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**GRETA THUNBERG'S DISRUPTIONS:
HOW RHETORIC BREAKS TRAINED INCAPACITIES TO CLIMATE CHANGE**

By

Mackenzie Peacock

B.A. University of Maine, 2019

A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

(in Communication)

The Graduate School

University of Maine

May 2021

Advisory Committee:

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After her impactful speech at the United Nations (UN) Climate Action Summit in 2019, Greta Thunberg's performance set the stage for her generation and children as the central actors for the current climate justice Movement. Although Thunberg's activism and global youth involvement in environmental politics were prominent prior to this speech, there is a need to understand the rhetoric behind Thunberg's performance in "The World is Waking Up." Considering her global impact as a young activist, the following thesis is a critical, rhetorical analysis of her UN speech. I examine Thunberg's rhetoric in this speech and interpret how it produces affects. By working deeply with the performativity of her words, I suggest that her rhetoric is a culmination of identification, consubstantiality, and affect. Her rhetoric produces affects of disruption seen in her performance of disgust, most notably when she says, "How dare you" Her rhetorical disruption matters because it breaks world leaders' trained incapacities to neoliberalism and thus persuades, through wonder and imagination, the importance of a sustainable environmental future. This thesis suggests the importance of children, especially activists with Autism, should have a voice in environmental activism and contribute to the fields

of rhetoric and Environmental Communication. Her rhetoric also demonstrates the power of emotion as a persuasive force because of its ability to disrupt world leaders' trained incapacities.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the midst of global change and turmoil, Greta Thunberg, a renowned figure and current face of the modern climate justice movement, calls for more than hope when she says, “We do need hope -- of course we do. But the one thing we need more than hope is action. Once we start to act, hope is everywhere” (Clinton, 2019, p. 125). Known for her bluntness and matter-of-fact way of speaking, her message of hope contrasts from the grim reality of climate change she intends to wake the world up to. In many speeches, she has told audiences that she wants them to panic, there are no grey areas for survival, and “change is coming, whether you like it or not” (Thunberg, 2019, p. 99). This urgent push for change and action was most evident in her speech “The World is Waking Up,” delivered in 2019 at the United Nations (UN) Climate Action Summit. Most notably, when she condemned a room full of politicians by admonishing “How dare you” (Thunberg, 2019), suddenly, her message of hope in relation to action became clearer and more urgent. Although she was already an established leader in the movement at the time, Thunberg abruptly became a global star following this performance (Jung et al., 2020), as if the world began to pay attention to both the impacts of climate change and children as strong political leaders.

Based on Thunberg’s inspiring role in today’s climate justice movement, my thesis is a critical, rhetorical analysis of Greta Thunberg’s acclaimed speech “The World is Waking Up.” As an environmental and climate justice activist, Thunberg is a rhetor and performer, meaning she makes specific choices in her speech by combining symbols and materials in ways that seek to produce affects (Ahmed, 2004). By analyzing her speech, I arrive at an understanding of the

rhetoric she produces and the performative tactics she employs to persuade audiences about the dire circumstances of climate change.

This thesis is organized into the following parts: literature review, methodology, analysis, and conclusion. In the literature review, I examine various rhetorical approaches, mainly from Kenneth Burke (1945, 1950, 1954), Sara Ahmed (2004), and Debra Hawhee (2009). By identifying their key concepts and theories, I situate them within the context of environmental activism and theorize Thunberg's rhetorical approaches. Doing this, I describe activist approaches, what rhetoric does as performance, and how rhetoric persuades or produces affects on audiences. I then cover my methodology by listing all of the concepts synthesized from the literature review and describe its potential applicability to analyzing her speech. I also describe my orientation to rhetorical criticism, rhetoric as performance, and provide details on the archive I chose to conduct my analysis. Moreover, my analysis begins with a critical observation and thick rhetorical description of Thunberg's speech. Based on my observations on her performativity, in my analysis I provide a critical explanation of the rhetoric she (re) produces and how it performs through her speech acts. I argue that her rhetoric involves identification, consubstantiality, and affect, and by performing "How dare you", she performs the emotion of disgust to build affects that are collectively persuasive. By analyzing the affects of her speech, I find that her rhetoric is disruptive, as it breaks world leaders' trained incapacities to neoliberalism. Finally, in the concluding section, I provide main insights from the analysis, describe limitations on Thunberg's affect as an activist, and discuss her contributions to the fields of rhetoric and Environmental Communication. As a whole, my project matters because it makes a case for children for disruptors of change, as Thunberg presents herself as a capable thinker and leader through her performance of rhetoric.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In their book, *The Book of Gutsy Women*, Hillary Clinton and Chelsea Clinton (2019) point to Greta Thunberg as an exemplar, encouraging readers to take inspiration from Thunberg's resilience and dedication to being an "Earth Defender" (p. 123). To be deemed "gutsy" and an "Earth Defender" is noteworthy, especially by two such prominent women and leaders, and speaks to the impact Thunberg has made as an environmental activist. And, as I aim to show, this acclaim is due in no small part to Thunberg's ability to speak and perform as a rhetorician. In her speeches, she tells citizens and politicians that she wants them to panic and be fearful because our house, the Earth, is on fire (Thunberg, 2019). During her speech at the UN Climate Action Summit, Thunberg only increased the urgency to panic, proclaiming, "I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you all come to us young people for hope? How dare you!" (Thunberg, 2019, p. 96). And while this speech occurred after the release of the Clinton's book, this performance even more so proved her gutsiness, as she bravely stood in the global spotlight and, through her chastising words, positioned youth as Earth Defenders.

Her impact as an Earth Defender begs the question: How, exactly, does she affect change as a rhetor? How do her speeches shape rhetorics of climate change and climate justice, and how does her rhetoric (re)shape her identity and constitute her activist work? By focusing on theoretical frameworks of rhetoric that draw from Kenneth Burke (1945, 1950, 1954), Debra Hawhee (2009), and Sarah Ahmed (2004), this literature review works critically with their approaches and identifies concepts that will be formative for my theoretical and critical analysis of Thunberg's speeches.

This literature review is organized into two parts: (1) a rhetorical orientation to environmental activism; and (2) theorizing Thunberg's rhetorical approaches. In the first part, I focus on rhetorical persuasion in Environmental Communication, synthesizing the meaning and importance of Burke's (1950) concepts of identification and consubstantiality, as well as affect (Ahmed, 2004). I also draw from the work of another powerful environmental figure, namely Rachel Carson, to help illustrate resonances with Thunberg and key aspects of my orientation to rhetoric and affect. The section also includes a review of rhetorical methods performed by female environmental activists, focusing on feminine and militant styles in performing motherhood (Peeples, 2003; Peeples & DeLuca, 2006). I then connect these styles of persuasion to "ephebic rhetoric" (Thomas, 2020, p. 3) to discuss the value of including children's voices in conversations about climate change. The inclusion of children's voices in activism is examined as a response to 'the next generation' trope, where children are societally positioned to embody hope for sustainable futures, yet their agency is simultaneously undermined due to their age (Walker, 2017, p. 14). Thus, their ability to use agency over their limitations is described using the rhetorical concepts of the scene-agent ratio (Burke, 1945). In the second part, I explore theoretical approaches to climate justice activism and focus on the concept of efficiency (Hawhee, 2009) in relation to trained incapacities (Burke, 1954). By using the example of body knowledge and movement, efficiencies describe the importance of having consciousness about the world as well as developing new modes of thought and communication. I suggest that the inability to acknowledge efficiencies are trained incapacities and, the concepts of wonder (Ahmed, 2004) and imagination (Burke, 1950), allow movement toward positive change and adopting new perspectives. Moreover, I also synthesize numerous approaches to the performativity of language which include amplification (Burke, 1950; Fahnestock, 2011; Laib,

1990; Winderman, 2019), performativity of disgust and stickiness (Ahmed, 2004), circulation (Gries & Brooke, 2018; Bradshaw, 2018; Borda & Marshall, 2020), repetition (Laib, 1990; Winderman, 2019), and echoes (Yergeau, 2018). Lastly, I explore rhetoric in relation to an audience and how rhythms (Hawhee, 2009) and transportation (Green & Brock, 2002) describe belief change as a result of a performer's persuasion. By first reviewing these rhetorical concepts drawn from the literature review, in the following chapter, I then apply them to Thunberg's speech that analyzes what rhetoric is, how it moves through performativity, and how it influences her rhetoric as an Earth Defender.

Rhetorical Orientations to Environmental Activism

Persuasion as Identification and Consubstantiality

A Burkean approach to rhetoric understands that identification and consubstantiality are key to persuasion (Burke, 1950). According to Burke (1950), through identification, there is a recognition of division that exists between the audience and speaker. Then, through consubstantiality, a mediatory ground is established by finding shared commonalities or substance that unifies inherent separateness. By acknowledging the importance of these concepts as persuasion, identification and consubstantiality also have vital applicability within the field of Environmental Communication, especially when the speaker is able to communicate complex information about the environment to the public in a way that is accessible and encourages change. Environmental activists encounter the challenge of connecting across difference because they need to effectively persuade their audience to care about the issues presented through speech when audiences may not hold the same values about those issues. This was pressing in 1962, where Rachel Carson, a marine biologist and activist, sparked a fierce debate about the dangers involving the pesticide industry (Murphy, 2018). She is a notable example that helps

demonstrate Burke's (1950) orientation to rhetoric because, by identifying with her audience, she was able to inspire action on pesticide regulation by encouraging audiences to care about this issue. Carson's ability to communicate accessible information about the environmental dangers of DDT and pesticides allowed her supporters to act and make their own decisions regarding individual and policy-oriented changes for the environment (Murphy, 2018). In this section, I review identification and consubstantiality as vital rhetorical concepts for achieving persuasion. I then connect these concepts to Carson's activism about DDT and pesticides to serve as an example of its applicability in the field of Environmental Communication.

Identification is a crucial rhetorical concept because it is a symbolic method of persuasion that allows a message to persuade across division. Burke (1950) suggests that the basic function of rhetoric is to persuade using language as a symbolic means to evoke a response. By aiming to evoke a response, persuasion involves a particular purpose or motive in appealing to an audience through the use of creativity in speech (Hochmuth, 1952). A motive to persuade is driven by division that inherently exists between the speaker and audience, and Burke (1950) refers to this as identification. Identification means that any persuasive act is an identifying one and involves a reflexive process where one "considers the ways in which individuals are at odds with one another, or become identified with groups more or less at odds with one another" (Burke, 1950, p. 22). "At odds" emphasizes that identification cannot exist without division. Therefore, Burke (1950) suggests that, "You persuade a man [*sic*] only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his" (p. 55). In other words, the rhetor must consider multiple ways in which they differ from their audience in order to connect to their perceptions and "make the hearer believe that he shares in the praise" (Burke, 1950, p. 55). And while this may be a deliberate choice as a means of

having a motivation to persuade, it is important to also recognize its use as unconscious and situational. Because division is inevitable, identification emphasizes a speaker's need to act upon themselves to speak across difference (Hochmuth, 1952). Overall, the concept of identification drives the basis of persuasion, as it portrays a speaker's motive to connect and feel compelled to speak to an audience because difference exists.

Identification by division is further explained by and works in tandem with the concept of consubstantiality. Consubstantiality involves substance between the speaker and audience acting together (Hochmuth, 1952). By "substance," this refers to concepts, images, ideas, and attitudes that become shared (Burke, 1950). And because persuasion does not exist without division, consubstantiality emphasizes that identification is productive through opposites and unifies substances through separateness (Ivie, 2005). To illustrate this concept, Burke (1950) provides the following example: "A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so" (p. 20). In this sense, the speaker, or A, does not establish an absolute, unified identity with the audience, or B, but rather a "mediatory ground" that is established when the rhetor seeks to find a shared substance (Davis, 2008, p. 125). In other words, an individual seeks to establish a sense of identity, but their identity is still unique in of itself (Davis, 2008; Burke, 1950). As Hochmuth (1952) put it, "Instead of trying to exclude a doctrine of substance, he [*sic*] restores it to a central position and throws critical light on it" (p. 137). Overall, the concept of consubstantiality with identification is necessary for persuasion because, when used, the speaker recognizes that with division there is connectedness. The speaker upholds their identity and substance because it is shared, and thus is able to find unity and communicate across difference.

The presence of identification and consubstantiality are notable with Rachel Carson too because she was able to bring science-based issues into public discourse and encourage public agency and responsibility in order to evoke change. Burke (1950) warns that seeking absolute, unified identification can be dangerous, even if it is grounded in morality. “If men [*sic*] were wholly and truly of one substance, absolute communication would be of man’s very essence,” Burke (1950) states, but it “would not be ideal, as it now is, partly embodied in material conditions and partly frustrated by these same conditions” (p. 22). For Burke, pure identification is unnatural because people become frustrated by sameness and end up resisting it. This was the case for Carson, because while she was able to identify among scientists in her field, she knew that, as an activist, relying on communication within one group and their consensus would not lead to change. Moving environmental and scientific communication to public discourse was especially crucial after the release of *Silent Spring* in 1962, where her work in exposing the dangers of widely-used pesticides and DDT was intensively contested among scientists (Murphy, 2018). Because Carson’s work was viewed as threatening and generated controversy, from an activist standpoint, she could not wait for a consensus to be made amongst chemists and food scientists, some of whom believed pesticides “were beneficial and safe” if used properly (Murphy, 2018, p. 2). Frustrated by a lack of consensus within her scientific cohort, Carson decided that the public was capable of understanding science despite their difference in expertise. Instead of performing as “an expert responsible for filtering scientific information to the public,” identification and consubstantiality shaped how she shared her knowledge in order to “empower people to do this for themselves” because she knew audience participation was necessary for public change (Murphy, 2018, p. 12 & 15). By telling them to “make up their own minds” and never fear to question or challenge authorities, her encouragement of audience autonomy uses

identification and consubstantiality because it appeals to the audience's good will (Murphy, 2018, p. 12; Burke, 1950). Overall, with her knowledge and communication shaped by identification and consubstantiality, she understood that her identity as a scientist does not limit her from connecting with diverse and non-scientific audiences and advocate for change.

