"We had to control the narrative"

The Innovations and Limitations of Youth Citizenship

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On 14 February 2018 the deadliest school shooting in American history took place at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (herein referred to as MSD) in Parkland, Florida. The rampage shooting, enacted by a former student of MSD, injured and killed seventeen staff and students, which sparked national debates over gun control policies.[1] In the macabre reality of gun violence in the United States, MSD is not an exceptional occurrence: there have been an estimated 108 school shootings in the US between 2009 and 2019 (Walker). However, the response to the MSD rampage shooting was unique in that youth survivors directly and purposefully intervened in the news media's coverage of the event and debates on gun control. Within hours of the shooting, MSD students quickly mobilized and "stepped directly into the political arena to not only declare 'enough is enough,' but to demand common sense gun reform" (Bent 56), and the March for Our Lives Movement (herein referred to as MFOL) was born. The MFOL's mission is to "harness the power of young people across the country to fight for sensible gun violence prevention policies that save lives" ("Mission"). MFOL organized the largest single-day protest against gun violence, and of the MFOL's activities, it was this protest that gathered the most media attention. However, MFOL also utilized several strategies to communicate their demands to policy makers, and it is through these varied strategies that the MFOL youth activists claimed and enacted the rights and responsibilities of citizenship before they were legally able to vote.

The MFOL youth activists deliberately intervened with their voices into the "thoughts and prayers" rhetoric spouted by the media and politicians, taking control of their narratives to challenge those in power to meet their demands. These young people offer an example of youth citizenship that greatly challenges standard citizenship models that traditionally exclude young people from participation in

1 Rampage shootings are defined as attacks on multiple parties selected mostly at random (Newman et al. 15). Katherine S. Newman et al. were the first to do a systematic study on school shootings in *Rampage* (2004) and scholars have continued to use the term "rampage" to describe mass casualty lethal school violence.

the political mechanisms that structure and govern their lives. Through an analysis of *Glimmer of Hope* (2018), an account of the MFOL movement written by the core founding members, this chapter explores the models of youth citizenship exhibited by the MFOL members. In their account, the young activists simultaneously assert themselves as subjects and citizens with the right to voice their concerns and have them heard and addressed, and undercut the power they have as citizens in emphasizing that voting is the strongest way to bring about change—a process they could not yet take part in. This dichotomy unveils some of the arbitrary boundaries of citizenship, in this case the legal voting age, and demonstrates the difficulty and limitations of asserting and claiming one's rights as a citizen before these rights have been legally granted and recognized. This chapter focuses on the methods with which the MFOL youth amplified their voices in order to put meaningful pressure on elected officials, and I argue that this is a method of citizenship available to those not yet legally able to vote. However, this chapter also investigates the limits that arise when youth make demands of elected officials when being unable to threaten the incumbency of these officials through the electoral process.

Defining Citizenship and Youth Citizenship

T. H. Marshall's definition of citizenship has long been considered the standard and encompasses three levels of rights to be granted to citizens: the rights to freedom of speech, to justice, to own property; the political rights to vote and to run for political office; and social rights that include social security, health care, and education. According to this seminal definition, citizenship provides members of a society civil, social, and political rights that Marshall believes would create equality: this form of citizenship would "become a form of equalization in which individuals gained a common identity" (303). However, rather than being an equalizing force, in practice this definition does not offer citizenship rights to every subject within a society, as the rights of citizenship have traditionally been consigned to adults (most relevant to this chapter) of a particular class and ethnicity.

Building from Marshall, Richard Bellamy defines citizenship as having "an intrinsic link to democratic politics," and he argues that voting is the most crucial component as it colours all other rights and responsibilities traditionally associated with citizenship (Bellamy 12). For Bellamy, voting is the most essential method to communicate with elected officials regarding concerns: "[t]he logic is simple … if politicians consistently ignore citizens and prove incompetent, they will eventually lose office" (7). Bellamy unpacks the difficulties and complications in assigning this amount of power to voting in that the right to vote has been historically monopolized by property-owning white men, and he traces several suffrage movements relating to gender, class, and race.

