

A Case Study of the Arapahoe High School Shooting: Representations of School Shootings in
News Media and Art

Chelsea Magyar
Department of Communication
University of Colorado Boulder

Thesis Committee

Peter Simonson
Department of Communication

Donna Mejia
Department of Theatre and Dance

Cindy H. White
Department of Communication

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Abstract

The moments of terror, emergency, and helplessness that unfold during a crisis extend beyond their initial occurrence through narrative. The stories that emerged from the December 13, 2013, Arapahoe High School shooting in news articles written by *The Denver Post* and in the survivor-authored play *Thirteen* provided different narratives about crisis and offered different ways to make sense of a traumatic event. Brummett (1984) highlighted the importance of communication in making sense of crisis by tasking the Burkean rhetorical critic to identify “the modes of discourse enjoying currency in a society and to link discourse to the real situations for which it is symbolic equipment” (p. 161). Thus, the study of representational narratives matters in the context of crises because these narratives function as post-crisis discourse that equips individuals to make sense of disturbing situations and respond. By exploring news media portrayals and a theatrical representation of the Arapahoe High School shooting using dramatistic pentadic analysis, this study seeks to discover narratives that mediate society’s experience with the Arapahoe High School shooting and to respond with art. The artistic response aimed to encourage empathy and activism through an installation dance performance and discussion event called *Equipment for Living: An Artistic Exploration of School Shootings*. Performance was used to address the passivity media consumers often adopt when encountering crises in the news. By creating a space to actively engage the issue, *Equipment for Living* led to conversation about school shootings and the need to collectively mitigate them. Rhetorical analysis and dance thus complemented each other as vehicles for investigating school shootings in the study to reveal that news provides a foundation for information about crises and that art can be a way to understand them at a deeper level of emotional intelligence and to address them with activism.

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Chapter 1: Equipment for Reading: An Overview of the Study

The moments of terror, emergency, and helplessness that unfold during a crisis extend beyond their initial occurrence through narrative. The stories that emerged from the December 13, 2013, Arapahoe High School shooting in news articles written by *The Denver Post* and in the survivor-authored play *Thirteen* provided different narratives about crisis and offered different ways to make sense of a traumatic event. Brummett (1984) highlighted the importance of communication in making sense of crisis by tasking the Burkean rhetorical critic to identify “the modes of discourse enjoying currency in a society and to link discourse to the real situations for which it is symbolic equipment” (p. 161). Thus, the study of representational narratives matters in the context of crises because these narratives function as post-crisis discourse that equips individuals to make sense of disturbing situations and respond. By exploring news media portrayals and a theatrical representation of the Arapahoe High School shooting using dramatic pentadic analysis, this study seeks to discover narratives that mediate society’s experience with the Arapahoe High School shooting and to respond with art. The artistic response aimed to encourage empathy and activism through an installation dance performance and discussion event called *Equipment for Living: An Artistic Exploration of School Shootings*.

To begin, a literature review will be presented that provides background information about the Arapahoe High School shooting, *The Denver Post*, and *Thirteen*, as well as prior research on representation of and communication about crisis in news media, theatre, and dance. A description of the study’s methods follows, explaining the dramatic and rhetorical lenses used to explicate *Denver Post* articles about the Arapahoe High School shooting, *Thirteen*, and

Equipment for Living. The methods section will conclude Chapter 1. Chapter 2 focuses on news media representations of the Arapahoe High School shooting in articles published by *The Denver Post* and looks at them through the lens of dramatism. Chapter 3 presents a dramatistic analysis of *Thirteen*. Chapter 4 gives an account of *Equipment for Living*, using autoethnographic writing and employing the language of dramatism. Chapter 5 compares *Denver Post* articles, *Thirteen*, and *Equipment for Living* in terms of their representational strengths and weaknesses in making sense of school shootings. The comparative analysis will end with a conclusion of the paper. Through these five chapters, this study aims to investigate existing narratives on school shootings, in order to better understand them and find a way to craft new narratives that lead to the mitigation and elimination of school violence.

Literature Review

Arapahoe High School is located in Centennial, Colorado. Home to 2,150 students, the school serves people living in the Littleton Public School district and those who apply through open enrollment (Pramenko, n.d.). On December 13, 2013, an 18-year-old student entered the school with a machete, three Molotov cocktail bombs, and a pump-action shotgun (Gurman, Mitchell, & Meyer, 2013). He killed Clare Davis, a 17-year-old student, and himself. In the aftermath of the shooting, local, state, and national news covered the event. One of these media agencies was *The Denver Post*, a Colorado news publication that has operated since 1892, and is currently owned by New York based hedge fund Alden Global Capital, which acquired the publication in 2010 (Simpson, 2017; Ember 2018). The publication covers local, state, and national news and uses online and in-print platforms. School shootings played a role in *The Denver Post*'s history, encouraging an emphasis of online coverage when the Columbine High School massacre, a Colorado school shooting that took place in 1999, prompted constant updates

and 24-hour coverage (Simpson, 2017). Fourteen years later, the publication would cover the Arapahoe High School shooting. This project examines *Denver Post* coverage of the Arapahoe shooting in order to understand how news coverage reconstructed the crisis.

Although news media coverage of the Arapahoe shooting provided important narratives, other depictions of the event gave insight into alternative perspectives that also equip people to navigate crisis. In 2015, Kendyl Meyer and Scotty Powell, Arapahoe High School students who experienced the shooting first-hand, wrote a play that shared their stories and those of their classmates (Meyer & Powell, 2013). *Thirteen* became a way to give voice to survivors of school shootings, illuminate their experiences and states of mind, and “provide a better understanding of the realities that weigh on survivors of these events” (Meyer & Powell, 2013, Foreword). Meyer and Powell submitted the play to a Thespian conference, but it was not allowed to be performed because it was considered controversial. It was, however, performed at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts Educational Theatre. Although it was not published after, in writing *Thirteen*, Meyer and Powell created alternative discourse to news media with which to address school shootings.

The tragedy at Arapahoe added to the history of school shootings in the United States. Prior to the Arapahoe High School shooting, the Columbine High School massacre took place in 1999, when two Columbine students entered their school in an attempt to carry out an act of terrorism they had planned for a year (Cullen, 2004). This act of school violence was situated in a year of crisis, making 1999 a peak period for school shootings in the 20th century (Katsiyannis, Whitford, & Ennis, R. P., 2018). The 21st century saw a growing frequency in shootings staged in educational environments (Katsiyannis et al., 2018), and the Arapahoe High School shooting added to the number. It happened one day prior to the one year anniversary of the Sandy Hook

Elementary shooting, the second deadliest shooting in the United States at that point in time (Vogel, Horwitz, & Fahrenthold, 2012). Since the Arapahoe High School shooting, Colorado has looked at different ways to prevent school violence. The Claire Davis Act, established in 2015, mandates schools to put more effort into threat assessment by making Colorado schools liable if they miss warning signs that lead to shootings (Estabrook, 2018). Five years after the crisis, Colorado is seeking to equip schools with better mental health resources, create an information sharing culture that keeps schools safe by recognizing threats to safety, and by training teachers and students to recognize warning signs (Brundin, 2018). Despite new safety measures in Colorado and elsewhere, however, school shootings continue to happen, and this study seeks to address how different narratives available in news coverage and art equip society to handle them.

News Media and Crises

Individuals encounter the world, including the world's crises, through news media every day. The stories that represent crises mediate society's experiences with these events (Coombs & Holladay, 2009). Fishman (1999) defines crisis as a situation in which an unanticipated event "threatens important values and requires a timely and effective response" (as cited by Elmasry & Chaudhri, 2012, p. 141). Dayan (2005) notes the ambiguity of this type of event and the way news media has a role in giving these events meaning. As a prompt and far reaching channel, news media are well equipped to provide a timely and effective response to crises. News representations thus play an important role in constructing social narratives about events such as the Arapahoe High School shooting (Dayan, 2005; as cited by Elmasry & Chaudhri, 2012).

Through news coverage, media consumers and journalists engage in a mediated conversation to make sense of an issue and co-construct crisis narratives. Those who encounter crises second-hand through stories from survivors, news accounts, dramatic representations, etc.,

never have complete access to the full story (Coombs, 2009a; as cited by Heath, 2012); thus, people outside of a crisis must reconstruct what happened. Journalists often begin the reconstruction practice and present crisis narratives through their reporting. News stories frame events in a particular way, meaning they emphasize selected aspects of a situation and put forth a suggested interpretation (Entman 1993/2007; as cited by Wondemaghen, 2014). Nevertheless, framing does not guarantee that an audience will subscribe to a particular interpretation of an event. While news discourse impacts “the majority of its readers in terms of what is noticed, remembered, evaluated and acted upon” (Entman, 1993; as cited by Wondemaghen, 2014, p. 697), the audience’s pre-existing beliefs will largely influence what it pays attention to in a given news story (Wondemaghen, 2014). According to Wondemaghen (2014), “journalists do not just report the objective facts of a story; they construct narratives in line with existing schemata in the audience’s beliefs in order to make stories appealing and newsworthy” (p. 698). Wondemaghen (2014) highlights the power of journalists in representing crisis, but she also shows that audiences play a role in the construction of narratives: journalists rely on the audience’s pre-existing knowledge to communicate and engage in mediated discourse with them. Thus, news consumers and producers co-construct narratives about crises through post-crisis journalism.

These narratives not only represent events, but they also play a role in cultural affirmation. Culture both impacts and is impacted by journalism. Carey (1997) calls journalism a “practice of world making” (p. 331), while simultaneously questioning how journalists are formed through their practice and how their practices meet the needs of a democratic society. Dayan (2005) builds on Carey’s (1997) analysis through the concept of casting:

Imagining the social consists not only of highlighting themes or issues (“agenda setting”) but of casting those who are concerned by, or involved in, these issues. In narrative

terms, one could say that agenda setting provides verbs, description of actions. Casting, on the other hand, tells us about actors and the parts they fill (p. 174).

Members of a democratic society can decide whether or not to play these roles, but as practices and prescribed roles repeat, they become somewhat fixed (Dayan, 2005). Despite the tendency to affirm cultural reality, however, media can also be used to transform, recast, and reconfigure it (Dayan 2005; Carey, 1997).

News as narrative often employs conventions that resonate with audiences, including societal roles such as hero, villain, and victim (Dayan, 2005; as cited by Elmasry & Chaudhri, 2012). While drawing on tropes the audience knows can foster sense-making and help individuals navigate their personal situations (Dervin & Naumer, 2009), it can also perpetuate dangerous cycles. For instance, assigning shooters a prominent role in a story leads to a phenomenon of “fame-seeking rampage shooters” (Lankford, 2016; as cited by Morris, 2018, p. 10). The repetition of stories that cast shooters in the lead role can lead to a contagion effect that causes more school shootings and gives certain perpetrators what they desire: fame (Morris, 2018). This phenomenon suggests that news media may not be the most suitable method of communication for addressing school shootings because news coverage does not always provide a reflective and nuanced perspective on school shootings and, in some cases, may even perpetuate them. Exploring alternative representations of and symbolic responses to the Arapahoe High School shooting provides an opportunity to assess this claim and determine if new discourse, or possibly new methods of representations, are necessary to address school shootings.

Art as Alternative Post-Crisis Representation

Although news media tend to serve as dominant channels for communicating narratives about crises, such as school shootings, alternative channels exist. Each channel presents interpretations of a crisis that vie with others to explain reality (Ryan, 1991; as cited by Wondemaghen, 2014). Art may not be as immediate as news coverage at responding to crisis; however, it has unique strengths that enable it to address crisis and facilitate coping. Art's somewhat delayed response to crisis allows for reflection and in-depth research that breaking news may not have the time for. Art can also meet the needs of specific audiences to facilitate the diverse types of coping people need. Hence, art offers post-crisis discourse which can be compared to news media, revealing the strengths and weaknesses of both channels in mediating post-crisis narratives.

Various forms of art have been used as discourse for crisis communication. Theatre practices such as Theatre in Education, Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 1985), and Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 1972) use theatre to empower, educate, and solve problems. For example, Theatre in Education often places participants within a dramatic fiction so that they engage with other characters, make decisions in the midst of some sort of crisis, or revise characters' actions to make a new narrative (Jackson & Vine, 2013). Other forms of theatre have addressed crisis and school shootings more directly. For example, The United States Theatre Project play *columbinus* (2005) combined reality and fiction to explore teenage culture and the Columbine High School Shooting (Columbinus, n.d.). It incorporates parent, survivor, and community leader perspectives and police evidence (Columbinus, n.d.). Film and music have covered school shootings as well. Movies such as *Zero Day* (2003), *Hello Herman* (2012), and *Home Room* (2002) all depict fictional shootings, while documentary films such as *Bowling for Columbine*

(2002) and *MSDStrong Documentary* (2018), a student-composed film about the Parkland shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School, focus on real events. Songs such as Boomtown Rats' "I Don't Like Mondays" (1979), which was inspired by the Grover Cleveland Elementary School Shooting in San Diego that same year (Daly, 2014), and Foster the People's "Pumped Up Kicks" (2010) engage with specific school shootings as well as the phenomena in general.

Like news media, theatrical and artistic practices and representations mediate individuals' experiences with crises; however, they can offer unique perspectives on crisis, which tend to allow for more emotional engagement and "resonance," in which "we think that we feel approximately the same 'vibes' as our interlocutors, we maintain and reinforce positive relationships" (Maranda, 2011, p. 84). *Thirteen* does not involve the same level of participation that Theatre in Education does; however, it shows how art afforded a multiplicity of narratives about the Arapahoe High School shooting. When performed or read to an audience, a play has more media richness (Daft & Lengel, 1986) than a news article because audience and performer share a space. The playwright, actors, and audience co-construct a narrative, similar to the constitutive practice that occurs in news media; however, there is more room to go beyond what happened and imagine a better future. Even if a play focuses on real experiences, such as *Thirteen* did, it might emphasize different aspects of the crisis than a news story would and can be more personal. The survivor perspective that *Thirteen* offers makes it an interesting object to study and compare to news articles that come from a second-hand perspective. Hence, artistic responses to crisis open the door for new findings on how to make sense of and cope with school shootings.

Dance as Representation

In the context of this study, dance was used as a tool to make sense of school shootings through choreography and performance. These processes have been used for sensemaking in other contexts, revealing dance as a unique method of both representation and investigation in the social sciences:

Dance as an art form for performing social science research is distinctive from more standard forms of social science research. A dance person focuses on the body not only as an object of inquiry and gaze, but also as the mode of inquiry itself, working from “inside” the body. That is, the dance person doesn’t merely analyze bodily action, but puts that analysis into action with her or his own body and studies the actions as a personal affair of motion. (Blumenfeld-Jones, 2008, p. 176).

Thus, dance allows for the researcher to gain an intimate access to the object of study by embodying it and living it. Documenting the discoveries gained through dance via performance and/or writing allows for these insights to be shared with other researchers and the general public to further inquiry and to initiate discourse.

Dance is thus a means to discover and share knowledge. “As in other art forms, dance artists have distinct bodies of knowledge, unique methods specific to dance, and diverse embodied and representational options for sharing knowledge” (Barbour, 2012, abstract). The choreographer has a particularly valuable perspective in this process:

In brief, the choreographer analyzes the observed world, has a motional response, and interprets and rearranges the world through motion. Finally, the choreographer teaches the movements to the dancers (Blumenfeld-Jones, 2008, p. 178).

The choreographer can be a formal researcher or not, but she or he learns about the world's existing narratives and affirms or transforms them through movement. In Blumenfeld-Jones' words, "the dancer is only exaggerating what is already potentially possible" (p. 179). Dance can wander into the land of fiction and fantasy; however, it can always be connected to reality. In this project, dance combined with installation, discussion, and rhetorical analysis attempts to explore the reality of school shootings and how to compose narratives that invite media consumers to think differently about school shootings and to take action to mitigate them.

Methods

Dramatistic Pentadic Analysis

The goal of this study is to understand narratives about school shootings in order to speak into the issue in a more effective and transformative way. As St. Francis of Assisi said, "O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand" (Christ Our Life, n.d.). Hence, in order to console and to put forth reflections to be shared, this study began with an analysis of existing school shooting stories with the goal of understanding them. I applied Burke's (1989) pentad to *Denver Post* articles and the play *Thirteen* and used my findings as inspiration for my dance show *Equipment for Living*.

Although multiple forms of textual analysis exist, Burke's (1989) pentad lent itself particularly well to this study because of its adaptability across genres. The pentad falls under the larger umbrella of dramatism, which refers to the root metaphor of drama that Burke developed to analyze symbolic action as if it were a play (Brummett, 1984). Despite the reference to the theatrical genre, dramatism can be and has been applied to many different contexts. The only requirement is an act, which radiates an agent or agents who perform it, a scene agents perform it in, agency by which they perform the act, and a purpose that motivates the act (Burke, 1989).

These five elements (act, agent, scene, agency, and purpose) compose the pentad. The pentad, and dramatism in general, seek to uncover human motives and interaction through looking at a text's "terms and their functions" (Burke, 1989, p. 135). To explore narratives that emerged from the Arapahoe High School shooting, I analyzed *Denver Post* articles and the play *Thirteen* with two layers of rhetorical analysis. For the first layer, I applied Burke's (1989) pentad by coding for acts, scenes, agents, agencies, and purposes, in order to uncover general narratives and important elements. I then looked for trends in these narratives and analyzed them for rhetorical impact.

I used two different sources to collect the texts used in this project. I conducted a search in the NewsBank database using keywords "Arapahoe High School" and "School shooting," and setting a date range from 2013 to 2013 to find *Denver Post* articles. The search populated 32 results. I analyzed all 32 articles; however, in my final analysis, I excluded opinion pieces, duplicate stories, stories without text, and articles that mentioned Arapahoe High School but were not about the shooting. Comparatively, a friend who graduated from Arapahoe High School told me about *Thirteen* and helped me obtain a copy. She also served as an informant and helped me understand the process behind and performance of the play.

In analyzing the *Denver Post* articles and *Thirteen*, I was interested in seeing how they equipped people to handle school shootings. This lens came from the Burkean concept of equipment for living (1935/1941/1965/1967; as cited by Brummett 1984), which suggests that "through types, components, or structures of literature people confront their lived situations, celebrate their triumphs, and encompass their tragedies" (p. 161). Hence, my rhetorical analysis focused on how news media and theatre addressed the Arapahoe High School shooting in a way that enables people to confront the phenomena of school shootings. Burke's terminology also

inspired the title and motive behind my dance show, as it was meant to equip audiences for living through school shootings.

Dance Production and Performance

The creative element of this study explored the process of creating artistic narratives about school shootings. I used dance as a method and genre of representation to research and address school shootings. It served as discourse on two levels, that of production and that of performance.

The production process consisted of choreography, teaching choreography to dancers, discussing the piece with advisors and mentors to revise the piece, working with musicians and a production crew, and engaging in dialogue about school shootings and artistic visions with collaborators. As choreographer, I directed and facilitated the dance piece that emerged from this process. The performance took place Saturday, March 2, in the Charlotte York Irey Theatre in Boulder, CO. It consisted of an hour-length performance involving movement, an interactive installation, and a facilitated discussion between dancers and audience members about what it would take to stop school shootings. I documented my discoveries from the production process and performance in order to reflect on them and contribute to existing research on school shootings.

Through dance production and performance, I aimed to equip people with a new way of thinking about school shootings. I wanted to encourage collaborators and audience members that these acts are not inevitable and that apathy and acceptance will only perpetuate them. Through conversation, performance, and encouraging people to engage in active responses to school shootings, the show's equipment for living was intended to be a new understanding of school violence, as well as impetus to take steps to heal from and mitigate school shootings.

Chapter 2: A Pentadic Analysis of Denver Post Articles About the Arapahoe High School Shooting

News coverage offers immediate insight into unfolding crises such as school shootings. Journalists gain special access to details the general public would not know otherwise, and as authors, these journalists frame a crisis in light of the details they discover. These texts offer a glimpse into what a society sees as important about a crisis, but it also sets an agenda for what media viewers should think about (Entman 1993/2007; as cited by Wondemaghen, 2014). Through a pentadic analysis of the Arapahoe High School shooting as represented in *Denver Post* articles, this chapter seeks to outline the key elements in the drama of a school shooting narrated in print journalism.

This chapter opens with a presentation of the *Denver Post*'s unfolding narrative about the Arapahoe High School shooting across articles dating from the day after the shootings (Dec. 14, 2013) until the end of that month (Dec. 31, 2013). It compiles excerpts from various articles to show the drama as represented across stories. The language from *The Denver Post* is italicized (Appendix A features the exact quotes and articles they originate from) to distinguish it from my own prose, which was used to connect quotes.

The following section analyzes the conglomerate account using Burke's (1989) pentad to uncover the dramatistic acts, agents, scenes, agencies, and purposes that compose the narrative of the Arapahoe High School shooting and its aftermath, as told by *The Denver Post*. The rhetorical implications of the narrative are also investigated.

The Narrative

At about 12:30 p.m., December 13, 2013, on what started as a typical Friday, another gunman visited terror upon another Colorado school...when an 18-year-old senior at Arapahoe

High School opened fire with a shotgun inside his school and wounded a fellow student. He entered through a door that should have been locked but instead was propped open and that was commonly left unlocked for easier access. He had scrawled a Latin message on the inside of his forearm in permanent ink. Translation: "The die has been cast." This was a reference to Julius Caesar, who said the words as he crossed the Rubicon river with his troops to start a civil war. Also written on his arm were numbers and letters associated with five classrooms and the school's library, places authorities said Karl Pierson planned to attack during his noon-hour rampage, Arapahoe County Sheriff Grayson Robinson said.

