the topic of school shootings with careful consideration to the rhetorical strategies utilized to both commemorate and consecrate those who have died. More broadly, I am interested in addressing the work of scholars who have attempted to make meaning of the dead as it relates to political discourse as well as a persuasive tool in favor of gun control. Presidential public address has been considered as it relates specifically to gun violence. The number of school shootings in the U.S. is unprincipled, and not enough has been done to address this problem. Decorum and civility are important to consider because they operate as blockage points preventing creative solutions and a fulfilling dialogue about gun violence.

Decorum is concerned with appropriateness, a way of performing to meet the unspoken requirements of a given moment. Duerringer brings into question the underlying ideological assumption embedded within proclamations for decorum. According to Duerringer, “where a given discourse of decorum gains adherence, it may function in the service of hegemony --

shaping common sense, structuring relations, ordering everyday communication, privileging certain actors, sites, and modes of publicity and, in due course, reinscribing the ideology from which it was birthed.”<sup>69</sup> By foregrounding strict rules and guidelines, decorum constrains the rhetor. Decorum as an extension of conservative ideology serves to detract from a community orientation toward gun violence, therefore, reducing the collective struggle to individual loss, struggle, and strife.<sup>70</sup> Arguing against the warrant of the dead by maintaining decorum changes the role of the citizen from an active contributor to a complacent bystander upholding the status quo.<sup>71</sup> Violations of decorum are evidence of disruption in the discursive structures impeding gun violence from being framed as a legitimate problem.

The clearest example of decorum used as a smokescreen can be found in what Craig Rood defines the warrant of the dead, “an explicit or implicit claim that the dead place a demand on the living.”<sup>72</sup> A call to action predicated on the dead has led to a pronouncement of decorum as it is deemed inappropriate to discuss political action in the midst of grief.<sup>73</sup> Bound by social, political, and cultural contexts the warrant of the dead does not go contested.<sup>74</sup> Rood argues that age, location, and geography impact the saliency of a tragic event.<sup>75</sup> The warrant of the dead can transform audience members and inhibit fleeting engagement. Rood contends, “Obama used the warrant of the dead to transform those who support or are open to gun control into activists who are as committed as their opponents are to the rhetorical and political struggle over gun policy.”<sup>76</sup> In order to amplify the need for change, Rood points to memory, as Obama extends, expands, and intensifies the collective memories of gun violence.<sup>77</sup> The warrant of the dead has been called into question, with some politicians deeming it controversial and inappropriate. As a result, there is a lack of engagement with the severity of the broader cultural problem of gun

violence. The isolation of incidents from public and political engagement limits the possibilities for change.

Civility has been equally called upon by politicians across the political spectrum. Ruth DeFoster and Catherine Squires found declarations for civility and proclamations of incivility were used to embolden support for an ideological position either for or against gun violence.<sup>78</sup> Days before Gabrielle Giffords was shot (Tucson shooting) Sarah Palin's website featured a map with bull's eye targets over the State's Republicans were looking to defeat democratic candidates for the Senate. Civility emerged as an ironic foreshadowing to the Tucson shooting, as an indicator of detrimental political bi-partisanship, and uncivility attributed to the political climate that inculcates the state of Arizona (immigration).<sup>79</sup> The presence of incivility is unquestionable, but it is important to ask, to what rhetorical effect does civility uphold?

Politically, there have been shifts in the framing of gun violence. Frank provides a comparative analysis of Barack Obama's eulogy following the Tucson shooting and the Sandy Hook Shooting.<sup>80</sup> In both speeches, Obama relied on scripture, however, Sandy Hook represents a shift in Obama's rhetoric. Instead of simply discussing mass shootings as an unavoidable tragedy that cannot be fully apprehended, he argued for action in the form of gun legislation.<sup>81</sup> After clearly naming the cause of the tragedy, in this case guns, "national eulogies such as these position traumas as serving a teleological purpose, and the eulogists deploy those who died as a martyrs who require action on the part of the audience."<sup>82</sup> Gun control legislation is propositioned as a method of healing the irreconcilable loss of a much broader community, the United States. Unfortunately, calls for both decorum and civility have consistently intersected, disciplining the rhetor by limiting their rhetorical and political agency. Within the scholarship I reviewed there is a commitment to civility across public and political discourse.

Decorum and civility are interconnected but they have been misconstrued to mean the same thing. Frank echoes the work of Hugh Dalziel Duncan in forwarding civility as an argumentative and conflictual tool used in an effort to foster democratic action.<sup>83</sup> Rather than collapsing decorum and civility, violations of decorum can be used as a rhetorical strategy used to advocate for change. In the following chapters I will highlight how González has violated decorum without incivility as the subsequent response. I utilize Hariman's understanding that,

any code of decorum also functions sometimes in a more critical sense, in which the rules, or attitude, of appropriateness itself becomes a means for the analysis of a social drama. By considering questions of decorum one is thinking dramatically, arranging actors on a stage to reveal the motives informing their actions.<sup>84</sup>

I posit that it is through González's presence on a national stage that violations of decorum are initially enacted and are inevitably carried through in her rhetoric with the use of words like "We call BS!" Removing some of the constraints of decorum allows for the greater possibility of resistance.

Some bodies are already in violation of decorum but others rhetorically construct constraints that lead to the creation of an identity known as the "demanding subject."<sup>85</sup> Earlier in the Chapter I discussed identity as it related to Gonzalez's race, age, gender, and sexuality. Identity as discussed in the coming section will briefly acknowledge the racialized and gender differences of white men who commit mass shootings. By doing so, my thesis will engage the "demanding subject" as already in opposition to González. I will attempt to show that while the "demanding subject" may not be her audience, the rhetorical strategies used by González begin to deconstruct the "demanding subject" as an identity.

### *Theme Three: Identity and "The Demanding Subject"*

There is a crucial conversation among communication scholars about the subject positions assumed by those in favor of an "unbridled second amendment" and the responsibility

of rhetorical critics to be active contributors in the elimination of a stalemate. This point comes after Laura J. Collins deconstructs the identity formation of the “demanding subject” by examining the “discourses of everyday citizens who align themselves with an unbridled Second Amendment.”<sup>86</sup> Collins argues that it is due to their demands of the institution, namely the federal government, that generate the “demanding subject.” Their subjectivity is “contingent upon domination” and an “absence of freedom” that allow these citizens to utilize a narrative of oppression as being on the margins of society.<sup>87</sup> In a study conducted by Seate et al., gun ownership was found to constitute a social identity, one that could be affected by the media.<sup>88</sup> These scholars found that the negative media concerning gun related news was perceived by viewers to have a greater effect on others than the self. Furthermore, gun owners were more dismissive of negative media, ironically, the demanding subject as conceptualized by Collins has sparked media events.<sup>89</sup>

In one particular instance, Starbucks CEO, Howard Schultz, requested customers to refrain from open-carrying in their stores. In response, those in favor of an unbridled second amendment decried discrimination, with racial discrimination paralleled to their inability to carry a gun into a Starbucks.<sup>90</sup> Unlike systemic oppression that constrains and in some cases targets people on the margins (e.g., class, gender, race, sexuality), “the subject comes to be signified through its demands and its relation in opposition to the institution of which it makes the demands.”<sup>91</sup> In other words, the fight for the absolute right to exercise the second amendment is self-sustaining. It is not premised on the “othering” or intentional marginalization of those in favor of an “unbridled second amendment,” instead it is the result of their demands.

In further exploration of the relationship between the demanding subject or “open carry activists,” Lunceford emphasizes the need for the creation of an enemy in an effort for open

carry activists to justify their demands.<sup>92</sup> In such cases, Harpine found that opponents of gun control “invent tradition” by using false quotations and attributing them to the founding fathers.<sup>93</sup> One example includes, “the strongest reason for the people to retain the right to keep and bear arms is, as a last resort, to protect themselves against tyranny in government.”<sup>94</sup> This quotation has been falsely attributed to Thomas Jefferson by those who argue in favor of gun rights and is in alignment with the demanding subject to feign an oppressed position.

These frames of the gun control debate create a moral and heroic image of open carry activists. Their willingness to showcase their guns in public is an image event that does more to bring media attention and does less to encourage dialogue or debate. In addition, Lunceford directs rhetorical critics to the relationship between race and guns:

The white male subject has been a prominent figure in open carry actions—for good reason. They are the ones who are able to exercise this right most freely. Frank Walton demonstrates this sharp contrast using the case of Steve Lohner and John Crawford. Lohner, a white 18-year-old male, was stopped by police while he walked around the streets of Aurora, Colorado (the location of the 2012 movie theater shooting that killed 12 people and injured 70) with a loaded shotgun. When police officers stopped him, he refused to put down his shotgun or show his identification and still walked away with his shotgun and misdemeanor citation . . . On the other hand, Crawford was a 22-year-old African American who was shot down in a Walmart while holding a toy gun that he planned to purchase.<sup>95</sup>

Who can hold a gun? Gun violence is a political issue that has been presented with a colorblind ideology and “white logics.”<sup>96</sup> As an unforeseeable phenomenon mass shootings are considered abhorrent with immediate atonement in the form of *thoughts and prayers*. Yet, as a major social issue for Black men, gun violence is oftentimes overlooked. According to the Giffords organization, “nowhere is the gun violence crisis more evident than in our underserved communities, where homicide rates often reach 10 times the national average. Young black men are especially vulnerable—the chance of a black American family losing a son to a bullet is 62% greater than losing him to a car accident. In fact, black men make up just 6% of the U.S.

population, but account for 51% of all homicide victims.”<sup>97</sup> Lunceford scrutinizes the power dynamics between citizens and highlights the discrepancies between the position of the “demanding subject” and the racialized other. To be clear, whiteness does not necessarily constitute the demanding subject but instead whiteness substantiates their demands.

Adding to the conversation Josh Gunn, Craig Rood, and Michael Hogan attempt to understand how to move the debate about gun control forward. Rood and Hogan argue,

We need an honest, open, and robust debate over guns and gun violence—the sort of debate that empowers the American people to make informed judgments and take political action. We need a debate that marshals the best expertise and engages a wide variety of stakeholders, from gun manufacturers and law enforcement agencies, to hunters and sport shooters, educators, parents, and victims’ rights groups.<sup>98</sup>

Furthermore, they deem it the critics’ responsibility to intervene, to transcend the stalemate and call for deliberation, educate students, and encourage communities to come together.<sup>99</sup> In conjunction, Gunn calls on rhetorical scholars to study affect as a method of intervention. More specifically, because demands are linked to desire, affect should be used to understand how the identity of the “demanding subject” is constructed.<sup>100</sup> The study of affect moves beyond the symbolic towards the experiences of the body.<sup>101</sup>

### *Chapter Overview for Thesis*

Chapter One has introduced Emma González as the primary rhetor, discusses the significance of rhetorical agency, and provided a summation of key concepts. Chapter Two will present the literature on the theoretical frameworks, raise the critical research questions that will guide the thesis, establish the argument, and will discuss in greater detail the methodological procedures. Chapter Three presents the analysis of two speeches given by González, one titled her “March for Our Lives” speech and the other at a rally for gun control in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida named “We call BS!” Chapter Four provides the discussion which revisits theory to



reiterate the rhetorical strategies utilized by González, making clear the strategic rhetorical maneuvers González employs to disrupt the public discourse and reconstitute gun violence in both of her speeches. Finally, Chapter Five is the conclusion of the key findings and contributions. In short, each chapter will culminate into a feminist criticism of González's rhetoric.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE, THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS, AND CONCEPTS

I work to assess how González is able to spark debate, or at the very least elevate the discourse of gun control, by shifting her subject-position. If the demanding subject has “painted themselves into a rhetorical corner,” in this thesis I raise question of the mechanisms for dislodging their position.<sup>102</sup> In order to discern the rhetorical shifts of her rhetoric used in the two speeches I attend to the different forms of oppositional consciousness.

In this section, I provide a literature review of the theoretical anchors used for this thesis—the methodology of the oppressed, null persona and silence, and affect. From the methodology of the oppressed I use the “five-location topography consciousness” which includes the equal-rights form, the revolutionary form, the supremacist form, the separatist form, and the differential.<sup>103</sup> Each of the three theoretical anchors produces a research question that guides the thesis, they are: how do the various forms of oppositional consciousness used by González disrupt and challenge the logic of the demanding subject?; what is the political function of the silence that encompasses her “March for Our Lives,” speech?; and, finally, how does González translate the affective experience of gun violence? I delve further into the relationship between the literature and the emergence of my critical research questions below.

### *Sandoval’s Methodology of the Oppressed as a Theoretical Framework*

After the emergence of the third world feminist’s movement in the 1980s there was a departure from hegemonic feminism that allowed for new theoretical, methodological, and ideological approaches to situating women’s lives as structured by their gender in addition to race, class, and sexuality. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* is a collection of writings that includes, for example, a variety of poems, short stories, and letters

depicting the complex daily lives and experiences of women of color. *This Bridge Called My Back* is not the only text worth noting, there were several individual publications by Audre Lorde, Paula Gunn Allen, Merle Woo, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Cherríe Moraga that have had a significant impact on the development and continued involvement of third world feminists as a political movement. In 2000, Chela Sandoval published the *Methodology of the Oppressed*. She compiles the work of de-colonial theorists (e.g., Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and Eldridge Cleaver) and theorists of Western thought (e.g., Roland Barthes, Hayden White, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Michel Foucault) to provide new insights to the deconstruction of hegemonic thought.<sup>104</sup>

Sandoval develops a methodology and theoretical framework for conceptualizing the modes of resistance and reconstruction of meaning. For the purposes of the thesis I use the methodology of the oppressed as a theoretical framework.<sup>105</sup> This framework will act as the foundation for the analysis of Gonzalez's speeches. Below, I provide definition of key terms, a brief description of the five forms of oppositional consciousness, and conclude the section by discussing the relationship to González and the broader gun control debate.

In the discussion of resistance and consciousness, there are very important distinctions between oppositional consciousness and what Sandoval terms differential consciousness. First, oppositional consciousness is a site(s) of resistance to "the dominant social order."<sup>106</sup> Sandoval presents a topology which includes forms of oppositional consciousness such as (1) the-equal rights form, (2) the revolutionary form, (3) the supremacist form, (4) the separatist form, and (5) the differential form. Each form has its own ideological standpoint that make it possible for those on the margins to resist and, ultimately, shape their subjectivities. Second, differential consciousness is illustrative of movement, more specifically, the movement between each form

of oppositional consciousness. It describes the way people constantly undo their own subjectivity, adopting the revolutionary form in one context and perhaps a separatist form in the next. Sandoval argues, “what U.S. third world feminism thus demanded was a new subjectivity, a political revision that denied any one ideology as the final answer, while instead positing a *tactical subjectivity* with the capacity to de- and recenter, given the forms of power to be moved.”<sup>107</sup> Lastly, differential consciousness requires “grace, flexibility, and strength” in order to evaluate the power dynamics of a given situation, to then subscribe to an identity position, and uphold an ethic of egalitarianism with other marginalized groups.<sup>108</sup> In the thesis I will call attention to the ways González demonstrates a tactical subjectivity through oppositional consciousness.

The distinctions and definitions of each ideological form assist in understanding how each form can be produced rhetorically and demarcated by various rhetorical styles. The equal-rights form is reliant on comparison, where the subordinated group argues that their differences are only exterior and arguments are made based on their humanity. Sandoval contends, “aesthetically, the equal-rights mode of consciousness seeks duplication; politically, it seeks integration; psychically it seeks assimilation.”<sup>109</sup> On the contrary, the revolutionary form emphasizes difference and in order for a truly egalitarian system to exist, its current structure must be redone. While the revolutionary form and equal-rights form must contend with the challenges of broader social change, the supremacist and separatist forms uniquely accept difference as foundational.

Through the supremacist form “they [the oppressed] also assert that their differences have provided them access to a higher evolutionary level than attained by those who hold social power.”<sup>110</sup> The goal of the practitioner is to elevate the moral and ethical vision of society so as

to create a hierarchy constructed on principle.<sup>111</sup> The separatist form nurtures difference and does not seek assimilation or revolutionary change within the dominant social order. Difference remains intact and is not conceptualized in relation to the dominant social order.