This section focused on identification and consubstantiality as vital yet complex rhetorical concepts within Environmental Communication. Burke (1950) situates identification as a useful concept for persuasion because the speaker, situationally, considers how they differ from the audience they are addressing and therefore builds a sense of commonality. Consubstantiality builds on this but emphasizes that the speaker does not dismiss their own identity despite acknowledging that they differ. Carson serves as an influential example of Burke's notion of these concepts because of her ability to encourage public participation in science-based issues. Attaining widely contested information about pesticides, she identified with the public and communicated that she believed they can understand its moral dangers and ultimately have the power to enact change. By considering the applicability of identification and consubstantiality within the field of Environmental Communication, it is important to evaluate the speaker's impact on audiences through the presence of these concepts. In the next section, I review the concept of affect and connect it to identification and consubstantiality by continuing to draw from Carson's activism as an example.

Persuasion as Affect

In this section, I suggest persuasion in rhetoric is shaped by affect (Ahmed, 2004). As discussed, persuasion involves a motivation to evoke a response through a symbolic means. This can be understood by reviewing affect because, as a concept, it explains the impact caused by the movement of language or emotion delivered by a speaker. In relation to identification and

consubstantiality, affect is crucial to review here too because, despite how much a speaker is able to identify with their audience, the speaker's identity hinders how the information they convey will be perceived. For instance, because Carson was a rising star in a male-dominated scientific field during the 1950s, she faced sexism, which invalidated her positionality as a woman scientist and hindered a universal understanding of her message involving pesticides (Corbett, 2001). By acknowledging Carson's strengths as an activist as well as her backlash, this section broadly discusses Ahmed's (2004) concept of affect and is further examined with Carson's impact as an activist.

Persuasion in rhetoric involves producing an affect, meaning language "leaves a mark or a trace" on an audience (Ahmed, 2004, p. 6). In other words, persuasive affect is about being moved and usually involves an emotional response based on how a persuasive speaker made an audience feel. For example, Ahmed (2004) analyzes affect through emotion, such as pain, and states that pain presses upon and inhabits surfaces and bodies. What this means is that pain is sensed and experienced as an "intensification and a departure from what is lived as ordinary" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 27). So, what is felt or pressed is an affect induced by emotion, and its ability to attach itself to someone creates a response. This affective response involving an intense emotion will often attach itself to others and is "produced as an effect of its circulation," meaning an impression moves and exists at societal level (Ahmed, 2004, p. 45-46). An affect rooted in pain or hate, for example, can become political and generate degrading affects and impressions, therefore making one's existence threatening in society. Overall, by reviewing affect, it is clear that rhetoric does something impactful when guided by the intensification of emotional responses induced by persuasion.

Public response to Carson's activism serves as an example of how, despite her ability to identify and be consubstantial with her audience, their influence of an affect driven by sexism impeded their ability to be persuaded by her environmental messaging. Even though her scientific findings were disputed, she also drew immense criticism because of her identity as a woman and being a minority in her field, subjecting her to public sexism. Because Ahmed (2004) states that affect resides at a societal level, sexism was bound to circulate because Carson worked within a male-dominated profession during the 1950-1960s (Corbett, 2001). The sexist affect was evident in media portrayals and her opponent's public comments. For example, the media criticized her for being too emotional, with *Time* magazine calling her work "emotional and inaccurate outburst" (Corbett, 2001, p. 728). Additionally, when she was featured on a CBS Reports broadcast in 1963, she was pit up against male chemist Dr. Robert White-Stevens, who told an audience of millions of people that Carson's work lacked experience and, "If Man were to practice agriculture as Carson indicates, we would return to the dark ages" (Kroll, 2001, p. 414). It is clear that when Carson identified and was consubstantial with the public, this left a mark on the audience that was influenced by sexism, harmfully separating Carson's female identity from her scientific one and viewing her overall existence as threatening (Ahmed, 2004). Despite Carson's capabilities for communicating across differences, her existence within a male-dominated profession produced affects in which audiences focused too much on how she differed, negatively impacting the perception of her activism because of sexism.

Overall, when examining affect, it is important to consider how persuasion produces an impression that thrives within social spheres and therefore hinders the possibility for environmental messaging to be reached. Affect presents what rhetoric does and how connecting across difference, through identification and consubstantiality, may further enhance division

depending on situational circumstances. Carson may have been able to identify with audiences, but during a time where most women were not scientists, she was subject to affects of sexism, where her message was seen as too emotional and threatening. In considering harmful affects, it is important to consider rhetorical styles that uphold womanhood and have the potential to be persuasively and positively affective. In the next section, I review rhetorical methods and styles performed by female environmental activists, specifically by activist mothers and children.

Rhetorical Methods Performed by Female Environmental Activists

It is important to note that “the majority of the leadership and membership of the Environmental Justice movement is female” (Peeples & DeLuca, 2006, p. 63). The existing literature surrounding rhetorical methods performed by environmental activists supports this claim, as it is evident that women, many of whom are also mothers, are influential leaders in Environmental Justice movements. This influence is based on the feminine and militant mother styles that aims, through rhetoric, to save children (Peeples & DeLuca, 2006). Through the use of both styles, activist mothers emphasize the need for environmental sustainability because this ensures a healthier and safer life for the children, making kids the vulnerable subject of environmental danger. Yet, it is apparent that limited literature exists concerning children being agents of change within the movement for environmental justice. Since Thunberg makes a case for children as powerful leaders, it is important for their voices to be considered and examine, perhaps, if the rhetoric employed by activist mothers have an impact on their agency. With that, this section reviews rhetorical strategies performed by activist mothers and connects their methods to child activists, such as Amariyanna Copeny or “Little Miss Flint,” an example of a young woman who portrays an influence from activist mothers.

For many female environmental activists, performing motherhood is a constitutive, rhetorical force that stresses the importance of speaking on behalf of children who need to be saved from environmental injustice (Peeples & DeLuca, 2006). It is evident that activists, who are mothers, use feminine style as a strategic persuasive choice to make environmental politics personal. This involves embracing their maternal identities and drawing from their knowledge as caretakers to share personal narratives that raise awareness about how children, as a vulnerable group, suffer from poor environmental conditions, such as lack of clean water (Thomas, 2020). As Peeples (2003) points out in her analysis of environmental activism in low-income neighborhoods in South-Central Los Angeles, activist mothers, who upheld and performed their maternal identities, played a pivotal role in exposing environmental harm their community is subject to by the city. Playing the role of a “concerned mother” through public narrative and using a “private sphere identity as a rhetorical tactic” during public protests established a collective identity for women “under the altruistic goal of protecting their children” (Peeples, 2003, p. 88-89). This goal also stems from their outrage at and distrust of local and government corporations exhibiting “total disregard for the lives of their children,” so being a “good mother” in advocating for environmental justice marks their passion for maintaining life and drawing attention to unnatural conditions injustice inflicts on children (Peeples & DeLuca, 2006, p. 69). Ultimately, this decision to become active and move from the private to public sphere occurs because, with children being in need of protection from environmental danger, activist mothers believe “no other course of action will save them” and, therefore, are compelled to step up and demand change (Peeples & DeLuca, 2006, p. 73). Overall, the use of feminine style portraying motherhood is an important rhetorical tactic that exhibits agency and urgency to protect children from environmental injustice by using narrative and upholding one’s maternal identity.

In addition to feminine style, activist mothers also embrace maternal militancy as a confrontational tactic to effectively communicate child endangerment caused by environmental injustice. As Peeples and DeLuca (2006) point out, it is not enough to only perform feminine, “good mother” styles because, from a constructivist standpoint, it may be assumed by audiences that activist mothers already have the skills necessary to organize and address the community due to what is learned in the home or societal constructs (Peeples & DeLuca, 2006, p. 72). Feminine style should not be excluded, but rather performed alongside the militant mother role because it demands greater attention from the public on child endangerment from environmental injustice. For instance, Mother Jones, who was an early twentieth-century union activist, used personal narratives to connect with her audience on the issues of child labor, but also employed shaming tactics that were meant to toughen the audience for an upcoming fight, like how mothers “raise their children in threatening neighborhoods” (Peeples & DeLuca, 2006, p. 73). In one instance during a public meeting, Jones recounted a story and then rejected an audience member’s audacity to interrupt her. She demanded, “You sit down, I have the floor,” then carried on with her narrative (Tonn & Kuhn, 1993, p. 321). This militant mother performance demonstrated Jones’ ability to command the room and employ her motherhood in a way where she was not silenced or disrespected, all without dismissing feminine style in her performance. Using a mix of motherly rhetorical styles both educates the audience and reprimands them for being incapable of seeing the truth (Peeples & DeLuca, 2006). Overall, when the survival of children is at stake with environmental injustice, activist mothers like Mother Jones presented a case where employing a mix of rhetorical methods of motherhood in activist performance is effective in mobilizing an effort to save the children.

In contrast, Thomas (2020) identifies that while rhetorical scholarship has examined performing motherhood in order to protect children, limited research exists in how mother activists empower children to become agents of change. Specifically, Thomas (2020) analyzes the efforts employed by then eight-year-old Amariyanna Copeny, otherwise known as “Little Miss Flint,” whose activism in 2015 surrounding Flint, Michigan’s water crisis offered “a chance to move beyond the notion that children are apolitical victims of environmental justice” (p. 3). As activist mothers embrace their identities when performing activism, Copeny grounds herself in her positionality as a child, to what Thomas (2020) refers to as “ephebic rhetoric” (p. 10). Ephebic rhetoric is rhetoric “crafted by and for children” in which children draw from their youthful experiences as persuasion (Thomas, 2020, p. 14). During her speeches, Little Miss Flint purposefully evokes childhood activities in relation to water issues, such as playing with dolls, which reminds audiences that the severity of Flint’s water crisis is so immense that it diverts children from their ability to play (Thomas, 2020, p. 12). Not only does she rely on her ephebic experiences to enact change, she also mixes her childish rhetoric with blunt and direct styles. For example, in a 2017 video of the Climate March, she is featured as “Little Miss Rambo” and is shown with a painted yellow sun on her face and neon-pink tennis shoes, while tying a bandana around her forehead reading “RESIST” (Thomas, 2020, p. 14). Her juxtaposition of feminine and militant symbols showcases her willingness to perform her identity while appearing contradictory to what is expected traditionally of children outside the home (Thomas, 2020). Based on Mother Jones and other mother activists, it is apparent that their rhetorical strategies may have an influence on Copeny, and more research is needed to fully understand the relationship between activist mothers and children. However, what is clear, based on Copeny’s

performances, is that children are not just subjects of vulnerability or victimhood but are also sources of courage, agency, and change.

Overall, this section describes how activists who are women draw from their experiences in the home in order to be heard and advocate for positive change to the environment. For further analysis, it will be important to consider whether Thunberg performs with feminine and militant styles of rhetoric and, if so, take note if activist mothers played a role in that influence, including her own mother. And while it is crucial to review rhetoric performed by activist mothers to analyze a point of influence, the narrative of “saving the children” has the potential to be limiting because it frames children as passive and too vulnerable to understand complex issues like climate change. I take this up in the next section to describe how listening to children and their perception of the world is essential, and reframing the narrative of “saving the children” might be necessary for today’s environmental movement because, as indicated by ephebic rhetoric, children can indeed be agents of their own saving.

Children’s Capabilities for Environmental Activism

While limited research exists concerning the possible link between mother and child environmental activists, what is certain is that children are capable thinkers and agents for environmental activism. Considering that activists focus on saving children, this frames environmental activism as a situation handled by adults. However, what is forgotten or taken for granted is that one’s concern for nature often begins during childhood, where children can experience and feel a deep connection to the world around them (Cohen, 2008). Because they are taken for granted for their environmental observations, “children are ignored as inherent members of society” and excluded from public spaces where activism is performed (Bergmann & Ossewaarde, 2020, p. 269). Yet, their ability to overcome this exclusion can be described by

applying Burke's (1954) scene-agent ratio, a rhetorical concept that describes an ability to overcome circumstances within a space or environment. This section covers literature that focuses on how early interactions give children the capacity to think critically and ultimately speak up despite their age difference. Additionally, being labeled as 'the next generation' allows kids to acquire new knowledge or perspectives about environmental issues that are both encouraged and conflicted by older generations (Walker, 2017). With that, by understanding children's capacities and consciousness for the future, this section will also include a review on the importance of the scene-agent ratio as it helps justify a need to include children's voices in conversations about climate change.

It is often forgotten that "children have unique realities and perspectives to offer as experts on their own lived experiences" through their openly social, physical, emotional, and cognitive interactions with the world around them (Cohen, 2008, p. 257). Children are not passive observers of the world, especially during their adolescent years, which is a crucial time for them to become involved, intrigued, and nurtured by their parents or adults to ultimately develop a concern for the environment (Cohen, 2008). In order to understand how they develop a concern, Cohen (2008) conducted forty-two open-ended interviews with children ages 10-13 at the 2002 International Children's Environment Conference. The interviews asked why they joined the conference, their narrative perceptions of environmental activism, and their overall beliefs surrounding the environment (Cohen, 2008). Cohen's (2008) results are significant, as her findings verify that children are critical thinkers and have the capacity to "grapple with issues of rights, responsibilities and feelings of belonging with the human and biotic community" (p. 269). Most notably, her findings present that children are not hesitant to question adults on practical and moral grounds, and ultimately find confidence in themselves to take a stance against

injustice (Cohen, 2008). Overall, the results of the study indicate that children's early experiences and interactions with the environment give them the capacity to think critically and use their voices toward addressing issues.