"He wasn't running, he wasn't yelling. He was calmly walking. It just seemed like it was an everyday occurrence for him," said Arapahoe High School alumni Tait Prisler about the shooter. Prisler had been chatting with a teacher down the hall when he heard a gunshot and saw Pierson, whom he did not recognize, wearing a hooded sweatshirt and aiming the shotgun in their direction. Along with a 12-gauge pump-action shotgun, Pierson was armed with...three Molotov cocktails and a machete concealed in a canvas scabbard. With more than 125 rounds of assorted ammunition he wore in a pair of bandoliers strapped to his chest and waist...Pierson packed a mix of steel-shot, buckshot and slugs, but the sheriff, Robinson, would not say which of those he fired. "The shooter was intent on causing the maximum amount of harm," Robinson said.

Prisler looked, saw Pierson reload and dove into the atrium. Pierson fired a total of five times. Police said he...fired randomly down a hallway before shooting Claire Davis in the head at point-blank range. She was sitting in the hallway with a friend and had no time to react. Davis collapsed onto the girl next to her, drenching her in blood. Authorities believe she was a random victim. Although she and the gunman were acquainted, they were not friends, officials said.

Robinson said Davis, a 17-year-old senior, was “an innocent victim of an evil act of violence” who happened to find herself in Pierson’s war path.

Before storming into the library, Pierson was saying “Where’s Murphy? Where’s Murphy?” between gunshots, according to Senior August Clary, who was sitting in science class when the school went on lockdown. Authorities said Pierson meant to kill librarian and debate coach Tracy Murphy. The teen apparently harbored a grudge against Murphy after being disciplined by him in September, action that Robinson said was appropriate. The discipline came after Pierson made a verbal threat against Murphy to a group of students. Law enforcement was made aware of that threat, and the response to it remains under investigation, Robinson said. Murphy, knowing he was sought, escaped the library with the help of a school janitor. Robinson would not elaborate on his exit. One of the five shots was directed toward Murphy’s office in the library. Pierson torched a set of shelves with one of the incendiary devices he had stashed in a backpack, then fired a sixth time, killing himself. The rampage ended in less than 80 seconds—the 80 seconds that terrified a community and left Davis in a coma, fighting for her life.

Throughout the building, students and teachers launched into a well-rehearsed protocol—going into the corners of classrooms, locking the doors, turning out lights. Many clung to each other and began pulling out phones and laptops to get news and communicate with their families. The students at Arapahoe, like the students at public high schools throughout Colorado, have gone through school shooting drills since they were in kindergarten. “We were all just sitting there staying quiet and praying,” said 15-year-old Jessica Girard, who was in math class when she heard three loud bangs. Outside the locked classroom door, Jessica heard someone walk by, saying, “It hurts. It hurts. Make it stop.” She said, “I was thinking I was going

to die and I was never going to see my family again, and I was praying that they knew how much I loved them.”

Justin Morrall, a senior, was studying for finals when he heard three gunshots and then two more. “I thought it was fireworks. Everyone just went silent, and then we heard the second gunshot and then we went into the lockdown position.” Megan Sheehan, a 17-year-old senior, was in psychology class. She heard two loud booms and thought it was just someone dropping heavy textbooks in the hallway, which happens sometimes, so no one thought it was gunshots. “On the third one, we knew it was not a textbook,” Sheehan said. Inside Andrea Bradley’s yoga class, Arapahoe High senior Courtney Leypoldt said she heard two bangs before the 15-year-old girl’s (this is Davis; her age was printed wrong in one of the articles) friend burst into the room. Bradley reacted quickly, Leypoldt said, and ushered students into a deep closet. One-by-one, Bradley counted the heads of her students as they walked inside, Leypoldt said.

Arapahoe County sheriff’s Deputy James Englert noticed something unusual. “The school is going on lockdown, and I don’t know why,” the school resource officer for Arapahoe High School radioed into dispatchers. He and unarmed security guard Rod Mauler, who is a retired county deputy... “ran toward the thunder,” Robinson said, referring to a tactic taught in active shooter training because the sound of gunshots inside a school sounds like thunder. They immediately dashed from the cafeteria down a long hallway to the library while yelling for students to get down and get back. According to police scanner recordings, the deputy ran to the library, where he saw smoke, and then into the athletic hall. There he found the wounded girl. Recordings between dispatchers and first responders captured a moment-by-moment narration that would describe the horror unraveling in one of the state’s biggest high schools as a gunman opened fire. “There is heavy smoke in here. I don’t hear any active shots right now. The school

is locked down. We have a student with a bad head injury in the athletic hallway,” Englert said to the dispatcher, who was calling in units from around the region to the high school. An ambulance arrived within minutes to take the girl (Davis) to Littleton Adventist Hospital, where she underwent surgery Friday afternoon. She remained in critical condition. On Dec. 15, her family announced that the girl was stable but in a coma.

About six minutes after Englert called in his first dispatch, he radioed in another report. “There is one student down, three shotgun shells,” Englert said as a piercing fire alarm pulsed over and over. He asked the dispatcher to tell the security company to turn off the alarm. This was the suspect, dead from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound in a classroom. A strong smell of gasoline lingered. Later, deputies would confirm the smell was coming from Molotov cocktails, one of which was still with the shooter. Pierson ignited a Molotov cocktail that set ablaze three bookshelves in the library before turning the gun on himself. “I believe the shooter took his life because he knew he had been found,” said Robinson, referring to Englert and Mauler’s quick response and action that saved lives.

Students texted their parents messages such as, “I love you. There is a shooting,” and other “terrifying text messages...from inside dark, quiet classrooms.” For many parents, the messages that were sent to reassure them—“I’m OK,” “We’re hiding and waiting,” “I love you”—turned into rattling uncertainty. Other parents did not receive messages. Julie Kellogg was driving by Arapahoe High School when she saw police rush to the campus. Kellogg said she frantically began calling and texting her children at the school but did not hear back. Christina Long didn’t want to text her 16-year-old son, Dylan, a junior at Arapahoe. “He’ll call me when he’s safe,” she reasoned. “I’m going to let him hide.” But a few minutes later, she received a

phone call and broke down in tears. She leaned over, and she simply said, “Oh, Baby. OK. OK. He’s OK.”

Douglas County Schools’ emergency alert system was overwhelmed by volume and failed Friday during the shooting at Arapahoe High School. About 73,000 parents should have received an e-mail shortly after the security decision was enacted, Michelle Yi, school district spokeswoman, said. For more than three hours, nothing was sent to parents, and once the notification system began to work, notices arrived as late as 7 p.m., Yi said.

Between 25 and 30 students in the class huddled together until about 1 p.m., when a policeman or firefighter knocked at the door and the students ran out of the building, across University Boulevard to a fast-food restaurant, where 17-year-old senior Megan Sheehan was reunited with her father, Dan Sheehan. As students left the school after the shooting, many held their hands in the air or on their heads, and police officers patted them down. They were taken by bus to Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church or Euclid Middle School. Parents dashed to the school to find their kids. Some students were still in lockdown at 2:30 p.m. More than 2,200 people had been led out of the building successfully by 2:47 p.m., a little more than two hours after the shooting began.

Local and federal investigators were at Pierson’s home in Highlands Ranch on Friday night, along with a bomb squad. Detectives were also searching Pierson’s car and at his father’s Denver home. They impounded Pierson’s car, which he had parked along a curb in the northside lot, Robinson said. Robinson declined to say what evidence was discovered but said all indications were that Pierson acted alone. Pierson’s mother was out of town Friday when the shootings happened. By Dec. 31, detectives had interviewed more than 200 people and obtained a dozen warrants to search places such as Pierson’s mother’s home in Highlands Ranch, his car,

his computers and cellphone. They hoped for warrants to search other areas, too, such as the gunman's medical and school records for any red flags. Search warrants in the case remained under seal. "The unsatisfying answer is that the outcome may be there simply isn't anything that could have been done differently," Arapahoe County District Attorney George Brauchler said. "I don't know if that is the answer. I want to know if there was something that could have been done and wasn't."

Pierson bought the shotgun legally Dec. 6, and purchased a large amount of ammunition at local stores Friday morning, Robinson said. Colorado law allows an 18-year-old to buy a shotgun but not a handgun. Pierson went bowling alone on the morning of the shooting, had a meal and took steps to buy more ammunition, Robinson said.

Standing in the shadow of Arapahoe High School, their nerves still raw and shaky from the horror that engulfed their school a day earlier, hundreds of members of the school's community marched silently Saturday from the entrance to Arapaho Park out onto an open field. Candles held aloft, members of the group gathered in a vigil for one of their own, senior Claire Davis, who was critically wounded in the shooting at the school. "We just thought it would be a good idea to get everyone together to pay respect to Claire, as well as gather with other people going through the same thing," said Maggie Hurlbut, an Arapahoe senior. Hurlbut said she and a group of friends came up with the idea on Friday night, not long after Pierson, another senior, carried a shotgun into the school and shot the 17-year-old Davis before apparently killing himself. By 11 a.m. Saturday, an invitation to the vigil had been placed on Facebook and Twitter. Once there, the assemblage said prayers and compared stories from Friday's attack. Soon they were singing the school's fight song and comforting one another with hugs—lots and lots of hugs. In addition, some students began collecting donations for the Davis family. "I don't

know her, but I just feel this needs to be done,” said Chris Davis, an Arapahoe senior. “They should know that they’re not alone and that the Warrior community is there for Claire and her family.”

Arapahoe High School upperclassmen were allowed back into the school on Thursday, braving the hallways for the first time since they were forced to evacuate after a shooting. Windows to the library, where authorities say the 18-year-old gunman killed himself, were covered, and the doors were locked. The library will be remodeled next semester, school principal Natalie Pramenko said in a letter to parents. “I thought the school would look like it changed, but I realized that just the people inside it had changed,” said senior Grace Marlowe, Arapahoe’s student council vice president. “I wasn’t sure if the place that was my home for four years would be different. But it’s even more of a home now, especially after today.” Many seniors—the first class to walk back into the school—said their return represented a first step toward healing, not a backslide into fear. “It’s definitely going to be different. There will be things that were compromised,” Marlowe said. “But it will be a community, and I don’t think anybody is not going to feel safe.”

But some students may struggle in silence, grieving both the death of a friend people are now calling evil and grappling with the inability to predict his demise. Friends of Pierson may feel they cannot express their grief with their peers, fearing their classmates will shun them for showing compassion toward him, Dr. David Schonfeld, director of the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement in Philadelphia said, “The kids, teachers and everyone are going to be scrutinizing carefully the relationship they had with the shooter,” Schonfeld said. “Some are going to feel very, very guilty.” Mental health services were offered to students on Thursday.

Counselors will be available throughout the school and at Shepherd of the Hills church from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday.

Clad in jerseys, letter jackets and school T-shirts, students walked out of the school loaded down with backpacks and armfuls of books. They carried yoga mats, art projects and instrument cases. “I keep using the word ‘united,’” said sophomore Tyler Aikens, who was selling “Warrior Strong” T-shirts to raise money for Davis and her family. Most students walking out of the school on Thursday bought a shirt. Between the hugs and tears, there were moments of high school normalcy, such as random, awkward dance moves and flirty nudges. But most stopped to remember the senior who was missing. A tribute to Davis has covered most of the fence along the south edge of the school. Cards, flowers and stuffed animals cover the fence and grass.

The high school senior died at 4:29 p.m. at Littleton Adventist Hospital after eight days on life support. The hospital had announced the teenager’s death in a Facebook posting at 5:15 p.m.: “Despite the best efforts of our physicians and nursing staff, and Claire’s fighting spirit, her injuries were too severe and the most advanced medical treatments could not prevent this tragic loss of life. Claire’s death is immensely heartbreaking for our entire community, our staff and our families.” About 6:30 p.m., the family also posted a statement. “Although we have lost our precious daughter,” the family said, “we will always be grateful for the indelible journey she took us on over the last 17 years—we were truly blessed to be Claire’s parents. The grace, laughter and light she brought to this world will not be extinguished by her death; to the contrary, it will only get stronger.” While asking for privacy, the family thanked the first-responders, school, sheriff’s office and others for their “extraordinary work” on Claire’s behalf. The hospital said that information regarding a public celebration of Claire’s life would be

announced later and said the public could continue to leave cards for the Davis family in the “Cards for Claire” box, located in the main entrance of the hospital.

Gov. John Hickenlooper and other officials from the state offered their condolences Sunday to the family of Claire Davis after the 17-year-old’s death Saturday. The parents of gunman Karl Pierson, Barbara and Mark Pierson, issued the following statement via email Sunday: “We are heartbroken to hear of Claire’s passing. Our hearts ache for her family as they deal with unimaginable grief. Our prayers are with Claire’s family & the entire Arapahoe community.” At the request of her family and friends, The Denver Foundation announced it had created a fund in Claire’s name on Dec. 16. The foundation said the Arapahoe High School Community Fund honoring Claire Davis will support mental health care, anti-bullying programs and other community needs chosen by her parents, the fund’s advisers. “Last week was truly a paradox in that we lost our daughter, yet we witnessed the wonderful love that exists in the world through the tremendous outpouring of support we received,” the Davis family said in a statement Saturday.

Davis’ love of horses and riding was memorialized before and during the National Western Stock Show, where the 17-year-old victim of the Dec. 13 shooting at Arapahoe High School competed last year (in 2012). On Jan. 1, the Claire Davis Memorial Celebration of Life was held at 1 p.m. at the National Western Events Center. The National Western’s annual hunter and jumper event was renamed the Claire Davis Memorial Gambler’s Choice Horse Show, and a moment of silence was held before each ticketed horse show this year. “The National Western does a wonderful job of supporting young equestrians, like Claire,” her mother, Desiree Davis, said in a statement. “We’re so appreciative that they’ve agreed to host this special celebration of Claire’s life and for everything they’re doing to honor Claire’s memory.” Though there was no

charge to attend the Jan. 1 memorial, the stock show issued tickets to assure enough seating. Tickets were issued at nationalwestern.com or the National Western Box Office beginning Friday at 10 a.m.

“Everyone at school who knows Claire knows about her love of horses,” said Avery Griggs, a 16-year-old sophomore. “Claire is one of the nicest people I’ve met at Arapahoe,” Griggs said. “I am a sophomore and she is a senior. I remember one day in class that you had to pick groups, and she turned around and asked if I wanted to be in her group. And I felt so special, because that is a big deal for a sophomore. She is amazing and so sweet.” Neighbors called her the best babysitter in the community, and classmates and friends talked of her love for horses.

No one called Safe2Tell to report that Pierson, 18, planned to attack Arapahoe High School before he opened fire in the school Dec. 13, killing 17-year-old Claire Davis before turning his legally acquired shotgun on himself, executive director of the reporting program Susan Payne said. Developed in response to the 1999 Columbine High School shooting that experts said was preceded by many unheeded red flags about the gunmen’s state of mind. Safe2Tell is an anonymous hotline that allows parents, teachers, students and concerned community members to report suspicious behaviors in a no-risk environment. Since Safe2Tell was created in Colorado at the suggestion of the Columbine Commission in 2004, the hotline has received 282 reports of planned school attacks (as of 2013). All were investigated by law enforcement and school officials: 251 were classified as high-risk threats, and 31 were called very high risk—prevented just in time. Early reporting of concerning behavior saved lives, Payne said. Safe2Tell reports are forwarded immediately to school officials and law enforcement, helping authorities stop violence before it starts.

Columbine principal Frank DeAngelis noted that security hardware—especially visible measures such as entrance buzzers and surveillance cameras—can be comforting to parents, but often the unseen efforts work to great effect. The Safe2Tell program, run in conjunction with the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, processes anonymous tips on potentially threatening behavior; counseling and mental health programs may have a deterrent effect that’s hard to measure. But the lingering question continues to focus on balance: how to keep kids safe without compromising an atmosphere conducive to education. Ken Trump, president of National School Safety and Security Services, said the main struggle for parents and administrators is determining what’s reasonable. Finding that balance is increasingly difficult in an often politically charged environment that muddles important discussions about safety. Trump said the Columbine High School shooting drew frank and thoughtful discussions nationally about keeping children safe, but the fear and anxiety that followed last year’s shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., created knee-jerk reactions that steered the conversations away from a holistic approach.

Experts considered Littleton Public Schools a national leader in school safety even before the Arapahoe High School incident, and the school and law enforcement response underscored how radically procedures have changed since the 1999 Columbine shooting. The district’s security protocols were ranked seventh-best in the country by Security magazine in November. The publication also recognized the school district as one of the top 500 security operations in the industry. Publisher Mark McCourt said Friday’s incident offered a glimpse into the district’s efforts, which have included implementing a mass-notification system, regular drills and various active-shooter programs with local law enforcement. “What could have been a much more terrible situation was resolved, unfortunately, with the death of the shooter, but

resolved with a much more positive outcome when you consider what has happened at schools and other places where the preparation and the drilling wasn't robust," McCourt said. State Sen. Linda Newell, whose district includes the Littleton public schools, said that even with the effective response, school safety remains an ongoing, evolving concern. "I absolutely believe that we never do enough," Newell said. "We do need to revisit this, and there will be lessons learned." Gov. John Hickenlooper said it was another "all-too-familiar sequence of gunshots" at a Colorado school. Off to the side after a news conference, he put it more directly: "This has got to stop."

Dramatistic Analysis of the Narrative

The following analysis attempts to contribute to the lessons to be learned from the Arapahoe High School shooting by investigating the way news media presented it as a foundation for further discourse. The analysis looks at the acts represented by *The Denver Post*, the agents connected to them, the scenes that acts unfolded in, the agencies with which agents performed the acts, and the purposes behind these acts.

Acts

Multiple acts formed the overarching narrative of the Arapahoe High School drama. *The Denver Post* reported them in a chronological order for the most part; however, as more details became available, journalists would re-depict acts that had been previously reported on. Most of the acts consisted of smaller acts that radiated from a central point. Other acts were irreducible. There were also distinctions between active acts, those committed by agents, and passive ones, those that happened to agents. The acts illustrated by *The Denver Post* will each be analyzed chronologically using these themes.

The first and most important act was the shooting. Journalists published on this event first, and they returned to it most often in other articles. Additionally, it caused all the other acts in the narrative, whether directly or by causing an act that produced a new one. *The Denver Post* called this primary and dominant act “another ‘all-too-familiar sequence of gunshots’ at a Colorado school,” “the horror unraveling in one of the state’s biggest high schools as a gunman opened fire,” “Pierson’s war path,” “an evil act of violence,” “the rampage,” “the shooting,” “the 80 seconds that terrified a community and left Claire Davis in a coma fighting for her life,” “the shooting at Arapahoe,” “his [Pierson’s] noon-hour rampage,” “the Dec. 13 shooting at Arapahoe High School,” “Friday’s incident,” and “what could have been a much more terrible situation,” among other terms.

These nominations portrayed the event with two sets of dialectics: conventional and abominable as well as ambiguous and specific. The shooting appeared conventional when *The Denver Post* referred to it as “another” and “familiar.” The implications for this language include the possibility for normalizing school shootings. On the other hand, sensationalization is not desirable, and to some extent, conventional language balanced a vocabulary of abominability surrounding this act, which included words and phrases such as “the horror,” “an evil act of violence,” and “terrible.” The depiction of the shooting as conventional and abominable connected to the dialectic of ambiguity and specificity. Abominability made the shooting ambiguous at one level because the “evil” act seemed to transcend control. At the same time, the shooting resulted in “terror,” loss of life, and the violation of human dignity; hence, the language of abomination was also specific because it captured the “the horror” of the situation. Comparatively, convention generally led to specificity because it contextualized the Arapahoe High School shooting among other acts of school violence. Even more specificity could balance

conventionality to show that each shooting is unique and each person it touches suffers differently.

Conventionality and abominability aside, some terms defined the shooting with more detail than others. Although language such as “the shooting,” “the rampage,” and “Friday’s incident,” all had connotations for what unfolded in the act, relying on audience knowledge of this kind of act. Other categorizations filled in cognitive dots with details such as “the 80 seconds that terrified a community and left Claire Davis in a coma fighting for her life” and “what could have been a much more terrible situation.” The latter description posed an issue because it partially takes away from the damage and impact the shooting have. It was part of an attempt to applaud Littleton Public Schools for their advanced security system; however, this specificity also opened the door for imagination and an ambiguous worse shooting, normalizing this sort of act and giving it a spectrum of terror. Using dialectics of specificity and ambiguity in conjunction with conventionality and ambiguity, *The Denver Post* presented a complex description of what happened Dec. 13 at Arapahoe High School.

Within the dialectical terminology used to describe this act, multiple smaller acts converged to create a gestalt of the shooting. These acts included Pierson’s entry into the school, Pierson firing shots, shooting Claire, Davis soaking her friend’s shirt in blood, Davis’ friend seeking help, the school going on lockdown and related actions such as running, ducking into an atrium, hiding, etc., students texting parents and waiting to reunite with them, Pierson looking for Murphy, Murphy escaping the school with the help of a janitor, officers responding to the lockdown, Pierson setting bookshelves on fire in the library and igniting a Molotov cocktail, Pierson’s suicide, finding Davis and Pierson, and waiting to reunite with parents. Hence, the shooting and other descriptors of this event entailed more than shots being fired.