Under consideration of the demanding subject by which domination is the constituting force, I propose the use of differential consciousness that allows the rhetor to transform their subjectivity. Moreover, it is because differential consciousness allows for coalition building that an episteme of domination is incongruent to the practices of moving between ideological standpoints. Therefore, González's constant shifting and resistance to dominant discourses made by those in power allows her to challenge the demanding subject. Collins argues "that the subject enjoys this process of attempting to project a coherent self despite the impossibility of doing so—compensates for the failure of signification."<sup>112</sup> However, I believe Emma González and other student activists are working to put an end to the "jouissance" by resignifying the demanding subject as a collective with socio-cultural and political power.<sup>113</sup> With news commentators such as Bill O'Reiley asking, "should the media be promoting opinions by teenagers who are in an emotional state and facing extreme peer pressure in some cases?" there is the political interest to contain the Parkland students within the confines of an inexperienced, young, emotionally unstable subject position.<sup>114</sup> Nonetheless, Emma González defies the prescribed role of victim or young person and asserts her position within the gun control debate. As a result, the first critical question of the thesis is how do the various forms of oppositional consciousness used by González in her "We call BS!" speech and her "March for Our Lives" speech disrupt and challenge the logic of the demanding subject? I will assess the rhetorical strategies González uses to uproot the arguments and logic of the demanding subject.

*Null Persona and Silence*

Dana Cloud states, “The null persona refers to the self-negation of the speaker and the creation in the text of an oblique silhouette indicating what is not utterable.”<sup>115</sup> The null persona is adapted from Wander’s third persona, an appeal to the critic to consider the audiences that go unmentioned, that otherwise exist in silence. Cloud found the null persona to encapsulate the oral histories of textile workers in the transcripts of the documentary *Uprising ’34*, pointing to “extradiscursive power relations” such as “economic exploitation and physical coercion that we must regard as supra-symbolic in nature in order to assess their significance.”<sup>116</sup> Distinguishing between material reality and discursive reality, Cloud warns the critic that silence is not simply rooted in absence but instead functions as evidence of economic and state power.<sup>117</sup> Methodologically, Cloud began by examining the transcripts of interviews and looking for “human agency,” “speaking persona,” and “self-silencing modes.”<sup>118</sup> In Chapter Four I will consider these specific concepts as they relate to González’s prolonged silence in her “March for Our Lives” speech.<sup>119</sup>

After watching and assessing a video of the speeches I will consider what the speaker is doing during the moment of silence that encapsulated her “March for Our Lives” speech, and how the audience responds. In addition, I will take into consideration the political meaning of the silence as it relates to the broader socio-cultural context as well as work to illuminate the extradiscursive power relations. To this end, I hope to reveal how silence is evidence of differential consciousness and constitutes an audience’s political struggle that is renewed in contention with loss and grief.

In consideration of the silence used by González during her “March for Our Lives” speech I am interested in understanding her prolonged silence as a transformation of ritual (a moment of silence) into a persuasive tool dedicated to dismantling disparate power relations. In

Clouds analysis of the *Uprising of '34* she argues, “The silences in the interviews point us to spaces and relations outside of themselves, located in the social conditions constraining.”<sup>120</sup> By identifying the broader social constraints I can grasp a greater understanding of the silence as a persuasive tool. While null persona situates silence within a context of power strategic silence allows the rhetor to employ silence as a mode of resistance.

Barry Brummett defines strategic silence as, “the refusal of a public figure to communicate verbally when that refusal (1) violates expectations (2) draws public attribution of fairly predictable meanings, and (3) seems intentional and directed at an audience.”<sup>121</sup> The rhetor who employs strategic silence is characterized as adopting a passive persona, however, I adopt null persona to account for the extradiscursive power relations. Passivity implies a sort of surrender, whereas null persona frames the rhetor as actively working within constraints. Brummett urges critics to “identify and describe strategic silence when it occurs, and (2) explain what the silence means and how it is understood by the public.”<sup>122</sup> In addition, to identifying the extradiscursive constraints I consider the public’s response by including news articles from various new outlets. In doing so, I can reach the significance and interpretation of the silence as I contend with the second critical question, what is the political function of silence that encompasses González’s “March for Our Lives” speech?

### *Affect*

*If you have ever lost someone very important to you, then you already know how it feels, and if you haven't, then you cannot possibly imagine it.*  
-Lemony Snicket as quoted by Emma González<sup>123</sup>

For the purpose of this thesis affect is defined as “an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation as well as the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities.”<sup>124</sup> Affect is an elusive concept, Ben Anderson offers

affective atmospheres as a means of grasping affect as a collective force<sup>125</sup> It is difficult to discern and decide the relationship between emotion and affect, nonetheless, Elspeth Probyn makes their relationship clearest in her discussion of emotion, “affects have specific effects.”<sup>126</sup> Within the literature there is an ongoing conversation as to whether or not emotion and affect are two distinct concepts. Massumi argues that emotion functions to aid in the construction of a narrative, whereas, affect is a demonstration of intensity.<sup>127</sup> On the contrary, the use of atmospheres as a theoretical concept deconstructs the dichotomies between emotion/affect. I have chosen to rely on affective atmospheres in order to qualify the rhetorical use and persuasiveness of González’s rhetoric.

Rhetorical studies engage affect and its related fragments of sensation, feeling, and emotion. Debra Hawhee tracks the study of sensation over the last 100 years in the *Quarterly of Speech* demarcating key developments, revealing “gaps,” and naming specific approaches.<sup>128</sup> Hawhee found, “the notion of energy comes up repeatedly with discussions of sensation in the context of rhetoric.”<sup>129</sup> Affect described as energy accounts for movement in the same way early scholars studied sensation using the language of electricity— “stimulant, reactor, and voltage”— to describe the relationship between the speaker and their audience.<sup>130</sup>

Mobilizing affect in the service of political argument has been a driving force in the struggle for change. Stephanie Larson’s conceptualization of visceral counterpublics, Miriam Betzlemize’s consideration of bodies as affective event in an analysis of FEME, and Lauren Berlant’s consideration of Euro-American art as a mode of revealing political corruption delve into the possibilities of affect as a tool used for resistance, mobilization, and challenging dominant ideologies.<sup>131</sup> The intersection of politics and affect an imaginary that alters the possibilities for the future, “amidst all of the chaos, crisis, and injustice in front of us, the desire



for alternative filters that produce the sense—if not the scene—of a more livable and intimate sociality is another name for the desire for the political.”<sup>132</sup> Similar to differential vision, affect allows the activist to construct a blue-print for a more equitable and just world.

González invokes the emotions of her audience in varied ways—through silence, symbols, and also affect. Sara Ahmed, uses affect as a linkage mechanism between happiness and objects, arguing that “happiness is an orientation toward the objects we come into contact with.”<sup>133</sup> In agreement with Ahmed, I hope to explore further how González has used affect to construct a “shared orientation” towards gun violence. There is a liminal space between the individual speaker and their audience where affect resides. Forefronting Ahmed’s definition, “objects would refer not only to physical or material things, but also to anything that we imagine might lead us to happiness, including objects in the sense of values, practices and styles, as well as aspirations.”<sup>134</sup> Relying on rhetorical, material, and symbolic markers as objects to point to a structure of affect, I work to uncover how González translates the incomprehensible emotion of loss and gun violence that her audience may not know.

### *Methodology*

I rely on a selection of some of the critical practices of a close textual analysis and filter the analysis through the theoretical frameworks mentioned previously—methodology of the oppressed, null persona and silence, and affect.<sup>135</sup> To be clear, this thesis does not rely on a traditional close-textual analysis, however, it is a methodological influence. For example, I will use iconicity to uncover rhetorical markers that gesture towards the texts. Leff and Sachs make clear, “as opposed to a symbol, an icon is a representational mark (signifier) bearing an actual resemblance to whatever it signifies.”<sup>136</sup> Therefore, the form is a representation of the ideological structures embedded within the meaning of the text. Iconicity fulfills two purposes of the

analysis, first, it is a marker of differential consciousness. It will be utilized to highlight how the form of the text—"the sentence, the paragraph, and the discourse as a whole"—constructs meaning and contains the "ideological forms" as mentioned by Sandoval.<sup>137</sup> Secondly, it accounts for the "discursive reality" while the null persona points the critic toward the material.<sup>138</sup> Dana Cloud, however, cautions the critic:

. . . too often textual scholars take what is on the page or in the speech as evidence for what is in a person's consciousness or culture. In other words, critical rhetoricians sometimes risk mistaking the persuasive for what is true, assuming there is no reality outside of and referenced (even incompletely) in rhetorical texts.<sup>139</sup>

In an effort to heed Cloud's admonition I rely on null persona and lean on the critical practices of a close-textual analysis. By highlighting the extradiscursive power relations that constrain Gonzalez's rhetorical agency and the symbolic meaning of the text, I strive to provide a more robust analysis that considers the texts being analyzed. My thesis, then, is influenced by constructs used in close-textual analysis and foregrounds differential consciousness, null persona and silence, and lastly affect as theoretical anchors that will provide insight into how rhetors negotiate ideological terrain in an effort to construct a counterpublic.

My methodological procedure is influenced by Sonja K. Foss who presents a four-step process for feminist criticism: (1) selecting an artifact; (2) analyzing the artifact; (3) formulating a research question; and (4) writing the essay.<sup>140</sup> Disrupting dominant hegemonies and ideologies of domination is a primary focus of a feminist critic and is an overarching theme of this prospectus.<sup>141</sup> Foss presents generating multiple perspectives, cultivating ambiguity, juxtaposing incongruities as possible strategies used by a rhetor to disrupt dominant discourse.<sup>142</sup> With these strategies in mind, my theoretical frameworks reflect to various degrees these rhetorical maneuvers.

For this thesis, I conducted an analysis by reading and re-reading the texts several times in order to identify key words, phrases, and sentences of both speeches as they relate to each theoretical anchor. This process was ongoing, one by which the relationship between affect, silence, and oppositional consciousness began to slowly emerge. Next, I watched the video of González delivering each speech alongside the preliminary analysis. I looked for prolonged silences, facial expressions, and responses from the crowd. Through notes of thick description, I was able to provide a holistic reading of each speech.<sup>143</sup> By taking a layered approach, first discursive analysis and then visual, I was able to consider each theoretical framework, for instance, and mark the shift in atmosphere based on the discursive movements within each text. Again, I watched each video several times until identifying key and substantial findings. The procurement of a thorough analysis was complete once significant patterns are identified or after illuminating how each theoretical anchor contributes to the persuasiveness of the speech.

In the spirit and tradition of building bridges by third world feminists, I forge a theoretical underpass that calls attention to the construction of meaning and the rhetorical processes.<sup>144</sup> To me, rhetorical criticism is the act of passing underneath, attempting to grasp an alternative view of the overpass, taking into account its' structure and the terrain.<sup>145</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa makes clear:

Being a bridge means being mediator between yourself and your community and white people, lesbians, feminists, white men. You select, consciously or unconsciously, which group to bridge with—or they choose you. Often the you that's the mediator gets lost in the dichotomies, dualities, or contradictions you're mediating. You have to be flexible yet maintain your ground, or the pull in different directions will dismember you. It's a tough job; not many people can keep the bridge up.<sup>146</sup>

In a Chicana feminist register I view González as a bridge for young people, specifically young people who have been the victims of gun violence. Her bridge is built to connect them to the larger U.S. society, political system, and even their own adult parents or guardians. As a critic,

my goal is to understand the design, aesthetics, and constituent parts of González's rhetoric within the two speeches—"We call BS!" and "March for Our Lives." When going underneath the rhetorical bridge a view of the substructure and foundation are illuminated.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this Chapter I have outlined the guiding theoretical anchors that will provide the foundation for this thesis and conveyed my methodological approach for the analysis of each text. The methodology of the oppressed, silence, and affect operate as a theoretical axis for analysis and interpretation. As an important note, the methodology of the oppressed lends itself to broader theoretical implications. In other words, it is both a theory and method. For the purposes of this thesis, I will rely on the methodology of the oppressed for its theoretical contributions. Methodologically, I approach the text using influences from close-textual analysis as a valuable starting point, at which point, I will layer the text with visual elements from videos of each speech. Only after having taken thorough notes did I begin the process of providing analysis.

## CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS OF “WE CALL BS!” AND “MARCH FOR OUR LIVES”

### Introduction

González delivered her “We call BS” speech outside of the Federal Courthouse in Fort Lauderdale, Florida during a gun control rally on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018.<sup>147</sup> On the same day, the Miami Gun Show was set to take place just 50 miles from Parkland, Florida.<sup>148</sup> As one of the largest gun shows in the State with 140 vendors selling weapons the irony of the matter was not lost.<sup>149</sup> Hours after the rally, there were more than 100,000 views of González’s speech which contributed to her notoriety as not merely a student of Marjory Stoneman Douglas but as a gun control activist.<sup>150</sup> One local news journalist wrote, “the voice of this brilliant, pissed-off woman speaks for her generation.”<sup>151</sup> In this chapter, I assess how González’s subjectivity is negotiated tactically, demarcating the methodology of the oppressed through its’ different forms of oppositional consciousness.<sup>152</sup> The movement between each form is referenced as differential consciousness, both terms are interrelated and will be used throughout the subsequent chapter, detailing resistance (oppositional) and transformation (differential).

There are four rhetorical strategies of the speech that help delineate the use of differential consciousness: orientation, “us” vs. “them” form, and violations of decorum. Each element raises the impression of specific forms of oppositional consciousness and simultaneously illuminates the movement through these forms. Chela Sandoval describes the compilation of oppositional forms as a “cultural topography” which “delineates a set of critical points within which individuals and groups seeking to transform dominant and oppressive powers can constitute themselves as resistant and oppositional citizen subjects.”<sup>153</sup> The cultural topography is a mapping of consciousness (i.e., critical points) and the rhetorical strategies used by González act

as a key for interpretation. From the beginning (i.e., “our guns have changed but our laws have not”), to the middle (i.e., “we are going to change the law”) and the final line of her speech (i.e., “give them [Congresspeople] a piece of your mind”) there exists a coherent call for political change through the use of differential consciousness. The analysis follows the form of the speech and provides terminology for discussing the text.

The speech has an hour glass shape that will serve as a point of reference. I discuss the speech in terms of above or below the fulcrum (the center) to highlight significant shifts. The analysis will include the majority of the speech highlighting critical points in the formation of an oppositional consciousness. Portions of the text that are excluded for reasons of length and redundancy. As a brief overview, González starts broadly with addressing the founding fathers, the President and then there is a crescendo in the middle of the speech. At the center of the speech is the fulcrum where “students” are imagined as changemakers, building coalitions and catalysts for change. At this point, the speech moves from students to the Parkland community and eventually coalescing to the nation, “If you agree, register to vote. Contact your congresspeople. Give them a piece of your mind.”<sup>154</sup> By moving through the national, coalitional, and local contexts she invites the audience to imagine multiple visions of what it means to be a teenager, to be a victim of gun violence, and imagines a future for America that is marked by gun violence. González is able to reconstruct multiple subject positions as she moves through oppositional forms. First, I provide an analysis of Gonzalez’s “We call BS!” prefatory speech, then I analyze González’s “March for Our Lives” speech, and to this end, conclude by summarizing key findings and discuss grief as a valuable heuristic consideration for rhetorical critics.

### **“We call BS!”: Moving Beyond Victimhood and Negotiating Subjectivities**

The day before the protest funerals were held for Alyssa Alhadeff (14) and Meadow Pollack (14). Attendees listened to Alyssa’s mother eulogize her daughter’s funeral and watched as the funeral procession for Meadow drove away. The community was in a state of disarray and grief pervaded in the presence of protestors. González appeared before a crowd of hundreds, meeting the public to reflect on the mass shooting that gripped their community.<sup>155</sup>

Before beginning her speech, González made it clear that while her speaking notes appear to be excessive, they also included her “AP Gov. notes.”<sup>156</sup> At mention of her AP Government notes, she situates herself as an above average student with the intention of addressing politicians to communicate her understanding of U.S. history. Additionally, she brings to light the importance of routine scripts that frame the gun control debate throughout public discourse. Her position as a student and young person is not simply visually perceptible but rhetorically constructed. González brings awareness to the political moment as the House of Representatives had not yet held a moment of silence. Briefly González performs a common ritual after a tragedy, “We haven’t already had a moment of silence in the House of Representatives, so I would like to have another one.”<sup>157</sup> She closes her eyes as pain overcomes her facial expression and then continues to endure the emotional weight of speaking on this day (0:13-0:28).<sup>158</sup> With the pain in her voice and the tone of her speech the weight of that day was difficult to contend with, she attempts to keep herself steady and calm. Regardless of how hard she tries her body betrays her with tear-filled moments in combination with shouts and breaks in her voice. During the initial words of her speech she projects and speaks with conviction but there are subtle hints of grief and disarray.