Moreover, children's ability to build agency and stand publicly against environmental injustice begins, like activist mothers, in the private sphere and confronting their everyday interactions, negotiations, and positionality as 'the next generation' (Walker, 2017, p. 14). Walker (2017) points out that children are societally positioned as 'the next generation,' an assigned identity that inherently has environmental implications of futurity (p. 14). This label is contradicting, because while it implies hope and childhood as an era of becoming, it unfortunately overlooks child agency because its label is seen as a pipe dream or social imagination (Walker, 2017). This is important to note because, with this generational positioning, children must reconcile with the fact that they are both pressured and disadvantaged to advocate for a better environmental future, ultimately discrediting them as activists. Because, as Cohen (2008) presented, children tend to be more observant and interactive with their environmental surroundings, the 'new' knowledge they accumulate often disrupts or clashes with their parents' or adults' existing knowledge. In one interview Walker (2017) conducted with a family from India, they recounted an incident where the children asked their mother to turn off the air-conditioning to "save the polar bears" (p. 20). The parents were immediately skeptical, asking if they see polar bears around them and, "How do you save them by turning it off?" (Walker, 2017, p. 20). In the end, the parents listened and supported their concern, but this conversation illustrates how children attempt to influence sustainable environmental practices which conflicts with parental, authoritative knowledge. Additionally, placing this within the context of 'the next generation,' not only does this "present insights into children's capacities to

interpret complex environmental messages,” it also shows that children “use their generational positioning” as persuasion that they will live with the consequences of “taken-for-granted” practices (Walker, 2017, p. 20). Overall, while their ‘next generation’ identity is inherently limiting based on conflicting experiential knowledge, Walker’s (2017) study suggests that it prompts a moral agency that should be valued and acknowledged. It is clear that, through their positioning in this trope, they are conscious of a future in jeopardy and their everyday activism in the private sphere should reconsider the supposed “social imagination” that overlooks children’s valid voices.

The ability for children to see beyond their environment and express how everyday interactions impact the environment and its inhabitants, such as polar bears, can be further illustrated by applying Burke’s (1954) scene-agent ratio. The scene-agent ratio centers on the agent’s relationship and reinforcement with the world around them. Burke (1945) elaborates on this concept by referencing a moment in a sonnet by William Wordsworth where a child interrupts the disturbance of a tremendous storm. This example suggests that the agent contained by the scene, or the child, “will partake [in] the same supernatural quality” of the storm (Burke, 1945, p. 8). In other words, the person becomes consistent with the scene while conquering the scene’s nature or adversities. This contrasts with the scene-act ratio, which means people become consistent or fixed within the environment where they are contained (Burke, 1945). In applying this concept to Walker’s (2017) study, if children come to accept their societal positioning as ‘the next generation’ without questioning any moral implications or limitations, they become fixed within their environment and perhaps would not question authoritative practices. However, by clashing with adults’ existing knowledge about the environment by drawing from their observations, they take on a “supernatural quality” that allows their complex insights to be heard

(Burke, 1945, p. 8). This suggests their willingness to move from a private, contained space and onto a public stage, where their agency, critical thinking, and moral grounds are fully realized.

To conclude, the literature in this section sheds light on how children can be capable and transformative actors for climate justice. Both Cohen (2008) and Walker (2017) indicate this by presenting children's ability to speak up on issues that challenge moral grounds. And while their ability to observe and stand against injustice is noteworthy and influenced by 'the next generation' trope, the skepticism and resistance shown by older generations, as Walker (2017) points out, presents limitations and conflicts purely because of age differences. Viewing these studies rhetorically through the scene-agent ratio helps to situate children's abilities to respond to their environments and authority with agency, therefore further validating their place in activism. In the next section, I review rhetorical approaches I theorize Thunberg may use and perform to validate her involvement in scientific discourse and positionality as a child activist because it breaks trained incapacities.

Theorizing Rhetorical Approaches to Climate Justice Activism

Breaking Trained Incapacities

Environmental activists are rhetorically affective because they are able to disrupt normalcy and challenge audiences to reorient their perspective towards the world. Rachel Carson, for example, was disruptive not only because of her identity as a woman scientist but for also urging the public to understand the immense dangers of their pesticide usage (Murphy, 2018). Yet, how can disruption through activism be truly understood? How can rhetoric describe normalcy and the process to which it is confronted? To elaborate, this section reviews important rhetorical concepts used in activism that create the conditions for new meanings to circulate and allow society to become more environmentally conscious. Recognizing efficiency, or the

normality of one's everyday experience, allows one to arrive at environmental consciousness, as Hawhee (2009) uses movement and body knowledge as an example. However, an inability to perceive efficiency results as a trained incapacity, which Burke (1954) defines as a harmful misjudgment, perception, and action resulting from one's past training or experience. This matters as a rhetorical concept because it helps illustrate the passivity people have adopted toward the environment. The performance of wonder and imagination, then, disrupts people's trained incapacities by inspiring a transformation toward growth and environmental reality (Ahmed, 2004; Burke, 1950). Efficiency, trained incapacities, wonder, and imagination, together, are vital rhetorical concepts that theorize environmental activism as a necessary disruption to people's everyday lives.

Through body knowledge, or recognizing the language and movement of our bodies, one encounters efficiency, which is a vital concept to recognize and begin arriving at new perspectives of the world. Hawhee (2009) suggests that our bodily knowledge and communication derives from acknowledgement of our habits that are performed mundanely or subconsciously. The concept of efficiency illustrates this further, as it suggests that one's navigation in the world is based on the habits and perceptions they accumulate and fail to recognize (Hawhee, 2009). Drawing from Burke, Hawhee (2009) states that performers should resist efficiency and actively have an awareness of their body knowledge to avoid an imbalance of self (Hawhee, 2009). Imbalance, in this sense, refers to how efficiency prevents one from gaining new knowledge, perspectives, and communication about the world. In other words, efficiency is linked to comfort and enforced fixity, because "to be comfortable is to be so at ease with one's environment that it is hard to distinguish where one's body ends and the world begins" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 148). So, by becoming conscious of our movement, it is possible to be

aware of our bodily rituals that are often ignored and subconsciously developed for human survival (Hawhee, 2009). For instance, movement becomes consistent with the environment that permits the normality of the habitual movement to form. A child who is only familiar with “a certain kind of walking that is adapted to floors and streets” yet “poorly adapted to rough mountainsides” indicates how the ground provides “a bodily sense of how something is done” and carried through “all the subtleties of manners and attitudes” (Hawhee, 2009, p. 72-73). In other words, if a person is accustomed to walking primarily in flat, urban neighborhoods, their habitual movements and communication would be exposed if they were to move to a mountainous, rural town. Therefore, one encounters their own efficiency, or their own kind of motion, and they gain a stronger awareness of themselves and the world around them. Overall, by recognizing efficiency through body knowledge, one experiences and perceives themselves and their environment differently.

Thus, the inability to encounter efficiency becomes a trained incapacity. A trained incapacity is when one orients themselves “in keeping with [their] past training,” as Burke (1954) notes, “the very soundness of this training may lead [them] to adopt the wrong measures” and cause them “to misjudge their present situation” (p. 10). This is relevant with the example Burke (1954) provides about chickens who were conditioned to respond and run towards the sound of the bell for food. However, if one were to ring the bell to punish or kill the chickens and “they come faithfully running,” it becomes clear that their orientation toward the signs of their experience, the bell, was correct but also incorrect, as their training misled them to their danger (Burke, 1954, p. 7). Overall, this example links to our comfort with efficiency: if people remain cleaved to their judgments through their past training, they become victims of their trained

incapacities and that ultimately interferes with the adoption of new habits, thoughts, and modes of communication (Burke, 1954).

Moreover, because knowledge derives from the movement and performances of our bodies and that influences one's efficiencies or training, seeking irregularities, or literally stopping in our tracks, is vital for understanding reality and "making the normal seem very, very strange" (Hawhee, 2009, p. 40). As mentioned, efficiency only serves comfort based on experience, and when reality becomes sunken into "what things will do to us or for us," it is a trained incapacity (Burke, 1954, p. 22). Therefore, if we contemplate and attend to our bodily movements and perceptions, perhaps we can adopt new training or ways of thinking. For example, knowledge is learned and performed through stop exercises, where dancers must freeze in motion in the midst of a complicated movement by their instructor's demand (Hawhee, 2009). While maintaining stillness, the performers must observe their attitudes and discomfort in unplanned positions (Hawhee, 2009). Such exaggerated attention to the new postures ultimately brings intense awareness to the body's "mechanical sense of habit," as these "new kinds of movement" invented "new modes of communication" (Hawhee, 2009, p. 40). This exercise is a significant illustration on the importance of inconsistency and deviating from what is perceived as normal. If one moves mechanically, they will continue to feel and think likewise and seal off direct contact with reality (Hawhee, 2009). Yet, if one stops, people allow themselves to be conscious of what is possible, normal, and strange.

The idea of stopping in one's tracks connects to the affect of wonder, which is productive in expanding consciousness, mobilizing one beyond their comfort, and working to transform the ordinary, or one's efficiencies (Ahmed, 2004). Described as a primary emotion because it appears during a first-time encounter with an object, wonder "works to transform the ordinary,

which is already recognized, into the extraordinary” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 179). Similar to what Hawhee (2009) suggests with stopping in mid-motion, wonder involves learning and perceiving what is taken for granted (Ahmed, 2004). This functions through bodily movement, as it allows the body to open up and begin to seek what is possible, especially when one encounters an object that allows them to see the world as something it does not have to be (Ahmed, 2004).

Additionally, the idea of wonder connects to the rhetoric of imagination because it allows one to move beyond seeing what is possible and into action or persuasion (Burke, 1950). When used in rhetoric, the best use of imagination can move to convince an audience of reality and truth and motivate action for the good of others (Burke, 1950). Imagination, then, allows wonder to be mobilized and energized “for the hope of transformation” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 181), as misleading perceptions, that were obscured by efficiencies, come to life to be recognized as a trained incapacity. Overall, if we move through the world with wonder and imagination, normality is not only strange but presents itself as a function of change that projects ourselves toward reality and the future.

In this section, the rhetorical concept of trained incapacities was defined in relation to efficiency, wonder, and imagination, and by broadly reviewing these concepts, these become useful concepts for making sense of Thunberg’s rhetorical performances. In order to utilize these concepts properly for analysis, it is important to place them in the context of Thunberg’s UN speech and then examine if she is trying to break world leaders’ trained incapacities. It is also crucial to identify and theorize what the public’s trained incapacities and efficiencies consist of and whether Thunberg’s rhetorical affects work to shatter them through her performances. In the next section, I review concepts that relate to performativity and speech acts, which allow for

further analysis of activist rhetoric and how, perhaps, this rhetoric can help break trained incapacities.

Performativity and Movement of Speech Acts

This section features a synthesis of rhetorical concepts that are key to understanding the performativity and movement of speech acts. To begin, this section opens with a broad review of amplification, a concept that depicts a speaker's ability to expand their emotions and distinctly strengthen an idea (Burke, 1950). I then suggest that when a message is amplified, the performance of emotion, specifically disgust, moves a speech act further (Ahmed, 2004). This is because, through the performativity of disgust, the speaker develops a relationality with an audience through stickiness (Ahmed, 2004). This relationality, or contact zone, creates an historicity where rhetorical acts both mobilize and stay, as defined by circulation (Gries & Brooke, 2018). The movement and persistence of an emotional speech act is only enhanced by repetition, which solidifies and justifies an emotional message (Laib, 1990; Winderman, 2019). Lastly, repetition has increased prominence through echoes (Yergeau, 2018). When repetition is performed by a speaker with Autism, such as Thunberg, echoes embody a repeated speech act into something inventive and significant, therefore adding further prominence and influence to a rhetorical situation (Yergeau, 2018).

Amplification is a crucial concept within rhetoric because, through its use, a speaker is able to perform a wide range of meanings that are persuasive and affective. Amplification works as both a persuasive and poetic force, as "the saying of something in various ways until it increases in persuasiveness by the sheer accumulation" can direct audiences toward "a purely poetic process of development" (Burke, 1950, p. 69). In other words, amplification as a style of rhetoric provides further conceptual prominence and importance to the element of discourse

(Fahnestock, 2011). And as Laib (1990) states, it is a crucial component in clearly reinforcing ideas through speech acts. When a speaker extends and intensifies their emotions, amplification discloses more meaning on the subject, fills in implications, and reduces uncertainty (Laib, 1990). This is particularly important when speakers disclose their emotions through performance. If the performer amplifies their wonder of a better world, for example, perhaps their feelings are more legitimized and rhetorically affective toward social change (Winderman, 2019, p. 333-334).

Moreover, the ability for amplification to extend emotions is further explained by the performativity of disgust because it builds affects of stickiness (Ahmed, 2004). According to Ahmed (2004), disgust is an active performance of emotion that repels and pulls away from abject surfaces and objects. By doing this, it also operates as a contact zone. This form of contact relates to the concept of stickiness, as stickiness forms a relationality with the quality of certain surfaces, objects, and signs (Ahmed, 2004). For instance, if one is disgusted by something, that feeling sticks because the quality of its disgust affects them personally, and if that feeling of disgust recurs, the stickiness becomes an affect dependent on one's history with it (Ahmed, 2004). The relationality we develop with that feeling towards the object becomes a consistent sign of disgust and performance of recoiling or pulling away. However, this consistent feeling also sticks because of its imperative as an emotion to expel or vomit through performative, verbal communication. A speech act, such as "That's disgusting!" amplifies that stickiness in that it requires an audience to witness the speaker's history with the object of disgust (Ahmed, 2004, p. 94). What sticks, then, is the possibility for the audience to share the collective feeling of disgust, "bound together through the shared condemnation of a disgusting object or event"

(Ahmed, 2004, p. 94). Overall, disgust is performed because it is innately expelled through language that sticks due to a shared history of what is considered sticky.