As indicated by the word “another,” school shooting seems to be developing into a common narrative about a particular event with protocol such as opening fire in a school, going on lockdown, intervention, texting parents about the event, injuries, suicides, waiting for the crisis to end in reunion with loved ones, and evacuation. Although each shooting is different, the repetition of the act and the way it is represented results in a homogenization reflected by the word “another.” For instance, even though unique and specific agents carried out actions such as firing shots and intervening, a vocabulary of convention contributed to homogenization. Examples in the study included descriptions such as “another gunman visited terror upon another Colorado school” and “throughout the building, students and teachers launched into a well-rehearsed protocol.” These showed how the shooting and the lockdown, which have become part of the act of a shooting, have become part of school life.

The act of the shooting set a timeline for other acts. It became the beacon around which other acts revolved. For instance, multiple acts were hinted at as taking place before the shooting, such as Tait Prisler chatting with a teacher, Claire Davis sitting with a friend, Angela Davis teaching a yoga class, etc. These normal events became the context for the shooting, making them memorable only because they preceded the shots. Pierson’s actions also preceded the event, and *The Denver Post* disclosed them. They included the a confrontation with the debate coach several months before, the legal purchasing of ammunition a week before, eating a meal and bowling the day of, writing on his arm, and planning mass violence. The focus on Pierson was important and posed ethical challenges. On the one hand, knowing what Pierson did could lead to a better understanding of red flags to look for. On the other hand, it can contribute to the phenomenon of fame-seeking rampage shooters (Lankford, 2016; as cited by Morris, 2018, p. 10). Disclosing details about the shooter could also help show the specificity of the act, but it

needs to be balanced between treating each shooting as unique and not putting the shooter center-stage.

Conversely, a series of acts placed Davis center stage. These included her getting shot, an ambulance rushing her to the hospital, her surgery, memorials held in her honor, and her death. The shooting triggered these acts and others including candlelit vigils, an investigation of the shooting, and an emotional return to school. These gave specificity to the event by showing what survivors did and how they acted during and in light of the shooting. They also presented a distinction between agents who performed acts and agents to whom acts happened, which will be discussed in further detail in the agents section.

Agents

Although overlap existed, agents in the narrative tended to be predominantly active or passive—they either generated or received action. As hinted at in the acts section, Pierson and Davis received a significant amount of attention in *The Denver Post*. They could be considered the lead roles in the drama. Their relationships to the acts varied drastically, however. Pierson almost always appeared as an instigator. Described with terms such as, “another gunman,” “the shooter,” and “the suspect,” these gave him culpability for the act as well as the power of being the one to enliven it. When described with less incriminating language, such as “a friend people are now calling evil” and a “student down,” he appeared as a more passive agent. Hence, language connected to the shooting seemed to connect to agents’ power to act. On the other hand, descriptions of Davis connected her to the shooting, but she almost always appeared as a passive agent. *The Denver Post* called her “Claire Davis, who was critically wounded in the shooting at the school” and “an innocent victim of an evil act of violence.” As a victim of the shooting, she was an agent; however, she did not generate the act. Other mentions of Davis dove

into her background, including information about her love of horses, her talent for babysitting, and her kindness to peers. More often than not, *The Denver Post* shared accurate and heartwarming details about Davis, but unfortunately, the first article *The Denver Post* published after the shooting printed her age wrong, misrepresenting her in a way. Details about Pierson's life appeared as well, such as his skill in speech and debate, but the focus was more on his actions. This could be considered a misrepresentation as well, disregarding that Pierson was more than a shooter.

Pierson and Davis were cast by *The Denver Post* as the lead roles in the drama, but there were a number of supporting roles too. These agents included Tracy Murphy, the debate coach and librarian Pierson was after; the janitor who helped Murphy escape; Arapahoe County Sheriff's Deputy James Englert, the school's resource officer and retired county deputy Rod Mauler, who responded to the shooting; Arapahoe County Sheriff Grayson Robinson, who seemed to be the spokesperson for the event and had an important role in shaping the narrative that emerged; Davis' friend who was drenched in blood; Angela Bradley, the yoga teacher who represented all the teachers in the way she followed lock down protocol; the Sheehan family who reunited across the street from the school; Tait Prisler who provided key details about Pierson's behavior during the shooting; and students who took up collections and organized vigils for Davis and her family. The Davis family also played an important role in the drama; however, their request for privacy subjected them to the background.

The ensemble would have been students, teachers, investigators, parents, and doctors. They helped set the scene for the act. They performed actions; however, they mostly remained in the periphery. Their group efforts, such as participating in vigils or the lock down, were more important than their individual behaviors. In addition to the ensemble, there were a number of

commenters that journalists incorporated into the narrative, such as officials who gave condolences when Claire died, such as Gov. John Hickenlooper; Ken Trump, president of National School Safety and Security Services; school district spokeswoman Michelle Yi; Arapahoe High School Principal Natalie Pramenko; Columbine High School Principal Frank DeAngelis; and Executive Director of Safe2Tell Susan Payne.

The drama thus involved several active and passive agents, whose representational importance to the narrative related less to whether they generated or received action and more to their names and frequency of mention. When a name was given, the person seemed to be more of an agent, but when there was no name but rather an association with a group (i.e. victims, police, students, etc.), the people seemed scenic. Sometimes even key agents went unnamed. For instance, the janitor who helped Murphy escape and set off the protocol was not named. He was defined by his status as a janitor and became a background detail. Names connected to agents' saliency; however, this was not the only defining characteristic for agents' importance in the narrative. For example, some students were interviewed because of the events or because they were students. Even though their names were written, their words seemed to be more important than their roles as agents in the drama. They blended in with the scene of students by describing what happened or who people were. When agents shared a closer relationship to particular acts, however, they became more key. For instance, Maggie Hurlbut, an Arapahoe senior, and her friends arranged a candlelight vigil for Davis. As an organizer of the act of the vigil, Hurlbut played a key role as an active agent. Nevertheless, her name only appeared in one article, making her fade into the background of scene.

Scenes

Students such as Hurlburt belonged to the most prominent scene in the drama: Arapahoe High School. The school made the shooting abominable, and the act of the shooting transformed the school into a violated environment. This sense of violation of scene also impacted agents as demonstrated by senior and Arapahoe's student council vice president Grace Marlowe, when she said, "I thought the school would look like it changed, but I realized that just the people inside it had changed." The scene of the school involved sub-scenes such as a hallway Pierson randomly fired shots down and first-responders ran down, the bench Davis sat on with a friend outside the library, the library where Pierson set three bookshelves on fire and committed suicide, and classrooms where students hid and trembled. These details all revolved around place.

The scenic details regarding time marked the importance and impact of acts. Journalists' specificity using times, and later dates, provided a plotline for audiences to follow. The first time given was 12:30 p.m., the approximate time the shooting happened. Journalists noted that the rampage lasted 80 seconds, which added a shock factor because a huge amount of damage happened in a relatively short amount of time. Hours passed before the lockdown ended and concluded the larger act of the shooting that extended beyond shots fired. Journalists reported that the school remained in lockdown at 2:30 p.m. and that "by 2:47 p.m., a little more than two hours after the shooting began" over 2,200 people had been evacuated. Specific times did not return until the 11 a.m. social media invitations to a vigil for Davis. This showed the immediate response of the Warrior community to the shooting. Specific times returned once more to mark Davis' death at "4:29 p.m. at Littleton Adventist Hospital after eight days on life support." Creating a scene with a time gave Davis' death importance and made the shooting somewhat of a scene for her death. It was the act that caused the act of her passing away. Announcing Davis'

loss of life and responding to it were also given specific times: the hospital announced her death at 5:15 p.m. and her parents posted a statement at about 6:30 p.m. Hence, specific times gave acts a sense of importance and relationships to other acts.

Non-temporal specificity accomplished this framing as well. For the school, certain acts were sometimes displaced by others that were given more detail. For instance, pre-shooting actions such as Davis sitting with a friend on a bench became a scene for her getting shot in the head to take place in. *The Denver Post* did not disclose the details of the friends' conversation nor did it share Davis' friend's name, but it did describe Davis' getting shot as "at point-blank range," that it resulted in Davis "drenching her [friend] in blood," and that there was "no time to react." Although, "no time to react" is a vague temporal detail, the other details did not relate to time, but they added specificity to Davis' injury, which highlighted it as important and made acts preceding it fade into the scene.

As aforementioned, the school was the dominant scene in the narrative; however, others were included. These were a restaurant across the street from the school, Euclid Middle School, and Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, all locations where students reunited with parents; Littleton Adventist Hospital where Davis underwent surgery and eventually died; vigils with candles, hugs, and prayers for Davis; social media platforms where students organized these vigils and people later expressed their condolences regarding Davis' death; the Douglas County School emergency alert system that failed during the shooting; Littleton Public School District, which had a reputation for school safety; Pierson's parents' houses and his car, which set the scene for post-shooting investigation; and the National Western Stock Show where a special memorial for Davis was to be held. Multiplicity of scenes showed the reverberation of school shootings beyond the school.

This reverberation also places school shootings in the historical context of the phenomenon of school violence. *Denver Post* articles mentioned other shootings such as the 1999 Columbine High School shooting and the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Although comparing school shootings to each other can help prevent future ones, it can also normalize this act. Scenic descriptions such as “another” can give a shooting permission to be the scene for the next shooting. It can take away from the unique pain of the situation as well. Hence, the agency with which journalists represent school shooting narratives must be attended to.

Agencies

The agencies of journalism are an important part of the Arapahoe High School shooting as represented by the *Denver Post*; however, they are subtle and involve behind-the-scenes work. Agencies in journalism include the frame journalists use, the people they choose to interview, the information and quotes interviewees provide, and the scope of an article. These methods reveal journalists as hidden agents in the drama who engage in the act of representation. Interviewees also partake as agents of representation when journalists quote them. Audiences can become agents in news media by responding via letters to the editor and other forum-like news functions. Hence, the frames journalists used and the structure of *The Denver Post* were agency for equipping audiences with information and perceptions of the Arapahoe High School shooting. Articles did this in different ways depending on their scope. By capturing specific foci, articles in general make information accessible and approachable. Although a narrow scope limits an article’s ability to disclose full narratives about school shootings, they are situated among other articles with complementary scopes that give a holistic account of the drama. Of course, not every media consumer will read every article, but they can if they choose to do so. The language

encountered in these articles is an important agency employed by journalists because the language shapes perception and future action.

Within the representational narrative of the Arapahoe High School shooting, agencies mainly revolved around the shooting, recovering from it, investigating it, and memorializing Davis. Guns and ammunition were highlighted as prime agency for the shooting. Even though a propped-open door was also attributed as agency for the shooting, one article said “a lock might not have deterred Karl Pierson, who packed a shotgun, a machete, Molotov cocktails and more than 125 rounds of ammunition during the Dec. 13 attack.” The primary implication for underscoring weapons as agency for the shooting is that gun control likely becomes the focus of debates surrounding school shootings. On the other hand, one article discussed the debate about safety measures in school and balancing security with an atmosphere conducive to learning, which would suggest that agency such as an unlocked door also received attention. A different article highlighted the failure to call Safe2Tell, holding up threat assessment as potential agency for mitigating shootings.

In comparison, the agency of recovery involved holding vigils, talking about experiences, seeing counselors, and returning to school. Social media was an additional agency that helped people heal, as this was what people used to organize vigils and share condolences. These agencies involved emotional details that helped humanize and denormalize the narrative. Agencies for investigation included searching Pierson’s parents’ homes and his car, as well as interviewing 200 people and obtaining about 12 search warrants. Agency for memorializing Claire included the “Cards for Claire” box at Littleton Adventist Hospital and the Claire Davis Memorial Celebration of Life, in which “the National Western’s annual hunter and jumper event

was renamed the Claire Davis Memorial Gambler's Choice Horse Show, and a moment of silence was held before each ticketed horse show."

Pierson's plan to carry out the shooting also functioned as important agency in the narrative. He wrote the classrooms he planned to visit on his forearm with permanent ink, along with a Julius Caesar quote, and the library, which is where he died. The act was not spontaneous, as Pierson bought weapons and ammunition the week before the shooting, purchased more ammunition the day of, and seemed to want to harm more than just his debate coach. Pierson's intentions as represented by *The Denver Post* will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

Purposes

Initially, the purpose of the shooting was represented as a "harbored a grudge against Murphy" and the execution of "a verbal threat against Murphy to a group of students" by Pierson. However, this purpose was quickly extended, capturing Pierson's intentions as "causing the maximum amount of harm" and that "he wanted to wound more than just Murphy," implicated by the large amount of ammunition he carried. Nevertheless, the rampage ended in suicide, which was attributed to Pierson knowing he had been found. Typically, mental health is discussed in the context of school shooting; however, none of the articles claimed that Pierson had mental health issues. Additionally, Pierson went bowling like the Columbine Massacre shooters, but his intention did not seem to be fame.

The act of recovery also served as the purpose for agencies used to accomplish recovery. For example, holding a candlelit vigil was intended to "get everyone together to pay respect to Claire, as well as gather with other people going through the same thing." It was an act used to accomplish another act. The memorial for Davis can be considered in a similar way. The act of

the memorial accomplished the act of honoring her memory with the purpose of commemorating her. Acts such as these all tied back to the shooting, making it their cause but not necessarily their purpose. The purpose was to respond to the shooting in an appropriate way.

Responding to this act in an appropriate way served as a purpose for acts staged in the context of the shooting as well. For example, the lockdown was a response to shots fired. Responding made agents active rather than passive. Passive agents did not necessarily have a purpose associated with the act they were involved in, rather their role in the drama was more similar to Burke's concept of accident, an act with no purpose (Burke, 1989). Yet the act remained an act because a different agent intended a motive in it. For example, Davis had no purpose or active response to being shot. She collapsed and drenched her friend in blood. Nevertheless, her injury constitutes an act because Pierson injured her, and although it is unclear whether he shot her on purpose or not, he did intend to fire the shot that hit her at point-blank range. Hence, the distinction between active and passive agents shared a significant connection to the presence or lack of purpose.

The purpose behind the articles, as a whole, was to present the facts and stakeholder opinions about what happened during the Arapahoe High School shooting and its aftermath. As an institution expected to be balanced and accurate, journalism allowed for people outside the crisis to learn about what happened. The factual and structured nature of articles allowed for an approachable medium through which to make sense of the Arapahoe High School shooting; however, its predictability and tendency to keep emotion in check had issues such as contributing to a rhetoric of inevitability and normalcy surrounding school shootings. This suggests alternate forms of representation would be useful for making sense of school violence.

Chapter 3: A Pentadic Analysis of *Thirteen*

Thirteen is an artistic representation of the Arapahoe High School shooting. The play is a phenomenological account of students' experiences with this event. It traces the characters' journeys from before, during, and after the shooting. The play has parallel structure and shifts from "Mom and Dad, I'm okay" (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 1) to "Mom and Dad, I'm *not* okay" (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 9). Themes include safety, threats to safety, the interruption of normalcy, uncertainty, dealing with emotions, and transformation in light of the shooting.

Thirteen was written by Arapahoe High School students who were sophomores when the December 2013 shooting took place. The play was part of an audition theatre class called Company, and the process of creating the play involved the actors writing about their experiences during the shooting. Actors initially performed the narratives of their actual stories, but in later renditions, actors performed other roles. The blocking was left up to interpretation, and the staging and set were designed to be generally bare. There were thirteen characters in the play; hence the title *Thirteen*. In this chapter, I will explore the play through the lens of dramatism, looking at the acts from which the narrative unfolded, scenes that served as a focal point, agents that interacted in these scenes, agencies through which the agents acted, and purposes that motivated the acts of the play.

(Note: Ellipses in this chapter are quoted directly from the script for *Thirteen*. They do not indicate omitted text, as in other chapters.)

Acts

The shooting was the act from which the rest of the drama emerged. According to Burke, "Act' is thus a terministic center from which many related considerations can be shown

to ‘radiate,’ as though it were a ‘god-term’ from which a whole universe of terms is derived” (Burke, 1968, p. 445). Hence, in the play, the shooting was central, and from it, terms and other acts unfolded. These other acts shared a relationship with the shooting, which served as a reference point. The shooting created a timeline for the plot, developing distinctions between acts carried out before and after the shooting, as well as the layered acts that composed the larger phenomenon of the shooting itself. As the primary act in *Thirteen*, the shooting was the act from which the rest of the drama radiated.

Because the shooting was central to the narrative, the name of the act mattered. There was metacommunication about this in *Thirteen*, suggesting that the language surrounding school violence was important. In the play, nomination of the shooting occurred after the event took place:

12: People never call it what it was. They always say “tragic event” or “incident.” I never got that. We all know what happened, why can’t we just come out and say it? Huh?

“Shooting” that’s what it was! It was a shooting! A kid brought a gun into his school and shot a girl! Then he turned the gun on himself and pulled the trigger. Why can’t we just say that? Is it “insensitive”? Does it trigger “bad” memories? So what? So what! Why do we feel like we have to pretend like it was anything else! Huh? Why do we have to sneak around it, like we have to cover it in sugar and put a cherry on top? Does that help anything? Will that make it better? Yeah, well you take the sugar off and it’s always going to be the same old cruddy thing underneath! This ugly, disgusting shitty thing and that’s never going to change! And I see no use in trying to make it change (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 7-8).

12 explained some of the ways people around her described the event. She claimed that calling it “tragic event,” “incident,” or anything that tried to hide what happened did not change what happened, and perhaps made healing harder, as suggested by her irritated tone. Instead of sugar-coating and putting “a cherry on top,” 12 referred to the act as “shooting,” “the same old cruddy thing,” and “this ugly, disgusting shitty thing and that’s never going to change.” Another character, 208, referred to the shooting as “two-hundred-and-eight minutes of terrifying uncertainty” (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 7). However, besides this and 12’s terminology, most characters referred to descriptions and acts that made up the shooting, such as hearing gunshots, going on lockdown, and longing to be reunited with loved ones. For the remainder of this chapter, the act will be referred to as “the shooting.”

Descriptions of the shooting included, “A kid brought a gun into his school and shot a girl! Then he turned the gun on himself and pulled the trigger” (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 7). One passage fleshed this out even more:

202: We heard two students down. One in critical condition, the other... killed... a self inflicted gunshot wound. We didn’t know if that was true or not, but we didn’t care. We pretended we knew, if only so we could delude ourselves into believing we knew something. There were two names that kept floating around, one girl and one guy, popping up here and there. I didn’t recognize the first, but I recognized the second... (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 5-6).

As shown by this passage, one of the main parts of the shooting was the gunman shooting another student and himself. Other key descriptions of the shooting included: bringing a gun to school, shooting a girl, turning a gun on himself and pulling the trigger, two students down, critical condition, killing, “a self inflicted gun wound,” uncertainty, and “pretending we knew.”

However, this act was made up of other acts too, and to understand the entirety of the shooting, the components that comprised it in *Thirteen* must be examined. The first component was “*A loud noise...like a BANG!*” (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 2). The bang happened in real time, as suggested the stage directions, and the characters reflected on it. The noise became collective memory because the actors and audience experienced it together. Other acts included the lockdown, hiding, worrying, crying, praying, screaming, dying, covering up blood, and evacuating. Examples of these acts appear below:

12: Then the voice came over the loudspeaker. Lock down. The fire alarms began sounding, we could hear the security guards shouting in the hallway. They were saying... something... I can't remember what. But we could hear their footsteps outside the door... at least I think it was their footsteps...I guess they could have been...someone else's (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 3).

205: I'm not religious. I don't put my faith in things I can't see. I couldn't see the kid in the hall. But I knew he was real. And if he was real, what else was? It's a funny thing that happens in a moment like that. A moment of such... hopelessness. When you feel you have nowhere else to turn, to run to... nothing to comfort you. Nothing to save you. And in that moment, I prayed. I prayed because that was the only thing I could think to do (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 4).

202: The kid next to me was crying. And the kid next to him. But I wasn't. I... I couldn't... I wanted to! I wanted to! I envied the kids who could purge themselves of this dread, this agony, this sorrow (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 4).

17: We had to put our phones away. Something about the backlights drawing attention to the room or... I don't know exactly... I just wanted to text my Mom. Tell her I was okay.

Tell her to quit worrying. I... just wanted to let her know I was alive. She must have been a nervous wreck and I just wanted to talk to her, to put her mind at ease. Is that too much to ask? Is it? Evidently (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 3).

201: I... don't remember the shots. Just the screaming. The screaming. That agonizing howling reverberating from the bottom of the stairs... She was screaming! She was screaming and we couldn't help her! She was dying and we couldn't save her! All we could do was sit. Just sit in that cold dark corner of that cold dark room and listen to her shrieking in terror only a few steps away! Just sit there and listen... Sit and listen... (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 4).

208: We were right there, right where it all happened. It took them so long because... because they had to cover up all the blood before they got us out... so we wouldn't see it (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 5).

21: They escorted us out of the building with our hands in the air. I kept making jokes. Kept saying "sounds like someone was stressed for finals" and dumb stuff like that. I don't know why. I didn't know what to do, how to handle it. I just... I guess the reality of the situation just wasn't resonating with me or something. I felt fine, and I wanted everyone else to feel fine. "It was gonna be okay" I kept saying. And at the time, I believed that. I did. I believed that it was going to be okay. It was going to get better. It would all blow over eventually, and everything would go back to normal. It was just a matter of time (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 5).

These excerpts showed that a shooting is more than gunshots. Shots, particularly shots inside a school, set off a chain of other events that made the school shooting what it was. The repetition

of this pattern in real life creates a formula for school shootings that genres such as news media and art represent.

The conglomerate act of the shooting also caused a series of acts to follow it, which related to coming to terms with the shooting. They were new acts influenced by an old act. Reunions, attempting to return to normalcy, the girl's death, dealing with emotions, sending in counselors and psychiatrists, and processing what happened were all examples of the acts that emerged in the aftermath of the school shooting represented in *Thirteen*. The characters struggled to make sense of the shooting, and the attempts to make life normal again seemed futile:

17: Eight days later, we got the news. The final twist of the knife. My mom told me.