The text unfolds with González weaving together two political orientations—local and national. Sara Ahmed describes the relationship between affect and a given “object” as an orientation.<sup>159</sup> A person’s orientation is concerned with the proximity and movement between the object, in this case meanings found within the text and the body.<sup>160</sup> The first orientation is the political discourse which contextualizes the Parkland Shooting, in other words, a national orientation. Orientations are important to discuss as Ahmed asserts, “to experience an object as being affective or sensational is to be directed not only toward an object, but to ‘whatever’ is around the object, which includes what is behind the object, the conditions of its arrival.”<sup>161</sup> Mentions of the founding fathers, specific politicians, and the President exemplifies an orientation wrought with anger and frustration. González explicitly shames the national government for their hypocrisy and inaction by pointing to the people standing with her at the podium, these people “should be home grieving.”<sup>162</sup> Throughout the speech, González weaves in-between each orientation, showcasing a cause-and-effect relationship between gun violence and broader political structures.

Following the very brief moment of silence González states, “Every single person up here today, all these people should be home ***grieving***. But instead ***we*** are up here standing together because if all our ***government*** and ***President*** can do is send ***thoughts and prayers***, then it's time for ***victims to be the change*** that ***we*** need to see” (0:30-0:47).<sup>163</sup> In the opening statement, González positions herself alongside the victims and speaks to the grief that has been postponed or denied entirely to the audience. Although she occupies the subject-position of the victim she takes a national orientation that allows her to shapeshift from victim to activist.<sup>164</sup> By naming the government and President González employs a separatist form. Rhetorically, “thoughts and



prayers,” is intended to console the grieving but instead González positions the condolence as a perpetuation of grief and a force reproducing the conditions of gun violence.

Explicitly, grief is located in the home—the private sphere—that typically goes unseen. As an isolated process, grief in a public space is cyphered from action. In order for the victims to become activist’s grief is withheld and contained. Although, there are outward ruptures that reveal the difficulty of containing grief. Affectively and discursively there is a contradiction, grief is both denied and embodied. Therefore, “we” is constituted through the rejection of grief in an effort to destabilize the status quo.

After briefly mentioning the President, the government, and the founding fathers she discusses the systemic foundations that foster gun violence (1:01-1:09). Leading from the subject position of a “teenager” González states, “We certainly do not understand why it should be *harder to make plans with friends on weekends* than to buy an automatic or semi-automatic weapon” (1:09-1:16). Again, the assertion of her youthful identity contextualizes the incongruity between what is and is not easily attainable. González prompts how the youthful and carefree lifestyle that is associated with teenagers has more barriers than the legal ability to buy a gun. As evidence she discusses the lack of oversight by the State, “in Florida, to buy a gun *you do not need* a permit, *you do not need* a gun license, and once you buy it *you do not need* to register it. *You do not need* a permit to carry a concealed rifle or shotgun. *You can* buy as many guns as you want at one time” (1:22-1:34). I contend the speech has a pedagogical function for viewers outside of the immediate audience. Every state has specific gun laws and González details the process of purchasing and possessing a gun. The lack of regulation becomes not only clear, but González also situates the Parkland Shooting as less of an unforeseeable occurrence and more of a probable outcome. She continues by repeating “you do not need” to teach the audience about

Florida's gun laws but to also emphasize their political agency to purchase a gun with few constraints. The effortless capability to purchase a gun in accordance with the law is juxtaposed with a lack of agency that victims are granted when they are faced with gun violence. As the speech comes to an end, agency is reversed and afforded to students as they create the course for change.

The oppositional consciousness evolves from a separatist form to a supremacist form as González positions students as the experts. By speaking from the position of a teacher she borrows a legitimated voice, as a result, the dichotomous relationship between students/teachers is absolved and the dichotomy between kids/adults is constituted. She displays this shift most clearly by stating, "I read something very powerful to me today. It was from the point of view of a teacher. And I quote: When *adults* tell me I have the right to own a gun, all I can hear is *my right to own a gun outweighs your student's right to live*. All I hear is *mine, mine, mine, mine*" (1:35-1:52). The striking contrast between the role of students and adults as antithetical, proving there is a greater need for students to advocate on their own behalf. Adults have been consumed by their own self-interest. As the speaker, González "provide[s] the social order a higher ethical and moral vision"<sup>165</sup> Experience and knowledge gained through "studying our notes," "debate," and a student's experience "during the shooting" gives them a moral and ethical claim to speak on this issue and more broadly, to act in opposition to any current legal conditions that create an environment ripe for gun violence. The result being that, "the people involved right now, those who were there, those posting, those tweeting, those doing interviews and talking to people, are *being listened to*" (2:24-2:30). There is an explicit recognition of the possibility for a fruitful dialogue or debate. These students are not just being "listened to" but they are being engaged as a legitimate force of change.

Speaking to the exigency, González takes a comparative approach to the U.S.' standing in relationship to the rest of the world. "*Canada* has had three [mass shootings] and the *UK* had one and they both introduced gun control and *yet here we are*, with websites dedicated to reporting these tragedies so that they can be *formulated into statistics for your convenience*" (3:15-3:28).<sup>166</sup> She gestures to the shameful fact that incidents of gun violence have been mapped for the public but preventative measures have been minimal.<sup>167</sup> In fact, taped to the podium González uses to deliver her speech is an image of the United States similar to the one produced by the Gun Violence Archive—a map of the incidences of gun violence across the United States.<sup>168</sup> Lives lost are being transformed into statistics while death and violence become an abstract reality represented through numbers and maps. It is clear that not only have adults lost a "higher ethical and moral vision," but the country is failing its' citizens.<sup>169</sup>

In direct response to the existence of websites like shootingtracker.com and to adults asking questions like "do you think *your children* will have to go through other school shooter drills? (3:33-3:36)."<sup>170</sup> González, in her speech, responds to the everyday discourses that encapsulates gun violence. Although the future appears to be at stake González responds with an answer that implicates the present by bringing forth a call to action, "And our response is that our *neighbors* will not have to go through other school shooter drills. When we've had our say with the *government* -- and maybe the *adults have gotten used to saying 'it is what it is,'* but if *us students have learned anything, it's that if you don't study, you will fail.* And in this case if you actively do nothing, people continually end up dead, so *it's time to start doing something*" (3:44-3:58).<sup>171</sup> As González positions her neighbors at the center of their cause instead of speaking to the experiences of her potential children, the present is brought forth as the point in time for altering a trajectory of the future that will be solely a mirror image of the past. In

addition, it is important to note that the question was asked of her as a victim of gun violence (i.e., “do you think your children...”), yet her response invokes her subjectivity as a student. The word “study” becomes a referent for action, the guiding mechanism for successfully meeting the demands of the current moment. To “fail” refers to death and functions as an inevitability without proper recourse.

Action is constructed on a vision for the future. González’s speech crescendos in the center, with the fulcrum of the hour glass compounded by the visionary work of students and the coalitions they construct to be the change they wish to see. As the fulcrum, González proclaims:

We are going to be the *kids* you read about in *textbooks*. Not because we're going to be another statistic about mass shooting in America, but because, just as David said, *we are going to be the last mass shooting*. Just like Tinker v. Des Moines, *we are going to change the law*. That's going to be Marjory Stoneman Douglas in that *textbook* and it's going to be due to the tireless *effort of the school board, the faculty members, the family members and most of all the students*. The *students* who are dead, the *students* still in the hospital, the *student* now suffering PTSD, the *students* who had panic attacks during the vigil because the helicopters would not leave us alone, hovering over the school for 24 hours a day (4:13-5:15).<sup>172</sup>

To be clear, the demand for change is not an individualistic endeavor. Although there are clear discursive distinctions constructed between adults and kids, González does not enact a revolutionary form until uniting the community. She rhetorically constructs a coalition (i.e., school board, faculty members, family members, and students) that allows for kids and adults to transcend their differences in an effort to create substantial change. Kids transform in to students who have suffered from gun violence and continue to live with the trauma. It is their experience that will alter the future. As the speech progresses the coalition remains intact, yet the subjectivity position of students, kids, and teenagers coalesce to oppose adults, the government, parents, companies, and the NRA.

The local and national orientations situate the affective response. Dependent on the orientation, González creates an “us” vs. “them” dichotomy that is constantly shifting as the speech progresses. At the beginning of the speech, “us” is organized as the local community and “them” is descriptive of the founding fathers, representative of the structural constraints that lend themselves to gun violence. Immediately following the fulcrum, “us” shifts and specifically refers to “students” and the nation positioned as the powerful “them.” The role of students is paramount in the middle of the speech as González proclaims, “we are going to be the last mass shooting” and envisions this as a result from efforts made by students and adults “school board, faculty members, and family members” of the students.<sup>173</sup>

The second orientation is local as she addresses her community and speaks in consideration of their immediate state. This is evidenced in the several instances when she discusses the experiences of students, teachers, and the mental health of the shooter. The instances when she speaks to/about the local community, her orientation is constituted by empathetic consideration, empowerment, and beholden of agency.

Below the fulcrum, González addresses the gunman, his mental health, and the question of blame. In a very self-reflexive and critical manner, González forces her community to consider the role they had that afforded the gunman an opportunity to commit such violent acts. Poignantly, González continues to expand responsibility bringing forth the President and the NRA. To this end, the broader systemic foundations that contribute to gun violence are connected to individuals in the Parkland community who should have intervened. While acknowledging the reports made concerning Cruz’s behavior and instability, she shifts the attention outward. Making it clear, that the gunman is not the only person to blame but so are “the *people who let him* buy the guns in the first place, those at the *gun shows*, the *people who*

*encouraged him* to buy accessories for his guns to make them fully automatic, the *people who didn't take them away* from him when they knew he expressed homicidal tendencies, and *I am not talking about the FBI. I'm talking about the people he lived with.* I'm talking about the *neighbors* who saw him outside holding guns” (6:30-6:57). By bringing attention to specific individuals within her community she does not free the President and the government from blame. Instead government intervention appears even more crucial and the people of her community are implicated through either their complacency or encouragement.

A discussion of responsibility, González situates “us” as the victims and “them” as community members who did not do enough given the signs the shooter was not in a good mental state, “the people he lived with” and “neighbors.” The “us” and “them” is a localized position that made a question of blame the responsibility of community members as much as outside government forces. Again, the shift occurs with the students vs. the nation with mention of President Trump and Republican Senator Chuck Grassley. Nonetheless, González places a large part of the blame on the national government, “If the *President* wants to come up to *me* and tell me to my face that it was a *terrible tragedy* and how it should never have happened and maintain telling *us* how *nothing is going to be done about it*, I'm going to *happily* ask him how *much money he received from the National Rifle Association*” (6:58-7:14). The crowd cheers in an uproar. González provides a careful route to blame the President and the NRA at the end of the road.

There is a monetary breakdown of how much money per person the President has received for every victim of gun violence, totaling \$5,800.<sup>174</sup> Her following statement foreshadows the political repercussions facing both the President and the NRA. “If you don't do anything to prevent this from continuing to occur, that number of gunshot victims will go up and

the number that they are worth will go down. And *we will be worthless to you*” (7:57-8:09). The oppositional form becomes revolutionary as she invokes shame. As González points out, Not only is the President complicit, but he is financially culpable for the lives lost to gun violence. While “Trump” is situated alongside other politicians like Republican Senator Chuck Grassley (Iowa) and shamed for their hypocrisy the student becomes their counterpart.

In the final moments of the speech all of her subject positions are unified in her repetitive use of “we call BS!” The weaving in-between victim, student, teenager, activist, alongside national discourse is an irrepressible strategy.

The people in the *government* who were voted *into power are lying to us*. And us *kids* seem to be the only ones who notice and our *parents* to call BS. *Companies trying to make caricatures of the teenagers these days*, saying that all we are self-involved and trend-obsessed and they hush *us* into submission when our message doesn't reach the ears of the nation, *we are prepared to call BS*. *Politicians* who sit in their gilded House and Senate seats *funded by the NRA* telling us nothing could have been done to prevent this, *we call BS*. They say tougher guns laws do not decrease gun violence. *We call BS*. They say a good guy with a gun stops a bad guy with a gun. *We call BS*. They say guns are just tools like knives and are as dangerous as cars. *We call BS*. They say no laws could have prevented the hundreds of senseless tragedies that have occurred. *We call BS*. That us *kids don't know what we're talking about*, that *we're too young* to understand how the *government* works. *We call BS* (10:14-11:30)!<sup>175</sup>

“We call BS” is a defining idiom of the text that is a violation of decorum.<sup>176</sup> The invocation of profanity and repetition of a rhetorical strategy devised in opposition is symbolically representative of González’s position as a teenager. Throughout history, prominent speakers have often relied on repetition to highlight a major premise. The repetition of “We call BS” in this speech amplifies her message and situates her subject position. Other violations of decorum rest in her image, shaven head and dressed in a tank top, her presence as the speaker is in defiance to gendered expectations. Therefore, González’s transcends expectations of the ideal speaker which allow her to emerge from the margins as a prominent speaker of a movement.

Overall, González voices her frustration at the reoccurrence of mass shootings, places blame on the lawmakers alongside the president, and makes a call for action. This speech foreshadows the formation of a movement leading to protests across the nation and creating another opportunity for González to make her second public address.

### **“March for Our Lives”: Gun Violence and the Creation of Affective Urgency**

This analysis of “March for Our Lives” proceeds in three sections. First, using the analytical/theoretical tools noted in Chapter Two, I map the atmospheric shifts and transformations in combination with shifts in the forms of oppositional consciousness. Then, I highlight Emma González’s role as a translator, and lastly, I discuss how null persona transforms our understanding of a moment of silence from ritual to political act. As a prelude to the analysis I provide brief contextual information and describe the constraints of identifying, in other words, naming a given atmosphere.

#### *Atmospheric Form(s) of Oppositional Consciousness*

The March for Our Lives took place on March 24, 2018 occurring in 763 different locations across the United States.<sup>177</sup> Early in the morning the crowd emerged along Pennsylvania Avenue, chanting “vote them out” at different points throughout the day. Jennifer Hudson, Ariana Grande, and Miley Cyrus were welcomed performers for the gathering. Overall, there were several noteworthy speeches specifically Naomi Wadler, David Hogg, Edna Chavez, and Yolanda Renee King.<sup>178</sup> As the final speaker of the day, Emma González left a lasting impression on the audience.

On this day, the audience cheered as González approached the microphone, there was a fervency as she walked. She was faced the size of the crowd. For a brief moment, she smiled as to acknowledge their support and words of encouragement. One can only assume what she was



feeling during this moment: nervous, overwhelmed, impassioned. Although her first sentence was merely six words, she took a deep breath. Her inhale is required of her to contain the rising emotion that emanated from her voice. González began her speech with the following: “*six minutes and about twenty seconds*. In a little over six minutes, 17 of our friends were taken from us, 15 were injured, and everyone, absolutely *everyone in the Douglas community was forever altered*” (0:19-0:32)<sup>179</sup> As the speech progressed Emma González does not just list the names of those who were killed but she made it clear that the murdered students “would never” be able to do the small acts of life like “complain to me [González] about piano practice.”<sup>180</sup> Then, the speech comes to a halting silence, the crowd claps and cheers intermittently, eventually shouting “never again!” The silence is profound, leaving the audience to their own thoughts and emotions. Because the speech is presented as a story and its inevitable end is devastation, there is a strong visceral reaction by the audience.

I argue that the various forms of oppositional consciousness (e.g., equal-rights form, separatist form, supremacist form) employed by González guide the affective atmosphere. The prevalence of key words and phrases such as “no one understood,” “would never,” and fight for your lives” along with the prevailing silence reflect a specific form of oppositional consciousness. Sandoval leans on Gloria Anzaldúa’s description of weaving, the movement “among and between” oppositional ideologies to describe shifts in the forms of oppositional consciousness (i.e., differential consciousness) whereas atmospheres are constructed “before” and “alongside” subjectivity.<sup>181</sup> For both affective atmospheres and differential consciousness there is a possibility of transformation, transfiguration, and/or substitution, more specifically, a malleability that allows a constant shifting to meet the demands of a given moment. Ben Anderson and James Ash offer four problematics that emerge from the study of affective

atmospheres: identification, coexistence, causal powers, and transformation.<sup>182</sup> Each problematic will be integrated throughout the analysis to provide nuance and specifics about how atmospheres are produced and interact with “March for Our Lives.” Before beginning the analysis, identification is concerned with the naming of atmospheres. While naming adds clarity, it can lead to the perception of a fixed state when ambiguity exists.<sup>183</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, I name each atmosphere with intentional thought and consideration of the speaker’s purpose and experience. Due to the fact that, “naming emerges, in part, from how the researcher is simultaneously oriented towards an atmosphere and dwells within the same atmosphere,” I understand there are limitations to naming each atmosphere.<sup>184</sup> Within the following analysis I will describe the shifts in atmospheres and oppositional consciousness as they emerge within the speech.