The concept of circulation furthers the idea of disgust as a contact zone because its historicity creates a space that is able to produce continuous, moving affects. Gries and Brooke (2018) describe how circulation “provides a framework from which we can understand the delivery of rhetorical acts as a moving, breathing thing” (p. 28). In other words, circulation builds on the mobilization of rhetorical acts because they interrupt spaces through the movement of language and create an affective process across audiences (Gries & Brooke, 2018). Considering this, while the performativity of disgust creates a contact zone with an object, Ahmed (2004) notes that affects and historicity reside in the movement between signs, as “the more signs circulate, the more affective they become” and enhance the contact zone through stickiness (p. 45-46). In this sense, circulation of emotional affects involves both movement and fixity, meaning that powerful speech acts in rhetoric both travel in spaces of discourse and persist over time. Specifically, Bradshaw (2018) points out that, when studying slow circulation, “we should be asking how and why things stay” because of rhetorical affects, and acknowledge rhetorical dynamics that remain present to public perception (p. 481 & 485). Thus, this process is noteworthy for analyzing affects of environmental activism performed by children, as their performative speech acts leverage public issues into mainstream discourse and fluctuate through news outlets and social media (Borda & Marshall, 2020). Overall, circulation is an important rhetorical concept because while it emphasizes language in motion, it opens an analysis for understanding why speech acts also reside in public discourse.

Furthermore, what sticks emotionally through circulation is most affective when speech acts are performed and amplified through repetition. To put simply, amplifying repeated phrases

and messages through speech not only ensures that the message is understood, but it increases the odds that it will be remembered (Laib, 1990) or that it will stick. As Ahmed states (2004), our historicity with an emotion that sticks, like disgust, is linked to repetition because of, as previously stated, our consistent relationality with the object's effect. And although some rhetors warn against redundancy, at the heart of strong writing and speech is being able to effectively amplify through repetition (Laib, 1990). For instance, when Winderman (2019) discusses performing anger with Black feminist activism, repeated phrases bolsters "eloquent rage" and justification for Black feminists' stories to be heard and for social movements to thrive (p. 332). Therefore, as an effective element of amplification, repetition not only sticks due to our historicity, but further legitimizes emotion through performance as a productive force.

Finally, the concept of echoes expands upon the power of repetition because when speakers, specifically those with Autism, use echoes, they have the potential to reinvent rhetoricity that open affective spaces for response (Yergeau, 2018). Yergeau (2018) defines an echo rhetoric embodied in a repeated, environmentally driven response. Although echoes have applicability to a variety of specific identities, Yergeau (2018) focuses on Autism within rhetoric in response to scholars who have argued that Autistic people lack a shared language or culture, implying an inherent disadvantage to having a disability. Autism, however, "confers ways of being, thinking, moving, and making meaning that are not in and of themselves lesser -- and may at times be advantageous" (Yergeau, 2018, p. 205). Being Autistic, then, is advantageous because of the speaker's ability to produce echoes, which are "environment-driven responses" derived from imitations of external stimuli (Yergeau, 2018, p. 193). To elaborate, Autistic people are able to mimic behaviors as a result of their environment or experiences, uniquely embody those behaviors through repetition of speech and movement, and then reproduce or invent new

ways of thinking. For example, Yergeau (2018) presents an example of “echomimia,” which is a reproduction of another’s facial expressions, where a person may mimic a colleague’s smile when they are not happy (p. 197). The person may feel awkward in not being able to convey their actual feelings, but it may influence a rhetorical situation where they invent “the creation of mutual anxiety” or the beginning of “a frustrated diary entry” (Yergeau, 2018, p. 197). While this example may appear trivial, it illustrates how an interaction of imitation can extend from beyond one moment in time into something creative or performative. Echoes, as a whole, expand upon the concept of repetition in a way that uniquely enhances rhetoric and the inventive capabilities of speakers who are Autistic.

In this section, the following speech concepts were identified for further analysis: amplification, performativity of disgust and stickiness, circulation, repetition, and echoes. In considering rhetoric in relation to performativity, these concepts portray the power of speech in its ability to move, create an affect, and reorient perspectives. When emotions are performed, amplification justifies feelings as a productive force that attaches itself to viewers, especially when a speech act contains disgust. The performativity of disgust and the speaker’s ability to form a relationality with an object through stickiness builds upon the capacity for affect and how emotions, exhibited by the speaker, become a shared, collective feeling for audiences. This shared experience or produced contact zone leverages movement through circulation, which explains how the impact of an emotional speech act, especially when repeated, can become long-standing in discourse. Lastly, echoes situate rhetoric as inventive and, given its context with Autism and imitation expands and diversifies the productivity of repetition.

Audience-to-Performer Relationship

In considering the performativity, movement, and rhetoric in speech, it is crucial to examine audience affects and how performative speech acts develop a relationship between the audience and the speaker in order to evoke change. This is important to consider because Thunberg has garnered a global movement and, by becoming a leader, has developed a massive following that is at least in part connected to the way in which her rhetoric evokes relationships and connections. Thus, I have identified two concepts that explain connectivity between the speaker and audience: rhythms (Hawhee, 2009) and transportation (Green & Brock, 2002). Through rhythms, the performer ignites audience engagement through rhetoric, as Hawhee (2009) suggests that language acts as an instrument that imparts ideas onto the audience. These rhythmic ideas and relationality developed influences the process of transportation, where belief change from rhetoric, performance, and stories occur (Green & Brock, 2002). By reviewing rhythms (Hawhee, 2009), and transportation (Green & Brock, 2002) as crucial rhetorical concepts, this section examines the ability of rhetoric in building a relationality with audiences and influencing change.

Rhythms, according to Hawhee (2009), are rhetorical instruments of communication that build a sustained and engaging relationship between the performer and audience. Language, like music and poetic form, “stands as a rhetorical force” that affects and imparts information on bodies because of the power of rhythm (Hawhee, 2009, p. 27). Rhythm, she notes through Burke’s critical work on musical effects, is how audience members are able to sustain “sublime engagement” through four-to-five-hour performances (Hawhee, 2009, p. 23). This is because music rhythms ignite an audience engagement that allows them to absorb a tapping motion into their “senses of touch, sign, and sound” (Hawhee, 2009, p. 25). Additionally, considering the

body as the generator of belief and language through efficiency, rhythms present an appeal to form because they influence ideas. Rhythmic ideas are imported to the body and create “marked degrees of expectancy, or acquiescence” and, therefore, increase receptivity and affect change (Hawhee, 2009, p. 67). This degree of compliance and receptivity formed by the performer and audience induces change because ideas produced by rhythms operate in motion like bodies. Additionally, Burke (1945) builds on this when he referred to ideas and sensations as bodies, as they are agents for experience and imparting human knowledge. Overall, the use of rhythm during a performance taps into the connectedness and engagement necessary for ideas to move through participants’ minds and potentially affect change.

The affect of change during a performer-to-audience situation must involve the process of transportation because one becomes taken by the world they are absorbing. Transportation is a mental process involved in Green and Brock’s (2002) Transportation Imagery Model of Narrative Persuasion (TIM), where recipients of written narratives are “swept away by a story and thus come to believe in ideas suggested by the narrative” (p. 324). This process equates to becoming so entranced by the world of the story that one feels they are being taken on a journey, as their mental systems and capacities are lost in the narrative through imagery (Green & Brock, 2002). It is important to note that Green and Brock (2002) frame TIM as an individualistic process, as they limit transportation to occur within the relationship between the reader and the text they are reading. However, a gap exists with this model because becoming transported by narrative is applicable to performer contexts. For instance, referring to the previous example by Hawhee (2009) with rhythms, it is apparent that the artists are telling stories that are effective for connecting and identifying with the audience. Transportation may contribute to their engagement because the rhythms allow them to become lost in the performance. Additionally, this

connectivity from transportation may also occur due to the performers' ability to transport themselves and ultimately fill the room through their agency. A postulate involved in narrative persuasion and TIM, according to Green and Brock (2002), is that belief change occurs in the reader (p. 317). Belief change, as a result of vivid narratives, can also influence one's self-concept or perception of self (Isberner et al., 2019). Considering this, when a performer performs narratives as rhetoric in front of an audience, the story must transport and empower them to command the stage and ignite audience engagement. So, it is crucial to extend the meaning of transportation beyond an individual experience and into a multi-faceted one. When applied to performance, audiences are transported into the world presented on stage because the artist's agency makes that journey possible.

This section covered two distinct concepts that ultimately connect when seeking to understand the relationship between the audience and performer. By performing rhythmically with language, this establishes a connectedness necessary to impart knowledge and messages effectively. This may even ignite a process of transportation, where the audience is taken by the performer's agency and narratives that, according to Green and Brock's (2002) TIM, belief change occurs. With that, it is possible that Thunberg's rhetoric performs these concepts to achieve a connection and following within the climate movement. For further analysis, these concepts will be applied to her speeches, and perhaps the responsiveness or lack thereof from her audience will indicate the presence of these concepts.

Research Questions

Based on the literature reviewed, I developed the following research questions to be addressed in my analysis:

- What rhetoric does Thunberg's speeches produce, and how is this rhetoric demonstrated in her speech "The World is Waking Up"?
- How does her rhetoric produce affects, how do these affects circulate, and what difference does this make?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Rhetorical Criticism as Invention

My analysis is a critical engagement with rhetorical theory and criticism (Dow, 2001; Wilson, 2020) that seeks to understand the performative affects of Thunberg’s rhetoric in her speech, “The World is Waking Up.” I identified various rhetorical concepts synthesized from the literature review, mainly derived from Burke (1945, 1950, 1954), Hawhee (2009), and Ahmed (2004), and I use them as lenses and conceptual tools to analyze her rhetoric based on my interpretations. By working with her rhetoric in this way, I analyze her speech creatively through my observations and use of concepts in order to produce my own knowledge regarding her performance. This means I engage with rhetorical criticism as an inventive process. It is crucial that I allow the concepts I have identified to “furnish a language for analysis” (Wilson, 2020, p. 284) and embrace my vocabulary to create “a vision of what we do as wholly and necessarily creative and artistic” (Dow, 2001, p. 339). In other words, by trusting my interpretations and connections to rhetorical concepts, my critical work presents itself as a form of art through a free range of motion with language. Wilson (2020) calls this a “language of engagement,” which embraces the fluidity of language and use of theoretical concepts in criticism and function as “works in progress,” as theory should expand ideas in tandem with my artistic interpretations naturally (Wilson, 2020, p. 285). So, in approaching Thunberg’s speech with a “language of engagement” and openness, I uphold authority in which concepts I have identified work to say something significant about my topic. Therefore, I am responsible for how I use theories and concepts to shape ideas about children’s involvement with rhetoric and activism. With that, as Wilson (2020) argues, “it is not enough in our research to tell the reader ‘What is going on’

because critics have “an obligation to answer the question, ‘What about it?’” (p. 287). Overall, it is not enough to simply understand Thunberg’s affect through my artistic interpretations, but I must unpack its significance and what it contributes to rhetorical studies and Environmental Communication.

In considering rhetorical criticism as an inventive language of engagement, I identified the following list of concepts I drew from the literature review that may have applicability to analyzing Thunberg’s rhetoric. The concepts are organized by category intended to guide the analysis and address specific areas within the speech to where I see being utilized based on my interpretations. Below, the concepts are listed with a short description of its potential usage for the analysis.

Table 1: Key concepts used to define rhetoric as persuasion as used in Environmental Communication.

Concept	Description	Sources
Identification	Persuasion across division or difference	Burke, 1950
Consubstantiality	Finding shared substance, identities acting together	Burke, 1950
Affect	Leaving an impression, evoking a response, feeling something	Ahmed, 2004
Feminine/militant styles	Performing motherhood through storytelling and confrontational tactics	Peeples, 2003; Peeples & DeLuca, 2006
Ephebic rhetoric	Performing childhood and youthful experiences as persuasion	Thomas, 2020
Next-generation trope	Performing both the advantages and disadvantages of childhood in activism; performing a moral agency	Walker, 2017
Scene-act and -agent ratios	Place and environment as influencers of agency	Burke, 1945

Acknowledging that Thunberg is young and limited research exists involving child environmental activists, these concepts are useful in understanding how she connects with adult audiences despite her age difference through identification and consubstantiality (Burke, 1950), and if ephebic rhetoric (Thomas, 2020) and the use of the next-generation trope (Walker, 2017) are effective in achieving that connection and persuasion. In identifying her ability to persuade and connect, the scene-act and -agent ratios (Burke, 1945) may enhance her ability to display agency, especially in taking a stand against world leaders on a large stage. Lastly, discovering the presence or absence of feminine and militant styles of rhetoric (Peeples, 2003; Peeples & DeLuca, 2006), commonly employed by activist mothers, is crucial to filling the gap in the literature on child activists' methods in environmental communication and activism.

Table 2: Key concepts use to define rhetoric as capacities for change.

Concept	Description	Sources
Efficiency	Lack of self-awareness of everyday behaviors, derived from body knowledge	Hawhee, 2009
Trained incapacities	Habits, perceptions, and behaviors developed that are misleading	Burke, 1954
Wonder	Expanding consciousness and perceiving taken-for-granted practices	Ahmed, 2004
Imagination	Capacity to move toward change	Burke, 1950

How is Thunberg encountering or disrupting how people go about their everyday lives by reminding us about the looming danger of climate change? Is she commenting on our efficiencies (Hawhee, 2009) and pointing out that they are misleading, or a trained incapacity (Burke, 1954)? In order to address this, I use these concepts to examine if she is using rhetoric

that addresses what is perceived as normal, and if wonder (Ahmed, 2004) and imagination (Burke, 1950) help facilitate in addressing these capacities.

Table 3: Key concepts used to describe rhetoric and language as performance.