She'd passed away in her sleep. I didn't know what to do with that. That was all I had. I guess I figured she'd heal, and the rest of us would follow suit, and it would all be... ok again. That's what everyone wanted. That's what everyone strived for. But there it was, scrawled across the bottom of the TV screen: Another one, taken too soon (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 7).

The death of a fellow student changed the school's population and made healing more daunting. 17 suggested that the girl's healing was the key for the rest of the students to heal because 17 "figured she'd [the girl who was shot] heal, and the rest of us would follow suit." Instead, the girl became "another one, taken too soon." The use of the word "another" connected the shooting represented in the play to other shootings, suggesting that this phenomenon had happened before and perhaps could even strike again.

After the shooting, other acts were described with increased emotional intensity. For example, 14 described reuniting with her dad as something she wanted to remember forever:

14: I'm happy that there weren't any pictures of me taken that day by the media, but I really wish that someone had recorded me being reunited with my dad. I can't explain it. But just think about never being able to see your parent again for 3 hours and then go give them a hug. Because it was that. But it was real life. This whole thing has been real life. Things that you think about, but you don't think that it will ever happen. But this is real life (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 6).

On the other hand, before the shooting, there were mundane acts of school life. Those described before the shooting in the play reflected everyday school life, opposed to the sense of alienation and questioning that followed the central act.

The act of morning announcements shows how the shooting transformed mundane acts into emotional ones. 12's lines showcased the mutation. Before the shooting, she speaks of the morning announcements as a comforting act:

12: Routine makes sense to me. I like knowing what's going to happen and when. Like how every morning the morning announcements will come on right after the bell rings for third period. I like that. It makes sense. It just... it seems like so little makes sense anymore. Like people have just gone crazy, they've lost their minds, stopped doing things in a way that... A way that I understand. And I like to cling to the few things I still do understand, and those announcements are one of them. Every morning they'll come on after the bell, "Beep," "click," "good morning students" every day. It's nice. Kind of soothing (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 2).

This act was a part of the school experience, but the shooting transformed it. During the shooting, someone came over the intercom and instead of "Beep," "click," "good morning

students,” (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 2) “the voice came over the loudspeaker. Lockdown” (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 3). And after everything resolved:

12: They came over the speaker again... “click” “BEEP.” Said to remain calm, that the fire alarms would keep sounding but we didn’t need to worry about them. That’s when I knew it was over... or at least that we were safe. I don’t know why, or what it was that put my mind at ease (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 5).

The announcements were familiar, interrupted, and familiar and comforting once more.

On the other hand, other students did not experience a return to comfort. The shooting made them question the normal things they experienced before the shooting. Two examples are presented below:

5.35: I think about that bench a lot. About her. I just... never got over it I guess. I never got over how... how ordinary it was, how casual, how unimportant it seemed at the time. It could have been anyone on that bench. It could have been me. Why wasn’t it me? I’d sat there before. Why did I decide to study in the library that day? Why did I go across the street instead of staying at school? Why am I able to stand here and ask these questions and she isn’t?! What decided that?! Who decided that?... I decided that. What if I stayed in that hallway? What if I was the one sitting on that bench studying? What if I had said something? Would he have turned that gun on me instead of her?! Would she have been able to stand up here and tell her story like I’m doing now?!... Could I have saved a life? (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 6-7)

202: He always forgot a pencil, so he would ask to borrow mine... Finally I just gave it to him. And to think... to think that that pencil is probably sitting in some... police evidence locker now... sealed in some air-tight bag next to that machete and those molotov

cocktails. I just... don't know what to do with that. I really don't know (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 6).

The acts before the shooting hence created a context and scene for the shooting to occur in, and the act transformed the characters' perceptions of act and context whether they returned to a place of comfort or not. An analysis of the scenes in the play shows this phenomenon in more depth.

Scenes

School functioned as the primary scene in *Thirteen*. Although other scenes were mentioned—such as 8162's home, a church where students reunited with loved ones, and coffee across the street—most of the narrative revolved around the school and what happened there. The scenes that were not the school were presented in relation to it; thus, the school existed as part of their makeup. Therefore, the school served as the dominant scene in the play.

Initially, this dominant scene was characterized by safety. Despite the images of security, however, there was a foreshadow of something darker. The actors did not mention the shooting until later in the play, but given the piece's subject matter, the perceived safety at the play's outset was ominous. In a way, the safety of the school set up for the danger of the shooting that took place in it. Past tense auxiliary verbs such as would and could gave a memory of safety rather than safety itself. Two examples of this appear below:

205: I felt safe by that bookshelf. I felt like nothing could hurt me there, nothing could get to me. That's how I felt about school. That's where I was invincible, untouchable. Boys could call me names and girls could spread rumors about me, but they never got to me. I loved it there. I thought I'd always love it there (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 1).

14: I grew up there. The place I went every day after school when my parents got divorced. My dad worked there and it was sorta like my second home. The one place in my life where I always felt safe and knew that the people there wouldn't let me down. I mean yes it was still my high school I would dread going there, but it was still my safe place. No one could touch me. No one could harm me. Ever (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 2).

These excerpts both painted school as a place marked by feelings of being “safe” and “untouchable.” They explicated the opening line of “Mom and Dad, I’m okay” (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 1). The school was okay. It served as a “second home,” a fortress in which students felt “invincible,” and even though students might “dread going there,” it was a place of stability and hope. Yet, these memories would be interrupted.

“A loud noise...like a BANG!” (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 2) transported the audience and actors from a scene of safety to the scene of the shooting. It shifted the perception of school as a safe haven to a bunker of uncertainty. The school became a container for the act of the shooting, showing the power of the turning point to transform scene. The “BANG” crescendoed as a student with only one line hinted at the day of the shooting:

3: I remember the darkness... I remember the cold... the snow. It was a really snowy day. Cold. Just... just nasty weather. I can't remember what the temperature was, but it was definitely in the negative digits. I know that because I wore my heavy blue winter coat that day, which I never do unless it's absolutely necessary. I was the kind of kid who liked to keep wearing shorts and a T-shirt year round, or as long as I could at least. But I know I had my blue coat on that day because I remember being late to first period because I had to stop by my locker to hang it up. It's kind of funny, the little things we

remember and the things we forget... or at least... try to (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 2).

The “nasty weather” and its “darkness,” “cold,” and “negative digits,” may have been coincidental on the day of the actual shooting, but here, the wintery scene began to transform the school from a normal place to one violated by a shooting. Given that this is the only time 3 appeared in the play, his lines indicated a moment of importance. The transition 3 initiated came to fruition when 6 talked about the day of the shooting and was interrupted by:

(A loud noise is heard, like a BANG!)

6: We didn’t know what it was or where it was coming from... at least... we pretended we didn’t.

(Another noise, then another, all coming from seemingly different places. Then, one final ear shattering BANG!) (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 2-3)

Although being present for the play would give the best indication of what this turning point sounded and felt like, the textual representation of “BANG!” in all caps with an exclamation point, modified by descriptors such as “loud noise,” “coming from seemingly different places,” and “ear shattering,” presented a sense of disorientation and shock that did not belong in the seemingly safe school.

With the exception of this transformative “BANG!”, the scenes in *Thirteen* were captured more in the actors’ words than in stage directions. Comparatively, in many other plays, scene is witnessed by the audience as a set, or if it is referenced in a textual way, the scene is mainly contained in stage directions. The departure of this structure in *Thirteen* made the characters’ minds a scene and highlighted the importance of their experiences. It also made the scenic details that the audience could see or hear stand out, such as the bang, which served as an epicenter for the drama because it also represented the act of the shooting.

After the “BANG!,” the actors described scenic elements using verb-related adjectives, making them come alive. For example:

208: I felt the echo of the blaring fire alarms rattling off the walls, the panic in the cold, dank air. I felt my classmates trembling as they sat there in that dark corner waiting, shaking uncontrollably, staring at the door, unsure of whether they would ever see the other side of it again. I felt the footsteps in the hall, the men in black armor stampeding into the classroom, swinging those big black machine guns at us! Pointing those red dots at our foreheads! Screaming “Get out! Get out!” I *felt* that! (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 4)

The scene was “blaring,” “rattling,” “panic,” “cold,” “dank,” “dark,” and everything was felt by the actors’ characters, making their experiences imaginable. Although safety was felt and imagined prior to this, it was more passive. Activities and interactions such as reading or not being teased resulted in safety, whereas during the shooting, everything was described as active and acutely felt through sensations as part of the act.

In addition to creating scenic details that involved motion and action, the shooting transformed the school in the characters’ eyes. For instance, the library underwent a renovation in an attempt to restore normalcy to the school. Nevertheless, this attempt fell flat because the shooting had altered the school on an experiential level, not just a physical one:

5.35: They replaced that bench with a security booth. I guess that’s practical. They gave the library a makeover. I guess that’s nice of them. They gave us the next week off of school. I guess that’s sensitive. They did everything they could to make it better, make it easier, make it “normal” again. But we didn’t want “normal.” We wanted closure. You can cover the blood stains with new carpet and fancy furniture, but you can never erase them. You can sweep them under the rug, but eventually they’ll crawl back out from

underneath. You can lock them in the bell tower like a deformed child, but you still have to feed them! “Normal” isn’t an option! Normal is done, it’s finished. That train has left the station (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 8).

This excerpt captured how the act mutilated the normal and safe school into something haunting. The “blood stains” imprinted into the school and the psyches of the characters, making school a place of uncertainty and the place where the shooting happened.

Because scene indicated the experiences of the characters and correlated with the acts, it was one of the most vital elements in *Thirteen*. The audience learned about the phenomenology of the characters through their description of the scenes, what they did in them, how they feel in them, and so on. The school contextualized the shooting, making it something even more absurd than a different type of shooting. If the scene were a shooting range, that would have changed everything.

Hence, the act and the scene shared a special relationship. The primary scene of the school did not influence the act much, but the act completely altered the scene. Yet, the agents were even more affected than the school itself. Scene was built into the agents because their names were based off of the classrooms they were in when the shooting happened. The act changed the agents and their relationship to the scene so much that the scene was now ingrained as part of an identity. The familiar was defamiliarized, and the unfamiliar became familiar in an uncomfortable way. The scene changed because the act changed the agents and how they perceived their school after the shooting.

Agents

The familiarity/unfamiliarity binary existed in the agents’ minds. In *Thirteen*, the dominant agents were the thirteen characters: 6, 14, 12, 19, 8162, 205, 201, 17, 202, 5.35, 208,

21, and 3. These agents played an important role in the drama because their existence as thirteen beings with thirteen unique experiences of the shooting gave meaning to the play's title:

Thirteen. As agents, these individuals were composites of character and actor. The actors embodied their own stories and those of their peers. Although the play still included fantastical elements inherent to the genre of theatre, the stories were ultimately based off of a real event the actors experienced firsthand, thus blurring the boundary between fiction and reality. The agents represented this phenomenon most clearly. The actors gave life to their characters, forming who they were and allowing them to be purveyors of the language used to describe the act. Hence, the original thirteen cast members were essential to the play because it was a largely phenomenological account of student experiences during the shooting.

Through their words, the characters also revealed non-cast agents. These included the shooter, the girl who died, siblings, parents, police, administrators, etc. The vagueness with which these agents were referred to varied, but it was always vague. For example, there was a decent amount of detail shared about the shooter, but the description did not reveal everything about him:

202: He sat next to me in science. He... he wasn't a bad kid. He was tardy a few times... he might've turned homework in late once or twice, maybe ditched a few classes, but never anything too bad... He always forgot a pencil, so he would ask to borrow mine... Finally I just gave it to him. (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 6).

Even though 202 showed the shooter "wasn't a bad kid," "tardy a few times," "late once or twice, maybe ditched a few classes," and "always forgot a pencil," 202 did not mention the shooter's name. The characters also never called the shooter "the shooter." Instead, characters call him, "a kid," hinted at him as "a man with a gun," included him in the "two students" down,

and usually just said “him.” Not naming any non-cast characters, including the shooter, the girl who had “passed away in her sleep” and “was just sitting there, on a bench, with a friend... just studying,” siblings, parents, police officers, etc., kept the focus on the thirteen characters and their experiences.

Moreover, even agents who were part of the cast were characterized somewhat vaguely. Their names were based on the classrooms they were in when the shooting took place. This stylistic choice had several implications. It enhanced the connection between the reality of the shooting and the fantastical and representational context of the play. It also opened the door for universality. Although the play was about the Arapahoe High School shooting and the experiences of specific students, not naming the school or the students allowed the audience to imagine any school or any students. It helped to accomplish the playwrights’ vision for *Thirteen*:

Our hope is that this show will help give a voice to all witnesses to these kinds of tragedies as well as provide insight into their experience and state of mind. It is not a plea for pity, nor is it an attempt to explain or try and make sense of why these tragedies occur. Our goal is simply to provide a better understanding of the realities that weigh on survivors of these events (Meyer & Powell, 2015, Foreword).

Hence, the level of emotional detail prevented the characters’ number names as being dehumanizing but rather showed how the act had seared the scene into their identities—and perhaps into the actors’ identities as well. Whether expressed as actor or performed persona, the play’s lines put the focus on experiences rather than specific people.

Although the play gave room for actor expression and narrative development, the playwrights built this in, making them agents as well. One of the playwrights, Kendyl Meyer, was an interesting agent in the context of the play because she was both an author and an actor.

As authors, she and Scotty Powell determined the language used to describe the acts, scene, agents, agencies, and purposes. Although other people contributed to these elements, Meyer and Powell had the final say in organizing the elements and set the overall purpose for the play. The playwrights' status as agents showed how the play itself was an act as well as agency for accomplishing the purpose of giving "a voice to all witnesses to these kinds of tragedies" and providing "a better understanding of the realities that weigh on survivors of these events" (Meyer & Powell, 2015, Foreword).

Agencies

Three main types of agencies interacted in *Thirteen*: the play itself as agency for the playwrights and actors to process the shooting, the structure and details of the play as agency for accomplishing its purpose, and agencies for the play's representation of the shooting and other acts. As agency for "providing a better understanding of the realities that weigh on survivors of these events," the play was an act. Its process and performance allowed for collaborators and audiences to come to a new understanding of school shootings, as well as the Arapahoe High School shooting in particular.

The stylistic choices in the play additionally functioned as agency for accomplishing the playwrights' purpose. If the act was giving an account of that shooting, the agency was storytelling and remembering. In particular, the emotional detail the playwrights included went deeper into individual experiences than a newspaper could. The play served as a place to personally heal and listen to individual stories. Sometimes, it seemed like the actors were experiencing the crisis again, even though they were just telling about it in hindsight the way a newspaper does. The play also made the audience relive the shooting a bit more than the

newspaper because of the emotional element. This was especially true when the multiple “BANG!”s sounded and made the audience part of the drama.

The agencies for acts represented in the play relied more on language than structure and the play as an act. The agencies were conveyed through the characters’ lines, with the exception of the gunshots, which were represented by noises initiated apart from the actors’ voices. The term “BANG!” was particularly interesting because it was used to describe both gunshots and evacuation. This word hence described the beginning and end of the shooting. Both were frightening to the characters. For the gunshot, 6 noted that she and those she was with were so afraid that they pretend they do not know what it was. She said, “I told myself we were just being hysterical, we were overreacting, we were just being crazy” (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 3). On the other hand, agents knew exactly what the bang was at the end of the shooting, yet there was still a level of uncertainty that perpetuated fear:

201: They were banging on the doors- The men in black armor were. “Police!” They kept shouting, “Police is anyone in there!?” BANG! BANG! BANG! “Police!” BANG! “Police is anyone in there!?” BANG! BANG!... We didn’t know who they were, what they wanted, if they could be trusted. It’s not like we could call out “Who goes there? Friend or foe?”. For God’s sake our lives were on the line. So we just sat there. Sat there while they kept...they kept banging and screaming. “Police.” BANG (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 4-5).

The police’s agency for evacuation shared similarities with the shooter’s agency for firing shots. Another parallel was a description of following police instructions when 17 said, “If the past few hours had taught us anything, it was to never argue with a man with a gun” (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 5). The act made even the safety and security of rescue seem questionable.

In relation to this, guns were highlighted as agency for firing shots and evacuation. They played an important role as agency for the representation of the shooting. Examples appear below:

12: ...A kid brought a gun into his school and shot a girl! Then he turned the gun on himself and pulled the trigger (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 7).

17: We opened the door and a man in heavy black armor walked in. He was carrying a massive black machine gun, like a carbine or a springfield or something... Anyway the thing was huge (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 5).

5.35: What if I stayed in that hallway? What if I was the one sitting on that bench studying? What if I had said something? Would he have turned that gun on me instead of her?! (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 6-7)

208: (In sign language) I couldn't hear the shot. But then again, it isn't something you hear, not something you see, it's something you *feel*...I felt the footsteps in the hall, the men in black armor stampeding into the classroom, swinging those big black machine guns at us! Pointing those red dots at our foreheads! Screaming "Get out! Get out!" I *felt* that!... I feel it every day (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 4).

The guns functioned as agency that transformed the scene of the school from safe to unsafe, and that transformed the agents and their perceptions of safety and their school. In the hands of policemen, the guns also brought the school back to a state of safety, even though the characters continued to feel unsafe.

The loudspeaker played a similar role as the guns. The routine it created made 12 feel soothed and comforted before the shooting. When the shooting took place, however, the

loudspeaker functioned as agency for going on lockdown. Nevertheless, it also partially restored normalcy for 12 when it was activated again to end the shooting:

12: They came over the speaker again... “click” “BEEP.” Said to remain calm, that the fire alarms would keep sounding but we didn’t need to worry about them. That’s when I knew it was over... or at least that we were safe. I don’t know why, or what it was that put my mind at ease. There was just something about the way they said it... about the tone in their voice. It was calm, collected. But it didn’t help. Once you lose your sense of security, you never get it back. I know that now (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 5).

Despite the notification of safety; however, 12 still felt unsafe. This was indicated by her statement that “it didn’t help. Once you lose your sense of security, you never get it back.”

Because the announcements became agency for the lockdown, its scenic context was both in the normal school day and in the event of the shooting, and the shooting took precedence.

The loudspeaker also revealed how attempts to return to normalcy often failed in *Thirteen*. Agency for these attempts included bringing in counselors and psychiatrists, replacing the bench where the girl was shot with a security booth, renovating the library, and saying “it was going to be okay” (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 5). The failure and the futility of these agencies demonstrated the struggle of survivors to heal from shootings. An example from the play was:

12: It’s hard to leave normal behind, to wave goodbye to everything you once knew... everything you once thought you knew. But that’s what we had to do. That’s what we had to do even though we had no idea how. They brought in floods of counselors and psychiatrists to help us... help us try and dissect what we just experienced. How it made us feel. But it was no use. We didn’t understand, so how could they? Healing doesn’t

happen overnight, it's a slow, painful process and when it's all over... you still have a nasty scar where there was once smooth skin. And there's nothing you can do about that. You just have to grin and bear it. And people may ask about it, they'll ask what happened... and you'll tell them. And they'll say "Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that" and you'll say "Thank you" and you'll move on. And that's that. That's normal now (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 8).

This excerpt is a powerful reminder of the deep impact the shooting left on the agents and how it altered them and their school forever. This reminder connected to the play's purpose of representing survivors and their stories.

Purposes

The play responded to the Arapahoe High School shooting by representing it through a process of playwriting and theatrical performance. The shooting provided a context for the play, but the play also created a context for the shooting in a representational existence. Hence, writing the play and performing it at the Denver Center for Performing Arts Educational Theatre were both acts that accomplished the playwrights' purpose of shedding light on survivors' experiences of school shootings.

The playwrights disclosed their purposes for the *Thirteen* in the foreword; however, the purposes for acts represented in the play were left vague or unspoken. For example, the motive for the shooting was not discussed as it was in the newspapers, but the characters in *Thirteen* seemed uncertain about the event as a whole:

205: None of us knew him. I'd never even heard of him. That's what scared me (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 4).

202: We heard two students down. One in critical condition, the other... killed... a self

inflicted gunshot wound. We didn't know if that was true or not, but we didn't care. We pretended we knew, if only so we could delude ourselves into believing we knew something. There were two names that kept floating around, one girl and one guy, popping up here and there. I didn't recognize the first, but I recognized the second (Meyer & Powell, 2015, p. 5-6).

The uncertainty showed how, even though the characters were active agents in the act of the play, in the drama it represented, they were somewhat powerless. The act happened to them. The play, on the other hand, empowered them to reclaim the narrative.

Chapter 4: A Documentation of the Production and Performance of *Equipment for Living*:
An Artistic Exploration of School Shootings

Equipment for Living: An Artistic Exploration of School Shootings, was a creative response to the research I collected about news and artistic representations of school shootings. It was an installation dance performance that concluded with a facilitated discussion revolving around the question: What would it take to stop school shootings? *Equipment for Living* took place Saturday, March 2, 2019, and was recorded by videographer Mark Tulk. It took a little over four months to choreograph and plan. Audience feedback (Appendix B) described the show as an engaging experience that resulted in deep reflection about school shootings.