One social group that is perpetually unable to vote, and that is not significantly discussed by Bellamy, is children and youth. Bellamy does mention that children are traditionally excluded from the full citizenship rights of voting because they "have yet to develop the capacity of independent reasoning or living on their own and are necessarily dependent on the views and support of their parents" (59). Bellamy notes the arbitrary nature of determining at what age children and youth become "capable of intellectual and economic independence" (59), and that because of this arbitrariness some nations, like the United Kingdom, have proposed the voting age be lowered. What Bellamy does not address is the false assumption that the legal age of majority automatically equates independent reasoning, when in reality many adults are also dependent (in varying degrees) on the opinions, views, and support of others. As well, using economic independence as a measure of who is granted the right to vote would exclude many individuals over the age of eighteen. In these standards that determine who should be granted the right to vote, it is seldom considered that children, youth, and adults can all embody similar characteristics, and this exposes the indiscriminate nature of these measures that exclude some from citizenship rights.

The authors of *Glimmer of Hope* largely agree with Bellamy that voting is the cornerstone of citizenship. Delaney Tarr argues "the best way to really make a difference is to get people to vote for the right leaders" (*Glimmer* 99), and David Hogg reflects that "unless every single one of those people [protesters who attended MFOL] votes, it doesn't matter … you have to get out and fucking vote" (*Glimmer* 183). While imbuing the right to vote with such power, a right many of the MFOL organizers did not possess in 2018, they nonetheless demonstrate that children and youth can directly influence the polls without casting a vote themselves: in 2018, MFOL registered over 50,000 new voters during their Road to Change education campaign and they registered another 800,000 people on National Voter Registration Day during the Mayors for Our Lives campaign events ("Mission"); possibly as a result of these voter registrations, in the 2018 midterm elections there "was a 47% increase over the last midterm election and the highest percentage of youth voter turnout ever" ("Mission"). Yet, many (including the MFOL activists) still view children and youth as being restricted as democratic citizens because they cannot cast their own ballots.

In the model of democratic citizenship, in which one becomes a citizen when they can legally vote, children and youth are viewed as future citizens or citizens-in-the-making. Robert Lawy and Gert Biesta argue that models of citizenship like Marshall's and Bellamy's create a "citizenship as achievement mindset," and essential to this is the "assumption that young people should act and behave in a particular way in order to achieve their citizenship status" (38). In this model, children and youth are future voting citizens with little to no power in their current life stage. In addition, Hava Rachel Gordon argues that one consequence in positioning children and youth as citizens-in-the-making is that they are "socially constructed as citizen participants only in future tense: ill-equipped to participate in the social

and political decision making as youth, only capable of this participation as adults" (9). Inherent in the citizens-in-the-making theory is the assumption that youth will transition synchronously and smoothly into active citizenship when they reach legal voting age; in practice this model breeds apathy, and this is demonstrated across many nations in the low youth voting numbers as compared to other age demographics. For example, a study of the 2013 Canadian Federal election found that sixty-one percent of youth aged twenty to twenty-four indicated they would be likely to vote in the next Federal election compared to eighty-four percent of seniors aged sixty-five to seventy-four (Turcotte). As well, the Canadian 2015 National Youth Survey found the two barriers that prevented youth from voting were motivation (lack of interest and the belief that their votes do not matter) and access (less likely to receive a voting card and less aware of how to register and vote) (Nielsen). Lack of motivation and difficulty accessing where and when to vote are directly related to a citizenship-as-achievement mindset: children and youth have been excluded from citizenship rights and responsibilities which breeds the assumption that their concerns do not matter, and they lack direct experiences with voting systems that make many ill-preprepared to be active voting citizens when they do join the legal majority. Lawy and Biesta suggest that rather than viewing citizenship as "a status or possession," or as "an outcome of developmental and/or educational trajectory that can be socially engineered," we should view citizenship as a "practice, embedded within the day-to-day reality of (young) people's lives, interwoven and transformed over time in all the distinctive and different dimensions of their lives" (47). As will be examined in the next section, the MFOL activists demonstrate a model of citizenship-as-practice in their acts of voicing discontent to lawmakers.

It is also a question of power and control in determining which subjects are allowed to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Jessica Taft notes that "democracy means that those affected by a decision should have significant voice in the making of such decisions" (*Kids* 51), and in excluding youth from the rights and responsibilities of citizenship there is the assumption that children and youth cannot make a difference that is "rooted in conceptions of the inherent inequality of young people" (53). Children and youths' exclusion from many of the rights of citizenship, as defined by Marshall and Bellamy, results in their unfiltered perspectives and concerns being considered in a limited nature, if at all, in decision making. When adults run for office at any level, a large portion of a nation's population does not need to be directly addressed or engaged with. Rather, adults speak for children and youth which filters and potentially distorts children and youths' concerns. However, many youths, like the MFOL organizers, "refuse the suggestion that their politics is only relevant in a deferred future. In this view of the discourse of preparation is, in the end, incompatible with their efforts to claim authority because it makes no space for the democratic participation of youth as youth" (Taft, *Kids* 52).