Concept	Description	Sources
Affect	Leaving an impression, evoking a response, feeling something	Ahmed, 2004
Amplification	Saying something in various ways to intensify or emphasize emotions and reinforce an idea	Burke, 1950
Performativity of Disgust	Speech act that verbalizes a feeling of disdain toward an object or subject	Ahmed, 2004
Stickiness	Relationality developed based on affect	Ahmed, 2004
Circulation	Mobilization of speech acts that interrupt and create a history with language and speech acts	Gries & Brooke, 2018
Repetition	Saying something various times to solidify stickiness and legitimate emotion	Laib, 1990; Winderman, 2019
Echoes	Embodies Autistic rhetoric through repetition to reinvent or reorient perspectives	Yergeau, 2018

What is Thunberg doing with her words that produce an affect and what performative choices does she make to induce the motion of her language? To address this, it is necessary to identify specific words and phrases she says, how she says it, and what that means in terms of performing a message about climate change. “How dare you” (Thunberg, 2019) is one of her more iconic phrases from her UN speech, so it is important to analyze the rhetoric behind the phrase and how she produces an affect through stickiness (Ahmed, 2004). By repeating the phrase, it is also crucial to examine how it moves and sustains itself in climate change discourse due to its performativity and the messages it carries. It is possible that “How dare you” (Thunberg, 2019) is inventive as repetition (Laib, 1990; Winderman, 2019) and, through echoes (Yergeau, 2018), embodies the phrase as inventive and affective.

Table 4: Key concepts used to define rhetoric as affective audience engagement.

Concept	Description	Sources
Rhythm	Connectivity and engagement developed between performer and audience	Hawhee, 2009
Transportation	Becoming lost in a story and belief change occurs	Green & Brock, 2002

Performing rhetoric involves imparting ideas to an audience in order to, especially within activism, evoke change and garner a larger movement. Rhythm (Hawhee, 2009) and transportation (Green & Brock, 2002) are two viable concepts that illustrate the relationship between the speaker and audience and may have applicability in examining how Thunberg imparts ideas as a result of affect.

Performance as Rhetorical Context

Situating Thunberg’s rhetorical affect within a performance context is important because, as indicated in *Our House is on Fire*, a book written by Thunberg and her family, she was raised in a performance-driven environment, with parents working as professional stage actors and singers. Thunberg’s mother, Malena Ernman, considers herself and her husband “cultural workers” through their work as artists, who seek to push boundaries and connect to various audiences (Thunberg & Ernman, 2018, p. 9). Although Thunberg is not an actor in the theatrical sense, her ability to engage in activism on various stages and speak to millions is indicative of the cultural worker example set by her parents. This is especially apparent in “The World is Waking Up,” where she made clear, performative choices with her words and nonverbal communication. By analyzing her speech as one that pushes boundaries as a cultural worker and performer, I can understand those choices by working critically and inventively with theory. Situating her speech within a performative context also enhances the study of affect. As Ahmed

(2004) states, the performance of emotion, such as disgust, engages in motion: it slides, binds, and recoils in response to the subject or object of emotional disdain. So, by working critically with the concept of affect, I am able to identify the performance of notable words and phrases used in the speech, such as “How dare you” (Thunberg, 2019), and analyze its rhetorical impact on how it moves persuasively to challenge boundaries.

In order to analyze the rhetorical impact of her performance, I selected materials as part of my archive that best set up an analysis of Thunberg’s performativity. First, as identified above, I drew some background on her family as performers or cultural workers from her family memoir *Our House is on Fire*. Because cultural workers aim to push boundaries as performers, I selected a film recording of Thunberg’s UN speech that I feel best captured this aim. This selection was from PBS Newshour, which filmed the entire UN Climate Action Summit and provided necessary context and information prior to her performance. In this film recording, I am able to hear the moderator’s question that prompted her speech, as well as gain a clear picture of the event space and audience she is addressing. By selecting this piece filmed by PBS, as well as use the cultural worker framework provided by her parents, I am able to conduct an in-depth observation of her speech, interpret and critically analyze her rhetoric, and discuss why her rhetoric matters in Environmental Communication, rhetoric, and climate justice activism.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Introduction

Thunberg's speech at the UN Climate Action Summit skyrocketed her into global stardom, as the power of her performance and her repeated refrain "How dare you" was featured on countless news headlines, as if it was the speech's title. While the speech is actually called "The World is Waking Up," there is ample significance to the mass recognition and circulation of "How dare you" (Thunberg, 2019) and Thunberg's performative attempt to wake up the world to the severe reality of climate change, especially in its impact on children and her generation. Given this, it is important to analyze what she is doing with "How dare you" and additional performative choices and examine what makes her rhetoric persuasively affective.

To address the persuasive impact of her speech, in this analysis I critically engage with Thunberg's rhetorical approaches in attempting to raise audience consciousness to climate change through the performativity of her words and phrases. I argue that her rhetoric, especially in her use of "How dare you" (Thunberg, 2019), is disruptive in an attempt to break world leaders' trained incapacities to neoliberalism and wake them up to a world suffering from climate change. Therefore, this section contains four parts: (1) an in-depth observation of her speech filmed by [PBS Newshour](#); (2) an examination of how I interpret Thunberg's rhetoric through the concepts of identification, consubstantiality, and affect; (3) a critical rhetorical analysis of her speech "The World is Waking Up," as a performance of disgust; and (4) an analysis of why her rhetoric matters in environmental activism and communication.

The World is Waking Up

Here I begin with a critical observation of Thunberg's speech that summarizes and examines key moments to be further reviewed using rhetorical theory and criticism (Dow, 2002; Wilson, 2020). In this section, I provide brief historical context to modern youth involvement in climate activism and the events leading up to the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit. Then, I describe and provide context for the performance from beginning to end, noting the aesthetics of the space, the performativity of Thunberg's body language and words, and specific reactions from the audience. Drawing from [PBS Newshour](#)'s film recording of the event, I provide ample detail of her performance necessary to analyze how her rhetoric produces affects.

Historical Context

Although the broadcasting of "The World is Waking Up" helped to make her famous, Thunberg had been engaging in environmental activism since 2015 (Han & Ahn, 2020). It should be noted that during the same year, youth, especially People of Color, were prominent as "environmental stewards for the future" (Han & Ahn, 2020, p. 2). This was seen in the case of *Juliana v. U.S.*, where dozens of teenagers from Oregon filed a constitutional lawsuit against the government and fossil fuel industry for their failure to address climate change (Han & Ahn, 2020). Additionally, similar lawsuits were made by young people in various developed countries the same year (Han & Ahn, 2020). Although youth political involvement was not new at the time, it became increasingly apparent that young people were agents in mobilizing activist movements that attract a sense of urgency and accountability (Han & Ahn, 2020). This was made evermore clear in 2018, where students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida organized the "March for Our Lives" movement in response to gun violence and the tragic shooting that took place at their school (Clinton, 2019). Thunberg was inspired by the

Parkland students challenging adults, and therefore took to skipping school to protest outside of Swedish Parliament (Clinton, 2019). That same year, her movement gained greater momentum through the use of social media, as it became a prominent space in garnering attention to the public, especially young people, about climate issues, especially through hashtags such as “#FridaysForFuture” and “#Climatestrike” (Han & Ahn, 2020, p. 6). The use of social media and catchy hashtags were successful in gaining a significant following, because by March 2019, over 1.6 million people in 1700 cities worldwide participated in climate strike protests (Clinton, 2019; Han & Ahn, 2020). This attracted ample media and political attention, as Thunberg became the face of the climate movement and signified children as its central actor (Trihartono et al., 2019). By September 23, 2019, this was solidified by her impactful and controversial speech, as described in the following critical observation.

Thick Rhetorical Description

Four panel speakers sit on a large, bright blue stage, and as the moderator is prepping her question, the petite Greta Thunberg stands out from the panel. With three adults dressed in business attire, the smallness and youthfulness of Thunberg is apparent, as she sits wearing a pink blouse with a tight, long braid draped over her shoulder. The moderator asks her, “What is your message for world leaders today?” Silence settles in the auditorium and the camera centers on Thunberg. She composes herself, adjusts the microphone, takes a deep breath and says, “My message is that we’ll be watching you.” She pauses and is met with sporadic chuckles, applause, and audible cheers from the audience. She projects and sustains a serious look on her face. This is no joke. She lets the commotion simmer and reach complete silence, as she readied herself to unleash more of her message. “This is all wrong. I shouldn’t be up here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean.” She speaks with a notable cadence, as she placed heavy

emphasis and stress on “school” and “ocean.” She acknowledges that her place on that stage is unusual and strange. She goes on, “Yet you all come to us young people for hope? How dare you!” “Young” is also stressed here, which allows her to point out that her childhood dreams have been stolen.

The silence among the audience persists, creating the sense that the affect of her words, especially “How dare you,” is sinking in. The camera sits still, framed on Thunberg. Her facial expressions are noteworthy, as she exudes anger and disgust with her pointed eyebrows and sharp eyes. As she goes on with her performance, she is clearly on the brink of tears. Her voice trembles but is spear-like, as she denounces, “People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction. And all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!” There is ample emotional intensity and rhythm here. By rhythm, I mean there is heavy emphasis placed on words that give her speech performativity and movement, such as “suffering,” “dying,” and “money.” It is possible that the emphasis on “suffering” and “dying” have a critical connection to “money.” Moreover, her second “How dare you!” is met with applause, as if the repetition of this phrase packed more punch and attached itself to the audience. The camera zooms out. The audience is large and Thunberg continues to stand out among the bunch with her pink blouse brightening the atmosphere, contrasting from the grimness of the situation she is portraying. It is as if the loudness of the bright pink amplifies her positionality and casts a light on how children are holding world leaders -- and even the world -- responsible. She carries this responsibility and goes on, “You say you ‘hear’ us and that you understand the urgency. But no matter how sad and angry I am, I don’t want to believe that. Because if you fully understood the situation and still

kept failing to act, then you would be evil. And that I refuse to believe.” This moment is also met with applause and cheers, but more sporadic than the previous time.

Silence fills the room as she continues on with her performance, much of it involving an impassioned delivery of scientific facts involving cutting carbon emissions and reducing global temperatures. She criticizes leaders’ “popular idea” of cutting carbon emissions by fifty-percent because it does not account for her generation who will suffer from the consequences. As they go on about their lives normally, she denounces their ignorance toward her generation denouncing, “How dare you pretend that this can be solved with business as usual and some technical solutions!” She follows these condemnations with a questioning of their maturity, saying the facts make them too uncomfortable and, as a result, they are “not mature enough to tell it like it is.” The panel to her right is leaning forward, listening attentively and expressing their agreement with head nods. They join the audience in applause after she says, “And if you choose to fail us, I say we will never forgive you.” The cadence of “never forgive you” is sharp here, as the pangs of climate change as a personal, children’s issue confronts the audience, whose applause disrupts her next point. Finally, Thunberg ends her speech with a “thank you,” and the panelists and entire audience cheer uproariously. She sits back, and the camera pans back out to a view of the entire room and another view of Thunberg and the panel on stage. The three panelists look at each other, as if they need to process the influence of her speech. Thunberg sits stoically as the applause reaches silence.

In this section, I provide historical context and a thick rhetorical description of the PBS film recording of Thunberg’s speech “The World is Waking Up.” Given the observations and detailed recounting of Thunberg’s speech, two aspects stand out within the performativity and movement of her language. The first notable aspect is that her rhetoric performs childhood in a

way that connects with the audience. This is not only noteworthy in her aesthetic, but in the performativity of her cadence and emphasis on key words that evoke childhood, such as “school” and “young.” While childhood is distinguished from a predominately adult audience, her mature rhetoric bridges that division. Her maturity is exemplified through her tonality, body language and word choices, more particularly when she says “How dare you” Moreover, the second most noticeable aspect of her speech is that her rhetoric is disruptive. What this means is her rhetoric performs emotion that aims to leave a mark, or produces affects (Ahmed, 2004). In taking account of these observations, I analyze them critically using rhetorical theory. Drawing from Burke (1950) and Ahmed (2004), in the next section I examine what her rhetoric is and suggest that it involves identification, consubstantiality, and affect.

Greta Thunberg Production of Rhetoric

The way in which I understand Thunberg’s rhetoric is a performance of identification, consubstantiality, and affect. As a Burkean approach, identification is a crucial concept for persuasion because it allows the speaker’s rhetoric to resonate with the audience while communicating complex issues. Conveying complex issues, especially within the realm of environmental communication and climate justice, involves communicating across an immanent difference that exists between speakers and the audiences. This difference, with Thunberg, involves the fact that she is a young woman speaking about climate change to a room (and world) full of adults. Therefore, I argue that Thunberg’s rhetoric embraces this division through consubstantiality and her rhetoric contrasts from her child identity without fully dismissing it. This means, through consubstantiality, that she identifies with the audience by maturely communicating her ability to understand the complexities of climate change while simultaneously reminding the audience that she is still a child. Through this, her rhetoric also

presents an emotional performance seeking to produce an affect. Affect, as a persuasive force, justifies the performance of emotion to connect across differences in a way that sticks, or builds a collective, emotional relationality with her audience about climate change. This relationality is enhanced by a performance of disgust because, as a speech act, it allows the audience to witness and share what she is feeling.

Identification, Consubstantiality, and Affect

Thunberg's rhetoric is shaped by identification and consubstantiality, as she connects with her audience despite the division that inherently exists with persuasion (Burke, 1950). All persuasive acts involve the speaker identifying with their audience through performance, and according to Burke (1950), this may involve altering speech, body language, tone, and attitude. This change occurs because, through identification, difference becomes more apparent, therefore creating a stark division between the speaker and audience. However, this performative rhetoric develops a relationship through consubstantiality, where separateness acts together through identification (Burke, 1950; Ivie, 2005). This means that while the speaker is aware of not sharing an absolute identity with the audience, they find a "shared substance" through rhetoric where a connection can be established (Davis, 2008, p. 125). In considering these two concepts, it is important to examine how she acknowledges the difference between her and the audience in order to effectively communicate about climate change. By establishing a sense of maturity with the audience, a shared substance is found without dismissing her youthful identity. For example, when she said, "I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean" (Thunberg, 2019), she acknowledges she is a high schooler, but also bears the responsibility in addressing climate change. This is also notable in her aesthetic, as she is clearly distinct from the panel on stage and the audience. By embracing her childishness while exemplifying responsibility to the world, her

rhetoric identifies and performs consubstantiality and, as a result, earns the potential to resonate with her audience, be seen as a capable leader, and communicate environmental issues across division.