The installation aspect of the performance allowed for audience interaction that helped with the show's possibility for engagement. Installation refers to "large-scale, mixed-media constructions, often designed for a specific place or for a temporary period of time" ("Installation Art," n.d.). The installation for *Equipment for Living* consisted of props, news articles, written prayers, and places to sit. It was not specifically designed for the performance venue; however, it was intended to stay for only a temporary period of time. The lack of site-specificity affords the opportunity to perform the piece in other spaces in the future. Venue aside, the most attractive part of installation for me was its ability for bringing audience members into the performance. According to artist Ilya Kabakov, "The main actor in the total installation, the main centre toward which everything is addressed, for which everything is intended, is the viewer" ("Installation Art," n.d.). I wanted audience members to see themselves as agents and participants in the show rather than mere voyeurs. It was my way to address the passivity that media consumers often adopt while watching the news and to instead invite image viewers to respond to what they see and take an active role in transforming the narrative of school

shootings. Hence, installation allowed for a interaction between dancers and audience as the two shared a space to imagine a past, present, and future together for an hour length performance.

Discussion further allowed for a crossing of boundaries. Dance performance is a conversation in a sense because dancers and audience share a conversation through movement, kinesthetic empathy, and response (Martin, 1989). It could also be considered a conversation between a choreographer's vision and the piece's execution (Nachmanovitch, 1990), a mediated conversation between choreographer and audience in which performance is the message, and a constitutive social world (Pearce, 2007) in which performers and audience co-construct a part physical and material and part imagined and fantastical reality. In other words, "A performance realizes its potential for narrowing the gap between self and other at least in part by engaging the emotions of the audience: hence... 'empathic,' from the Greek *empathia*, meaning 'passion,' and *pathos*, meaning 'suffering' and 'sensation' (Bordwell, 2000, p.22). Discussion brought these interactions and qualities to the surface by putting words to them and giving performers and audience members an opportunity to reflect on what they had experienced together. I hoped that if audience members did not feel comfortable engaging with the installation, they would perhaps be willing to discuss their experiences. I also included a questionnaire for participants to fill out at the end to allow audience members to write about their experience and participate through writing, if they felt uncomfortable speaking their opinion and/or exploring the installation. Hence, discussion paired with installation created multiple levels of participation in the performance for dancers and audience members to interact within. It also allowed for an opportunity to develop relationships and share an experience that could lead to a more active stance toward mitigating school shootings, in which active agents take steps to mitigate them

rather than accepting them as normal and letting them continue to happen without acknowledgement or resistance.

This chapter will examine the performance and choreographic process of *Equipment for Living* by using dramatistic terminology. The intention is to explore the act of producing and performing rhetoric, whereas the previous chapters looked at existing texts. It will engage the development process as well as the dance as text itself, which will be compared to news media and theatre in the final chapter. The non-verbal element of dance allowed the performance to access emotions news and theatre could not necessarily do, and through installation and discussion it created a multimedia experience that afforded new ways for audience members and dancers to relate to school shootings. My hope is that the piece truly helped participants think differently about school shootings and how the conversation about them needs to change in order for a new narrative to emerge. The performance was an attempt to both examine the existing narratives on school shootings and their flaws, and by doing so bring forth the opportunity for a new story. The attempt will be analyzed in the remainder of this chapter by looking at the purpose of the piece in more depth, the act of the performance, the agents who made it come alive, the agencies used for accomplishing purpose, and the scenes of attempted transformation in *Equipment for Living*.

Purposes

I hinted at my intentions for the piece in the introduction, but in this section I will unpack them further. In addition to addressing the purposes for the show as a whole, I will analyze the motives behind particular elements of the show and the co-development of purposes between the dancers and me regarding the performance. I crafted *Equipment for Living* because I thought art and dance would allow me to explore school shootings in a way that code books and rhetorical

analysis would not. I found the choreography process to be more emotional and vulnerable than pentadic analysis of texts. The piece also allowed me to reach populations I would not have with my written research. I got to have amazing conversations about school shootings with my dancers, and I got to share the work with an audience of friends and colleagues too.

After spending so much time with representations of the Arapahoe High School shooting, I wanted to put together a show that addressed the representation of school shootings in general and created a space to reflect and converse about how we relate to these crises and how we can reclaim and transform the narrative. Dance became my way of making sense of the senselessness of school violence. I hoped to share a message that redemption is possible and that we do not have to accept school shootings as inevitable, but rather we can and should imagine a new narrative through transforming the existing drama. Hence, I wanted the piece to transport the audience to a social and performative world, present a narrative, and interrupt it through reflecting on the past through installation elements and dreaming into the future through discussion.

Equipment for Living was intended to be a three-part show: pre-show, performance with installation interaction, and discussion. Before audience members walked in, the other dancers and I performed school-related gestures, such as raising hands and writing in notebooks, mixed with acrobatic maneuvering with, on, and between school desks, so that when audience members entered the space they would find a story already in motion. I wanted to tap into the idea that news happens whether we watch it or not, and that the impact of school shootings leaves residue, whether we attend to it or not. The choreography oscillated between pedestrian school gestures and dancy improvisation to introduce an idea of fantasy and abnormality to the school day. It would serve as a foreshadow to the gargantuan abnormality of a school shooting, which would

be represented later in the piece. I interrupted the preshow behavior by rising from the desk I was performing in to come forward and address the audience. I thought it would be an interesting moment to present my dual identity as choreographer and performer in the piece, and breaking the fourth wall also provided the opportunity to disrupt the distinction between dancers and audience members in order to invite deeper participation on the part of the audience. I explained to the audience that the performance would begin as the music started and that they were invited to interact with the installation pieces, which I explained one by one. I wanted the performance and installation interaction to occur simultaneously so that audience members could look at the dancers from different angles to represent the different experiences each person has when encountering a school shooting. It would have been similar to the “BANG!” in *Thirteen*. I thought the simultaneity of dancer and audience motion would also draw audience members deeper into the narrative because they would be navigating the scene along with the dancers.

I told the audience that we would transition into a discussion at the end of the performance and re-arrange chairs in order to do so. I did not want there to be an abrupt ending to the performance because I wanted it to bleed into the discussion in order to let conversation be a continuation of performance. I did want to reorganize the chairs, however, to create a circle in which participants could all look at each other and which would put dancers in the same configuration as the audience instead of creating a voyeur/actor binary. I had the dancers sit in their desks during the discussion, which created a slight distinction, however, because I wanted the scene of a school to continue to be in our minds during our conversation about what it would take to stop school shootings. Although the piece had three parts, I wanted them to overlap and layer, inspired by a discussion with Assistant Professor of Dance Helanius J. Wilkins about not underestimating the audience’s ability to understand complexity and layered meaning. Layering

would allow audiences to not only participate at multiple physical levels but at multiple cognitive levels as well.

I aimed to continue this strand through the installation elements in the piece, which were meant to serve as stimuli for both material and intellectual engagement. It consisted of four separate pieces that audience members could choose to interact with, following the instructions I gave. The four parts could be explored in any order or not at all, in order to give the audience freedom as active agents to choose their involvement with the narrative. One part of the installation involved audience

members reading an article called “All of these people have died in school shootings since Columbine. Enough,” (Appendix C), which talked about the number of deaths since the Columbine High School shooting and arranged



the names of those who died in school shootings to spell out the word ENOUGH. The dancers and I taped the article to a white board positioned behind the desks we danced in to give the idea that the lesson learned in this particular classroom was that school shootings are a problem, we need to remember those it has impacted, and that we have had enough. It aligned well with the movement of students who have spoken out against school shootings through protests, art, walk-outs, and other acts of resistance.

In the installation, audience members were invited to have solidarity with students such as these by sitting in desks that were among the ones dancers performed in. I wanted participants to have the opportunity to be as close as possible to the piece and experience the representational shooting from a student perspective of a school desk. Another desk sat farther away from the rest of the configuration and faced away from it. Audience members were invited to sit in it and take a moment of silence or pray for those touched by school shootings. The desk stood apart from the other desks to represent people missing from school because they lost their lives from school shootings, people being in the school physically while their mind is apart from it due to the trauma suffered, and to offer seclusion in order for audience member to be able to make a personal and private tribute.

The last piece of the installation was a table featuring an op-ed I wrote (Appendix D) about threat reporting and a note inviting audience members to program the number for Safe2Tell, a Colorado organization that responds to threat reports about potential danger in schools and regarding students, into their phone and to text a loved one and express affection for them. I wanted this part of the installation to offer a concrete step for participants to take toward mitigating school shootings by equipping them with the means to report questionable behavior. Hence, I intended for the installation part of the performance to include the audience in the exploration of school shootings through art and prepare them to become activists working to mitigate, heal from, and assist others in recovering from school shootings.

The choreography performed by dancers was meant to tell a story and present themes of crisis disrupting everyday school life, the emerging normalcy of school shootings, community as a key to healing, and hope. In fewer words, the themes were disruption, normalcy, communal healing, and hope. I wanted to weave disruption into the choreography to honor the suffering

victims of school shootings go through and acknowledge how a shooting changes everything. Yet, these events are problematically becoming a somewhat expected threat in schools as shootings grow in frequency. I wanted to showcase normalcy to question it and invite a renewed commitment to empathy rather than complacent numbness. Community is an important part of any struggle in my opinion, and my dancers and I were very adamant about making it part of the piece. It also provided a sense of hope that would open audience members' minds for discussing the possibility of a new future in the discussion section. Through these themes, I wanted the dancing to showcase a narrative that the dancers, audience, and I could use as a common reference point while we talked about how to live with and change it.

The narrative will be discussed in more depth in the act section, but overall it was intended to show a normal school setting interrupted with the image of a shooter ready to commit violence that would allow the audience to meditate on what this act means; disruption of this stillness with a series of gunshots that would cause dancers to fall to the ground and represent the 23 school shootings that took place in 2018, with 23 gunshots; and renewal as dancers came together, comforted one another, and collaboratively put the scene back in order. As a fruit of my discussion with Helanius, the choreography was designed to provoke meditation and contemplation.

My conversation with Helanius as well as discussions with other collaborators helped me develop purposes for the show. A show Helanius did called *A Bon Coeur* involved a high degree of collaboration, and I wanted this to be part of my piece as well. I collaborated with musician and fellow dance student Sarah Vail to develop a music score for the piece. Talking to her helped me think about my intentions for the piece, which she took and made into a complementary auditory soundscape. Talking to the lighting designer, Reed Auto, further contributed to this

vocalization and intentionality. I told him that I wanted the space to look like a normal school room with cheery lighting that would be ironic in light of the vicious narrative. The most formative conversations were the ones I had with my dancers during rehearsals. Although I had the final say in setting choreography and giving the piece direction, I wanted to hear my dancers' ideas and include them as agents in making the piece. The final performance was a product of collaborative efforts and turned out to be an intriguingly profound event.

Acts

I touched on the structure of the dancing, installation, and performance in the previous section, but here I will give an account of how the piece unfolded the afternoon it was performed. As audience members trickled in, three dancers, including myself, performed in the desks for the pre-show part of the piece. The dancers on stage with me chose pedestrian movements and improvised with student-based movements such as writing in notebooks, stretching, yawning, and resting their heads on their desks, for the entirety of the pre-show sequence. One dancer chose to actually write, adding authenticity to the choreography. The pedestrian movements he and the other dancer performed provided a constant to compare to the oscillation between student-inspired gestures and contemporary dance that I performed. My student movements were writing in a pretend notebook and raising my hand. The repetition of this phrasing also created a pattern. I would do these movements in non traditional places and positions, such as while I laid on my stomach underneath one of the desks, sat on top of a desk with my feet resting on one of the other dancer's desks, etc. I would abandon this choreography periodically to play with the desks: maneuvering them, dancing on top of them, climbing on them, etc. The fourth dancer was the house manager for the show, and when she finished letting

the audience in, she joined us and gave me a cue to break the fourth wall and address the audience.



My non-traditional movement, when compared to the movement of other dancers who engaged in student-like gestures, gave my transition from performer to public speaker an elevated sense of oddity. “Hello! Thank you for coming to *Equipment for Living*. If you’re not here for *Equipment for Living*, then congratulations because now you are!” I broke character to become

myself. I introduced who I was, told the audience about my research, and gave an overview of the show, including a trigger warning about the gunshots and loud noises. It was easier to dance than talk, and my tone addressing the audience sounded nervous and a bit mumbly. I think my directives were not convincing or clear enough to encourage the audience to interact with the installment during the dancing. All audience members remained in their seats when the music began. In the aftermath of the show, a couple audience members told me that they thought about getting up, but when they saw no one else doing it, they remained seated.



I returned to my seat onstage as the audience quietly clapped, and soft guitar music filled the space. Two of the dancers and I oscillated between student-related gestures and contemporary dance technique that implemented our desks as props. The other dancer only

performed student gestures. A few minutes in, an irritating grinding noise began to interrupt the guitar music periodically. The dancer who had been engaging in only student gestures the entire performance, did not change his movements, but his movement quality took on an agitated expression. The grinding noise suddenly escalated, replacing the repetitive guitar entirely as the two contemporary dancers and I returned to our seats, and the agitated dancer pushed his notebook off his desk, stood up with his head in his hands, made a gun with his fingers, and slowly raised his arm toward us.

His breath became shallow and heavy as he began to cry and his arm began to shake. The music stopped, and all that could be heard was his breathing. He and the rest of us remained silent and still. A raised hand frozen in time, a



pencil stopped in the middle of a sentence, and a gunman with his weapon pointed at his fellow classmates. We stayed like this for two minutes. My mind began to wander, and I felt anxious. I kept wanting to swallow, and I had to work to control my impulse to move.

The cocking and firing of a gun disrupted the silence and all the dancers collapsed to the ground. We would get back up at different speeds. I tended to get up more quickly than the other dancers, and one of the audience members later asked if that represented the normalization of school shootings. I could not remember my intentions for getting up quickly when I performed, but I was pleased that it read that way because challenging the normalization of school shootings

was one of the piece's themes. The guitar music returned, speckled with twenty-two more gunshots that would cause us to fall or jolt on the ground in the middle of dancing, running, getting up, sitting in desks, and other movements. As we fell, we knocked over and displaced desks. The last gunshot had an echoing quality and a different, more melancholy and somber guitar music replaced it. There were tones of hope in the music, and it gave the impression that we had been through a lot. As it played, we remained on the ground. I dragged myself over to one of the other dancers. After I reached her, we crawled over to another dancer, and then the three of us drug our bodies toward the dancer who represented the shooter.

We helped each other stand up, and we danced in contact with each other. We hugged and made eye contact and improvised using contemporary movement. I stared into the pretend shooter's eyes, and I had to almost pretend like I was not because it was scary to be vulnerable during a performance. I could touch and hug and reassure him during the dance. If I saw him looking sad, I could try to comfort him. I could come comfort the other dancers too, if they looked lonely. As we partnered, we reset the desks. We returned to our seats as the music ended, and we resumed student gestures.



I let the audience know we were going to move into the discussion. I invited them to interact with the installation, and told them we (the dancers) would set up the chairs. It was interesting to watch the audience interact with the installation on stage while I sat where they sat

watching me a few minutes before hand. When everyone returned to their seats, which the dancers and I positioned into a circle, I began the discussion. I asked everyone to say their name and why they were there. Then I opened up the the circle for questions. People asked about the

process and choices of the piece and if it was a hard topic to research and make art about. After this, we talked about what it would take to end school shootings. Audience members chose to participate in the discussion at different levels. Some people were willing to share their thoughts; many people would agree with previous ideas before sharing their own; one



woman said that while she agreed with what was said, she thought the solution was different; some people approached me after to share their ideas; one woman did not speak much English, and I did my best to use the Spanish I had to engage with her while her friend helped translate; some people did not speak at all, but they listened; others spoke multiple times. One person had to leave before the discussion started, but she wished me congratulations on the show. All were invited to fill out a questionnaire (Appendix E) at the end of the discussion and write about what stood out to them and what they thought it would take to stop school shootings.

Agents

The agents involved in *Equipment for Living* participated in different degrees. As choreographer, I had the most involvement in the piece, and I also played a number of roles, adding complexity to my status as an agent in the acts of producing and performing *Equipment for Living*. Dancers had a significant amount of involvement in the piece too, as they contributed

to the shows design and execution. A number of advisors and mentors participated through formative conversations that helped give the piece direction. Advisors and mentors were involved in the act of production, whereas audience members participated at an equal level through their involvement in the performance as viewers, performers of sorts, and interactants. The music director, her musicians, my technical crew, and my videographer all participated at a slightly less engaged level than advisors, mentors, and audience members, in both the production and performance of the piece. In this section, I will discuss each classification of agent in detail and talk about the agents the dancers and audience members represented in the show.

As choreographer, I led the production process of *Equipment for Living* and made final decisions for the performance. Blumenfeld-Jones (2008) described the choreographer's role in this way:

The choreographer watches the dancers' movements and makes alterations until the dance meets the choreographer's interpretation of the phenomenon in which she or he is interested. The choreographer may ask the dancers to compose some movements, but in the end the choreographer determines what to use, what to discard, and how to shape what is used (p. 178).

In addition to choreographer, I also played a number of other roles, including dancer/performer, discussion facilitator, researcher, installation designer, and author. These identities were tied to a number of acts and responsibilities for each role. As choreographer, my duties involved making up movement and setting it on dancers, creating improvisation scores for dancers to develop movement within, and coordinating connections between other agents to make the show happen. As dancer/performer, I modeled what I wanted to see as a performer, partook in presenting a narrative through movement, and executed choreography and improvisation. As discussion

facilitator, I helped the audience and performers transition into the discussion section of the show and share ideas; I also shared my own ideas. As researcher, I entered the spaces of performance and production with an eye of discovering and remembering so that I could document and analyze these experiences. As installation designer, I put together a vision for the installation, selected and constructed the elements, and gave instructions for the audience to engage with it. This was closely tied to my identity as author, as I wrote an op-ed that was featured as part of the installation. I would sum up my identities as an agent with the term artistic and research director. I enjoyed the opportunity to create art about research and research my art.

I also enjoyed the collaborative structure of the piece. Leaving space for the dancers to be agents in both piece creation and performance led to so many good ideas I could not have developed on my own. We would experiment together in rehearsals, tweak pre-set choreography, improvise to find movement, and discuss the topic of the school shootings as well as elements of the show itself. Thus, the dancers were not merely performers, but they were also content contributors and collaborators. My cast fluctuated, and not all the dancers I worked with at the beginning of the piece appeared in the performance. Hence, some dancers were only collaborators and content creators because they did not perform in the final piece. The dancers had a complexity of identities just like I did. The dancers that performed in the final piece had an extra layer of identity as they represented characters. One dancer also took on the role of house manager, letting people into the space, handing them programs, and asking them to remove their shoes, so they would keep the floor on the stage clean while they explored the installation. She also let me know when it was time to address the audience.

In the context of the piece, the other performers and I represented students in a normal school day. As time progressed, one dancer emerged as the shooter, exhibiting aggressive

behaviors that culminated in raising a gun toward the other dancers portraying students. When gunshots fired, the dancers became victims of school violence, falling to the floor each time a shot sounded. At the end of the piece, the dancers became a community of survivors healing from the tragedy that shook them and their school. For the dancer who represented the shooter, his identity as Kyle and his persona as shooter began to blur, as he started crying when he raised an arm with fingers shaped in a gun position. His personal emotions bled over into his representation of a school shooter. He never cried in rehearsal, but something about the experience triggered an emotional response. This showed the power of dance, art, and performance to bring new understandings and emotions familiar situations.

Mentors and advisors I met with assisted me with the development of my intentions, offered suggestions for what to do, and listened to my thoughts and aspirations for the piece. I met with Iain Court, the Director of Dance Production at the University of Colorado Boulder, to discuss possible performance venues for my piece. I talked to Associate Professor of Theatre Beth Osnes about participation and sensitivity. I wanted the audience to interact with the dancers, and I wanted the piece to provoke emotion and reflection without being forced or triggering traumatic responses. Beth suggested that I not worry too much about audience response because sometimes art should be provocative. Following this advice in combination with mindful selection of images to present in the piece resulted in my desired outcomes. Beth's advice was helpful for my development of a concept. Discussions with my thesis advisor, Department Chair and Professor of Communication Pete Simonson, and honors thesis coordinator, Associate Dean and Associate Professor of Communication Cindy H. White, helped me transform concept into performance. I talked to them about my rehearsals, and it was helpful to have people holding me accountable for the progression of the piece and taking interest in the artistic process. They also

helped me with my intentions. Other advisors were a panel of adjudicators whom my dancers and I performed an early iteration of the piece for in order for it to be considered for *Open Space*, a CU Theatre and Dance Department show curated by students and featuring student choreographed work. The adjudication process and its fruits will be discussed in the following section. Helanius sat on this panel, and meetings with him were vital to the development of the installation part of the performance and in creating a more complex narrative. Finally, Instructor of Communication Jeff Motter helped me develop the discussion question and format, offered advice for advertising the piece, and helped me clarify my intentions for the final performance.

Unbeknownst to audience members, they held a dual personality composed of personal identity and representational persona during the piece. In the drama, the audience represented media consumers who can decide how to respond to the events they see through different media. Events such as school shootings. The response could range from passive acceptance to aggressive resistance. Interaction with the installation and in the discussion was both a representational and an actual way to practice an active response to school shootings. Hence, the audience as a group of agents had multiple identities in the performance that dipped into one another. Each chose how to participate and did so differently.

The final agents in the piece were the production crew. The music director, Sarah, and I discussed my vision for the piece, and she would work on the music score based on my description of the piece. This proved to be a challenge because I kept changing the choreography in light of advice from mentors and advisors, as well as other inspirations. In the end, she and the musicians she directed produced a music score that enhanced and complimented the piece very well. The technical crew ran the music for the piece, designed the lights after I gave a description of what I was looking for, and one member participated in the discussion. Videographer Mark

Tulk captured the show on video for future reference. Telling Mark how the piece would go so that he could video it helped me to have an idea of how I wanted the piece to unfold.