First, an atmosphere of loss exists leading up to the silence and encloses the audience. González states: “*six minutes and about 20 seconds. In a little over six minutes, 17 of our friends were taken from us, 15 more were injured, and everyone, absolutely everyone in the Douglas community was forever altered*” (0:18-0:33)<sup>185</sup> Loss is a remnant of death and is encapsulated by the short phrase “our friends were taken from us,” it is a desire for the past. Before the silence is enacted, I contend there is supremacist form, as she “not only claims their [subordinate group] differences” but attempts to “provide a higher social order.”<sup>186</sup> By evoking images of victims’ bodies that had “*waiting to be identified for over a day*” and bodies that had “*stopped breathing,*” she utilizes visceral counterpublicity to emphasize that these bodies occupy a subordinate position within the public sphere (0:53-1:03).<sup>187</sup> Although the dead bodies of her peers are located on the margins, she shifts their loss to the center. Death as a material phenomenon is captured rhetorically, and an image of dead bodies strikes an incomprehensible

configuration of reality that implicates the morality of the listener. Through the visceral discord between the past and the present, death is levied as the price for inaction. As a result, she characterizes this loss as unlike any other.

There is an epistemological divide between González and her audience which constitutes the supremacist form. González foreshadows the imperative of personal experience while attempting to alter her audience, and move them towards political action, “Everyone who has been *touched by the cold grip of gun violence understands*. For us, long, tearful, chaotic hours in the scorching afternoon sun were spent *not knowing*” (0:36-0:48).<sup>188</sup> The repetition of “no one” is followed by the verbs “believe,” “understood,” “knew,” and “comprehend.”<sup>189</sup> Knowingness becomes tied to the bodies of victims as a marker of gun violence and to understand it, as a survivor, is to feel it in the body as much as the mind and soul. González explicitly conveys the boundaries of awareness, “*No one understood the extent of what had happened. No one could believe that there were bodies in that building waiting to be identified for over a day. No one knew that the people who were missing had stopped breathing long before any of us had even known that a code red had been called*” (0:49-1:04)<sup>190</sup> The details of that day are recalled with a tone of disbelief and a remembrance of the victims’ bodies left in the building. This image, difficult to conjure, is evidence of the traumatic distance between the audience and González as it simultaneously reflects the shock of the broader Parkland community.

González reflects on the jarring impact of her experience, again the unknowingness, “*no one could comprehend the devastating aftermath, or how far this would reach, or where this would go*” (1:05-1:12).<sup>191</sup> She attempts to jolt the audience out of complacency by relocating the body of the victims in the earth, “*I’ll tell you where it went. Six feet in the ground, six feet*

*deep*” (1:17-1:21).<sup>192</sup> Death is immediately juxtaposed with the lived experiences of the victims. González states, “*my friend Carmen would never complain to me about piano practice. Aaron Feis would never call Kyra ‘miss sunshine,’ Alex Schachter would never walk into school with his brother Ryan*” and as she approaches the silence, she shortens her list by referring only to the names of victims (1:26-1:38). While the repetition of “*would never*” is memorable, I assert it is the juxtaposition of death and life that produces an atmosphere of loss.

González enacts what Craig Rood terms the warrant of the dead, “an explicit or implicit claim that the dead place a demand on the living.”<sup>193</sup> As a survivor of the Parkland shooting, the warrant of the dead becomes embodied, as a living survivor speaks of the dead. Implicitly, González is imposing the loss which constitutes the Douglas community on her audience in an effort to eventually move them towards action. The names of the victims are signifiers of life and personhood, González amplifies loss in the succession, “*Aliana Petty would never, Cara Loughen would never, Chris Hixon would never, Luke Hoyer would never, Martin Duque Anguiano would never, Peter Wang would never, Alyssa Alhadeff would never, Jamie Guttenberg would never, Jamie Pollack would never*” (1:54-2:10).<sup>194</sup> Therefore, the warrant of the dead can be a translational mode, as emotion is generated and the audience is situated within the boundaries of her personal experience.

Immediately following the list of names silence emerges (2:11-6:34). Loss is characterized by the silence, keeping in mind there can be “multiple atmospheres that touch, contact, and rub up against one another, rather than a single overarching dominant one.”<sup>195</sup> I describe the silence in González’s speech as a moment of lament, in other words, atmospheres of grief, sorrow, condemnation, and reflection, all of which coexist. Ultimately, it is a moment in which every individual engages the silence through their own personal experiences. A victim of

gun violence may engage the silence differently, for example, then a parent or guardian whose child has not been a victim. Although atmospheres may become individualized there is not a complete disregard for the social and political power structures that foster gun violence. More specifically, the individual or a group of individuals who share an atmosphere are not isolated, rather they exist in relationship to each other and with the socio-political-cultural forces of power.

The change in atmospheric conditions simultaneously reflects a change in the form of oppositional consciousness. The silence displays an equal-rights form by which González attempts to move the audience closer to their humanity. Sandoval presents the equal-rights form as an effort towards sameness, noting that “aesthetically, the equal rights mode of consciousness seeks duplication, politically it seeks integration; psychically it seeks assimilation.”<sup>196</sup> The silence is a moment in which the audience unifies through shared grief and loss. The aftermath of gun violence is no longer felt by just the Parkland community. Instead reality is altered, so the Parkland shooting did not simply happen in a distant community far off. It is no longer something that happened to someone else, someplace else, but something that happened to all of us. Communal grief and reconciliation require the audience to contend with the past and respond in the present. More importantly, in order to reimagine the future there is a need to identify a starting point, an event which catalyzes the change.

The atmospheres coalesce when the timer goes off, and “altering the position of a body or changing some condition within an atmosphere changes its capacity to affect.”<sup>197</sup> As the narrative of the Parkland shooting is complete, González concludes:

***Since the time that I came out here, it has been six minutes and 20 seconds. The shooter has ceased shooting, and will soon abandon his rifle, blend in with the students as they escape, and walk free for an hour before arrest. Fight for your lives before it's someone else's job (6:37-6:55).<sup>198</sup>***

The atmosphere emanating from the audience is revolutionary in form. Unlike the equal-rights form, there is not a strong effort made towards assimilation, but instead González works towards a recognition of difference through her use of the word *“fight.”* Difference between the victim and shooter is maintained, however, it is the difference between complacency and action that distinguishes people. During the silence, bodies were fused together in grief and reconciliation. As the speech comes to an end, these bodies will diffuse. By ending on a revolutionary call to action González in stating, *“fight for your lives before it’s someone else’s job”* affectively constructed the political pursuit for an end to gun violence.<sup>199</sup> Revolution demands not only a call to action but a demand for recognition. Patty Sotirin urges scholars to consider the moral implication specifically the ethopolitics of gun violence.<sup>200</sup> Sotirin asks, “how is it that lives lost in this most hegemonic of populations are not publicly mourned?”<sup>201</sup> Moral outrage is offered as the impetus for change that has not yet been actualized until, I argue, González creates a space for everyone to mourn in community. The space was not constructed due to González’s efforts alone but everyone who spoke during the *March for Our Lives*. While the silence permeates the atmosphere the spoken abruptly shifts from lament to indignation.

The revolutionary form is evidence of moral outrage, a shift in ethopolitics, and an affective demonstration of the effects of gun violence. Each shift as an assemblage, constructs a system of relations in the way the public engages gun violence. Viewing changes in the atmosphere and oppositional form in tandem reveals how a speaker/activist is not only responsible for advocating for change externally, by altering material and discursive structures, but also for a change internally by requiring the audience to alter their embodied engagement to be nonnormative. With regard to gun control, this means the public escapes fleeting engagement

which has come to character the general public as immoral, apathetic, and without affective ties to the issue of gun violence.

### *The Burden of Translation*

At this juncture, a majority of González's "March for Our Lives" speech has been quoted in the analysis. In the forthcoming section I will integrate the text to demonstrate the translational work González undertakes. While language can become the "object" of affect or gesture to affective atmospheres, the transmission of affect has proven to be a valuable analytic. Therefore, I discuss the significance of time and consider how affective structures are being transmitted to the audience through the use of time, threat, and transduction. Before delving into the text, it is crucial to connect translation as tool of a speaker employing differential consciousness.

The methodology of the oppressed is a theoretical anchor of this thesis that was derived from the work of women of color feminists. Among these women is the work of Chicana feminists. Sandoval's theorization of differential consciousness leans on their work to discuss the movement "between" and "among" ideological positions. I contend González not only utilizes an oppositional framework but is what Gloria Anzaldúa terms *nagual*, "shape-shifter," an individual who changes face depending on the context.<sup>202</sup> The act of translation is a marker of the shape-shifter. Translation from Spanish to English to Indian, from academic jargon to the customary and from poetry to prose are each a political strategy as much as they are rhetorical. Cherrie Moraga situates translation within historical context and transformative praxis; she offers, "maybe we are modern-day Malinches. Not traitors but translators, women who tread dangerously among the enemy, driven by a vision of change that may only be intuitively known."<sup>203</sup> Within the field of rhetorical studies, Lisa A. Flores has emphasized the significance of translation in her conceptualization of a rhetoric of difference.<sup>204</sup> Translation is not only

linguistic but discursive, Flores highlights the significance of Chicanas countering dominant discourses by re-creating and reclaiming the negative images that attempt to constrain them. By translating their experiences, Chicana feminists have disrupted and transformed dominant discourses.

Affective atmospheres and translation enfold at the experiential, as translation is concerned with recreating meaning, experiences, and/or feelings. For González discussing her experience is an entry point for the audience to gain a sense of the Parkland Shooting as a brief moment. Although there is a supremacist form González invites the audience to imagine the feeling of being in a state of chaos and confusion, ***“No one understood the extent of what had happened. No one could believe that there were bodies in that building waiting to be identified for over a day. No one knew that the people who were missing had stopped breathing long before any of us had even known that a code red had been called”*** (0:49-1:04). Ben Anderson states, “atmospheres are the shared ground from which subjective states and their attendant feelings and emotions emerge.”<sup>205</sup> The audience is forced to reconcile their possible reluctance to understand and imagine this sight with her, ***“For those who still can't comprehend, because they refuse to, I'll tell you where it went. Six feet into the ground, six feet deep”*** (1:13-1:21). Death and loss construct an oppositional subjective state for the audience to contend with their own feelings about this moment, these people, and their lives ended. Naming the victims in the form of a list with concise statements about what they “would never” be able to do amplifies this subjective state. Even though the audience may not have known the victims personally, imagining a small piece their past life, their absence becomes materially invoked.

Although González enacts the supremacist form by creating a distinction between those who have and have not experienced gun violence, she attempts to re-create a shared subjective



state for her audience. I argue González translates her experience affectively through mimetic communication. In order to substantiate my claim, I focus on three specific components of the speech: time, transduction, and threat. All of which bring the audience into a subjective state, translational space, where gun violence becomes shared ground.

There were 340 mass shootings in 2018, time is now a form of demarcation similar to the practice of naming.<sup>206</sup> More importantly, the use of time is a method of mimicry that Gibbs contends, “can be understood as a response to the other, a borrowing of form that might be productively thought of as communication.”<sup>207</sup> The rhetorical boundaries of six minutes and about 20 seconds, gives the audience a modest piece of González’s experience. In addition, González thrusts her audience into a state of ecstasy, while rhetorical scholars have considered fleeting engagement as a response to gun violence there is evidence of what Karma Chávez describes as, “subversive performativity.”<sup>208</sup> During the speech, the possibility of moving on is incomprehensible. Paradoxically, six minutes is fleeting but even so, to feel deeply for six minutes and about 20 seconds leaves an affective residue that makes “feeling moved and then moving on” difficult. For the duration of her speech, moving on is equated to a loss, loss of life, loss of time, and loss of understanding. When the sound of the timer González brought on stage with her goes off (6:33) it is jolting, a disruptor, suspending the silence. Consequently, it evokes the material consequences of gun violence, the length of time is not only real but so is the gunman, the victims-their bodies, and the emotional aftermath. While “*six minutes and about 20 seconds*” was repeated three times over the course of the speech there appeared to be some confusion as to how long the silence actually was. On twitter, the same day of her speech, González wrote to clarify the time concern;

Real quick: my speech today was abt 6 minutes & 30 seconds, including both my speech and my silence. The fact that people think the silence was 6 minutes... imagine how long

it would feel if it actually was 6 minutes, or how it would feel if you had to hide during that silence.<sup>209</sup>

In a state of ecstasy, time is beyond measurable, disjointed from time is the feeling of time.<sup>210</sup>

González's clearly wanted the audience to imagine themselves living in the temporal moment of a mass shooting, more specifically, this mass shooting. In fact, during the Parkland Shooting González was hiding in the auditorium while Nikolas Cruz shot his victims.<sup>211</sup> Time as a shared environmental factor between the Parkland shooting and her speech, evokes a shared affective atmosphere. The silence is profound; however, silence and the rhetorical boundaries of time reproduce a tragic experience. By constructing a state of ecstasy González was able to counter fleeting engagement through affective atmospheres.

Time is a form of induction, what Massumi describes as, “qualification, a containment, an actualization,” whereas, transduction is “the transmission of a force of potential that cannot but be felt.”<sup>212</sup> Transmission and transduction are non-ideological means for producing ideology.<sup>213</sup> One means of transduction mentioned by both Gibbs and Massumi is mimicry. Gibbs argues, “at the heart of mimesis is affect contagion, the bioneurological means by which particular affects are transmitted from body to body.”<sup>214</sup> Similar to the use of time, I believe the audience begins to mimic González's feelings and emotions, and readily mimic each other through cheering. At the beginning of the silence, the audience cheers (minute mark), so as to disrupt the silence. In the same way, a person fills the awkward silence in a conversation. When González begins to cry (3:34), she closes her eyes and takes several deep breaths. The audience cheers again as a sign of encouragement. The camera moves back and forth between González and her audience. Many audience members have a look of concern (5:43, 5:47), are crying (4:24, 4:57). The crowd begins to chant “never again!” the moment tears begin to stream down

González's face. The audience responds to González's bodily impulse to grieve and lament with applause, cheers, and sympathy.

The focus of the camera is consistently shifting between González and her audience, providing a clear image of the movement of energy between rhetor and audience. Facial expressions reflect the affective state. Gibbs states, "of particular interest is facial expression's activation of a mimetic impulse." The resemblance between the audience and González is uncanny. Panoramic views of the audience provide a holistic landscape of the raw emotion of which the atmosphere circulates above. Watching the camera pan to the audience, the audience shares the bodily impulse to cry, to grieve, and support one another. When the beeper goes off (6:33), it is as though the transmission of emotion changes to power, strength, and resistance. The final line of her speech "*Fight for your lives before it's someone else's job,*" signifies the affective state.

Here "the affective reality of threat is contagious," the looming possibility of another mass shooting envelops the audience.<sup>215</sup> The possibility of threat takes on a cyclical nature: guns, death, life. While discussing the affective nature of threat, Massumi argues:

Threat is from the future. It is what might come next. Its eventual location and ultimate extent are undefined. Its nature is open-ended. It is not just that it is not: it is in a way that it is never over. We can never be done with it. Even if a clear and present danger materializes in the present, it is still not over. There is always the nagging potential of the next after being even worse, and of a still worse next again after that. The uncertainty of the potential next is never consumed in any given event. There is always a remainder of uncertainty, an unconsummated surplus of danger. The present is shadowed by a remainder surplus of indeterminate potential for a next event running forward back to the future, self-renewing.<sup>216</sup>

González's affective transmission of her experience acts as a threat reminder. Threat can be a debilitating force as depicted by Massumi, it is never-ending and can easily become passively accepted. While the presence of a threat is actualized in the speech through the strategic use of

time it is not elusive. Instead, it is tenuous and the potential to fracture the cycle of threat is conceivable through action, to fight. González did not urge the audience to vote or to support gun control legislation, instead *“fight”* is used to disassemble the affective state of threat that the public has come to expect and endure.

Threat implies fear and *“fight”* is a confrontation of that fear. To fight not only disrupts the perpetual existence of a threat but symbolically represents a visceral reaction. Who are we fighting? There is a collapse of the present moment and the future—to fight now—is to fight within power structures (state and economic power). The future, however, rejects the agency of audience members as they must depend on presumably a police officer to fight an active shooter. There is an inevitable struggle and irreverent need to resist. The future looms but instead of immobilizing the audience González positions the audience to reject this future possibility by fighting. Therefore, the present becomes the greatest influence of the future.