In addition to bearing responsibility for climate change issues, Thunberg's rhetoric of identification and consubstantiality performs disgust in order to produce affects. Affect is driven by emotion and means that an aspect about a rhetorical performance moves or leaves an impression on an audience (Ahmed, 2004). This impression involves the concept of stickiness, which means one forms a relationality with something that emotionally affected them (Ahmed, 2004). Stickiness also "involves a transference of affect" that is performative of one's relationality, because as the object of emotional affect recurs or consistently reinforces a feeling, it is expressed through rhetoric or a speech act (Ahmed, 2004, p. 91). Moreover, affect is most present during a performance of disgust, which Ahmed (2004) defines as an emotion that causes one to both recoil and abject to an object of discomfort expressed through speech. For example, graphic images that display contributing factors to climate change, such as fossil fuels darkening a blue sky, may cause one to turn away in repulsion, and then return to the image saying, "That's disgusting!" This speech act transfers the emotion of disgust to the image and, when performed publicly, an audience becomes witness to the object of disgust and that feeling, through affect, potentially becomes shared. This example and the speech act "That's disgusting!" shares similarities with when Thunberg says "How dare you" (Thunberg, 2019), as this performance of disgust is an act of repulsion toward climate change and is directed at the world leaders, who ignore the dangerous impacts of fossil fuels and let the severity of climate impacts worsen. Therefore, by performing speech acts that project disgusted feelings toward climate change and

world leaders, her rhetoric attempts to build collective affects and allowing “How dare you” (Thunberg, 2019) to stick.

In summary, Thunberg’s rhetoric is shaped through processes of identification, consubstantiality, and affect. This means that, through identification, her rhetoric acknowledges difference and acts as a persuasive force for reaching across division. While portraying a responsibility for addressing climate issues, her rhetoric engages in consubstantiality that aims to unite the audience on environmental, science-based issues while still embracing her positionality as a child. Her rhetoric unites the audience because it encourages them to view her as a capable leader despite her age. Thunberg’s mature rhetoric also attempts to unite by producing affects, meaning that it performs emotion that sticks, or transfers her disgust toward climate change to the audience in order to form a collective relationality. Disgust is the proper emotion to apply to her rhetoric because it requires speech acts and a witness to stickiness. Overall, in considering identification, consubstantiality, and affect together, it is vital to examine what Thunberg’s rhetoric actually does with these concepts in her speech “The World is Waking Up.” Therefore, in the next section, I analyze how she performs disgust in a way that identifies through consubstantiality and builds collective affects.

Rhetorical Disruption

It is safe to assume that Thunberg’s UN speech is known for her saying “How dare you” (Thunberg, 2019), as countless news headlines feature this phrase as if it was the speech’s title, which it wasn’t. And given its prominence and recognition, there is a great deal to be gathered from Thunberg’s rhetoric when she says “How dare you” (Thunberg, 2019) from the bold, emotional, and poignant weight it carries. To unpack “How dare you” (Thunberg, 2019), it is crucial to question how this phrase sticks through a “refusal of the terms of allegiance” (Ahmed,

2004, p. 100), or analyze: How does the phrase stick through her performance of activism and verbal opposition to political leaders? Additionally, how does this phrase attach itself, circulate, and intensify affects amongst viewers that allowed it to become the speech's title? To address these questions, I argue that "How dare you" (Thunberg, 2019) is a performance of disgust which, according to Ahmed (2004), means Thunberg's rhetoric abjectly performs disdain to produce affects. These affects involve her audience who witness the performance and potentially access and then share her disdain for the effects of climate change through her use of identification and consubstantiality. By choosing this phrase to perform disgust, she repeats it four times with the intention that it will capture the audience's attention and produce an affect that sticks (Ahmed, 2004). By "sticks" or "stickiness," her performance of "How dare you" produces affects about climate change that attaches itself to audiences which creates a shared condemnation for the lack of action and turmoil it has caused for her generation (Ahmed, 2004). As a result, I suggest that her rhetoric is disruptive as a corollary of disgust. By disruptive, I mean her rhetoric jolts perspectives through affect and what it means to be a child during the massive crisis of climate change.

Therefore, this section of the analysis examines each instance of "How dare you" (Thunberg, 2019), how it differs in its projection of disgust, and how it produces affects of rhetorical disruption. Although it is the same phrase repeated, she amplifies this phrase through repetition by saying it in various ways in order to reinforce her feeling of disgust (Burke, 1950). Doing so, her rhetoric disrupts when she reflects both her frustration and embracement of her child identity through ephobic rhetoric and criticizing 'the next generation' trope (Walker, 2017), inspires a collective feeling of disgust especially through identification and consubstantiality, and produce a persistent affect through amplification and circulation. Altogether, the repetition of the

phrase reinforces her Autistic rhetoric (Yergeau, 2018). While her child identity is significant within her persuasion, it is crucial to also recognize her ability to use this phrase despite having Asperger's, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), and selective mutism (García, 2020). What are considered mental disabilities are actually poignant, rhetorical abilities, as the repetition of "How dare you" (Thunberg, 2019) creates echoes which reinvent the abilities of Autistic rhetoric as a powerfully disruptive form of persuasion (Yergeau, 2018).

How Dare You! - Performance of Disgust

The first instance of the phrase reflects Thunberg's frustration with 'the next generation' trope (Walker, 2017) and her generational positioning as an idealization of hope, which allows her to perform disgust and direct it towards the leaders who forced her into that position in the first place. "How dare you!" (Thunberg, 2019) occurs early in the speech after she contrasts her childhood as positioned against her presence on stage. She is aware that, given her age and career standing, her place at the UN event is unusual, saying her presence is simply immoral and that she "should be in school on the other side of the ocean" (Thunberg, 2019). However, she knows that this is not her fault and says, "Yet you all come to us young people for hope. How dare you!" (Thunberg, 2019). She goes on: "You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words" (Thunberg, 2019). Given these two statements about hope and childhood, her rhetoric expresses disdain for embodying hope because it comes at the cost of living her youthful dreams. This expression of frustration is very relevant because of what is known within the implications of the contradicting 'next generation' label placed on children. This trope is defined as a societal construct assigned inherently to children to become "agents of change" involving the environment (Walker, 2017, p. 14). Walker (2017) argues that this label is contradicting because, while it symbolizes children as figures of a positive future, it overlooks their actual

capabilities as activists. When children use their voice to advocate for environmental justice, it is seen as naive due to their age, and Thunberg's rhetoric acknowledges this constraint. She is an agent of change, but embodying hope is simply not enough. What sticks about the first "How dare you!" (Thunberg, 2019), then, is her inability to have a childhood due to the pressure stemming from embodying hope, thus vocalizing her feelings to be viewed as valid and heard. Additionally, the stickiness of "How dare you!" (Thunberg, 2019) is aided by the quality in which she performs the speech act, as the breathiness of her voice and angered demeanor make it appear as though her words are cast out as an abjection. This performance choice and her rhetoric of disgust here, overall, portrays the pressure from 'the next generation' trope as suffocating and demeaning, because it deters her from going to school normally and living out her childhood aspirations. Therefore, her rhetoric is disruptive because it confronts the contradictions of the trope and constructs of childhood as a symbol of futurity, as it robs them of actual futures.

It is important to point out that, despite the emotional toll that Thunberg's positionality as 'the next generation' has placed on her, she also embraces her childhood as persuasion and utilizes ephebic rhetoric to perform disgust as disruption. Although children must reconcile with their positions as 'the next generation,' Walker (2017) also suggests they are able to use their disadvantages to their advantage in activism. This is evident in Thunberg's ephebic rhetoric, which Thomas (2020) defines as rhetoric, deriving from a young speaker, that evokes childhood as persuasion and asserts a child's voice, usually within an activist context, as valid and powerful. With this in mind, this only enhances Thunberg's disgust by the fact that she and her generation are taken for granted. Her vocalizing an inability to be in school and live out her childhood dreams through "How dare you!" (Thunberg, 2019) is her rhetoric displaying an

ability to “interpret complex environmental messages” and utilize ‘the next generation’ trope to perform activism for the sake of morality, as well as turn it back onto the adults who projected this trope onto her (Walker, 2017, p. 21). It is also displaying the emotion of wonder, which allows her audience to perceive her taken-for-granted generation as having extraordinary voices for change (Ahmed, 2004). Wonder is demonstrated through her use of ephebic rhetoric, as the bluntness of “How dare you!” (Thunberg, 2019) awakens viewers to move beyond the notion that children are passive, apolitical victims of climate injustice (Thomas, 2020). Furthermore, the first “How dare you!” (Thunberg, 2019) and its ability to expand perceptions of childhood is similar to how Amariyanna Copeny, or “Little Miss Flint,” performs in climate activism. Copeny is another modern child environmental activist known for using ephebic rhetoric by evoking childhood activities in relation to water issues in Flint, Michigan. Like Thunberg, though, she is also unafraid to be disruptive and wear a bandana that says “RESIST” in protest marches (Thomas, 2020, p. 14). Aligning Copeny’s example with Thunberg’s phrase, disgust sticks as a form of opposition because it slides from childhood into a harsh reality; “it seeks to secure ‘the not’ through the response of being disgusted” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 86). In other words, Thunberg’s use of ephebic rhetoric projects disgust that opposes an imminent future where her generation suffers the consequences because they were not listened to or taken seriously. Thus, her first use of the phrase sticks because her agency and wonder is heard and felt as persuasive.

Moreover, by repeating it a second time, “How dare you!” (Thunberg, 2019) turns an individual disdain into a collective one that is transferred from Thunberg to the audience. Although there is minimal time lapse between the first occurrence of this phrase, there is more of a sharp, dagger-like feeling the moment she says it a second time. However, the jab of “How dare you!” (Thunberg, 2019) is not an individual attack held by Thunberg. The stickiness of this

phrase, here, increases a collective feeling of disgust, and this is evident not only by the loud and supportive response from the audience during this moment, but in Thunberg's framing prior to the second use of the phrase. While she expresses her lack of childhood, she claims she is lucky because "People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction" (Thunberg, 2019). Thunberg is recognizing her privilege here by emphasizing that there is, on a broader scale, more at stake beyond her experiences. She is harmfully distracted from a normal childhood because there are many others who are unable or are struggling to simply live due to unsustainable and dangerous living conditions. Therefore, Thunberg is saying that the severity of climate change is beyond an individual issue and means the crisis, plus the lack of action from leaders, affects us all. The affect of the second "How dare you!" (Thunberg, 2019), overall, evokes a collective feeling of disgust because it is beyond an individual issue, as Thunberg suggests that we should be ashamed of the leaders who continue to take her generation for granted and simply ignore climate change issues. As Ahmed (2004) put it, a speech act can translate and generate additional effects beyond what is said, as she notes, "'It's disgusting!'" becomes 'They are disgusting,' which translates into, 'We are disgusted by them.'" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 98). "How dare you!" (Thunberg, 2019), then, sticks and means "We are disgusted by you!" Thus, the increased emotional intensity and delivery of the line followed by the uproarious applause from the audience present how disgust has mobilized from an individual to a shared feeling.

Additionally, her ability to build a collective feeling was aided through identification and consubstantiality, as seen in the mature, militant style performed in the second "How dare you!" (Thunberg, 2019). While the emotional intensity may be seen as drawing a line in the sand or enhancing division between her and the audience, she is actually establishing a relationship

through identification and consubstantiality by performing with maturity despite being a child (Davis, 2008). Her maturity, as previously mentioned, derives from her bearing responsibility in addressing complex climate issues. This sense of responsibility she has gained as an activist relates to activist mothers and their embracement of “maternal militancy” in demanding a safer environment for their children (Peeples & DeLuca, 2006). Using a militant style in rhetoric and environmental communication means that an activist mother uses confrontational, shaming tactics to command attention, as if she was trying to toughen her audience for an upcoming fight (Peeples & DeLuca, 2006). Activist mothers would employ these tactics to demand greater urgency and responsibility to mobilize an effort to protect children from environmental issues (Peeples & DeLuca, 2006). Although this inherently acts as an opposite to Thunberg because she embraces her youthfulness in her aesthetic and ephebic rhetoric, through consubstantiality she performs with a militant style through “How dare you!” (Thunberg, 2019) to project her responsibility and maturity, and therefore, identify with her audience of adults. Additionally, “How dare you!” (Thunberg, 2019) is a mature phrase in itself, as if a parent was reprimanding their child, so perhaps Thunberg’s choice in this phrase and tonality through identification was to emulate an activist mother performing with militant styles (Peeples & DeLuca, 2006). As a result, “How dare you!” (Thunberg, 2019) demands greater attention and has the potential to resonate with listeners and see her as a capable leader beyond her childishness. Overall, by taking on a militant mother style to her performance without discarding her own youthful identity, her rhetoric identifies with her audience through consubstantiality.