Agencies

In order to accomplish the visions of the piece I shared with the agents involved in *Equipment for Living*, the choreographic and production process was vital. In the purpose section, I discussed the reason behind agencies used in the performance such as the show's structure, its key movements, elements of the installation, etc.; but in this section, I will focus on the agencies used in the process leading up to the performance and how these seeped into the final show. These agencies include collaboration, discussion, emotions, participation in the *Open Space* process, experiments, movement, and space.

As aforementioned in the agents section, *Equipment for Living* involved a high level of collaboration, and the piece would not have happened without it. I wanted the show to encourage empathy rather than apathy about school shootings and to invite active resistance rather than passive acceptance of this phenomenon. Collaboration leading up to the show allowed me to practice these acts of encouragement and invitation by asking my collaborators to be empathetic and active via their participation in constructing *Equipment for Living*. I did not directly request empathy or activism, but by envisioning ways to foster these two qualities in the context of a show and sharing these visions with others, the result was space to reflect on school shootings together. Many of my conversations with collaborators would touch on how awful school shootings are, and each hand involved in this piece was a hand reaching out to mitigate and end school shootings. Collaboration led to ideas for the piece's concepts, themes, choreography, design, scene, and final impact.

Related to collaboration was the agency of discussion. Each rehearsal began with a discussion about school shootings, revolving around themes such as if they are inevitable, what it would take to stop them, and what our experiences with them had been. These discussions led to choreography, improvisation scores, and the discussion we staged with the audience during the show. The routine of convening at the beginning of rehearsals also allowed us to take care of ourselves as we worked with an extremely sensitive topic. Sharing our experiences and thoughts helped me know how my dancers were doing, what they wanted to contribute, their potential to express concepts through movement, and if certain choreographic choices were too emotionally strenuous or insensitive. During the process and in the performance, discussion inspired by art and research turned out to be one of the most powerful agencies for addressing school shootings. In rehearsal, it was something that bonded my dancers and I together in addition to generating content. In the show, discussion resulted in connection, empathy, and the opportunity to share opinions. One of the most touching moments was when one of the audience members began to cry, and one of the dancers reached out to hold her hand.

As reflected by this moment, emotion was a key agency in *Equipment for Living*. In multiple rehearsals, I would watch the other dancers perform scores, and I would get choked up because I knew their falling represented dying or because we connected with each other in a meaningful way. This helped me decide on movement I wanted to include in the final piece. I would take inspiration from an emotion I saw or felt and ask the dancers to embody it. For instance, one iteration of the performance involved a score about mourning, and I asked to dancers to improvise with mourning. Later on, I created a choreographed phrase about grief and asked my dancers to showcase anxiety and sorrow. Emotion in the context of set choreography was challenging because while I enjoyed the dancers' different expressions of emotion, I wanted

them to perform certain phrases in unison, and embodying emotion would get in the way sometimes. This dissonance made me frustrated with the process at points. “How can you possibly express the pain of losing your child in two eight counts?” I would think. This disenchantment led to a more improvised structure for the piece. I would give guidelines for movement instead of specific movements. This gave dancers more freedom to explore emotion, respond to the present moment, and voice what they wanted. The unison and structure of choreography did not quite align with the chaos of emotion that ensues in the context of a school shooting. Improvisation scores allowed for a looser structure that could still present the piece’s themes without being too blunt or neglecting the dancer’s personal expressions of emotions. This evidenced itself during the performance when Kyle began to cry. Him raising a gun was choreographed, but the way he did it was all his own, and this opened the door for his interpretation, representation, and in the end, raw expression of emotion.

The emotions experienced during auditioning the piece for *Open Space* also had a formative effect on the final show. The process began with a cast audition, during which choreographers could select dancers to be in their piece. I went to the auditions as a choreographer looking for dancers and also as a dancer auditioning for other pieces. It was strange, and I did not necessarily get to observe dancers like a scout would. It was an experience of participant-observation. Subjecting myself to the audition process was helpful because it gave me insight about what kind of dancers I wanted. I wanted dancers that could embody emotion; who could partner well together; who would be able to handle the topic of school shootings, how to have better conversations about them, how to listen to the stories of survivors; and who would be passionate about addressing school shootings.

The audition also gave me a taste of the insecurity I would experience during the rest of the *Open Space* process, especially when the dancers and I auditioned the piece for the show to take place February, 28-March, 3, 2019. I did not love the version of the piece we presented for the adjudication. I felt anxious and cried and did not sleep and kind of knew our piece would not be selected. I wanted to prove myself as a capable dancer and choreographer in the department, and when the piece did not get in, I questioned my abilities and sunk into depression. In the end though, this insecurity and rejection was the best thing that could have happened to the piece. It showed me that I had lost track of my intentions: *Equipment for Living* was not about demonstrating my artistic abilities, it was about addressing a topic that needs attention. It was okay that the piece did not reflect my hopes and dreams for the piece at that moment in time. It needed a revision. I used the feedback the adjudicators from the audition gave, I went back to the drawing board, and *Equipment for Living* became more than a piece, it became its own show. Creativity, discussion, new ideas, and increased collaboration were the fruits of the *Open Space* process.

Both before and after the adjudication, experimentation played an important role in the development and revision process of *Equipment for Living*. In developing the piece, we experimented with exercises such as falling as a representation of dying, contact improvisation as a representation of healing and community, dragging each other across the floor to find the most effective way to transport representational corpses, and improvising to a description of Adolescent Insider Masculinity (AIM) Theory (Farr, 2018) to represent the persona of a school shooter. These experiments all made their way into the final performance. We fell 23 times to represent the 23 school shootings that resulted in casualties in 2018, and this stood out to many of the audience members. Contact improvisation represented the resolution to the piece, allowing

tragedy to transform us into a community and heal together. We did not drag each other across the floor, but we did drag ourselves to one another. Unintentionally, this reflected the active stance I wanted to portray: instead of passively being dragged, we actively performed this movement ourselves to reach one another. Finally, the representational shooter's behavior was based off of AIM, and his microaggressions really stood out to one audience member who approached me after the show to talk about how attentiveness to one another is a vital way to mitigate school shootings. These experiments demonstrate the iterative process of creating *Equipment for Living*. Even the final performance was somewhat of an experiment because we did not know how the audience would choose to engage and move with us.

Movement was the dominant agency behind the choreography in *Equipment for Living*, but it also connected to interaction with the audience through installation and discussion.

Movement allowed for embodiment of emotion and an aliveness for the show that could transport the audience into a representational narrative of school shootings. The motion and stillness the dancers portrayed allowed for meditation on images and gestures.

Phenomenologically, movement allowed for dancers to meditate as well. Movement and meditation was something Helanius and I discussed during our conversation. The installation and choreography were components audience members could move through, but they could also be still, experience, and reflect on and with them. Movement was an agency of participation, and those who moved most seemed to participate most. On the other hand, meditation is the product of stillness, and those who did not vocalize or physicalize their experience perhaps participated more than anyone in the space could have realized. During rehearsals, we mainly moved, yet meditating upon experiences, concepts, and goals for the piece helped me create movement with collaborators, including the audience.

Movement directly related to space. The presence of bodies made the piece more human and alive than written text; however, the bodies sharing a space resulted in the engaging and participatory nature of *Equipment for Living*. A live performance allowed for direct interaction in a way that watching a video or reading a news article would not make possible. Proximity was the most important element of space. In rehearsals, we discovered this when we engaged in contact improvisation as opposed to dancing in solo. If a dancer performed apart from dancers in contact, it was very noticeable. Contact represented collaboration and interaction, whereas solo represented solitude and personal experience. Both were needed and both became part of the piece. In regard to the audience, they could choose their proximity to the dancers. No one chose to sit in the desks near the dancers; however, I saw people take a moment of silence in the desk set apart for prayer and reflection. Being close is vulnerable, and perhaps audience members did not want to subject themselves to that. Breaking the fourth wall to that extent is also somewhat foreign. I discussed this with another installation artist, and she said it is very challenging to encourage this boundary crossing. Instead of entering the performance while it unfolded, audience members entered the stage afterwards, and the dancers traded place with the audience to watch them explore the installation. The division between audience and performers remained until the discussion. The circle brought us into proximity. The agency of space is closely tied to scene, which will be discussed in the following section.

Scenes

Although venue, staging, costumes, lighting, music, and representational situations could be considered agencies in the show, they were largely scenic in the drama of *Equipment for Living*. Scene was not the most important part of the show, but it did create contexts and emphases for the acts. Movement and discussion were designed to be the focal points, but scenic

elements elevated them and made world making and boundary crossing in the show possible. This section will address the scenes within and surrounding *Equipment for Living*.

The creation of the performance began with considerations of scene. I met with Iain Court, the Director of Dance Production at the University of Colorado Boulder, to discuss possible performance venues for my piece. We talked about doing an installation around the theatre and dance building, about incorporating the piece in *Open Space*, and about possibly setting the piece in a museum. The final show had installation elements, but everything was in the same space, the Charlotte York Irey Theatre. The *Open Space* process contributed to the final performance, but *Equipment for Living* ended up having its own context instead of being situated among other pieces. I enjoyed the idea of setting the piece in a museum, but the Charlotte York Irey Theatre ended up being a good fit for the piece, when considering time restraints. It was the physical scene that my piece took place in. A studio in the CU Boulder Theatre and Dance building, it has a history of hosting dance performances and classes. For the afternoon of the performance, the chairs were set up for *Open Space*, which would take place later that night. The proscenium setting was the foundation for the rest of the staging.

Proscenium created the traditional audience/performer binary with audience members sitting in seats and performers dancing on stage. Setting this binary allowed us to blur it when audience members explored the stage to look at the installation and when dancers and I broke the fourth wall to converse with the audience. The agents inhabiting the scenes of audience viewership and onstage performance transformed the scenes, but these two places were also physically manipulated during the show. The audience seating was cloaked in darkness during the pre-show and dancing, and clothed in light for the performance. The chairs were also rearranged into a circle for the discussion. These transformations reflected the illuminating

power of performance
and discussion.

Comparatively, the scene
on stage also changed
during the performance.

The original staging
positioned seven desks



lined up in three rows center stage surrounded by the installation pieces of the op-ed in the
upstage right corner, the board with the names of school shooting victims directly behind the
desks, and the lone desk for prayer and silence in the upstage left corner. The installation pieces
remained where they were throughout the show, but the seven desks were overturned and moved

out of lines as the dancers fell
23 times. This represented the
destructive and disruptive nature
of school shootings. During the
contact improvisation score,
dancers repositioned the desks
into their original staging to



show the possibility of redemption and reconciliation, although a return to normalcy may not be
possible. Hence, staging and transforming staging allowed for the scenes for performance and
audience interaction to be open to transformative thinking about school shootings.

The staging helped create boundaries for audience members and performers to cross and
so did costuming. On the one hand, performers' clothes were meant to represent what high

school students might wear: jeans, athletic wear, sweaters, etc. The only thing that did not reflect this was the dancers' lack of shoes. We danced barefoot in order to execute movement more efficiently; however, the absence of shoes also introduced something abnormal to the representation of a normal school. Additionally, the absence of shoes became something that connected dancers to the audience. Audience members were asked to remove their shoes before entering the space so they would preserve the marley when they investigated the installation. Not wearing shoes was familiar for me and the dancers, but it may have felt strange and even vulnerable to audience members to remove their shoes. Although I did not intend this to be part of the piece, the audience members removing their shoes became an act of costuming and performance that served as liminality for them to enter the social world of *Equipment for Living*.

This social world involved a normal school day bathed in cheery lights. The audience sat in the dark that separated them from this scene. They were invited to enter the light, but did not until light flooded their space and another invitation was extended. It is possible that the lights in *Equipment for Living* impacted audience interaction. At different points in the show, the lights differentiated and similarized audience and performer scenes. In the audience space, the light did not have much of an intention other than to prevent the Charlotte York Irey theatre from being too bright during the dancers' movement (lights off) and to allow everyone to see each other during the discussion (lights on). In practice, however, turning the lights on created an opportunity to cross boundaries. The lighting on stage played a different role. The lights were intended to give the appearance of an average school day. To do this, Reed, the lighting designer, gave the back wall a blue tint, and added "a white backlight to pop performers and give a slightly ethereal feel combined with yellow/amber and light pink high sides for visibility and tone [in

order for] the space [to look] like a classroom.” This created a space that could be interpreted as friendly or ominous, depending on the movements of the dancers.

The music afforded a similar capacity for movement-guided interpretation. Its purposes were to help dancers know when to initiate movement scores and to enhance the mood created by the movement. It was an original composition by CU Boulder undergraduate student and dance major Sarah Vail and her colleagues, Brian Sinnock, and Josiah Piper. Sarah named the piece “Twisted Memory.” It was a 14 minute and 21 second length score. It began with a soothing guitar playing repetitive rhythms. This was interrupted by glitchy beeping noises about two minutes in. The beeping escalated into a loud and irritating drilling sound that replaced the guitar. The sound evaporated into a two-minute silence. After the two minutes, a the cocking of a gun and a gunshot broke the silence and continued to interrupt the original guitar music as it came back on. This happened a total of 23 times. The last gunshot reverberated and echoed in a distinct way and subsided into new guitar music that had a different lilt than the original score. It was just as repetitive, but the strumming of the guitar was more drawn out and there was more percussion. It also gave the impression that we had experienced something drastic but would not give up. The music score ended with a final strum of the guitar that was very subtle and slightly abrupt. A few seconds of silence accompanied the dancers as they returned back to their seats in the desks at the end of the piece. The music added to the meditative essence of the show and helped convey its messages. It also helped create the representational scenes of the piece.

Equipment for Living involved a number of representational scenes that crossed over into reality. The pre-show set the scene of a school, with its students, desks, and whiteboard. My manipulation of the desks and contemporary dance movement interrupted this scene, inviting the audience to question what the scene was. When the music started, the dancers and I continued

this representation of a school in question. When the irritating beeping and drilling began, the normal school scene became a violated space and one student became an active harmer. Yet, the silence and lack of gunshots suspended the scene. Would it be violated by gunshots or only the potential threat of a student with a gun? The cocking and firing of a gun answered the question and represented the scenes in real life that involve casualties caused by school shootings. The contact improvisation at the end of the falling score created a scene of resolution and restoration. It represented community healing and togetherness. The final scene was a return to a normal school day, but because of the acts that unfolded in the scene of the desks and representational school, something dark remained despite attempts to heal. These scenes were meant to remain in our minds as we transitioned into the discussion.

The discussion was a representation of activism, but it also set the scene for true action. The installation involved news articles and opportunities to interact as well. All in all, *Equipment for Living* served as the scene for my act of presenting and responding to my research on equipment for living in news and art. I hope that it also served as a scene for new ways of thinking about school shootings and imagining a better future.

To see a program for the show, please reference Appendix F.

To view the performance, please use this link: <https://youtu.be/uRa365iA0Nw>

Chapter 5: Comparative Rhetorical Analysis and Concluding Thoughts

This study sought to make sense of school shootings through analyzing a case study of the Arapahoe High School shooting as represented in *The Denver Post* and *Thirteen*, as well as using dance, installation, and discussion to further explore school shootings through the production and performance of *Equipment for Living*. This final chapter compares *Denver Post* articles, *Thirteen*, and *Equipment for Living* in terms of their affordances and limitations in regard to representing school shootings. It will also discuss limitations of the study, suggestions for future exploration, and concluding thoughts.

Discussion

News media, theatre, and dance each had unique ways of addressing school shootings. There were also similarities in the three media's representational narratives. Looking at these media together shows how they complement one another in order to provide a richer understanding of school shootings.

In this study, news media served as a foundation for understanding the Arapahoe High School shooting. Journalists have access to specific information artists may not, allowing for facts about crises to be gathered, clarified, and shared with the general public. Of the three texts I analyzed, *Denver Post* articles provided the clearest understanding of what happened in the Arapahoe High School shooting. The factual and structured nature of news articles balances the emotionally charged atmosphere of a crisis. News media's immediacy of response, reliability, and ability to reach a large audience allows for a community to share information and begin to process school shootings. *The Denver Post* featured a multiplicity of acts, scenes, agents, agencies, and purposes. This captured the complexity of the event. Hence, news articles, such as those published in *The Denver Post* about the Arapahoe High School shootings, are necessary to

establish a foundation for discourse about crises such as school violence because they are able to provide extensive details in a reliable format to a large audience.

Although news coverage provides a breadth of information about crises such as school shootings, there is not always space for depth. Investigative journalism is the exception; however, there were no such pieces published within the scope set for the study. I had to connect articles to give an overview of the Arapahoe High School shooting and its aftermath. Because articles can only capture so much information, crisis narratives are often covered across articles, and audiences may not always read them all. Theatre and dance can also include multi-part works in telling a story; however, the examples in this study captured school shootings in singular texts/settings, allowing for an audience to have all the information offered in one place. News media is attentive to short attention spans; however, in order to properly respond to school shooting narratives, reflection and attention are necessary. Journalism does provoke reflection in its own way; however, news articles do not always dive into the emotional details or question an event the way art can.

As the dominant source of crisis coverage, news media can perpetuate toxic narratives, such as the fame-seeking rampage shooter. Pierson was not a fame-seeker; however, the shooter is almost always a prominent agent in school shootings represented in news coverage—the Arapahoe High School shooting was no different. Balance and accuracy are hallmarks of journalism, but the repetitive narrative arcs surrounding school shootings do not need to be. Of course, journalists may not share their opinions the way artists do, unless they write opinion pieces, but awareness of the power of news media in influencing perception and action is needed. I attempted to do this through *Equipment for Living*.

While reading through *Denver Post* articles about the Arapahoe High school shooting, I was concerned by the normalcy with which they were portrayed. This is not to say *The Denver Post* was insensitive in covering the event, because they covered the crisis respectfully, but I did not like how Arapahoe was portrayed as “another shooting.” On the one hand, it was another shooting, but the damage it did is unique to the community it impacted. The problem with news media in covering school shootings is that this medium always has to cover what is new. Even as survivors of school shootings continue to suffer, news and its audiences have to move on. Apathy can be a product as society continues to read and watch so much crisis. Empathy fatigue and passive acceptance can be the fruits. By providing opportunities for activism, *Equipment for Living* invited empathy and action as well as discussion to lead to new narratives about school shootings and renewed compassion.

With facts established through news media, art can break them apart and put them back together in different ways to further make sense of crises such as school shootings. *Thirteen* relied on a similar structure to news media for presenting the act of a school shooting as an event involving shots fired in a school, a lockdown, longing for reunion with loved ones, response to the shooter, and evacuation. What was different in *Thirteen* was that it focused more on individual experiences than *The Denver Post* did or could have. *The Denver Post* could capture portions of phenomenology and experiences through quotes; however, theatre allowed for a more in-depth encounter. *Thirteen* did not feature the same multiplicity of dramatic elements that articles from *The Denver Post* did, which allowed it to focus specifically on student experiences with the Arapahoe High School shooting.

The play also captured the lasting impact of a school shooting. The importance of scene in *Thirteen* showed the transformation of the school and its students in light of the crisis. It

showed that normalcy post-shooting is not as immediate as news media might suggest. In *Equipment for Living*, there was also a somewhat immediate return to normalcy to question if the normalization of school shootings is real or desirable. *Thirteen* showed that returning to normal may have been desired but that it would take more than a physical transformation of scene. It would take psychological and emotional healing. School shootings are not normal, and as they increase in frequency, it is important to recognize this. Although going back to normal post-crisis is desirable, survivors must heal at their own pace, and their suffering should be acknowledged. Of the texts analyzed, *Thirteen* best acknowledged the pain and trauma survivors of school shootings experience.

Thirteen was limited in scope, but it also expanded on news media, which had another scope. The actors' lines provided real-life accounts of the Arapahoe High School shooting. Unfortunately, these narratives are not widely accessible. Because the play was never published, only the playwrights, members of the 2015 Company class at Arapahoe High School, people who witnessed it being performed, people who reviewed it for submission to the Thespian conference, and perhaps a few select others have access to the play. In the future, it could possibly be published and give a better understanding of what survivors go through. The news articles represented what happened during the Arapahoe High School shooting, and *Thirteen* represented who it happened to.

Equipment for Living addressed the larger phenomenon of school shootings, the normalization of them in representational narratives, and how media consumers might respond. Creating a non-verbal text allowed for emotional exploration that words do not necessarily allow for. I could not present the facts *The Denver Post* could, nor the survivor perspective of *Thirteen*, but I could investigate how to respond to these narratives. Creating dance and facilitating

discussion about school shootings helped me to encourage empathy and activism. *The Denver Post* focused on the past event of the shooting, *Thirteen* highlighted then-present struggles of survivors (that are perhaps still present), and *Equipment for Living* used dance and installation to spark conversation about the future. Art thus pairs well with news media in addressing school shootings because it warps and unpacks reality so that a better future can be imagined.

The process of creating art such as theatre and dance can also be cathartic. The collaboration and meditative reflection media such as theatre and dance afford can help people heal from school shootings and be aware of their impact. Journalists can collaborate too, and they also reflect on crises, but due to constant deadlines, they might not receive the same amount of time to process crises such as school shootings as an artist could.

This study contributes to past research on representation and school shootings because it looks at how different media address this phenomenon. It could be applied to better represent school shootings, using a mix of facts, empathy, and invitation to act, in whichever medium is chosen. On the other hand, the study was limited because it only looked at one school shooting, did not address media consumer response, and only covered a set scope of time in which news articles were published. Future research could compare representations of school shootings in different genres looking at multiple school shootings. The Columbine and Parkland shootings would be worthy candidates because they were represented in several ways through both news media and art, such as documentary film, the play *columbinus*, and more. Beyond rhetorical analysis, I would like to perform *Equipment for Living* for different audiences to listen to their opinions about what it would take to end school shootings. It would especially be interesting to perform it in schools and include students in discussions about school safety and responding to crisis.