### **Chapter Summary**

Emma González has proven a need for change imbedded in grief, loss, and pain. Gun violence maintains its unsettling capacity to alter our lives—if it has not already. This analysis of “We call BS!” and “March for Our Lives” has mapped the various form(s) of oppositional consciousness in an effort to gain a better understanding of resistance and forces of change. Atmospheric shifts allowed the audience to embody the experience of gun violence by situating them within a shared affective state. In addition, affect is a method of oppositional consciousness, wherein tactical subjectivity is afforded an affective capacity to catalyze change. public grief created a sense of urgency, emphasizing the severity of gun violence and forcing the audience to question the moral and ethical implications of acquiescing to the status quo.

As an activist, Emma González is a shapeshifter. Without explicitly calling for legislative action she guided the audience to action by carefully forcing them to recognize the material and embodied effects of gun violence. Unafraid of being vulnerable, she is able to bring forth the material and affective consequences of death. By appealing to our deepest sense of humanity, she situates the value of life is found in the experience of loss. González's strategic movement through atmospheres and forms of oppositional questions she directly confronts the demanding subject.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

### Introduction

In Chapter Three I demarcated the shifts in oppositional consciousness that constitute González's response to the political exigency produced by gun violence. I found that the affective potentialities to build alliances and coalitions necessary for change resides in the expression of public grief. This Chapter intends to expand on the theoretical conceptualization of the methodology of the oppressed. Differential consciousness as the movement between ideologies reveals the affective attachments that come to define the methodology of the oppressed in both speeches. Throughout this Chapter I reconsider concepts such as differential consciousness and affect as they relate to gun violence. Ultimately, I locate grief as an "affective force" that allows Emma González to construct a counterpublic through public mourning.<sup>217</sup>

Differential consciousness requires the critic to shift in an effort to reconsider what is assumed, expected, and considered normal—an ideological undertaking. In this introduction as an extension of Sandoval's notion of differential consciousness I discuss Carrillo Rowe's conceptualization of differential belonging and Karma R. Chávez differential vision. Their call for greater movement between and among ideologies, communities, subjectivities, and "positionality" is exemplified through González's "March for Our Lives" speech and "We call BS" speech.<sup>218</sup>

Differential vision "holds competing positions for the sake of building coalitions, centers the perspectives of coalitional subjects, and recognizes the necessity of maintaining flexibility with regard to political form and relationalities."<sup>219</sup> It centers the most vulnerable in an effort towards holistic justice in addition to community building, building bridges, and breaking

borders. Chávez conducts a rhetorical analysis of four manifestos from the: Audre Lorde Project (ALP); Queers for Economic Justice (QEJ); Wingspan and Coalición de Derechos Humanos (CDH); lastly, Horizontal Alliance of Very [or Vaguely or Voraciously] Organized Queers. One example of differential vision, specifically of breaking borders, is the way that CDH and Wingspan discuss NAFTA. While the movement of people across the border is unwanted, the movement of capital is given an exception.<sup>220</sup> This allows for the possibility of coalition building across borders through the means of production. In addition, the link between Mexican migrants and Native Americans living on both sides of the border allows for coalition building for the end of U.S. imperialism.<sup>221</sup>

The greatest overlap with this thesis occurs with Carrillo Rowe and differential belonging. As described by Carrillo Rowe, “belongings in which we become accountable to power can produce a space of alterity, a space of resistance, and spaces that disrupt these hegemonic forms of belonging. Belonging, then, is intimately tied to power. It is an *affective force*<sup>222</sup> that can be used to reproduce and/or challenge whiteness as hegemonic form.”<sup>223</sup> The transformative potential of differential conflict depends on affect as a means of catalyzing change. I contend grief creates a sense of belonging that requires the audience(s) to grieve with and for González, as one of the victims of the Parkland shooting, in order to challenge institutional power (i.e., government and the NRA) and the authority granted to adults/parents. Naming the affective force which constructs a space of belonging offers valuable insight into how oppositional forms (differential consciousness) fracture and alter the direction of public discourse. In addition to naming, one must consider the direction of the force. As made known by scholars interested in both affect and differential consciousness movement is foundational. Is there a positive or negative movement that is the primary focus? Is there movement which acts as

a reversal? Are there movements made in simultaneity with different facets revealing a unique trait or principle?

The affective ties that were constructed by Emma González allowed grief to be re-situated as a humanistic and necessary form of response. It has led me to reflect on questions such as, what form of expression is being denied? Who is being denied? What are the boundaries of grief? What are we not grieving for? To be clear, I do not believe a single affective force is the cause of a given social movement but instead challenges normative affective scripts that relegate victims of gun violence to their immediate communities and obscures their sense of belonging within the nation. Clearly put by Raymie McKerrow, “influence is not causality.”<sup>224</sup> In this Chapter I discuss grief as an affective force in both speeches. Then, I discuss violations of decorum as constitutive of an adolescent subjectivity. To conclude this Chapter, I reflect on how the demanding subject comes to be dislodged by oppositional consciousness.

### **Grief in the Midst of Gun Violence**

Over the course of my research I came across a wide array of photos that serve as a record of the Parkland shooting and various mass shootings that have taken place from 2007-2016.<sup>225</sup> In many of the photos people can be seen crying— holding each other as they sob, some even screaming, attending evening vigils, and praying. Unfortunately, I stumbled upon photos of the crime scene following the Sandy Hook shooting.<sup>226</sup> These photos were supplemented with a brief description and excerpts from the 911 calls made by the teachers at Sandy Hook. They serve as a material reminder of the quick splintering of reality. A photo of an empty classroom with an excerpt explaining how one officer found a teacher on top of their students trying to shield them from the gunfire but they were all dead. These images and descriptions have invaded my thoughts and are heavy to contend with.<sup>227</sup> Bearing witness to these photos and their stories I



am overcome with a deep sadness, I am reminded that grief acquires the body. I have begun to question the obvious, what is the role of grief if not one of unification?

Expression of grief remains at odds with a cultural shift to end gun violence. Publicly, many lawmakers and pundits have disagreed as to when it is the best time to discuss gun policy. In response to the Parkland shooting, Sarah Huckabee Sanders (Press Secretary of the White House) evaded a public policy discussion on account of “a day of mourning.”<sup>228</sup> On the contrary, Chuck Todd from “Meet the Press Daily” stated,

I’m obsessed that since the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, the horror that was supposed to change everything, changed nothing. I’m obsessed that there have been 239 school shooting since Sandy Hook. Two hundred and thirty-nine. I’m obsessed with people who say now is not the time to talk about gun violence. I’m obsessed with people who say the way to prevent gun violence is more guns. And I’m obsessed with that now-famous onion headline, the one they put up over and over again, ‘no way to prevent this.’<sup>229</sup>

This tension between grief and action has been an affective force pushing ideological oppositions further apart. As grief and action are situated as a dichotomy within the public and political spheres González rhetorically and affectively uses grief to construct a counterpublic, to perform what Phaedra Pezzullo has termed, “critical interruptions.”

Critical interruptions challenge “taken-for-granted narratives and practices,” by invention.<sup>230</sup> As Pezzullo argues “these interruptions, as I will illustrate, may occur at any point in a dominant narrative: to establish a scene, to perform an act, and/or ascribe meaning to an overall story.”<sup>231</sup> In Pezzullo’s analysis of the narrative depicting Warren Country as the place of origin for the environmental justice movement she emphasized the significance of reflexivity in

accounts of history, accountability of those in power, and the misrepresented latent exigency that led to a delay in action. Parallels can be drawn to each of González's across both speeches as she provides a historical origin of gun violence that began with the founding fathers and continues to this day. She has proven to hold lawmakers accountable and countered claims that "guns are just like tools like knives and are as dangerous as cars" in an effort to prove there is a need for immediate action.<sup>232</sup> The critical interruption occurs with the performance of grief. Although different, each speech contains a striking performance of grief.

In the first speech, "We call BS!" González attempts to suppress her grief, yet there are moments when the grief swells over and becomes apparent. During the moment of silence, González is crying, and the mention of grief marks the beginning of her speech. As she reads her speech, eye contact and the use of purposeful gestures are limited. Some may be quick to say that she is not performing her speech or at least, not performing it well. However, close attention to her hand wiping her tears and the shift in vocal variety clearly portrays grief and anger. For example, her voice becomes louder at mention of shootingtracker.com, school shooter drills, along with the school shooter and the role of the community as there were claims of ostracization. Grief sparks anger, creating an exigency and specifically engaging the Florida community. Again, just three days after the Parkland shooting, González is speaking with an affective force in response to the material aftermath of gun violence. Kathleen Stewart, describes affect as worlding refrains, "accumulative dispositions," by which "everything depends on the feel of an atmosphere and the angle of arrival."<sup>233</sup> As mentioned in Chapter Three, there were funerals for Meadow Pollack and Alyssa Alhadeff leading up to the protest.

The performance of grief is unbounded in her "March for Our Lives" speech. As mentioned in Chapter Two, silence is transformed from a ritual to an act of resistance. This

supports Pezzullo's point, "Hence, understanding interruptions as strategic acts of invention offer insight into the ways in which we are capable of resisting oppressive hierarchies."<sup>234</sup> Barack Obama delivered a eulogy for the children and teachers at Sandy Hook Elementary, during his speech he cried. His expression of grief could lead many to ask why grief was not an affective force as it was for Emma González. Craig Rood, as mentioned previously, argues Barack Obama utilizes the warrant of the dead, quoting him as saying, "Our tears are not enough. Our words and prayers are not enough."<sup>235</sup> Again, grief must be transcended for the sake of action and argumentation. Does the warrant of the dead change form when it is used by a victim of gun violence instead of the President at the time? Pezzullo argues it may "rather, invention is an expression of communication grounded in human experience."<sup>236</sup> Attempts to isolate grief and situate it within a private space contains its influence. González, unlike Barack Obama, leans on her personal experience and openly displays grief. Removing it from a private space to a public sphere.

González occupies a position that could be understood as purely altruistic rather than emerging from a political position like the Presidency. Nonetheless, the political function of González's use of silence is to act as a critical interruption and the performance of grief is transformative. The silence is a space that allows the performance of reflexivity and grief to produce a sense of belonging.<sup>237</sup> The creation of "affective ties" with her audience brings forth a counterpublic grieving or responding to their grief (referring to the anger and frustration in González's "We call BS!" speech).<sup>238</sup>

Affect is a cumulative force in the production of counterpublics. Michael Warner contends, "Counterpublics are 'counter' to the extent that they try to supply different ways of imagining stranger-sociability and its reflexivity; as publics, they remain oriented to stranger

circulation in a way that is not just strategic, but also constitutive of membership and its affects.”<sup>239</sup> Inevitably, strangers become the audience to which the speaker engages. Therefore, González reaches strangers by forcing them to contend with her grief and the grief of her peers. The reflexivity is not only performed but rhetorically applied as she describes, “Every single person here should be at home grieving”; change will be accomplished because of “the students who are dead, the students still in the hospital, the students now suffering from PTSD, the students who had panic attacks during the vigil because the helicopters would not leave us alone, hovering over the school 24 hours”; and the translation strategies found within the “March for Our lives” speech. Evidence of a counterpublic is most apparent in her repetition of the use of “We call BS!” and its subsequent use by those in support of gun control. In order to grasp how a sense of belonging is constructed and the significance of grief I turn to Kimberlee Pérez and Daniel C. Brouwer for their concept of Queer decorum.<sup>240</sup>

### **Queer Decorum: “Registry of Ambivalent Forces”<sup>241</sup>**

In Chapter One, decorum is discussed as an ideological mechanism that can act be interpreted dramatically, with actors obtaining a role and guiding a narrative.<sup>242</sup> In relation to the gun control debate, decorum intersects with civility as both sides of the political spectrum have argued for a more respectful engagement with the issue of gun violence and the right to the Second Amendment. Decorum and civility are intricately interwoven functions of maintaining certain rhetorical boundaries, acting as a restrictive force committed to hegemonic structures. On the contrary, “queer decorum registers the pull of an alternative relationality. Because queer is usually forwarded as a deconstructive undoing, queer decorum suggests an alternative *poiesis*—an artful unnaturalness, a perverse making and remaking.”<sup>243</sup> More specifically, queer decorum alters the boundaries of rhetoric so as make and remake how the rhetor and the audience

construct a sense of belonging. With regard to González, violations of decorum simultaneously conveys a sense of queer decorum. Between the audience and rhetor, González, produces an alternative set of relations constructed through the affective force of grief and the refusal to acquiesce to rules of decorum that reproduce hegemonic discourses.

By forwarding various subjectivities built interchangeably between her identity as victim, teenager, and activist González creates points of affinity with her audience. To make this point clearer I turn to, Perez and Brouwer, who in their conceptualization of queer decorum, reflect critically on space and how one constructs or infiltrates a given space. Their consideration prompts the question, how does González enter and leave the space that encloses the “We call BS!” speech and her “March for Our Lives” speech?

As an idiom, “We call BS!” is not just in opposition to politicians/adults but it is “one that in other contexts would be regarded with hostility or with a sense of indecorousness.”<sup>244</sup> Invoking the parent-child relationship, decorum is a form of discipline. In which case, a child is told to refrain from cursing, to use their inside voice, and to respect their elders. “We call BS!” is a violation of decorum reminiscent of those expectations that are presupposed. Nonetheless, “We call BS!” is a rhetorical outcome that is incongruent to what is expected. In addition, “We call BS!” removes young people from the authority of adults.

It is clear grief is present in both of her speeches and dissipates affective potentialities of anger and frustration. It culminated into a rallying cry, “We call BS!” and in her “March for Our Lives” speech silence created a space for alternate relations between her and the audience. The silence allowed anyone to fill the space with their own thoughts and feelings. The duration of the silence and its abrupt presence in the middle of her speech was more than a violation of decorum.

Acting as a translator, González created space for the public to grieve together and a possibility to heal. This can be best understood as the transformation of silence from ritual to a political act.

Queer decorum is not merely resistance or opposition, it is an embodied possibility of engaging with the world, so oppression, in all its various forms, is transgressed. González broke out of the dichotomy between grief and action that political discourse circulates. Below I discuss the role of silence by consider the extradiscursive power relations.

### **Moments of Silence: From Ritual to a Political Act**

As a critic, null persona led me to ask question beyond the speech act. What constraints are imposed on the speaker by economic and state power? Is silence self-imposed or a strategic political strategy?<sup>245</sup> Although silence is a persuasive strategy that affectively induces the audience to lament and moves them towards action, silence also gestures to extradiscursive power relations. Examining silence from dual angles provides a greater understanding of the relationship between social constraints and rhetorical agency. More specifically, I argue González transforms silence from a ritual to a political act. As evidence I include content beyond the text to highlight the extradiscursive power relations that provide an additional layer of understanding and meaning to the text. Politically, moments of silence have become evidence of the divergence between lawmakers. Jim Hines, a representative of the state of Connecticut (Democrat), openly contested moments of silences following the Orlando Nightclub Shooting.

Hines stated:

In that moment, I realized it's a ritual of impotence and in as much as it involves silence The congress has shown in the face of the American people and I decided, and I decided this for me. I'm not leading a crusade, or telling my other colleagues what we should do, but I'm not going to stand in a room full of people, the only people in this country who are in a position to do some things about the violence and feel smug and self-satisfied and like I'm actually doing something serious because I stopped talking for 10 seconds and I just imagined speaking to one of the parents or partners of one of the victims in Orlando

as they are dealing with this shock and they look at me as a congressman and what are you going to do?<sup>246</sup>

By protesting moments of silence, Hines sent a clear message, it is simply not enough to create substantial change. The affective benefits of “feeling smug and self-satisfied” do not exceed the loss of parents and partners.<sup>247</sup> The disparity between an affective script confined by moments of silence and enacted by those “who are in a position to do something,” in comparison to the victims of gun violence, including loved ones left behind, has constructed moments of silence as a space of conflict. Several members of congress have since protested moments of silence in alliance with Jim Hines and more importantly, victims of gun violence. Extradiscursive power relation in the form of political power directly informed Emma González’s experience. As a victim, the critique of silence becomes a critique of its symbolic meaning.