By solidifying her sense of responsibility and maturity toward addressing climate issues, her repetition of “How dare you!” (Thunberg, 2019) by the third and fourth time amplifies and circulates, showcasing the power children have in being agents of change. When she says, “How

dare you continue to look away” and “How dare you pretend that this can be solved with just ‘business as usual’” (Thunberg, 2019), it is amplifying a shared disgust that recurs while reinforcing the idea that change, led by her generation, is coming. By repeating the phrase, it increases the likelihood that they will remember feeling disgusted through the attachment of “How dare you!” (Thunberg, 2019), thus further justifying that her message is heard and understood (Laib, 1990; Winderman, 2019). This is vital because, as she has made clear, it is her generation that is forgotten and taken for granted despite being signifiers of hope. “How dare you!” (Thunberg, 2019), said twice more, solidifies that her message sticks and our relationality with leaders involves progress induced by emotion and led by children (Ahmed, 2004). It only makes sense that her speech ends with “And change is coming, whether you like it or not,” (Thunberg, 2019) as the bluntness and anger of this statement resonates with the message of “How dare you!” as a whole (Thunberg, 2019). By ending the speech on this note about change which aligns with the phrase, it circulates and affects public perception about children’s capabilities as activists and cements disgust as its emotional force.

Ultimately, the reason repetition is key to amplifying, circulating, and influencing public perception about child activists is because it produces echoes, which embodies rhetoric as disruptive. Echoes, in relation to Autistic rhetoric, reproduce “environment-driven responses” through imitation (Yergeau, 2018, p. 193). Imitation involves mimicking or repeating behaviors based on one’s experience within their environment, but the imitated act is not verbatim. Autistic speakers reproduce moments and translate them into something unique, performative, and creative in relation to their Autism (Yergeau, 2018). This concept is applicable to Thunberg’s rhetoric because, as a person with Asperger’s, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), and selective mutism, she reinvents not only what children can do as activists, but embodies her

Autism as an advantage in her rhetoric. Her ability to embody echoes into her rhetoric through repetition stems from the vulnerability present in her performances and through “How dare you!” (Thunberg, 2019). In previous speeches, her vulnerability is notable when she embraces her Autism as persuasion. As seen in her 2018 TED talk, “Disarming Case,” she discloses her diagnosis of Asperger’s, OCD, and selective mutism and said, “That basically means I only speak when I think it is necessary. Now is one of those moments” (García, 2020, p. 6). She went on: “For those of us who are on the spectrum, almost everything is black or white” and “I think, in many ways, we Autistic are the normal ones and the rest of the people are pretty strange, especially when it comes to the sustainability crisis” (García, 2020, p. 6). It is worth noting that her performance in “Disarming Case” is restrained and conversational, which greatly contrasts from the performance of “How dare you!” (Thunberg, 2019) in “The World is Waking Up.” I believe this is because “How dare you!” (Thunberg, 2019) echoes and amplifies a stronger urgency to speak about climate change because, in Autistic rhetoric, it is such a black or white issue. Therefore, by echoing this phrase through repetition, Thunberg is embodying rhetoric that claims for her right to be heard, stand for others on the Autistic spectrum, and use her voice for the sake of the world (García, 2020). As a whole, the phrase’s repetition produces an echo that alters what is seen as abnormal and reinvents Autistic rhetoric as an affective, disruptive persuasive force.

Given the performativity of “How dare you!” (Thunberg, 2019) and the ample meaning she projects with it, it is no wonder that her speech is remembered through this phrase as if it were its title. As a whole, it is remembered because it is disruptive. “How dare you!” (Thunberg, 2019) is disruptive because it is a performance of disgust that sticks and emotionally captures her identity as a complex child; a child who is able to produce a collective disgust that attaches itself

to world leaders who hinder childhoods and enforce maturity onto the next generation. Thunberg's rhetoric and performance of disgust disrupts what it means to be a child because she was robbed of living a normal one and thus decries her social and political positioning. Yet, through ephebic rhetoric, she translates this emotional energy to her advantage by showcasing children's capabilities for agency and leadership in the climate justice movement. And despite being a kid, she is able to generate collective persuasion, reminding audiences that climate change affects everybody. Through identification and consubstantiality, she builds on this collective persuasion by upholding her sense of responsibility by performing maturely and militantly, thus holding leaders accountable and reprimanding them because they are immature. The repetition of this phrase also amplifies and circulates the idea that change, led by her and her generation, is coming, as "How dare you!" (Thunberg, 2019) rightly positions their place in activism. Lastly, the repetition of this solidifies the attachment of disgust and Thunberg's message as a whole and produces echoes. The echoing of "How dare you!" (Thunberg, 2019) greatly extends the possibilities of her rhetorical disruption because it derives from her Autism and embodies rhetoric as disruptive to perceptions of not only what children can achieve as activists but also what people with Autism can produce with change with the strengths of their so-called disability. Overall, in considering the capacity of Thunberg's rhetoric in producing affects of disruption, it is vital to examine in her speech what it is actually disrupting and why it matters.

Rhetorical Disruption to Neoliberalism

Thunberg's rhetoric matters as a disruptive force because it attempts to break world leaders' trained incapacities caused by neoliberalism. Trained incapacities develop when people adopt habits and perceptions based on their training, or experience, which lead them to harmful

misjudgments and actions (Burke, 1954). One's training or experience relates to their efficiencies, which are accumulated habits and mindsets of which a person is not conscious of (Hawhee, 2009). Therefore, if one encounters their efficiencies, they are able to become conscious of their perception of the world and new modes of communication become possible (Hawhee, 2009). However, if one is stuck or remains oriented within their efficiencies, it becomes a trained incapacity, which Burke (1954) suggests that "in keeping with [their] past training, the very soundness of this training may lead [them] to adopt the wrong measures" (p. 10). Thunberg suggests that world leaders have adopted the wrong measures in addressing climate change because, while the science has been, as she says, "crystal clear" (Thunberg, 2019), what is also clear, based on their lack of action and accounting for Thunberg's generation, is that their perceptions have led toward a reality where rising carbon emissions and global temperatures are mere issues. In considering this, how do these transparent issues that contribute to climate change fail to appear on powerful leaders' radars?

I believe Thunberg answers this in her rhetoric by calling out world leaders' efficiencies to neoliberalism, which has led to them developing apathy toward combating climate issues, resulting in trained incapacities. Neoliberalism is an ideology grounded in free-market economics and calls for "deregulation, privatization, welfare cuts, and reduced taxation to revive high corporate profits and economic growth" (Peeples, 2014, p. 233). This framework is synonymous with anti-environmentalism and anti-regulatory politics because when neoliberal industries, such as coal, are confronted by environmental regulations and activism, they respond with an overemphasis on freedom, market rationality, and belief that their individual liberties are being threatened (Peeples, 2014). And considering coal, for example, is a multi-million-dollar, high corporate profit industry that has clear contributing factors to climate change, it is evident

that people with neoliberal ideologies identify with wealth rather than the common good (Peeples, 2014). Therefore, if world leaders are not standing for the common good of society and the Earth, Thunberg's rhetoric aims to disrupt their version of normal or efficiencies - a reality absorbed by wealthy industries -- and break their trained incapacities by purposely evoking discomfort. Although her choice to cause discomfort could also be traced through "How dare you!" (Thunberg, 2019), it is important to recognize additional blunt, performative choices that achieve this. When performing bluntly with the intention of evoking discomfort, her rhetoric performs with imagination and the emotion of wonder which disrupt neoliberal trained incapacities.

Breaking Trained Incapacities

By identifying wealth as the source for their lack of perception of and apathy toward the severity of climate change, Thunberg's rhetoric is attempting to open world leaders' eyes to the material reality they are unable or choose not to see. This disruptive process begins immediately when she says at the beginning of her speech, "My message is that we'll be watching you." An unexpected, pointed, and performative hook, it grabs the audience's attention through its unforeseen nature coming from the youngest spokesperson on stage. This blunt and disruptive delivery also evokes the importance of sight. By saying that she is "watching" them, she makes it clear that her eyes are open to climate issues, and theirs are not, which gives her the opportunity to use language to disrupt their version of normal. She goes on: "We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!" (Thunberg, 2019). She says "money" and "fairy tales of eternal economic growth" (Thunberg, 2019) in reference to world leaders' neoliberalism. If all leaders can discuss are money and an ever-growing economy, this has given them the "desire to avoid an

unsatisfactory situation,” or climate change, and to “try any means at their disposal to do so” (Burke, 1954, p. 8). Yet, because neoliberalism has led to a trained incapacity toward not being able to perceive the severity of climate change, Thunberg suggests that this avoidance may not be purposeful. If neoliberalism contributes to their efficiencies or past training and has caused them to misjudge the situation of climate change (Burke, 1954), then their realities would not be absorbed by money and change would happen. Therefore, she says, “Because if you really understood the situation and still kept failing to act, then you would be evil. And that I refuse to believe” (Thunberg, 2019). By implying that they could be evil if they were able to perceive the danger of climate change, she attempts to break their trained incapacities because their wealth and privilege allows them to avoid a massive crisis that does not affect them directly. Overall, by drawing their attention to sight in relation to wealth and the economy, her disruptive approach creates an opening for recognizing their trained incapacities to neoliberalism and orient their perspectives to climate change differently.

Furthermore, Thunberg continues her disruptive approach by using the term “evil” to cause discomfort to their efficiencies. Just like “we’ll be watching you” (Thunberg, 2019) was unforeseen and disruptive coming from a child, “evil” has a similar, yet piercing function because it makes their normal, or efficiencies, feel uncomfortable. As Hawhee (2009) suggests, efficiency derives from an inability to connect with one’s own body knowledge and not consciously at new perceptions for communication. So, if money or neoliberalism functions as avoidance to climate change, it is also an example of efficiency because it does not allow world leaders to separate from their version of normal supported by a privileged ideology. By pointing this out, “evil” is disruptive because it aims to make them more aware by creating discomfort about, as she says, their “business as usual” (Thunberg, 2019) affairs. She even confronts the

discomfort she caused later in her speech when she says, “There will not be any solutions or plans presented in line with these figures here today, because these numbers are too uncomfortable” (Thunberg, 2019). Thus, by implying villainy through her use of the term “evil” and calling out their discomfort, she is forcing powerful leaders to confront their privilege derived from neoliberalism and make their normal lives feel strange (Hawhee, 2009) in order to produce change.

As a whole, by attempting to break trained incapacities and cause discomfort to their efficiencies, Thunberg is performing her wonder and imagination of a better world. She does so by seeking to transform the ordinary and therefore motivate action beyond the bare minimum (Ahmed, 2004). Although she said that leaders keep failing to act, “popular ideas” still persist in terms of committing to combating climate change, which, to Thunberg, is lackluster and equivalent to not acting at all (Thunberg, 2019). For example, she says cutting carbon emissions by half may be enough to most leaders, but it does not account for future consequences her generation will endure, such as “most feedback loops, additional warming hidden by toxic air pollution or the aspects of equity and climate justice” (Thunberg, 2019). She goes on, “They also rely on my generation sucking hundreds of billions of tons of your CO₂ out of the air with technologies that barely exist” (Thunberg, 2019). By saying this, she performs wonder by opening “up a collective space” where she can make an impression and present an opportunity that more can be done in taking action against climate change (Ahmed, 2004, p. 181-182). Additionally, this extends her imagination and encourages a movement toward a reality of change (Burke, 1950). This concept is especially apparent when she says “fairy tales of eternal economic growth,” “evil,” and “sucking hundreds of billions of tons of your CO₂ out of the air” (Thunberg, 2019). Thunberg is using imagination during these moments in particular because of

the immense passion and vivid language apparent during her performance, which allow the audience to see material truth that neoliberalism has obscured (Burke, 1950). This coincides with wonder because the evocation of economic la-la lands, villainy, and inhaling toxic air “expands our field of vision” and overall exposure to the grim reality of climate change (Ahmed, 2004, p. 179). Overall, Thunberg performs wonder and imagination in an effort to mobilize world leaders toward change and where they can see that more can be done to combat climate change.

Breaking one’s trained incapacities through performance is no easy task because, based on Thunberg’s rhetoric, it is meant to disrupt the power of neoliberalism as an ideology. This challenge is amplified because of her age, as she was the youngest person on stage delivering a blunt and pointed message to a room full of adults. However, the unexpectedness of “My message is that we’ll be watching you” and “evil” is exactly what makes Thunberg’s rhetoric so affective and powerful. There is bravery in her rhetoric in that she is trying to make adults feel uncomfortable by calling out their efficiencies to neoliberalism, which has passively displaced them in an alternate reality where climate change is one among many issues or something that will ultimately be able to solve with more market-based thinking. “Evil” is poignant in its use to cause discomfort, but its discomfort is meant to reorient perspectives absorbed by neoliberal ideologies. This is why her use of wonder and imagination is crucial: if new modes of communication are necessary for change and political action, she must cast a light on their failures. Performing this rhetoric disruptively achieves this and shows that neoliberalism will not lead the world toward sustainable progress.

Conclusion

To conclude, this analysis synthesized Thunberg’s speech, “The World is Waking Up” as a performance of rhetorical disruption to world leaders’ trained incapacities. I critically observed

a film recording of her speech at the UN Climate Action Summit and noted what Thunberg was doing in terms of performance choices with her body language, tonality, and language cadence. What stood out to me was that her performance and rhetoric exuded maturity and aimed to produce affects through the movement of her words. I connected these observations with Burke's (1950) concepts of identification and consubstantiality, as well as Ahmed's (2004) concepts of affect in relation to stickiness and performativity of disgust. As the youngest speaker at the summit, Thunberg identifies with her audience by performing with maturity and, through consubstantiality, establishes children as bearing responsibility to combating climate change. This persuades across division as well as produces an affect, which in Thunberg's rhetoric, involves a transference of disgust that sticks or creates an emotional relationality toward climate change and the world leaders who have failed Thunberg's generation. Her use of identification, consubstantiality, and affect produces a rhetoric of disruption, most notably in her performance of "How dare you!" (Thunberg, 2019). When she amplifies this phrase, she is performing disgust that produces a multiplicity of disruptive affects. For one, "How dare you!" (Thunberg, 2019) expels her distaste for 'the next generation' trope and inherently embodying hope when she is unable to even have a childhood. Yet, it is this frustration that also allows her to embrace her childhood through ephebic rhetoric. By purposefully evoking childhood in her speech, ephebic rhetoric allows her to disrupt the idea that children are passive victims of climate injustice and therefore amplify their agency. Moreover, her rhetoric, aided by her militant style, is about sticking a shared feeling of disgust by translating "How dare you!" (Thunberg, 2019) into "We are disgusted by you!" This collective feeling is enhanced by repetition and solidifies, through circulation, that children are legitimate agents of change. What influences public affect through repetition are echoes, which not only expand upon the capabilities of children's environmental

rhetoric, but if they have what is considered a disability, like Autism, it reorients into a performative advantage. Thunberg's repetition of "How dare you!" (Thunberg, 2019) echoes her right to be heard because she only speaks when necessary, projecting that her Autism allows her to see that the world is in need of help now more than ever.