Conclusion

News media and art both equip people for living through school shootings. Information, awareness, empathy, and activism are all pieces of the puzzle to understanding and mitigating them. News media is adept for immediate response to school shootings that captures details about what happened. Theatre can be used to tune into individual experiences, and the process of creating theatre lends itself to empathy and awareness of the damage school shootings cause. In a similar way, dance can open the door for empathy and question the conventional narrative about school shootings as an inevitable and normal threat in schools today. News, theatre, and dance when paired with discussion and collective action could all lead to mitigating school violence. Discussion and activism revolving around the question: what would it take to stop school shootings?

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Appendix A: Quotes from *The Denver Post* Used in Chapter 2

This appendix consists of quotes from *The Denver Post* referenced in Chapter 2. The headlines and authors are included to show which articles the quotes came from. The articles appear in order of publication.

“Again.” by Sadie Gurman, Ryan Parker, Jordan Steffen and John Ingold

- “Another gunman visited terror upon another Colorado school Friday, when an 18-year-old senior at Arapahoe High School opened fire with a shotgun inside his school and wounded a fellow student.”
- “‘We were all just sitting there staying quiet and praying,’ said 15-year-old Jessica Girard, who was in math class when she heard three loud bangs. Outside the locked classroom door, Jessica heard someone walk by, saying, ‘It hurts. It hurts. Make it stop.’ ‘I was thinking I was going to die and I was never going to see my family again, and I was praying that they knew how much I loved them,’ Jessica said.”
- “‘Inside Andrea Bradley’s yoga class, Arapahoe High senior Courtney Leypoldt said she heard two bangs before the 15-year-old girl’s friend burst into the room. Bradley reacted quickly, Leypoldt said, and ushered students into a deep closet. One-by-one, Bradley counted the heads of her students as they walked inside, Leypoldt said.”
- “‘According to police scanner recordings, the deputy ran to the library, where he saw smoke, and then into the athletic hall. There he found the wounded girl.”
- “‘An ambulance arrived within minutes to take the girl to Littleton Adventist Hospital, where she underwent surgery Friday afternoon.”
- “‘Likewise, Robinson and Hickenlooper praised the quick actions of law enforcement officers, who entered the school immediately in hopes of confronting the shooter. ‘I believe their quick response and action saved lives,’ Robinson said. “I believe the shooter took his life because he knew he had been found.”
- “‘Earlier in the day, Chris Foster’s daughter, Devan, sent him a text message saying, ‘I love you. There is a shooting.’”
- “‘Julie Kellogg was driving by Arapahoe High School when she saw police rush to the campus. Kellogg said she frantically began calling and texting her children at the school but did not hear back.”
- “‘Long said she didn’t want to text her 16-year-old son, Dylan, a junior at Arapahoe. ‘He’ll call me when he’s safe,’ she reasoned. ‘I’m going to let him hide.’ But a few minutes later, she received a phone call and broke down in tears. She leaned over, and she simply said, ‘Oh, Baby. OK. OK. He’s OK.’ ”
- “‘As students left the school after the shooting, many held their hands in the air or on their heads, and police officers patted them down. They were taken by bus to Shepherd of the

Hills Lutheran Church or Euclid Middle School. Parents dashed to the school to find their kids.”

- “Local and federal investigators were at Pierson’s home in Highlands Ranch on Friday night, along with a bomb squad. Detectives were also searching Pierson’s car and at his father’s Denver home. ”
- “Gov. John Hickenlooper said Friday was another ‘all-too-familiar sequence of gunshots’ at a Colorado school. Off to the side after a news conference, he put it more directly: ‘This has got to stop.’ ”

“‘We got in the corners. We turned out the lights, and we locked the Doors.’” by Jeremy P. Meyer, Sadie Gurman and Kevin Simpson

- “At about 12:30 p.m. on what started as a typical Friday, Arapahoe County sheriff’s Deputy James Englert noticed something unusual. ‘The school is going on lockdown, and I don’t know why,’ the school resource officer for Arapahoe High School radioed into dispatchers.”
- “Throughout the building, students and teachers launched into a well-rehearsed protocol—going into the corners of classrooms, locking the doors, turning out lights. Many clung to each other and began pulling out phones and laptops to get news and communicate with their families.”
- “Justin Morrall, a senior, was studying for finals when he heard three gunshots and then two more. ‘I thought it was fireworks. Everyone just went silent, and then we heard the second gunshot and then we went into the lockdown position.’”
- “Megan Sheehan, a 17-year-old senior, was in psychology class. She heard two loud booms and thought it was just someone dropping heavy textbooks in the hallway, which happens sometimes, so no one thought it was gunshots. ‘On the third one, we knew it was not a textbook,’ Sheehan said.”
- “Recordings between dispatchers and first responders captured a moment-by-moment narration that would describe the horror unraveling in one of the state’s biggest high schools as a gunman opened fire. ‘There is heavy smoke in here. I don’t hear any active shots right now. The school is locked down. We have a student with a bad head injury in the athletic hallway,’ Englert said to the dispatcher, who was calling in units from around the region to the high school.”
- “About six minutes after Englert called in his first dispatch, he radioed in another report. ‘There is one student down, three shotgun shells,’ Englert said as a piercing fire alarm pulsed over and over. He asked the dispatcher to tell the security company to turn off the alarm. This was the suspect, dead from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound in a classroom. A strong smell of gasoline lingered. Later, deputies would confirm the smell was coming from Molotov cocktails, one of which was still with the shooter.”
- “Between 25 and 30 students in the class huddled together until about 1 p.m., when a policeman or firefighter knocked at the door and the students ran out of the building,

across University Boulevard to a fast-food restaurant, where Sheehan was reunited with her father, Dan Sheehan.”

- “Allison was still in lockdown at 2:30 p.m., and they were waiting to reunite with her.”

“Be reassuring, but realistic, in explaining school violence” by Claire Martin and Suzanne Brown

- “The students at Arapahoe, like the students at public high schools throughout Colorado, have gone through school shooting drills since they were in kindergarten.”

“Response reveals advances in safety, but questions linger” by Kevin Simpson and Zahira Torres

- “Columbine principal Frank DeAngelis notes that security hardware—especially visible measures such as entrance buzzers and surveillance cameras—can be comforting to parents, but often the unseen efforts work to great effect. The Safe2Tell program, run in conjunction with the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, processes anonymous tips on potentially threatening behavior; counseling and mental health programs may have a deterrent effect that’s hard to measure.”
- “But the lingering question continues to focus on balance: how to keep kids safe without compromising an atmosphere conducive to education.”
- “Ken Trump, president of National School Safety and Security Services, said the main struggle for parents and administrators is determining what’s reasonable.”
- “Finding that balance is increasingly difficult in an often politically charged environment that muddles important discussions about safety. Trump said the Columbine High School shooting drew frank and thoughtful discussions nationally about keeping children safe, but the fear and anxiety that followed last year’s shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., created knee-jerk reactions that steered the conversations away from a holistic approach.”
- “Experts considered Littleton Public Schools a national leader in school safety even before Friday’s incident, and the school and law enforcement response underscored how radically procedures have changed since the 1999 Columbine shooting.”
- “The district’s security protocols were ranked seventh-best in the country by Security magazine in November. The publication also recognized the school district as one of the top 500 security operations in the industry. Publisher Mark McCourt said Friday’s incident offered a glimpse into the district’s efforts, which have included implementing a mass-notification system, regular drills and various active-shooter programs with local law enforcement. ‘What could have been a much more terrible situation was resolved, unfortunately, with the death of the shooter, but resolved with a much more positive outcome when you consider what has happened at schools and other places where the preparation and the drilling wasn’t robust,’ McCourt said.”

- “State Sen. Linda Newell, whose district includes the Littleton public schools, said that even with Friday's effective response, school safety remains an ongoing, evolving concern. ‘I absolutely believe that we never do enough,’ Newell said. ‘We do need to revisit this, and there will be lessons learned.’”

“Lights in the dark - Valiant:Quick response kept gunman from harming more” by Sadie Gurman, Jeremy Meyer and Kirk Mitchell

- “Pierson fired a total of five times and ignited a Molotov cocktail that set ablaze three bookshelves library before turning the gun on himself.”
- “His next shot hit the face of Davis, who collapsed onto the girl next to her, drenching her in blood.”
- “Robinson said Davis, a 17-year-old senior, was ‘an innocent victim of an evil act of violence’ who happened to find herself in Pierson’s war path.”
- “The teen apparently harbored a grudge against Murphy after being disciplined by him in September, action that Robinson said was appropriate. The discipline came after Pierson made a verbal threat against Murphy to a group of students. Law enforcement was made aware of that threat, and the response to it remains under investigation, Robinson said.”
- “The quick actions of a deputy sheriff working as the school's resource officer and an unarmed security guard undoubtedly saved lives, Robinson said. They immediately dashed from the cafeteria down a long hallway to the library while yelling for students to get down and get back.”
- “Investigators searched the school and the home of Pierson’s mother in Douglas County, and they impounded his car, which he had parked along a curb in the northside lot, Robinson said. He declined to say what evidence was discovered but said all indications were that Pierson acted alone.”
- “Pierson’s mother was out of town Friday when the shootings happened.”
- “Pierson bought the shotgun legally Dec. 6 and purchased a large amount of ammunition at local stores Friday morning, Robinson said. Colorado law allows an 18-year-old to buy a shotgun but not a handgun.”

“Candles glow for girl who shines - Hundreds turn out to support Claire Davis, family” by Anthony Cotton

- “Standing in the shadow of Arapahoe High School, their nerves still raw and shaky from the horror that engulfed their school a day earlier, hundreds of members of the school's community marched silently Saturday from the entrance to Arapaho Park out onto an open field. Candles held aloft, members of the group gathered in a vigil for one of their own, senior Claire Davis, who was critically wounded in the shooting at the school. ”
- “‘We just thought it would be a good idea to get everyone together to pay respect to Claire, as well as gather with other people going through the same thing,’ said Maggie Hurlbut, an Arapahoe senior. Hurlbut said she and a group of friends came up with the

idea on Friday night, not long after Karl Pierson, another senior, carried a shotgun into the school and shot the 17-year-old Davis before apparently killing himself. By 11 a.m. Saturday, an invitation to the vigil had been placed on Facebook and Twitter. ”

- “Once there, the assemblage said prayers and compared stories from Friday’s attack. Soon they were singing the school’s fight song and comforting one another with hugs—lots and lots of hugs. In addition, some students began collecting donations for the Davis family. ‘I don’t know her, but I just feel this needs to be done,’ said Chris Davis, an Arapahoe senior. ‘They should know that they’re not alone and that the Warrior community is there for Claire and her family.’”
- “Everyone at school who knows Claire knows about her love of horses, said Avery Griggs, a 16-year-old sophomore. ‘Claire is one of the nicest people I’ve met at Arapahoe,’ Griggs said. “I am a sophomore and she is a senior. I remember one day in class that you had to pick groups, and she turned around and asked if I wanted to be in her group. And I felt so special, because that is a big deal for a sophomore. She is amazing and so sweet.”

“A day of hugs and hope” by Jordan Steffen

- “Students stood in groups, and when words failed, hugs were used instead. Parents also came together, holding back tears as they described the short, terrifying text messages their children sent them from inside dark, quiet classrooms.”
- “For many parents, the messages that were sent to reassure them—‘I’m OK,’ ‘We’re hiding and waiting,’ ‘I love you’—turned into rattling uncertainty.”
- “Students at Arapahoe High School should have been studying for finals Monday, powering through their last week of classes before Christmas break. Instead, authorities continue to walk the school’s hallways, piecing together the 80 seconds that terrified a community and left Claire Davis in a coma, fighting for her life.”

“Alert system at Dougco failed” by Ryan Parker

- “Douglas County Schools’ emergency alert system was overwhelmed by volume and failed Friday during the shooting at Arapahoe High School.”
- “Friday’s shooting took place about 12:30 p.m. About 73,000 parents should have received an e-mail shortly after the security decision was enacted, Yi said. For more than three hours, nothing was sent to parents, Yi said. Once the notification system began to work, notices arrived as late as 7 p.m., Yi said.”

“Markings of mayhem - Gunman’s plan to inflict harm evident in phrase, letters, numbers on arm” by Sadie Gurman

- “Before he stepped foot into Arapahoe High School on Friday, Karl Pierson scrawled a Latin message on the inside of his forearm in permanent ink. Translation: ‘The die has been cast.’”

- “The sentence is a line attributed to Julius Caesar, who said the words as he crossed the Rubicon river with his troops to start a civil war.”
- “Also written on his arm were numbers and letters associated with five classrooms and the school's library, places authorities said Pierson planned to attack during his noon-hour rampage, Arapahoe County Sheriff Grayson Robinson said Tuesday.”
- “‘I looked, saw him reload and dove into the atrium,’ he said. ‘He wasn’t running, he wasn’t yelling. He was calmly walking. It just seemed like it was an everyday occurrence for him.’”
- “Tait Priser, who graduated last year, said he was chatting with a teacher down the hall when he heard a gunshot and saw Pierson, whom he did not recognize, wearing a hooded sweatshirt and aiming the shotgun in their direction.”
- “The sheriff has said Pierson was targeting his debate coach and librarian, Tracy Murphy, when he came to school armed with a 12-gauge pump-action shotgun, three Molotov cocktails and a machete concealed in a canvas scabbard.”
- “But those weapons, along with more than 125 rounds of assorted ammunition he wore in a pair of bandoliers strapped to his chest and waist, are a sign he wanted to wound more than just Murphy, Robinson said.”
- “Pierson packed a mix of steel-shot, buckshot and slugs, but the sheriff would not say which of those he fired.”
- “‘The shooter was intent on causing the maximum amount of harm,’ Robinson said.”
- “‘I looked, saw him reload and dove into the atrium,’ he [Prisler] said.”
- “Police said he entered the school from the north side and fired randomly down a hallway before shooting Davis in the head at point-blank range. She was sitting in the hallway with a friend and had no time to react.”
- “‘I heard him say, ‘Where’s Murphy? Where’s Murphy?’ between gunshots, said senior August Clary, who was sitting in science class when the school went on lockdown.”
- “Murphy, knowing he was sought, escaped the library with the help of a school janitor. Robinson would not elaborate on his exit.”

“SOMBER RETURN” by Jordan Steffen

- “Before storming into the library, Pierson shot 17-year-old Claire Davis at point-blank range.”
- “Arapahoe High School upperclassmen were allowed back into the school on Thursday, braving the hallways for the first time since they were forced to evacuate after a shooting last week. Windows to the library, where authorities say the 18-year-old gunman killed himself, were covered, and the doors were locked. The library will be remodeled next semester, school principal Natalie Pramenko said in a letter to parents Wednesday.”
- “‘I thought the school would look like it changed, but I realized that just the people inside it had changed,’ said Marlowe, Arapahoe’s student council vice president. ‘I wasn’t sure

if the place that was my home for four years would be different. But it's even more of a home now, especially after today.”

- “But many seniors—the first class to walk back into the school—said their return represented a first step toward healing, not a backslide into fear. ‘It’s definitely going to be different. There will be things that were compromised,’ Marlowe said. ‘But it will be a community, and I don’t think anybody is not going to feel safe.’”
- “Every student’s struggle will be unique and depend largely on how threatened they felt during the shooting, said Dr. David Schonfeld, director of the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement in Philadelphia. But some students may struggle in silence, grieving both the death of a friend people are now calling evil and grappling with the inability to predict his demise. Friends of Pierson may feel they cannot express their grief with their peers, fearing their classmates will shun them for showing compassion toward him, Schonfeld said. ‘The kids, teachers and everyone are going to be scrutinizing carefully the relationship they had with the shooter,’ Schonfeld said. ‘Some are going to feel very, very guilty.’”
- “Mental health services were offered to students on Thursday. Counselors will be available throughout the school and at Shepherd of the Hills church from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday.”
- “Clad in jerseys, letter jackets and school T-shirts, students walked out of the school loaded down with backpacks and armfuls of books. They carried yoga mats, art projects and instrument cases. ‘I keep using the word ‘united,’ said sophomore Tyler Aikens, who was selling ‘Warrior Strong’ T-shirts to raise money for Davis and her family. Most students walking out of the school on Thursday bought a shirt.”
- “Between the hugs and tears, there were moments of high school normalcy, such as random, awkward dance moves and flirty nudges. But most stopped to remember the senior who was missing. A tribute to Davis has covered most of the fence along the south edge of the school. Cards, flowers and stuffed animals cover the fence and grass.”

“Claire’s light lives on - With tears, smiles, family and friends hail her big heart” by Zahira Torres

- “Authorities believe she was a random victim. Although she and the gunman were acquainted, they were not friends, officials said last week.”
- “The high school senior died at 4:29 p.m. at Littleton Adventist Hospital after eight days on life support.”
- “The hospital had announced the teenager’s death in a Facebook posting at 5:15 p.m.: ‘Despite the best efforts of our physicians and nursing staff, and Claire’s fighting spirit, her injuries were too severe and the most advanced medical treatments could not prevent this tragic loss of life. Claire’s death is immensely heartbreaking for our entire community, our staff and our families.’”

- “About 6:30 p.m., the family also posted a statement. ‘Although we have lost our precious daughter,” the family said, ‘we will always be grateful for the indelible journey she took us on over the last 17 years — we were truly blessed to be Claire’s parents. The grace, laughter and light she brought to this world will not be extinguished by her death; to the contrary, it will only get stronger.’ While asking for privacy, the family thanked the first-responders, school, sheriff’s office and others for their ‘extraordinary work’ on Claire’s behalf. ”
- “The hospital said that information regarding a public celebration of Claire’s life would be announced later and said the public could continue to leave cards for the Davis family in the ‘Cards for Claire’ box, located in the main entrance of the hospital.”
- “Neighbors called her the best babysitter in the community, and classmates and friends talked of her love for horses.”
- “Claire was taken to the hospital, where she remained in critical condition. On Dec. 15, her family announced that the girl was stable but in a coma.”

“Davis family is ‘in our hearts’” by Alison Noon

- “Gov. John Hickenlooper and other officials from the state offered their condolences Sunday to the family of Claire Davis after the 17-year-old's death Saturday.”
- “The parents of gunman Karl Pierson, Barbara and Mark Pierson, issued the following statement via email Sunday: ‘We are heartbroken to hear of Claire's passing. Our hearts ache for her family as they deal with unimaginable grief. Our prayers are with Claire's family & the entire Arapahoe community.’”
- “At the request of her family and friends, The Denver Foundation announced it had created a fund in Claire's name on Dec. 16. The foundation said the Arapahoe High School Community Fund honoring Claire Davis will support mental health care, anti-bullying programs and other community needs chosen by her parents, the fund's advisers. ‘Last week was truly a paradox in that we lost our daughter, yet we witnessed the wonderful love that exists in the world through the tremendous outpouring of support we received,’ the Davis family said in a statement Saturday. ”

“memorial SET AT NATIONAL WESTERN” by Joey Bunch

- “Claire Davis’ love of horses and riding will be memorialized before and during the National Western Stock Show, where the 17-year-old victim of the Dec. 13 shooting at Arapahoe High School competed last year. On Jan. 1, the Claire Davis Memorial Celebration of Life will be held at 1 p.m. at the National Western Events Center. The National Western's annual hunter and jumper event will be renamed the Claire Davis Memorial Gambler's Choice Horse Show, and a moment of silence will be held before each ticketed horse show this year. ‘The National Western does a wonderful job of supporting young equestrians, like Claire,’ her mother, Desiree Davis, said in a statement. ‘We’re so appreciative that they’ve agreed to host this special celebration of Claire’s life

and for everything they're doing to honor Claire's memory.' Though there is no charge to attend the Jan. 1 memorial, the stock show is issuing tickets to assure enough seating. Tickets will be issued at nationalwestern.com or the National Western Box Office beginning Friday at 10 a.m."

"Early reporting may keep crises from escalating" by Colleen O'Connor

- "No one called Safe2Tell to report that Karl Pierson, 18, planned to attack Arapahoe High School before he opened fire in the school Dec. 13, killing 17-year-old Claire Davis before turning his legally acquired shotgun on himself, Payne said."
- "Developed in response to the 1999 Columbine High School shooting that experts said was preceded by many unheeded red flags about the gunmen's state of mind, Safe2Tell is an anonymous hotline that allows parents, teachers, students and concerned community members to report suspicious behaviors in a no-risk environment."
- "Since Safe2Tell was created in Colorado at the suggestion of the Columbine Commission in 2004, the hotline has received 282 reports of planned school attacks. All were investigated by law enforcement and school officials: 251 were classified as high-risk threats, and 31 were called very high risk — prevented just in time."
- "Early reporting of concerning behavior saved lives, Payne said."
- "Safe2Tell reports are forwarded immediately to school officials and law enforcement, helping authorities stop violence before it starts."

"Side door wasn't locked" by Sadie Gurman

- "The 18-year-old student who fatally shot a classmate at Arapahoe High School this month entered through a door that should have been locked but instead was propped open, the Arapahoe County sheriff said Monday."
- "Grayson Robinson said the set of double doors was commonly left unlocked for easier access. "
- "Pierson shot fellow senior Claire Davis at point-blank range almost immediately after entering the unlocked door, then headed toward the library, where authorities said he meant to kill librarian and debate coach Tracy Murphy."
- "The sheriff said Pierson fired five times, including once toward Murphy's office in the library. He torched a set of shelves with one of the incendiary devices he had stashed in a backpack, then fired a sixth time, killing himself. The rampage ended in less than 80 seconds."
- "A janitor who saw the gunman touched off the school's lockdown protocol, which Robinson said worked perfectly and likely saved lives. So did the quick efforts of Deputy James Englert, the school's resource officer, and unarmed security guard Rod Mauler, who is a retired county deputy. They 'ran toward the thunder,' Robinson said, referring to a tactic taught in active shooter training because the sound of gunshots inside a school sounds like thunder."