Following the Parkland shooting, the House of Representatives adjourned for a week without holding a moment of silence. This was a consequence of protests due to a vote that would allow major setbacks to the American for Disabilities Act. Democratic Congresswoman, Eleanor Holmes Norton, invoked the controversy deeming moments of silence a point of contention in her press release; she noted, “since the Sandy Hook massacre in 2012, the House of Representatives has held more than 40 moments of silence for victims of mass shootings.”<sup>248</sup> In the political sphere silence is equated with indifference and neglect. This conflict was pointed to in González’s, “We call BS!,” taking place February 17<sup>th</sup>, just three days following the Parkland Shooting. At the beginning of her speech González states, “we haven’t already had a moment of silence in the House of Representatives, so I would like to have another one.”<sup>249</sup> The transformation of a moment of silence from ritual to political act is made clearer by their juxtaposition.

A condition of strategic political silence is the creation of mystery and uncertainty.<sup>250</sup> During an expected moment of silence the context gives meaning to the silence, making it clear to the audience that silence is not only expected but required. González encouraged a traditional moment of silence during her first public address, “We call BS!”. On the contrary, during her “March for Our Lives Speech,” González creates mystery by placing the moment of silence in the middle of her speech instead of the silence preceding her speech. Initially, there is no explanation as to what the silence represents, and its symbolic meaning is only made known at the very end of the speech. Brummett situates the presence of power within silence by contending, “silence creates mystery between people and provides no way to bridge the mystery in hierarchy.”<sup>251</sup> In other words, silence is an equalizing force, although González does not possess political power to the same degree of a President or lawmaker, silence is used to unite the audience in a shared political venture. More importantly, it allows the audience to engage the silence with their own experiences and bear witness to each other’s grief. How is this different from a traditional and political moment of silence? There is mystery in the sudden disruption caused by the silence and a useful uncertainty in the length and purpose of the silence.

The silence in both speeches was directional, intended for the audience, and strategically used to evoke a response from González’s audience(s). The length of the silence can feel uneasy. Initially “public wonder” attempts to break the silence by cheering but González does not falter, upholding the silence for a little more than four minutes (2:10-6:33).<sup>252</sup> Typically cheering occurs in response to verbal discourse or at the end of the speech, yet, cheering amidst silence highlights the directional and intentional construction of silence to be evocative. More specifically, the silence remained pervasive and is reinforced by González’s nonverbal cues. As González is crying, wiping her tears away, and trying to manage her emotions the silence is



reinforced as a necessary means of conveying a message of grief. It is difficult for a person crying to talk, however, in silence, crying is situated, relevant, and applicable to the speech.

The final consideration of silence as a political strategy is to contend with the past, present, and future considerations of publically-performed moments of silence.<sup>253</sup> By coupling strategic silence and null persona the ethical and moral implications encapsulating moments of silence are called into question. In the past, politicians have viewed silence as an unproductive performance, a smokescreen of sorts.<sup>254</sup> Moments of silence have become routine, with many finding silence by the most politically powerful fruitless. Nonetheless, several lawmakers continue to participate in moments of silence. I am less concerned with debating whether or not individuals should participate in moments of silence, but how González has taken silence and “makeshifts” the form, intent, and purpose of such moments.<sup>255</sup> González’s silence is a transfiguration of the political dispute encapsulating moments of silence and creates an imperative for the future. The silence ends with a call to action as discussed previously, but moments of silence no longer create distance between the tragedy and the public, instead, as González performs it, there is a unification, hope for the future.

### **Confronting the Demanding Subject**

Collins frames the contradictory nature of the demanding subject by stating, “its goal is naming and figuring the marginalized subject rather than defying marginality,” while arguing for their freedom (Second Amendment).<sup>256</sup> The demanding subject depends on the domination from a perceived tyrannical government, forcing themselves to the margins, whereas, González constantly shifts the center. At the beginning of her speech, she centered the Parkland community, then more broadly, anyone who has experienced gun violence, and finally, to the general public. Her tactical subjectivity confronts the demanding subject by challenging their

fictitious marginalization. Not only does she shift who is at the center by rejecting discourse with silence moves the demanding subject out of the margins.

As the demanding subject constructs their identity discursively, silence becomes a material and affective product that brings forth the power relations that amount to actual oppressive experiences, for instance, being killed at school. The demanding subject will never be forced to grieve as their marginalization remains contained rather than constructed by material or extradiscursive power relations. The demanding subject must contend with the loss and grief conveyed by victims, their loved ones, and activists. In which case they do not, it is evidence of their fictitious marginalization. Demands will continue to be made but let us bear in mind and act as a reminder to anyone who makes such demands, that their second amendment rights are not threatened. To render grief and loss invisible is a rejection of humanity, moving the demanding subject from the margins to the highest point of the social hierarchy as they decide the value of life.

### **Chapter Summary**

This thesis has examined two speeches delivered by Emma González, “We call BS!” and her “March for Our Lives” speech. The methodology of the oppressed, affect, and silence are The guiding theoretical anchors that illuminated the rhetorical strategies and affective outcomes which aided in the persuasiveness of the texts. These strategies include translation, the transformation of silence as a ritual to a political act, the utilization of queer decorum, and movement between and among subject positions. Among each, grief is an affective force which becomes a heuristic consideration for future research.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

On February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018 a mass shooting occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. For many of us in the United States, this is not the first instance in which a mass shooting has intruded on our lives. As I reflect on my own experience with these types of tragedies, the Columbine High School Massacre (1999) has held a place in my memory for many years. With my older sister attending high school in our hometown of Greeley, Colorado and myself, only four years old, I remember my parents discussing the tragedy as though it took place in our own hometown. There may be a single or perhaps several instances of gun violence that have left an impression on each of us. This violence can include mass shootings, instances of interpersonal violence, suicides, accidents, or moments of police violence. The Parkland students emerged as a force of change attempting to prevent another mass shooting from occurring. Emma González, a Parkland student, delivered two speeches, her “We call BS!” speech and her “March for Our Lives” speech. In tandem, each highlights important shifts in the gun control debate. Victims as activists bring a new perspective as many high school students experience school shooter drills and many live and die through moments of gun violence. Emma González had a remarkable presence in the public sphere after delivering two speeches just a little more than a month apart, she made significant contributions to the broader efforts made by her peers to catalyze change.

Chapter One introduced Emma González as the rhetor and stated the parameter of this thesis. In addition, González’s social location was considered to discuss the constraints and opportunities of her rhetorical agency. Finally argumentation, decorum and civility, and the demanding subject were key concepts that have permeated the gun control debate.

Engaging in rhetorical criticism, this thesis provides an analysis of Emma González's two speeches. Chapter Two offered a review of the literature and raised critical research questions. The first question of the thesis is, how do the various forms of oppositional consciousness used by González in her "We call BS!" speech and her "March for Our Lives" speech disrupt and challenge the logic of the demanding subject? I explored further how González used affect to construct a "shared orientation" towards gun violence.<sup>257</sup>

Chapter Two also offered a review of the literature as it relates to the guiding theoretical frameworks: the methodology of the oppressed, affect, and silence. Briefly, the methodology of the oppressed is committed to the ways people on the margins develop strategies of resistance and offers a framework for activism and coalition building. I specifically, mapped the various ideological shifts as they emerged through different form of oppositional consciousness. The movement among and between each form is known as differential conscious. The methodology of the oppressed and affect overlap with the quotidian. My interest in the changes of the affective atmospheres allowed me to consider affect as a collective force encapsulating the audience. Meanwhile, silence has been primarily studied as evidence of an oppressive force or a political strategy. To reconcile the disparate views of silence I contend silence is a methodology of the oppressed.

In addition, I detail the methodological approach to this thesis in Chapter Two. My method was influenced by close-textual analysis as I read each text multiple times to identify key words and phrases in an attempt to recognize a pattern. To adequately consider affect however, I watched a video of Emma González deliver each speech and paid close attention to her facial expressions, mimicry by her audience, and any subtleties in delivery. As a result, the moment of silence in her "March for Our Lives" speech led me to reflect on its affective implications as well

as the extradiscursive power relations. To this end, Chapter Three offered an analysis of each text and Chapter Four offered a broader theoretical discussion of the results. Below, I discuss and conclude the contributing results of the final Chapters in greater detail by discussing the key the theoretical interventions, limitations, and future directions.

With gun violence resurgent in the political and social realms, a guiding question of this thesis is one rhetorical scholars have ruminated over, broadly speaking, for some time, how has González disrupted the gun control debate?<sup>258</sup> In an effort to answer this question without judging the effectiveness of González's rhetoric, I point to three rhetorical strategies that highlight her ability to move the audience towards resolve. In each text, González relies on her subject position as a student, victim, and activist to negotiate existing discourses that attempt to obscure the role of political institutions and the threat guns pose.

First, González dislodges the demanding subject, those who argue in favor of gun rights, by shifting her own subject position. In her, "We call BS!" speech, she moves through and between the subject position of victim, student, kid, and teenager allowing her to speak in opposition to the President, government, lawmakers, and adults. While the demanding subject asserts their rights to the Second Amendment and proclaims marginalization, González points to the various ways gun rights are systemically upheld and validated as people continue to encounter loss and are forced to grieve for their loved ones. This is not to say that the demanding subject will cease their demands, instead, I assert González forces them to contend with a systemic view of gun violence. As a result, the demanding subject must meet opposition from multiple subject positions.

The second critical question seeks to understand silence as a deliberate strategy, what is the political function of silence that encompasses González's "March for Our Lives" speech?

Silence is a violation of decorum that becomes transformative of the audience. Silence as I argue in Chapter Three is a form of queer decorum, allowed the audience to grieve together. Their grief demarcated a counter public interested in altering the status quo while holding lawmakers and politicians accountable. In addition, silence was transformed from a ritual to a political act. Moments of silence have been a point of contention among lawmakers as some protest their ritualistic and formulaic implementation in place of action. Silence as a symbolic ritual is reconstructed and employed, as termed by Pezzullo, as a critical interruption, in other words, a tactic of oppositional consciousness.<sup>259</sup>

The final question of this thesis asked, how does González translate the affective experience of gun violence? In her “March for Our Lives” speech there are atmospheric shifts that create a fold between the experiential and affective. Threat, time, and transduction re-create the conditions of the Parkland shooting allowing the audience to gain a nominal sense of the fear, loss, and frustration González has experienced. Translation allows the audience to contend with the Parkland shooting with a corporeal reading in conjunction with discursive structure, for example, reading the sequence of events in a newstory. More specifically, González adopts the length of time of the Parkland shooting and contends with her own personal experience as a victim of gun violence. In sum, the affective atmosphere is mutable and enhances the oppositional form(s) González employs throughout the speech.

The research questions this thesis set out to address offers multiple theoretical contributions. As the relationship between the methodology of the oppressed and affect is contextualized within discourses about gun violence, there are also critical insights that emerge. The result being, new questions, new considerations, and a new angle of perception of gun violence.

Grief has been relegated to the private sphere, a personal right typically afforded to the families of victims and is separated from a variety of political pursuits. Situating death and grief as a starting point to discuss legislative and cultural change has been typically met with discontentment. The ultimate question being, when is it time to discuss gun violence? Nonetheless, communities are separated from the nation and the nation takes an external perspective of a more specific and spatially defined community. Therefore, the resulting outcome is often that the shooting in Parkland, Florida is casted as a single incident and should not be considered a national concern. On the contrary, González resituated grief as a national outpour which stretched far beyond the victims' families but created a moral imperative for the entire nation.

The first theoretical contribution emerging from this project is a reconsideration of the possible relations between strangers through grief.<sup>260</sup> Mass shootings can connect strangers in a movie theater, at a concert, or at a nightclub.<sup>261</sup> Even though a shooter can connect strangers, grief is delegated to a private sphere. The family and surrounding community grieve together but this is not unbounded. González brought grief to the forefront and reminded us that if strangers could be connected through fear and trauma, they can also be brought together through grief and reconciliation. In light of this thesis, my engagement with moments of tragedy and loss have changed. Regardless of my proximity to a specific instance, studying grief has left an impressionable mark, so that upon hearing about another mass shooting I experience an intense sadness that resurfaces all other previous moments of gun violence. After learning about the most recent shooting in New Zealand I recalled the same feeling I had after hearing about the Sandy Hook shooting, Orlando Nightclub shooting, the Aurora movie theater shooting and so

many other. I no longer ask about the details or maintain a superficial distance, instead, I grieve and extend my hand in community with others.

A second intervention occurs within critical scholarship as the methodology of the oppressed<sup>262</sup> has been developed theoretically (i.e., differential belonging and differential vision) but continues to be utilized sparingly in all of its various iterations. The methodology of the oppressed, as used in this thesis, provides a nuanced view of agency and complicates the subject-position of the rhetor. Movement has been an underlying theme of this thesis that accounts for the shifting in affective atmospheres and strategic shifts in subject-positions. Accounting for movement affectively and oppositionally in this thesis revealed the rhetorical effect of silence as a tool that indicates a valuable enactment of resistance. Affect and its implication of the body in conjunction moves beyond a post-structuralist investment in discourse and instead, situates the material composition of the body in daily lives. In other words, Emma González relied on silence to emphasize the bodily conditions of gun violence—death, grief, loss, threat, fear, and a call to “fight.” Silence as a space of contention and evidence of a greater power-struggle is intimately tied to our body as a marker of both resistance and capitulation as made evident by the political significance of moments of silence.

Null persona positions silence as a marker of an oppressive force. I contend there exists a distinction between silence as an indicator of oppression and silence in opposition can be grasped from the underlying, or perhaps, overarching affective atmosphere, and we see this happening from the opening moment of silence in her “We call BS!” speech and the reification of silence that takes during the middle of her “March for Our Lives” speech. Similar to null persona which requires historical and political contextualization, affect reveals the oppressive-oppositional



struggle. To consider the affective limits of silence is to approach the text from multiple axis. As shown here, silence functioned in opposition and gestured towards extradiscursive boundaries.

Recognizing the relationship between affect and the methodology of the oppressed is not new ground. In fact, Sandoval argues radical love is a force that creates “a synchronic process that punctures through traditional, older narratives of love, that ruptures everyday being.”<sup>263</sup> Grief, like love, can create new ways of being in the world. Paying careful attention to affect as it is a part of the methodology of the oppressed creates a space for new possibilities for activism. By which the broader political struggle for liberation (i.e., gun control legislation) is collapsed into the everyday practices of moving through the world (i.e., existing in the world without fear of gun violence). It is difficult to measure the extent to which the Parkland students, specifically Emma González, has had on the gun control discourse. Nonetheless, Emma González has demonstrated the significance of grief as a means of constructing a counterpublic with compassionate engagement for the loss of life. It is not to say the public is not empathetic or compassionate, but instead locates the call to act within grief—an affective tie that creates a new way of being among strangers.

The final intervention is dependent on the theoretical significance of movement. I have developed what I call a strategy of embrace to account for variances in movement. Physically, an embrace is a recognition of another that allows them to transgress the boundaries of personal space. Embrace as a form of coming together implies a temporary unification. An embrace can be thought of physically, spatially, and politically. Unity should not be mistaken for a liberal understanding of erasing difference for the sake of cohesion. Instead unity is a willingness to recognize difference and sameness as a condition of our lives. Throughout the day we embrace others and others embrace us, this multitude compounds, into a sense of belonging. From one

embrace to the next, there is a constant dispersal. The dissipation of an affective state that constitutes a counterpublic may be fleeting, however, the possibility of coming together and embracing each other in a moment of grief led to a confluence of people who come to care for the conditions of their lives. As the camera pans across the audience during her extended moment of silence the audience mimics González, crying as she cries. The vulnerability to grieve in front of a large audience invited the audience to do the same. The unity constructed through embrace contends with the political implications of lived experience. Theoretically, it means to embrace multiple subject-positions, to cross disciplinary boundaries, and to reflect on the affective dimensions of our daily lives.

The metaphor of embrace is not without some contestation. Many of us have received an embrace that was disingenuous or perhaps we embraced each other out of obligation. In the context of which I am writing, embrace can easily be equivalated to a form of fleeting engagement. However, embrace as a momentary affection speaks to the possibilities of creating and nurturing a profound exchange between people and among ourselves. González embraced her various subject-positions as a teenager/kid, victim, student, activist and transcended the rhetorical boundaries of the media, politicians, and adults. She did this in her “We call BS!” speech by naming specific politicians, comparing the gun control legislation in the U.S. with other countries who have experienced mass shootings, and through elevating her expertise as a high school student. A strategy of embrace is both contextual and historical, allowing for the various performances of identity while also contending with one’s privilege. The critique of the Parkland Students, including González, as speaking on behalf of Black Parkland students is an example of some of the challenges of activist work. I firmly believe the voices of Black Parkland students should be foundational to their cause, and yet, it is not for reasons that appear no less

than problematic. While this thesis has yielded valuable contributions including the significance of public grief, silence and affect as modes of the methodology of the oppressed, and the metaphor of embrace it remains important to acknowledge limitations and reflect on future considerations.