Thunberg's rhetoric matters as disruption because it confronts neoliberalism, or world leaders' efficiencies that have led to their trained incapacities. If leaders function through the world through their neoliberal ideologies, their immense wealth and privilege do not allow them to see the world like Thunberg does. So, by targeting their lack of perception and passivity toward a more just sustainability, Thunberg creates discomfort by emphasizing her consciousness: she will be watching them. She will be watching if they continue to live in a world, equivalent to a fairy tale, influenced by their misguided, neoliberal perspectives. And because neoliberalism functions as world leaders' efficiencies, she implies that they could be evil to cause discomfort. The use of the term "evil" is a powerful choice because, while it is disconcerting, it potentially allows leaders to confront their privilege and move toward change. This movement toward change is guided by Thunberg's wonder and imagination, which pictures a world without neoliberalism, as it has no place for her generation or a future in sustainability.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Main Insights

Based on my critical observation and analysis, it is clear that through Thunberg's commitment to performing rhetoric during her performances in activism, there are several contributions made to the fields of rhetoric and Environmental Communication. First, Thunberg's rhetoric demonstrates the capacity children have in displaying their critical thinking and responsibility in questioning authority on moral grounds, therefore solidifying their place in environmental activism. Although modern youth engagement in the climate justice movement has had a prominent place since 2015, what is significant is that Thunberg's production of rhetoric is disruptive and allows audiences to move "beyond the notion that children are apolitical victims of environmental injustice" (Thomas, 2020, p. 3). Her disruptive rhetoric is shaped by identification and consubstantiality, as she identifies with her audience by exhibiting her responsibility and a willingness to hold politicians accountable through a militant style of persuasion, all without discarding her youthfulness as an affective persuasive strategy. By doing this through a performance of disgust, she also presents how she can use her identity as a child to her advantage, as seen through her use of purposefully evoking childhood in her speech, ephebic rhetoric, as well as acknowledging both the limitations and opportunities through 'the next generation' trope. What is disruptive about this is the fact that she is able to immerse audience attention, as if children are finally being listened to about their concern for the world. "How dare you" (Thunberg, 2019) abruptly halts us in our tracks and forces those impacted by her speech to question their relationship to the environment, neoliberalism, and perhaps misconception of children.

Second, Thunberg not only grants children more agency and a place in rhetoric, Environmental Communication, and climate justice activism, her echoing builds on Autistic agency and presents how people with Autism offer unique perspectives on pressing issues like climate change. Thunberg's rhetoric would not be as disruptive without the repetition and echoing of "How dare you" (Thunberg, 2019) as it derives from her Asperger's, selective mutism, and OCD. By seeing most issues as black or white and speaking only when necessary, as she mentioned in her speech "Disarming Case," her rhetoric embodies an urgent disruption and validates Autistic voices and contributions, especially children with Autism or mental disabilities, to climate change rhetoric and discourse. She validates their contributions by reinventing "disability" as advantageous because of her ability to perform bluntly through disruption. This is supported by her performance of disgust of "How dare you" (Thunberg, 2019), production of sticky affects, and in her word choices, such as "evil," that are meant to cause discomfort toward leaders' neoliberal mindset. So, not only does she represent what children are capable of, but her decision to speak out against oppression by chastising politicians and performing with emotion echoes to those with a "disability" that their voices matter in and offer a valuable contribution to political issues.

Lastly, Thunberg's rhetoric demonstrates the productivity of emotion as a justified, persuasive force. Ahmed (2004) states that "emotions are not a positive form of dwelling, but produce the effect of surfaces and boundaries of bodies" (p. 194). In other words, it is not enough to observe that Thunberg feels disgusted at world leaders for their lack of action or concern for her generation. Rather, it is about examining what Thunberg is doing with her feelings of disgust, how she is performing it, and why it matters. And based on the analysis, it is clear that she performs disgust as a form of disruption to leaders' trained incapacities to wealth and neoliberal

ideologies. As her speech is titled “The World is Waking Up,” she is literally trying to wake them up to a reality they are able to ignore. While it is unclear how much she is able to raise their consciousness, her transfer of disgust sticks to audiences, which build collective affects that climate change is an emotionally impactful issue because it is something that affects all of Earth’s inhabitants. It is more than just perceiving an emotion, but how its use in rhetoric produces affects that sticks and is felt as collective. Even beyond that, it is about how Thunberg’s affects are able to open up a future that is conscious toward saving the world (Ahmed, 2004).

Limitations on Activism and Affect

While Thunberg represents herself as a viable figure in the climate justice movement, it is also crucial to acknowledge her fame in relation to race and how her whiteness may limit broader recognition of activist voices from People of Color. Even though Thunberg did not ask to be the “messianic-like face for the climate movement,” the media and public making her the center of the youth-led movement obscures the work of many Indigenous, Black, and Brown youth activists (Burton, 2019, para. 2). Such notable activists include Jamie Margolin, a queer, Jewish, and Latina climate activist from Colombia, who advocates for Latinx and Indigenous communities severely impacted by climate issues such as droughts, as well as gang violence, murder, and persecution for engaging in environmental activism (Burton, 2019). Amariyanna Copeny is another notable figure in the movement and, as mentioned in the analysis, shares commonalities with Thunberg. Like Thunberg, Copeny’s style of activism is informed by her positionality as a child as a way to chastise politicians (Thomas, 2020). Yet, despite their similarities, Thunberg is certainly more privileged given that she is wealthy and white, whereas Copeny, who is black, grew up where water issues disproportionately affect people of color: Flint, Michigan. Their differences in experiences with climate change are stark based on how

they evoke childhood in their activism. For instance, while Thunberg references her childhood more broadly, Copeny draws attention to her inability to enjoy daily activities, such as play in the water during the summer, because of the devastation of the water crisis (Thomas, 2020). By doing this, she also cites environmental racism as a basis in addressing climate change, acknowledging that it is treated as a nonissue even though there are “dozens of Flints across the country” (Burton, 2019, para. 14). This is not to invalidate Thunberg’s emotional trauma, but rather to point out that whiteness, as a system of power, continues to amplify some voices and attempt to silence others. Overall, while Thunberg is positioned as the climate justice movement’s central actor, her positionality should also be granted to activists of color, like Copeny, who contributes to the expansion of children’s engagement with politics and incorporates additional impacts of climate change, such as water issues and environmental racism.

Additionally, Thunberg’s privilege is present when she engages in other forms of activism, such as her decision to sail to the United States for the UN Climate Action Summit rather than fly (Mkono et al., 2020). Her decision to sail was to inspire others to move away from air travel because of the rising greenhouse gas emissions of the airline industry (Mkono et al., 2020). And while her anti-flying message is valid and seeks to morally persuade others to consider more environmentally friendly travel means, her actual ability to do this exemplifies her white privilege in the climate justice movement. As Vilentchik (2020) argues, not everyone, especially young people, have the ability to participate in these kinds of demonstrations. He states that her protest “ignores the fact that environmental activists in the global South fight for climate justice under harder conditions” and thus, given their circumstances, are not able to participate at all (Vilentchik, 2020, para. 13). Considering this, activism is then a matter of

resources, and Thunberg's activism reflects her capacity to sail and speak at the UN because her parents were able to support her efforts. In examining this in relation to when she says "I should be in school on the other side of the ocean" (Thunberg, 2019), while the rhetoric in this statement uses identification and consubstantiality in evoking childhood and responsibility, it could also be read as performing privilege. This is because she has the resources to be able to skip school, then sail across the ocean to the United States, and be given the platform to perform at the UN. As a whole, while her activism and rhetoric can be read as noble, it is vital to recognize the privilege she was granted in her ability to sail to the UN Climate Action Summit as well as be given the global spotlight on climate justice.

Lastly, in acknowledging her privilege and ability to use her platform, it is vital to examine just how persuasively affective her rhetoric is. Or, in other words, by applying the concept of circulation, it is important to ask: How much has Thunberg's rhetoric moved in public discourse surrounding climate change, and what stays as a result of her affect? (Bradshaw, 2018; Gries & Brooke, 2018). Unfortunately, as a result of her age, being sixteen at the time of "The World is Waking Up" her production of identification and consubstantiality, Thunberg is subject to ageism based on circulated media coverage of her speech. For example, when she says "I should be in school" (Thunberg, 2019) and as she continues to skip school on Friday in effort to continue the circulation of #FridaysForFuture, it appears that this becomes the focus to the media rather than her environmental messaging. For instance, in a study where Bergmann and Ossewaarde (2020) analyzed German news coverage of Thunberg and school strikes, ageism is evident because they invalidate youth climate activists by questioning the morality and legality of skipping school. This invalidates the interests of the movement because it "locates the young climate activist in school" rather than a public stage and redirects "the issue of debate away from

the actual interests of the youth movement” (Bergmann & Ossewaarde, 2020, p. 273). By segregating youth and Thunberg from public places and focusing purely on their form of protest while negating their messaging, Thunberg’s affect results in ageism (Bergmann & Ossewaarde, 2020). And based on her rhetoric, which maintains childhood through consubstantiality, ephebic rhetoric, and both embracing and criticizing ‘the next generation trope,’ it is challenging to evaluate whether her rhetoric is productive in producing affects toward change or is one that enhances ageism.

In taking account of Thunberg’s white privilege and ageist media portrayals, I believe that Thunberg’s positive impact as an Earth Defender is worth amplifying despite apparent limitations. Although it is important to recognize the resources put her at an advantage over others, allowing her to skip school and commit her life to activism, it is notable that she uses her platform in order to identify racial injustice from climate change to the forefront of her activism. This is most notable in her social media presence, which garnered millions of followers on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter after her UN speech (Jung et al., 2020). Her ability to gain millions of followers after her UN speech is a strong indicator of her positive impact and ability to bring climate change discourse to the online sphere. With that many followers, it is evident that, for instance, she uses her platform to leverage discussion on issues relating to environmental racism. In one tweet, she said, “Indigenous people are literally being murdered for trying to protect the forest [sic] from illegal deforestation. It is shameful that the world remains silent about this” (Phillips, 2019, p. 1). In addition to using her platform to raise awareness about environmental racism and indigenous rights, her continued work emphasizes, in referencing the title of her book of speeches, that “No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference” (Thunberg, 2019). Although her evocation of childhood in her rhetoric and simply being small may draw

limited media coverage, her influence is evident in the example she sets for children and people with disabilities.

Plans for Future Research

Acknowledging Thunberg's activist presence on social media, I am interested in analyzing her rhetoric on social media and connecting it to the concept of circulation. Because circulation examines "how and why things stay" (Bradshaw, 2018, p. 481) in rhetoric, it would be fascinating to analyze how her reshaping of rhetoric and performativity translate on social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter and therefore influence the movement of her messaging. For example, following her UN speech and earning *Time Magazine's* "Person of Year in 2019 (Atler, Haynes & Worland, 2020), former President Donald Trump mocked Thunberg on Twitter, tweeting that she should chill, watch an old-fashioned movie, and work on her anger management problems (Wamsley, 2019). In response, she put in her Twitter biography, "A teenager working on her anger management problem. Currently chilling and watching a good old-fashioned movie with a friend" (Wamsley, 2019, para. 5). The bluntness, which is apparent in her disruptive rhetoric during her UN speech, seems to transfer to her social media presence through stickiness. Based on this observation, I would explore if the performativity of her speeches translates to her social media presence and examine how they stick and circulate online. By doing this, it may suggest and provide further information on Thunberg's persuasive affects.

Considering my interest in Thunberg's performativity, my future research would also incorporate a theatrical angle, especially in children's theatre, and explore whether a theatrical background influences the performance of speeches and social media posts. It would be intriguing to study whether Thunberg's parents, who are professional actors and performers, had

an influence on Thunberg's ability to perform activism on stage. I would also be inclusive of more activists and incorporate them into the conversation, such as Amariyanna Copeny and other important figures, and examine their potential linkage to theatre. This could open an opportunity in studying the importance of children's theatre, as it may give young people the confidence to become environmental agents of change.

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BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Mackenzie Peacock is from Weare, New Hampshire and graduated from John Stark Regional High School in 2015. As a sophomore in high school, Mackenzie became involved in theatre as an actor after her brother convinced her audition for a play. Ever since then, Mackenzie fell in love with the performing arts and decided to pursue Theatre as well as Communication at the University of Maine. During her time as an undergraduate, she was involved in countless productions with the School of Performing Arts. Her passion for theatre always intertwined with her Communication studies, as she found the two to be interrelated in various ways. After earning a Bachelor's degree in Communication and Theatre in 2019, she continued directly into graduate school to pursue a Master's degree in Communication at the University of Maine. Continuing to combine her theatre interests with Communication, Mackenzie became intrigued with rhetorical studies and Greta Thunberg's activism, thus sparking a two-year-long journey in researching rhetoric, Environmental Communication, and children's performance in climate justice activism. After receiving her degree, she hopes to pursue work where her combined interests of Communication and Theatre can be fully realized. Mackenzie is a candidate for the Master of Arts degree in Communication from the University of Maine in May 2021.