- “More than 2,200 people had been led out of the building successfully by 2:47 p.m., a little more than two hours after the shooting began.”
- “Detectives have interviewed more than 200 people and obtained a dozen warrants to search places such as Pierson's mother's home in Highlands Ranch, his car, his computers and cellphone. They hope for warrants to search other areas, too, such as the gunman’s medical and school records for any red flags. Search warrants in the case remain under seal.”
- “Pierson went bowling alone on the morning of the shooting, had a meal and took steps to buy more ammunition, Robinson said. Initial reports — later disputed — suggested that the Columbine High School killers also went bowling on the day of the 1999 attack inspiring the title of the movie "Bowling for Columbine." If there is any connection, the ongoing investigation will uncover it, Robinson said.”

Appendix B: Dancer and Audience Responses to Questionnaire from *Equipment for Living*

Question 1: What stood out to you during the performance/installation/discussion? What did you think, feel, and experience?

- “I felt most most emotional as gunshots fired and we fell to the ground. Everytime I fell, I knew people in these situations would fall too but never be able to get up or have to struggle for their life through every gunshot.”
- “I felt very emotional. It was very shocking and eye-opening. It stood out everytime the performers fell and it also stood out when the first incident occurred. Thank you so much for bringing this to our attention! You did a great job approaching such a difficult topic.”
- “The intention was powerfully expressed, great commitment to the cause, great job guys!”
- “Desensitization of children. But care at the end for friends.”
- “What really stood out was the feelings it involved within be. I feel a little important but now looking at this piece I see that we can actually do something about it, even when it doesn’t seem like it.”
- “Es un sentimiento de aprendizaje.”
- “Gunshots and very emotional choreography.”
- “The shots when the dancers were down. That hurt the most.”
- “I felt very jarred during the shots and as time went on I got used to it. Desensitization. That really makes it clear of why this is so important, and I really appreciate you putting a light on this situation. The simplicity of the music stood out to me because that’s how life is. It’s simple until the point of no return.”
- “It was all-encompassing: dance, handout with explanations, [two words I could not read] audience involvement, discussion afterwards.”
- “The thing that stood out most was the feelings that the repeated shots and falling invoked. The discussion also has given me some thinking points to take away.”

Question 2: What would it take to stop school shootings?

- “Better gun education, better gun regulation, more support and less stigma for those suffering from mental illness.”
- “Government changes, mental health support, gun reform.”
- “A combination of community awareness, gun control, intimate teacher/student relationships, mandatory counseling, family counseling...whew!”
- “Better family foundation address mental health future parents.”
- “A lot of things but I think that learning about human behavior and how to read and interpret someone can tell us a lot because the body has a voice too.”
- “La unión familiar es algo esencial. Dar mucho amor a los hijos y enseñarles valores, respetar y respetarse a sí mismos.”

- “Better counseling, teachers, and instead of punishing kids, help with homework and love them.”
- “Gun laws that help. Community support. Media to taking responsibility for their part. Stop glorifying in the media.”
- “Communication, empathy, law, education.”
- “Mental-health improvement. Compassion toward others, esp. loners.”
- “I just don’t know—I’ve struggled with that question since Columbine...”

Appendix C: “All of these people have died in school shootings since Columbine. Enough.” as It

Appeared in the Installation for *Equipment for Living*

All of these people have died in school shootings since Columbine. **Enough.**

By **THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE EDITORIAL BOARD**

APRIL 20, 2018

Exactly nineteen years ago, 13 people were killed at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. At the time, it was the deadliest high school shooting — and one of the worst mass shootings — in modern U.S. history.

Now it’s not even one of the 10 worst — and students and adults are still dying on our country’s campuses.

As the anniversary of that cruel day in Colorado approached, students from Parkland, Florida, somehow kept school gun violence a central subject of conversation in an overwhelmed nation. We wondered what we could say today that might move the needle on an all-too-often irrational national debate over sensible gun legislation and campus safety. We wondered about all those lives cut short on campuses in the past 19 years. We wondered how many lives that was.

19 **MEDIAN AGE OF SCHOOL SHOOTING VICTIMS SINCE APRIL 20, 1999**

So we asked writer Abby Hamblin to do some research. Please take the time to read these 223 names. Be sad. Be outraged. They represent everyone killed on an educational campus in the last two decades, starting at Columbine. They are on-campus victims of mass shootings, gang violence or gun incidents, including those in campus housing and at athletic fields. Our list excludes suicides, drive-by shooting victims and people killed on buses or at off-campus events. If we overlooked a name, we apologize. Our intent here was twofold: to honor victims and to urge you to call congressional leaders and school board members and to demand change. A [Pew Research Center survey](#) taken after the Feb. 14 Parkland, Florida, shooting found 57 percent of teenagers worry

As parents who just want our kids to be safe. As journalists sickened by school shooting coverage. As taxpayers fed up with misplaced budget priorities that overlook common-sense ways to protect our community's children. As voters incensed Congress does too little. We say, "Enough."

15; Neva Rogers, 62;
Thurlene Stillday, 15;
Bruce, 48. **2006:** Mary
Benjamin
Logan P.
Keyes,
Rose
13; Lena
Anna
Samnang
20;

25; Ryan
18;
49; Kevin
Gwaltney,
19; Jeremy
27; Rachael
Emily Hilscher,
22; Matthew J.
Henry Lee, 20;
oganathan, 51;
24; Lauren McCain,
Juan Ramon

16; Dale Regan, 63;
Doris Chibuko, 40;
Kim, 23; Kathleen Ping
53; Lydia
Wright,
Bacon, 6;
Rachel
Engel, 6;
7; Dawn
47;
6;
Hsu,
Hubbard,
Kowalski,
6; Ana
6; James
Grace
Anne
Emilie
Pinto,
Caroline
Avielle
Assseau,
56;

Cooper, 18; Lucas Johnson, Dawn Moore, 44; Treven Carnes, 18; Kim 59s; Colin Brough, 18; Cameron Anthony White, Kieu, 15; William Hall, 6. **2017:** Martinez, 8; Karen Janeera Nickol n, 15; Francisco Fernandez, 15; Najee Ali Baker, 21; Nicole Holt, 15; Ralph Beigel, 35; Alyssa Martin Duque, Dworet, 17; Aaron Guttenberg, 14; Luke Hoyer, 15; 14; Gina Montalto, 17; Alaina Petty, Ramsay, 17; Alex Schachter, 14; Wang, 15; Kaelel Clarke, 20; James Arrington, 17; Jaelynn Willey, 16.

Starting with Columbine, there have been **85** school shootings.

Those shootings have killed **223** people, including students,

teachers and staff. That adds up to **11,100** years of
life* cut short by gun violence.

** For this calculation, we subtracted each victim's age from his or her life expectancy as determined by the National Center for Health Statistics based on date of birth and gender, then added all those numbers together. We excluded people who lived longer than their life expectancy from our equation.*

Prepared by editorial and opinion director Matthew T. Hall, writer Abby Hamblin, data designer Daniel Wheaton, video producer John Kelley, web developer Ruby Gaviola and designer Gloria Orbegozo.

1999: Cassie Bernall, 17; Steven Curnow, 14; Corey DePooter, 17; Kelly Fleming, 16; Matthew Kechter, 16; Daniel Mauser, 15; Daniel Rohrbough, 15; William “Dave” Sanders, 47; Rachel Shoels, 18; Scott, 17; Isaiah John Tomlin, 16; Lauren Townsend, 18; Kyle Velasquez, 16; Araceli Tena, 13. **2000:** Kayla Rolland, 6; Barry Grunow, 35; John Locke, 67. **2001:** Randy Gordon, 17; Bryan Zuckor, 14; Neal Boyd, 16; James D. Holloway, 40. **2002:** Thomas F. Blackwell, 41; Angela Denise Dales, 33; L. Anthony Sutin, 42; Joseph Johnson, 16; Cheryl McGaffic, 44; Barbara Monroe, 45; Robin Rogers, 50. **2003:** Jonathan Williams, 15; Eugene Segro, 51; Norman Wallace, 30; Seth Bartell, 14; Aaron Rollins, 17. **2004:** James Richardson, 17. **2005:** Derrick Brun, 28; Dwayne Lewis,

15; Chase Lussier,		15; Neva Rogers, 62;
Chanelle Rosebear, 15;		Thurlene Stillday, 15;
Alicia White, 15; Ken		Bruce, 48. 2006: Mary
Alicia Shanks, 56;		Benjamin
M. Pennington, 24;		Logan P.
Pennington, 26; Emily		Keyes,
16; John Klang, 49; Naomi		Rose
Ebersol, 7; Marian Fisher,		13; Lena
Miller, 7; Mary Liz Miller, 8;		Anna
Mae	Stoltzfus, 12. 2007:	Samnang
Kok, 17;	Ross Alameddine,	20;
	Christopher James	
Bishop,	35; Brian Bluhm,	25; Ryan
Clark,	22; Austin Cloyd,	18;
Jocelyne	Couture-Nowak,	49; Kevin
Granata,	46; Matthew G.	Gwaltney,
24; Caitlin	Hammaren, 19; Jeremy	
	Herbstritt, 27; Rachael	
Elizabeth	Hill, 18; Emily Hilscher,	
19; Jarrett	Lane, 22; Matthew J.	
La Porte,	20; Henry Lee, 20;	
Liviu Librescu, 76; G.V.	Loganathan, 51;	
Partahi Lumbantoruan,	34; Lauren McCain,	
20; Daniel O'Neil, 22;	Juan Ramón	

Ortiz-
 Ortiz, 26; Minal
 Panchal, 26; Daniel Perez Cueva,
 21; Erin Peterson, 18; Mike Pohle Jr., 23;
 Julia Pryde, 23; Mary Read, 19;
 Reema Samaha, 18; Waleed
 Shaalan, 32; Leslie Sherman,
 20; Maxine Turner, 22; Nicole White,
 20. **2008:** Taniesha Butler, 26;
 Karsheika Graves, 21; Lawrence King,
 14; Gayle Dubowski, 20; Catalina
 Garcia, 20; Julianna Gehant, 32; RYANNE
 Mace, 19; Daniel Parmenter, 20;
 Omero Mendez, 26; Ryan McDonald, 15;
 Chavares Block, 19; Ryan Henderson,
 18; Amanda Collette, 15. **2009:**
 Justin Cosby, 21. **2010:** Todd Brown,
 14; Maria Ragland Davis, 50; Adriel
 Johnson, 52; G. K. Podila, 52; Larry
 Wallington, 48; Jose Daniel
 Cisneros, 15. **2011:** Vicki
 Kaspar, 58; Tremaine
 Deante Paul, 18; Deriek W. Crouse,
 39. **2012:** Demetrius Hewlin,
 16; Russell

King Jr., 17; Daniel Parmertor,	16; Dale Regan, 63;
Tshering Rinzing Bhutia, 38;	Doris Chibuko, 40;
Sonam Choedon, 33; Grace	Kim, 23; Katleen Ping,
24; Judith Seymour,	53; Lydia
Sim, 21; Terrance	Wright,
18; Charlotte	Bacon, 6;
Daniel Barden, 7;	Rachel
D'Avino, 29; Olivia	Engel, 6;
Josephine Gay,	7; Dawn
Hochsprung,	47;
Dylan Hockley,	6;
Madeleine	Hsu,
6; Catherine	Hubbard,
6; Chase	Kowalski,
7; Jesse Lewis,	6; Ana
Marquez-Greene,	6; James
Mattioli, 6;	Grace
McDonnell, 7;	Anne
Marie Murphy, 52;	Emilie
Parker, 6; Jack	Pinto,
6; Noah Pozner, 6;	Caroline
Previdi, 6; Jessica Rekos, 6; Avielle	
Richman, 6; Lauren Rousseau,	
30; Mary Sherlach, 56;	

Soto, 27; Benjamin	Victoria Wheeler,
6; Allison Wyatt, 6. 2013: Kristopher	
Smith, 27; Caitlin Cornett, 20; Jackie	
Douglas Cornett,	53; Taylor
Cornett, 12;	Tyrone
Lawson, 17; Sean	Collier,
26; Carlos Franco,	68;
Marcela Franco,	26;
Margarita Gomez,	68;
Roderick Bobo, 15;	
Michael Landsberry,	
45; Claire Davis,	17. 2014: Andrew Boldt, 21;
Brandon Robinson,	20; Ricardo Zetino, 31; Darryl
Smith, 19; Paul	Lee, 19; Emilio Hoffman, 14;
Kristofer Hunter,	17; Shaylee
Chuckulnaskit, 14;	Andrew Fryberg,
15; Zoe Galasso,	14; Gia Soriano,
14; Khambell	Manning, 16.
2015: Benito	Aguirre, 16;
Ron Lane, 44;	Christopher
Starks, 22; Roman Gonzalez,	25;
Ethan Schmidt,	39;
Lucero	

<p>Alcaraz, 19; Quinn Glen Eibel, 18; Jason 33; Lawrence Levine, 67; Sarena Anspach, 20; Rebecka Saltmarsh Dietz, 20; Brent Randall, Selmon, 19; 19. 2016: May S. Klug, 39; Jacob Jonathan Alfredo Elaine Smith, 53; Gonzalez, 20; Sam Strahan, 15; Francisco Fernandez, 18; Casey Marquez, 17. 2018: Najee Ali Baker, 21; Preston Cope, 15; Bailey Nicole Holt, 15; Ralph Kennedy, 32; Scott Alhadeff, 14; 14; Nicholas Feis, 37; Jaime Chris Hixon, 49; Cara Loughran, 14; Joaquin Oliver, 14; Meadow Pollack, 18; Helena Carmen Schentrup, 16; Peter Davis, 48; Diva Davis, 47; Courtlin</p>	<p>Cooper, 18; Lucas Johnson, Dawn Moore, 44; Treven Carnes, 18; Kim 59; Colin Brough, 18; Cameron Anthony White, Kieu, 15; William Hall, 6. 2017: Martinez, 8; Karen Janeera Nickol Beigel, 35; Alyssa Martin Duque, Dworet, 17; Aaron Guttenberg, 14; Luke Hoyer, 15; 14; Gina Montalto, 17; Alaina Petty, Ramsay, 17; Alex Schachter, 14; Wang, 15; Kaleel Clarke, 20; James Arrington, 17; Jaelynn Willey, 16.</p>
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San Diego Union-Tribune Editorial Board. (2018, April 20). All of these people have died in school shootings since Columbine. Enough. Retrieved from <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/opinion/editorials/sd-columbine-anniversary-school-shootings-20180420-htmlstory.html>

Appendix D: Chelsea's Op-Ed as It Appeared in the Installation for *Equipment for Living*

Daily Camera

OPINION: GUEST OPINIONS

Chelsea Magyar: Mitigate school shootings through threat reporting

By Chelsea Magyar

POSTED: 02/28/2019 04:34:35 PM MST

UPDATED: 02/28/2019 04:35:39 PM MST

Like any Valentine's Day, lovers made plans and singles remembered their singleness this year. But amidst the chocolate and flowers and singles' awareness, the one-year anniversary of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., loomed, asking for a different kind of awareness. An awareness that sees that not everything is all right and that gun violence in schools is still an issue but not a hopeless one.

Awareness could be the key to mitigating the problem of school shootings: awareness of those around us and awareness of the resources we can utilize to mitigate school shootings.

In many incidents of school gun violence, someone knows that something is off. A 2004 study conducted by the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education that examined 37 incidents of U.S. school violence from December 1974 through May 2000 revealed that in most cases, at least one other person knew about the attacker's intentions or attack plan. This shows that we are often aware when danger is afoot, but we may not know what to do about it. We are not aware of the seriousness of a threat or we are unaware of our potential to positively intervene.

To address these blind spots, I think Coloradans should be aware of Safe2Tell, an anonymous reporting system through which students, teachers, administrators and community members can share concerns with law enforcement without being traced and with assurance that their concerns will be taken seriously.

According to research conducted by University of Arizona associate professor in psychology Michael Sulkowski, trust that support systems will respond to students' concerns and the experience of connectedness to the campus community positively correlated with students' willingness to report perceived threats. On the other hand, lack of trust in support systems and disconnection to community were among the factors that prevented threat reporting. Safe2Tell's assurances that calls are not traced and that proper action is taken and tracked provides tools to encourage trust in this reporting system. Campus connectedness is perhaps beyond the scope of Safe2Tell, but an awareness of the power of the individual to reach out, intervene and become an agent of connection combined with systems like Safe2Tell could make all the difference between a school shooting and a troubled individual listened to and treated with compassion.

Threat reporting in action shows this is true. In 2011, the founders of Safe2Tell reported that 83 percent of threats communicated to Safe2Tell resulted in positive action and that the program prevented an estimated 28 attacks. There are also more recent success stories that can be found at Safe2Tell.org.

To encourage awareness of reporting systems such as Safe2Tell, I recommend that schools invite Safe2Tell to give presentations and that individuals program the Safe2Tell number — 1-877-542-7233 — into their contacts, download the app on their phones, and visit the Safe2Tell website. In the 2011 Safe2Tell study, researchers found that Safe2Tell received a larger number of calls after trainings about the reporting system.

Valentine's Day may always be a day of singles' awareness. It will now also be a day to mourn the lives lost and the tragedy suffered at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. But perhaps it can also be a day that makes us aware of the individuals around us and aware of the power of a single call and a single agent of change.

Chelsea Magyar is a communication and dance student at the University of Colorado.

Magyar, C. (2019, February 28). Chelsea Magyar: Mitigate school shootings through threat reporting. Retrieved from http://www.dailycamera.com/guest-opinions/ci_32483864/chelsea-magyar-mitigate-school-shootings-through-threat-reporting

Appendix E: Audience Questionnaire from *Equipment for Living*

Audience Questionnaire

1. What stood out to you during the performance/installation/discussion? What did you think, feel, and experience?

2. What would it take to stop school shootings?

Appendix F: Program from *Equipment for Living*

Equipment for Living

An Artistic Exploration of School Shootings

Equipment for Living is a part of a larger honors thesis that explores and compares news media and artistic representations of school shootings. The research involved an analysis of the Arapahoe High School shooting as recounted by *Denver Post* articles and the play *Thirteen*, which was written by survivors of the shooting, Scotty Powell and Kendyl Meyer. *Equipment for Living* addresses the issue of school shootings in general, and after its culmination, it will be put into conversation with analyses of the news articles and play, with the goal of coming to a deeper understanding of how we make sense of school shootings. The final thesis will be defended in early April.

Choreography

Chelsea Magyar

Dancers

Xaalan Dolence
Alexa Graffeo
Kyle Lee
Chelsea Magyar

Music

"Twisted Memory," an original score by Sarah Vail, Brian Sinnock, and Josiah Piper

Production Team

Reed Otto, Stage Manager and Lighting Designer

Angelo Baca, Technical Crew

Xaalan Dolence, House Manager

Mark Tulk, Videographer

Special Thanks

Thank you to all my advisors, professors, instructors, and friends who helped get the word out about this show. Thank you especially to Pete Simonson, Helanius J. Wilkins, Iain Court, and

Cindy White for their direction and assistance with this project. Thank you so very much to the dancers, both the ones in the show as well as Sarah Napier, Ethan Fisher, and Anna Blanco who helped in the earlier stages, who were vital to the choreography process. Thank you to Mom and Dad for their support. Thank you to God because without Him, this would not be possible and this show would not have been inspired.

Acknowledgements

I am thankful that I have so many people to thank! My words cannot do justice to the amount of support and encouragement I have received in working on this thesis. I'd first like to thank my advisor, Pete Simonson, for mentoring me through this process, reading through numerous drafts, and for sitting on my committee. Thank you to Donna Mejia and Cindy White, my other two committee members. Donna and Pete have both been mentors to me since my freshman year of college and both inspire me and help me grow in so many ways. I have also known Cindy since my freshman year, and as honors thesis coordinator, she helped my dream thesis become a reality. Thank you to my parents because they encourage me to dream big, take action, and love wholeheartedly. Thank you Iain Court, Beth Osnes, Helanius J. Wilkins, and Jeff Motter for their advice and assistance in conducting this research. Thank you to Allan Van Hoye for helping me navigate NewsBank. A huge thank you to my dancers Kyle Lee, Xaalan Dolence, Alexa Graffeeo, Sarah Napier, Ethan Fisher, and Anna Blanco, who were amazing to watch as artists and listen to as compassionate souls. Thank you to Sarah Vail and her musicians, Reed Otto, Angelo Baca, Mark and Niki Tulk for their technical support. Thank you to Michelle Piccone and Lizzie Lynch who helped me find *Thirteen*. Thank you to Lily Tovado, who designed my poster for *Equipment for Living*. Thank you to all my friends and family for listening to me chat excitedly about my research, grapple with the topic of school shootings, and struggle to finish my paper. Thank you for everyone who came to my show, helped me advertise it, or wished they could be there. Thank you to Dan Apuan, Rex Wood, Meredith Greer, and Ben Beese for proofreading my paper. Thank you to the survivors of and people affected by school shootings, to first responders, and to artists and activists working to mitigate school shootings for

fighting the good fight and for the inspiration you bring. Finally, thanks be to God that this paper is now written. :)