Further exploration of public grief is warranted as a predecessor to moral outrage. How is grief isolated and to what means? As a country, what/who are we not grieving for? What is the role of grief in other social movements? Grief plays a pivotal role in uniting an audience and is a valuable entry point. Other considerations include studying the rhetorical strategies of other Parkland students, the Never Again Movement, and the progression of Emma González. Perhaps grief has a different effect depending on the rhetor that enacts grief publicly. These are all avenues to continue studying gun violence and activism.

The significance of grief raised questions about revolutionary love as offered by Sandoval.<sup>264</sup> In hindsight, public grief appears to be connected to love as a method of decolonization. Further exploration of the relationship between grief and love speaks to the possibility of new ways of being in the world, raising a collective, bounded by the deepest expression of our humanity. Grief as a performance holds the potential for understanding the various tools and tactics people on the margins employ to cope, survive, resist, advocate, and fight for change. The specificity of how grief is expressed, when, by whom, and for what means is a site of great potential. For example, a possible study could consider grief throughout the Black Lives Matter movement and consider the presence of love as a contemporary decolonizing effort. As a result, expanding beyond a single rhetor appears crucial.

Emma González contributes significantly to public discourse and understanding about gun violence and is highly recognized as a prominent activist, appearing on the cover of popular

culture texts like *Out* magazine, which afforded her the title, “Newsmaker of the year.”<sup>265</sup> Her presence in the public sphere is not without notice, however, analyzing the rhetoric of multiple Parkland students and multiple artifacts is valuable and necessary. Although, outside of the scope of this thesis, there are other voices that remain to be heard including other Parkland students and others who have experienced gun violence in the past year. Isolating González’s “We call BS!” speech and her “March for Our Lives” speech does not attend to the movement in its entirety nor does it reflect the varied experiences victims of gun violence hold. In this thesis, I am interested in uncovering how public grief proliferates so as to grasp how affect drive a social movement.

The final limitation of this project is a lack of consideration of the National Rifle Association (NRA) given its political and economic influence. Despite consideration of the extradiscursive power relations, I primarily focused on the significance of silence as a ritual contested by various members of congress. Future studies could situate Emma González or the Parkland students with the NRA as a direct or indirect exchange of ideological positions. Reviewing the response between both the NRA and Parkland student could yield productive insights into the effect these students have had given the NRA’s response.

Having offered contributions and discussed limitations, I conclude this thesis with a final reflection. I find it imperative to position myself within my work and to acknowledge how I, as the researcher, influenced the thesis. Typically, the critical researcher situates themselves in their work at the beginning of a project. I have chosen to do so here because I would like to bring forth some of my own personal reflections as I push “pause” on this work.

In completion of this project, I have reconsidered my own affective ties, investments, and desires. As someone who has not personally experienced the harrows of gun violence, my association with others who have has reframed my understanding of what social justice requires

of its practitioners. We must bare witness and reconcile the oppressive material circumstances that take effect in another person's life. Social justice is a state of being, an ontology. The weight of letting your body respond to the disparity, injustice, and tragedy, in order to meet the affective dimensions of the moment is required. These moments emerge without notice, with every mass shooting I but with a renewed prospect of imagining the world differently.

Therefore, I have come to understand affect as a sort of intuition and the methodology of the oppressed as a tool box with the necessities for first survival and then the creation of something entirely new. Therefore, silence is something that is in the toolbox of both the oppressed and the oppressor. It should be carefully and strategically utilized. I believe González constructed a plan, perhaps just a blueprint detailing the modes of resistance, but one that should be taken seriously and discussed critically. Given my own unique social location, my privilege in academia and my existence as a queer woman of color from a small agricultural town I have learned that anything can be torn down and made anew.

Finally, I reflect on the difficulties of doing rhetorical criticism. Bonnie Dow reminds rhetorical critics "when we leave the realm of abstract idealism, we confront the reality that no critical act can account for everything."<sup>266</sup> Therefore, the stakes are high for the critic to consider what is going to be left out. González's rhetoric should be considered from multiple perspectives, theories, and subject positions. While I have praised González for her rhetorical invention and ability to effectively discuss gun reform without falling prey to the familiar script which privileges grief over politics there are simultaneously shortcomings. The continuous marginalization of Black students, as alluded to earlier in this thesis, and their experiences is a form of public silencing that is an act of oppression and should be understood as such. From this project, I learned a critic should be willing to constantly ask, who is being silenced?

As I conclude this thesis it has been nearly one year since the Parkland shooting. As of yet, the Gun violence Archive has reported a total of forty-eight mass shooting since the new year.<sup>267</sup> Although the Parkland students were not the victims of the *last mass shooting* their proclamation was a revolutionary thought. Their courage and frankness is a reminder of our own unequivocal right to exercise our voice and use our own rhetorical agency to make the world a better place. To this end, I echo Emma González's commitment to change, "We're going to be fighting for this until it's fixed."<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Historically, the phrase “Never Again” has been used by Holocaust survivors and the Jewish community as a “solemn vow” and “rallying cry” against a totalitarian government. See Dov Marhoffer, ““Never Again!’ Belongs to the Holocaust—Not an Anti-gun Rights Book and Campaign,” TownHall, June 19, 2018, <https://townhall.com/columnists/dovmarhoffer/2018/06/19/never-again-belongs-to-the-holocaust-not-an-antigun-rights-book-and-campaign-n2492004>. In addition, the naming of the Never Again Movement was created by Cameron Kasky, a student of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, while he was sitting on the toilet in his ghostbuster pajamas. Nonetheless, misappropriating the use of “Never Again” is troublesome and should be acknowledged as erroneous. For more information as to how the Never Again Movement was named see the following article by Emily Witt, “How the Survivors of Parkland Began the Never Again Movement,” *The New Yorker*, February 19, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/how-the-survivors-of-parkland-began-the-never-again-movement>

<sup>3</sup> The NRA published a rebuttal to Emma González, specifically with regard to her “We call BS!” speech as well as other comments made by her during a variety of public appearances. The NRA recognizes González’s voice as representing a new generation of young people attempting to reinvigorate the gun control debate. In an effort to destabilize González’s voice and

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influence the NRA positions her as a liar, hypocritical, and misleading. González has garnered significant media attention and has been discussed by the NRA as “one of the leading personalities behind the March for Our Lives gun control lobby,” see more details here “Who’s BS’ing Now? Gonzalez Argues for Gun Confiscation but Insists She’s ‘Pro Second Amendment,’” Friday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018, <https://www.nraila.org/articles/20181012/who-s-bs-ing-now-gonzalez-argues-for-gun-confiscation-but-insists-she-s-pro-second-amendment>”; In addition, the political relationship between her “We call BS!” speech and her “March for Our lives” speech is noteworthy. At the beginning of her “We call BS!” speech she takes a moment of silence because the House of Representatives had not already had one. This moment of silence is a stark comparison to the prolonged silence she took during her “March for Our Lives” speech. More importantly, her silence takes on a political meaning considering those congress members who refuse to attend to a moment of silence as a matter of protest. See the following articles for additional information about members of congress protesting moments of silence; “Representative Jim Himes on Orlando Mass Shooting.” 2016. C-SPAN. June 14, 2016. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?411153-1/representative-jim-himes-discusses-house-moment-silence-walkout>; Marcos, Cristina. 2018. “House Skips Moment of Silence Day after Florida School Shooting.” *The Hill*, February 15, 2018. <http://thehill.com/blogs/floor-action/house/374070-house-skips-moment-of-silence-day-after-florida-school-shooting>; Norton, Eleanor. 2018. “Norton Says No Moment of Silence on House Floor for Parkland Shooting Victims Shows Republicans Know They Are Complicit Through Their Continued Inaction.” Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton Representing the District of Columbia. February 15, 2018. <https://norton.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/norton-says-no-moment-of-silence-on-house-floor-for-parkland-shooting>.



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<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/06/04/scot-peterson-parkland-shooting-school-resource-officer/668353002/>; Meagan Flynn, “Father of Parkland Shooting sues ‘coward’ school resource officer, among others,” *The Washington Post*, May 1, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/05/01/father-of-parkland-shooting-victim-sues-coward-school-resource-officer-among-others/?utm\\_term=.e14e7f8e9168](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/05/01/father-of-parkland-shooting-victim-sues-coward-school-resource-officer-among-others/?utm_term=.e14e7f8e9168)

<sup>44</sup> Richard A. Oppel Jr., Serge F. Kovalski, Patricia Mazzei, and Adam Goldman. “Tipster’s Warning to F.B.I. on Florida Shooting Suspect: ‘I Know He’s Going to Explode.’” *The New York Times*, February 23, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/23/us/fbi-tip-nikolas-cruz.html>.

<sup>45</sup> Jen Christensen, “Trump’s Language on School Shooter’s Health Could Be Harmful, Experts Say.” *CNN*, February 22, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/22/health/trump-mental-illness-comments-bn/index.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Christensen, “Trump’s Language.”

<sup>47</sup> Justin Eckstein and Sarah T. Partlow Lefevre. "Since Sandy Hook: Strategic Maneuvering in the Gun Control Debate," *Western Journal of Communication* 81, no. 2 (2017): 228.

<sup>48</sup> “Guns,” GALLUP, 2018, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1645/guns.aspx>.

<sup>49</sup> “Guns.”

<sup>50</sup> “Guns.”

<sup>51</sup> Nikki Graf, “A Majority of U.S. Teens Fear a Shooting Could Happen at Their School, and Most Parent Share Their Concern,” *Pew Research Center*, April 18, 2018.

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<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/18/a-majority-of-u-s-teens-fear-a-shooting-could-happen-at-their-school-and-most-parents-share-their-concern/>.

<sup>52</sup> Graf, “U.S. Teens Fear.”

<sup>53</sup> Graf, “U.S. Teens Fear.” The Pew Research Center found that 64% of girls are fearful of a potential school shooting, however, the sum of the data (“very worried” and “somewhat worried”) amounts to 63%.

<sup>54</sup> Craig Rood, “‘Our tears are not enough’: The warrant of the dead in the rhetoric of gun control,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 104, no. 1 (2018): 47-70.

<sup>55</sup> Emma González as quoted by CNN Staff, “Florida student Emma Gonzalez to lawmakers and gun advocates: ‘We call BS,’” February 17, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/17/us/florida-student-emma-gonzalez-speech/index.html>.

<sup>56</sup> Christopher M. Duerringer and Z. S. Justus, “Tropes in the Rhetoric of Gun Rights: A Pragma-Dialectic Analysis.” *Argumentation and Advocacy* 52, no. 3 (2016): 182-183.

<sup>57</sup> Duerringer and Justus, “Tropes in the Rhetoric of Gun Rights,” 186.

<sup>58</sup> Duerringer and Justus, “Tropes in the Rhetoric of Gun Rights,” 182.

<sup>59</sup> Duerringer and Justus, “Tropes in the Rhetoric of Gun Rights,” 193.

<sup>60</sup> Charles Rabin, Carli Teproff, Nicholas Nehamas, and David Ovalle, “Parkland School Cop ‘never Went in’ during the Shooting. There Were Other Failures, Too.” *Miami Herald*, February 22, 2018.

<sup>61</sup> Rabin et al, “Parkland School Cop.”

<sup>62</sup> Rabin et al, “Parkland School Cop.”; See again Meagan Flynn, “Father of Parkland Shooting.”

<sup>63</sup> Duerringer and Justus, “Tropes in the Rhetoric of Gun Rights,” 194-195.

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<sup>64</sup> Justin Eckstein and Sarah T. Partlow Lefevre, "Since Sandy Hook: Strategic Maneuvering in the Gun Control Debate." *Western Journal of Communication* 81, no. 2 (2017): 228.

<sup>65</sup> Eckstein and Lefevre, "Since Sandy Hook," 237.

<sup>66</sup> Eckstein and Lefevre, "Since Sandy Hook," 228.

<sup>67</sup> Eckstein and Lefevre, "Since Sandy Hook," 228.

<sup>68</sup> Eckstein and Lefevre, "Since Sandy Hook," 238.

<sup>69</sup> Duerringer and Justus, "Tropes in the Rhetoric of Gun Rights," 84.

<sup>70</sup> Duerringer and Justus, "Tropes in the Rhetoric of Gun Rights," 94.

<sup>71</sup> Duerringer and Justus, "Tropes in the Rhetoric of Gun Rights," 93.

<sup>72</sup> Craig Rood, "Our Tears Are Not Enough": The Warrant of the Dead in the Rhetoric of Gun Control," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 104, no. 1 (2018): 49, DOI:10.1080/00335630.2017.1401223

<sup>73</sup> Meghan Keneally, "The mix of politicians saying it's either not the time to talk about gun control or it's past time," abcNews, February, 16, 2018, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/mix-politicians-time-talk-gun-control-past-time/story?id=53142010>.

<sup>74</sup> Rood, "Our Tears are Not Enough," 50.

<sup>75</sup> Rood, "Our Tears are Not Enough," 52.

<sup>76</sup> Rood, "Our Tears are Note Enough," 55.

<sup>77</sup> Rood, "Our Tears are Not Enough," 56-65.

<sup>78</sup> Ruth DeFoster and Catherine Squires, "What does civility have to do with it?" in *Dangerous Discourses: Feminism, Gun Violence, and Civil Life*, ed. by Catherine Squires, (New York: Peter Lang, 2016), 53-71.



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- <sup>79</sup> DeFoster and Squires, "What does civility," 64.
- <sup>80</sup> David A. Frank, "Facing Moloch: Barack Obama's National Eulogies and Gun Violence," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 17, no. 4 (2014): 653-78.
- <sup>81</sup> Frank, "Facing Moloch," 653-78.
- <sup>82</sup> Frank, "Facing Moloch," 659.
- <sup>83</sup> Frank, "Facing Moloch," 656.
- <sup>84</sup> Robert, Hariman, "Decorum, Power, and the Courtly Style." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78, no. 2 (1992): 165.
- <sup>85</sup> Laura J. Collins, "The Second Amendment as Demanding Subject: Figuring the Marginalized Subject in Demands for an Unbridled Second Amendment," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 17, no. 4 (2014): 737-56.
- <sup>86</sup> Collins, "The Demanding Subject," 738.
- <sup>87</sup> Collins, "The Demanding Subject," 749.
- <sup>88</sup> Anita Atwell Seate, Elizabeth L. Cohen, Yuki Fujioka, and Cynthia Hoffner, "Exploring Gun Ownership as a Social Identity to Understanding the Perceived Media Influence of the Virginia Tech News Coverage on Attitudes toward Gun Control Policy," *Communication Research Reports* 29, no. 2 (2012): 130-39.
- <sup>89</sup> Collins, "The Demanding Subject," 744.
- <sup>90</sup> Collins, "The Demanding Subject," 746.
- <sup>91</sup> Collins, "The Demanding Subject," 743.
- <sup>92</sup> Brett Lunceford, "Armed Victims: The Ego Function of Second Amendment Rhetoric," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2015): 333-46.

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<sup>93</sup> William D. Harpine, "The Illusion of Tradition: Spurious Quotations and the Gun Control Debate." *Argumentation & Advocacy* 53, no. 3 (2016): 151-164.

<sup>94</sup> Harpine, "Spurious Quotations," 151.

<sup>95</sup> Lunceford, "The Ego Function," 337.

<sup>96</sup> Michelle A. Holling, Dreama G Moon, and Alexander Jackson Nevis, "Racist Violations and Racializing Apologia in a Post-Racism Era," *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 7, no. 4 (2014): 262.

<sup>97</sup> "Urban Gun Violence," Giffords: Courage to Fight Gun Violence, 2018, <https://giffords.org/issue/urban-gun-violence/>.

<sup>98</sup> Michael J. Hogan and Craig Rood, "Rhetorical Studies and the Gun Debate: A Public Policy Perspective," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2015): 360.

<sup>99</sup> Hogan and Rood, "Gun Debate," 368.

<sup>100</sup> Joshua Gunn, "Tears of Refusal: Crying with Collins (and Lundberg), with Reference to Pee-wee Herman," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2015): 350.

<sup>101</sup> Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, "An Inventory of shimmers," ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 15.

<sup>102</sup> Lunceford, "The Ego Function," 340.

<sup>103</sup> Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 54.5.

<sup>104</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 6.7

<sup>105</sup> The methodology of the oppressed has been discussed minimally in rhetorical studies, most notably by Stacey Sowards, "Rhetorical Agency as Haciendo Caras and Differential Consciousness through Lens of Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Class: An Examination of Dolores

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Huerta's Rhetoric," *Communication Theory* 20, no. 2 (2010): 223-47. The literature review of this section of the proposed thesis will emphasized the dualisms and constraints that require women of color to negotiate their identity strategically. By bringing together the work of scholars in both Communication Studies and Ethnic Studies I intend to highlight the methodology of the oppressed as a crucial concept that demands further inquiry. Some of the articles I will include are Lisa Flores, "Creating Discursive Space Through a Rhetoric of Difference," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82, no. 2 (1996): 142-156; Erin F. Doss and Robin E. Jensen. 2013. "Balancing Mystery and Identification: Dolores Huerta's Shifting Transcendent Persona." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99 (2013): 481-506; Shanara R. Reid-Brinkley (2012). *Mammies and Matriarchs: Feminine Style and Signifyin(g) in Carol Moseley Braun's 2003-2004 Campaign for the Presidency. Standing in the Intersection: Feminist Voices, Feminist Practices in Communication Studies* . Eds. Karma Chavez and Cindy Griffin; SUNY Press, New York.

<sup>106</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 54.5?

<sup>107</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 58.9.

<sup>108</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 60.1?

<sup>109</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 54.5?

<sup>110</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 56.7.

<sup>111</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 56.7.

<sup>112</sup> Collins, "The Demanding Subject," 742.

<sup>113</sup> Collins, "The Demanding Subject," 742.

<sup>114</sup> Bill O'Reiley, Twitter Post, February 20, 2018, 8:37a.m.

<https://twitter.com/billoreilly/status/965988859669614592?lang=en>

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<sup>115</sup> Dana L. Cloud, "The Null Persona: Race and the Rhetoric of Silence in the Uprising of '34," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 2, no. 2 (1999): 200.

<sup>116</sup> Cloud, "Null Persona," 179.

<sup>117</sup> Cloud, "Null Persona," 201.

<sup>118</sup> Cloud, "Null Persona," 187.

<sup>119</sup> In an effort to Forefront Emma González's voice I have chosen to discuss the significance of extradiscursive power relations in Chapter Four instead of the analysis Chapter as I rely heavily on secondary sources.

<sup>120</sup> Cloud, "Null Persona," 186.

<sup>121</sup> Barry Brummett, "Towards a Theory of Silence as a Political Strategy," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66, no. 3 (1980): 289.

<sup>122</sup> Brummett, "Theory of Silence," 297.

<sup>123</sup> Emma González, "Parkland Student Emma González Opens up about Her Fight for Gun Control." *Harper's Bazaar*, February 26, 2018, <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/politics/amp18715714/protesting-nra-gun-control-true-story/>.

<sup>124</sup> Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers," ed. Mellissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 1.

<sup>125</sup> Ben Anderson, (article)

<sup>126</sup> Elspeth Probyn, 74.

<sup>127</sup> Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect." *Cultural Critique* 31, no. 0 (1995): 88.

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<sup>128</sup> Debra Hawhee, "Rhetoric's Sensorium." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 101, no. 1 (2015): 2-17. See also Joshua Gunn, "Speech's Sanatorium," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 101, no. 1 (2015): 18-33.

<sup>129</sup> Hawhee, "Sensorium," 3.

<sup>130</sup> Hawhee, "Sensorium," 3.

<sup>131</sup> Stephanie Larson, "'Everything Inside of me was Silenced': Redefining Rape Through Visceral Counterpublicity," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 104, no. 2 (2018), 123-144; Mariam Betlemidze, "Mediatized Controversies of Feminist Protest: FEMEN and Bodies as Affective Events," *Women's Studies in Communication*, 38, no. 4, 374-379; Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 223-263.

<sup>132</sup> Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 247.

<sup>133</sup> Sarah Ahmed, "Happy Objects," ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 32.

<sup>134</sup> Ahmed, "Happy Objects," 41.

<sup>135</sup> Edwin Black, "Gettysburg and Silence," in *Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. by Brian L. Ott and Greg Dickinson (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), 197-210.

<sup>136</sup> Michael Leff and Andrew Sachs, "Words the Most Like Things: Iconicity and the Rhetorical Text," ed. by Brian L. Ott and Greg Dickinson (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), 215.

<sup>137</sup> Leff and Sachs, "Iconicity," 223.

<sup>138</sup> Cloud, "Null Persona," 180.

<sup>139</sup> Cloud, "Null Persona," 193.

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<sup>140</sup> Sonja K. Foss, “Feminist Criticism” in *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2018), 141-178.

<sup>141</sup> Foss, “Feminist Criticism,” 147.

<sup>142</sup> Foss, “Feminist Criticism, 147-53.

<sup>143</sup> Sarah J. Tracey, *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact* (Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell), 50-51.

<sup>144</sup> Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, ed. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015).

<sup>145</sup> Developing an understanding of my role as critic was inspired by Chicana Feminists Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga, Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros, and Norma Alarcón. As well as Lisa A. Flores, “Creating Discursive Space Through a Rhetoric of Difference: Chicana Feminists Craft a Homeland,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 82 (1996): 142-156.

<sup>146</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, “Bridge, Drawbridge, Sandbar, or Island,” ed. by AnaLouise Keating (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 147.

<sup>147</sup> Kamala Kelkar, “At Fort Lauderdale Rally Against Gun Violence, Impassioned Calls for Change and Anger at Politicians,” *PBS*, February 17, 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/fort-lauderdale-parkland-shooting-rally-guns-change>.

<sup>148</sup> Darryl Forges and Selima Hussain, “Miama Gun Show is on Despite Mass Shooting,” *NBC Miami*, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018, <https://www.nbcmiami.com/news/local/Miami-Gun-Show-is-On-Despite-Mass-Shooting--474380083.html>.

<sup>149</sup> Forges and Hussain, “Miami Gun Show.”

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<sup>150</sup> Julie Turkewitz, Matt Stevens, and Jason M. Bailey, “Emma González leads a Student Outcry on Guns: ‘This is the way I have to grieve,’” *The New York Times*, February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/18/us/emma-gonzalez-florida-shooting.html>

<sup>151</sup> Travis Cohen, “This is what Righteousness Sounds Like: The Importance of Emma González,” February 19, 2018, *Miami New Times*, <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/arts/emma-gonzalez-stoneman-douglas-survivor-makes-righteous-speech-10100848>.

<sup>152</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 52-60.

<sup>153</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 54.

<sup>154</sup> CNN, “Transcript.”

<sup>155</sup> Emily Witt, “Calling B.S. in Parkland, Florida,” *The New Yorker*, February 17, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/three-days-in-parkland-florida>.

<sup>156</sup> CNN, “Transcript.”

<sup>157</sup> CNN, “Transcript”; The enactment of a moment of silence will be considered in relationship to the silence during her “March for Our Lives” speech.

<sup>158</sup> Time markers will be incorporated throughout the analysis of each text in order to explicate the significance of silence (specifically in González’s “March for Our Lives” speech), to provide an understanding of the sequence of events, and as a point of reference for the reader.

<sup>159</sup> Ahmed, “Happy Objects,”

<sup>160</sup> Ahmed, “Happy Objects,”

<sup>161</sup> Ahmed, “Happy Objects,” 33.

<sup>162</sup> CNN, “Transcript.”

<sup>163</sup> CNN, “Transcript.” In this chapter I bold and italicize key words and phrases of González’s “We call BS!” speech and “March for Our Lives” in order to add emphasis and bring

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attention to discourse that supports the theoretical concepts and my claims (or add something like this to clarify why emphasis is brought forward).

<sup>164</sup> In this sentence I use the word “shapeshift,” originally coined by Gloria Anzaldúa, to discuss González’s transformation from victim to activist.

<sup>165</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 56.7.

<sup>166</sup> CNN, “Transcript.”

<sup>167</sup> My use of the word “shameful” is borrowed from González directly as in a later part of the speech she shouts “shame on you!”; CNN, “Transcript.”

<sup>168</sup> It is difficult to know for sure whether the image taped on the podium was in fact from the Gun Violence Archive, however, there is a striking resemblance worth mentioning. Gun Violence Archive, “Charts and Maps,” March 18, 2019, <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>.

<sup>169</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 56.7.

<sup>170</sup> CNN, “Transcript.”

<sup>171</sup> CNN, “Transcript.”

<sup>172</sup> CNN, “Transcript.”

<sup>173</sup> CNN, Transcript.”

<sup>174</sup> CNN, “Transcript.”

<sup>175</sup> CNN, “Transcript.”

<sup>176</sup> In Chapter Four I will discuss decorum in greater detail relying on the work of Megan Elizabeth Morrissey, “The Incongruities of Queer Decorum: Exploring Gabriel García Román’s Queer Icons,” *Women’s Studies in Communication*, 40, no. 3, 2017 (289-303).

<sup>177</sup> Kanisha Bond, Erica Chenoweth, and Jeremy Pressman, “Did you attend the March for Our Lives? Here’s what it looked like nationwide,” *The Washington Post*, April 13, 2018,



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[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/04/13/did-you-attend-the-march-for-our-lives-heres-what-it-looked-like-nationwide/?utm\\_term=.863c1073c816](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/04/13/did-you-attend-the-march-for-our-lives-heres-what-it-looked-like-nationwide/?utm_term=.863c1073c816).

<sup>178</sup> Samantha Raphelson and Emma Bowman, “Hundreds of Thousands March For Gun Control Across the U.S.,” *NPR*, March 24, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/03/24/596679790/hundreds-of-thousands-march-for-gun-control-across-the-u-s>; “March for Our Lives: Five of the Most Powerful Speeches,” *The Guardian*, March 24, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/video/2018/mar/25/march-for-our-lives-five-of-the-most-powerful-speeches-video>.

<sup>179</sup> Emma González as quoted by Laura Beck, “Here’s Emma González’s Gut-Wrenching March for Our Lives Speech in Full,” March 24, 2018, <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/politics/a19482963/emma-gonzalez-march-for-our-lives-speech-transcript/>

<sup>180</sup> González as quoted by Beck, “March for Our Lives Speech.”

<sup>181</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 58.

<sup>182</sup> Ben Anderson and James Ash, “Atmospheric Methods,” ed. Phillip Vannini (New York: Routledge, 2015), 47.

<sup>183</sup> Anderson and Ash, “Atmospheric Methods,” 38.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Emma González as quoted by Chris Tognotti, “Transcript of Emma González’s March For Our Lives Speech Will Absolutely Crush You,” *Bustle*, March 24, 2018, <https://www.bustle.com/p/transcript-of-emma-gonzalezs-march-for-our-lives-speech-will-absolutely-crush-you-8596656>.

<sup>186</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 56.7.

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- <sup>187</sup> Larson, “Visceral Counterpublicity,” 123-144.
- <sup>188</sup> González as quoted by Tognotti, “Transcript.”
- <sup>189</sup> González as quoted by Tognotti, “Transcript.”
- <sup>190</sup> González as quoted by Tognotti, “Transcript.”
- <sup>191</sup> Emma González as quoted by Chris Tognotti, “Transcript.”
- <sup>192</sup> Emma González as quoted by Chris Tognotti, “Transcript.”
- <sup>193</sup> Craig Rood, “Our Tears Are Not Enough”: The Warrant of the Dead in the Rhetoric of Gun Control,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 104, no. 1 (2018): 49, DOI:10.1080/00335630.2017.1401223
- <sup>194</sup> González as quoted by Tognotti, “Transcript.”
- <sup>195</sup> Anderson and Ash, “Atmospheric Methods,” 39.
- <sup>196</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 55.
- <sup>197</sup> Anderson and Ash, “Atmospheric Methods,” 47.
- <sup>198</sup> González as quoted by Tognotti, “Transcript.”
- <sup>199</sup> González as quoted by Tognotti, “Transcript.”
- <sup>200</sup> Patty Sotirin, “Silencers: Governmentality, Gender, and the Ban on Gun Violence Research,” ed. Catherine Squires (New York: Peter Lang, 2016), 26-52.
- <sup>201</sup> Sotirin, “Silencers,” 45.
- <sup>202</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, “The New Mestiza Nation: A Multicultural Movement,” ed. AnaLouise Keating (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), 211.
- <sup>203</sup> Cherrie L. Moraga, *A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness*, (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2011), 150.

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- <sup>204</sup> Lisa A. Flores, "Creating Discursive Space Through a Rhetoric of Difference," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82, no. 2 (1996): 142-156.
- <sup>205</sup> Anderson and Ash, "Atmospheric Methods," 78.
- <sup>206</sup> "Gun Violence Archive 2018," Gun Violence Archive, 2018, <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>.
- <sup>207</sup> Anna Gibbs, "After Affect: Sympathy, Synchrony, and Mimetic Communication," ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010), 193
- <sup>208</sup> Chavez, 50.
- <sup>209</sup> Emma González (@Emma4Change), "Real quick: my speech today was abt 6 minutes & 30 seconds, including both my speech and my silence. The fact that people think the silence was 6 minutes... imagine how long it would feel if it actually was 6 minutes, or how it would feel if you had to hide during that silence," Twitter, March 24, 2018, <https://twitter.com/emma4change/status/977709613184405504?lang=en>.
- <sup>210</sup> Karma R. Chávez, "Spatializing Gender Performativity: Ecstasy and Possibilities for Livable Life in the Tragic Case of Victoria Arellano," *Women's Studies in Communication*, 33, no. 1 (2010), 1-15.
- <sup>211</sup> Nicole Chavez and Saeed Ahmed, "What we know about Emma González, the fiercely outspoken teen who stunned America with her silence," *CNN*, March 26, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/25/us/emma-gonzalez-what-you-need-to-know-trnd/index.html>.
- <sup>212</sup> Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," *Cultural Critique*, no. 31, *The Politics of Systems and Environments*, Part II (Autumn: 1995), 104.
- <sup>213</sup> Massumi, "Autonomy of Affect," 104.
- <sup>214</sup> Gibbs, "After Affect," 191.

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<sup>215</sup> Brian Massumi, “The Future Birth of the Affective Fact,” ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010), Page 58.

<sup>216</sup> Brian Massumi, “Affective Fact,” 53.

<sup>217</sup> Aimee Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines: On the Subject of Feminist Alliances* (Duke University Press: Durham and London, 2008). Affective force is a term used to conceptualize differential belonging and describes the linkage mechanism for building alliances across difference.

<sup>218</sup> In place of social location Carrillo Rowe urges scholars to utilize differential belonging as a way of understanding their power relations with others. She describes a shift from identity, otherwise described as “I am” to “positionality.” Each *i* represents a different context of belonging that the individual shifts between and among. To be clear, the individual positions oneself within a broader collective that allows them to build alliances.

<sup>219</sup> Karma R. Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities*, (Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2013) 47.

<sup>220</sup> Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics*, 39.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Italics added for emphasis.

<sup>223</sup> Aimee Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines: On the Subject of Feminist Alliances* (Duke University Press: Durham and London, 2008) 38.

<sup>224</sup> Raymie E. McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis,” *Communication Monographs*, 56, no. 1, (1989), 106.

<sup>225</sup> Orlando Sentinel, “Pictures: Mass Shootings 2007-2016,” *Orlando Sentinel*, January 7, 2019, <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/pulse-orlando-nightclub-shooting/os-mass->

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<sup>257</sup> Ahmed, “Happy Objects,” 41.

<sup>258</sup> J. Michael Hogan and Craig Rood, “Rhetorical Studies and the Gun Debate: A Public Policy Perspective,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 18, no. 2, (2015): 359-372.

<sup>259</sup> Pezzullo, “Critical Interruptions,” 1-25.

<sup>260</sup> Michael Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics,” 55-57.

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<sup>262</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 1-198.

<sup>263</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 142.

<sup>264</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 1-198.

<sup>265</sup> Monica Castillo, “Out 100: Emma González, Newsmaker of the Year,” <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/about>” *Out*, November 14, 2018, <https://www.out.com/out-exclusives/2018/11/14/out100-emma-gonzalez-newsmaker-year>.

<sup>266</sup> Bonnie J. Dow, “Authority, Invention, and Context in Feminist Rhetorical Studies,” *Review of Communication* 16, no. 1, (2016): 70.

<sup>267</sup> Gun Violence Archive, “Charts and Maps,” Gun Violence Archive, April 1, 2019, <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/about>.

<sup>268</sup> Castillo, “Newsmaker of the Year.”