This chapter uses an expanded definition of citizenship from that of Marshall and Bellamy that considers citizenship not as something that is achieved, but as a lifelong "cradle to grave" practice (Lawy and Biesta 43). It is through citizenship-as-practice, as Lawy and Biesta argue, that "young people learn to be citizens as a consequence of their participation in the actual practices that make up their lives" (45). Yet, how can youth fully participate in democratic citizenship when they cannot vote, which is heralded even by the MFOL youth as the corner stone of participating in a democracy? Besides voting, Bellamy notes that "speaking out" is also a crucial task in being involved in the democratic process, and thus another means to exercise one's citizenship (3). This chapter analyzes the methods utilized by the MFOL youths to "speak out" in order to regain control of how their narratives are being represented, address the issues entrenched in their narratives, and speak directly to policymakers. The methods (social media, face-to-face dialogue in legislation, and protests) which the MFOL youth harness to amplify their voices offer a model for children and youth to participate as citizens in the present and are a means to influence the voting process before being legally able to vote themselves.

"This is not your story": Intervening Through Social Media

School shootings have garnered much media attention throughout their history, but the repeated national outrage has not resulted in substantial gun reform policies. The Columbine Massacre in 1999, "was the deadliest school shooting in history at the time and the second-most-covered news event of the 1990s, second only to O. J. Simpson's car chase with police and televised murder trial" (Markland). Columbine's media focus was centered on adults interpreting the rampage shooting and its causes, and not on the youths' perspectives who had lived through the experience. As with many issues that directly affect children and youth, adults spoke on behalf of students and this resulted in attention being misdirected from the wider social factors (such as gun regulations) towards the individual (such as the violent media the shooters consumed and their mental health).

In the hours following the MSD shooting, MFOL activist Cameron Kasky witnessed the same trend unfold with the immediate media coverage, and this compelled him (and subsequently his peers) to interject with his voice to gain control over his own narrative:

> This is not the media's narrative. This is not your story. This is nobody's tragedy to interpret but our own. The students of Stoneman Douglas know exactly what happened at Stoneman Douglas, and under no circumstances will you tell our story for us. (Glimmer 5).

In writing that the MSD rampage shooting is for the youth survivors to interpret, Kasky disrupts the usual hierarchy of adults speaking on behalf of youth. Furthermore, Kasky situates the MSD youth survivors as those best suited to interpret this event because their direct experience makes them authorities on the subject. Kasky's statement that youths are the experts of their own experiences additionally unsettles the power imbalance between adults and youth in giving control to youth. The use of "interpret" in understanding the MSD shooting is also significant—Kasky argues that the youth survivors, as the authorities on this subject, will be the ones to "to make meaning of" this event ("interpret" v.1.b). In this section, Kasky demands that he and his peers be put in control of their narratives, and he asserts they will be the ones to understand and make meaning out of their experiences. Both rhetorical moves imbue youth survivors with power in declaring that they will directly voice their narrative and demands, rather than have this filtered through adult advocates to adult policymakers.

Kasky's above assertion transposes youth as authorities over their experiences, and this repositioning is a form of self-making. Self-making is, as Aihwa Ong argues, a form of citizenship: "citizenship [is a] process of self-making and being-made in relation to nation-states and transitional processes" (737). Ong sees citizenship as a "cultural process of 'subject-ifcation,' in the Foucauldian sense of self-making and being-made by power relations" (737). Kasky notes that in order for himself and his peers' concerns and demands to be heard, they must be in control of their narratives. In doing so, Kasky and others take an active role in their self-making as a process of citizenship that controls how they are presented and reframes how they are constituted as youth subjects: no longer silent figures in video clips who only speak when an adult journalist decides who a microphone is given to, Kasky and other MSD survivors share their voices through various means in order to reposition themselves as citizen-subjects needing to be heard. Furthermore, Kasky states it is essential he and other youth control their narratives to directly make demands: "I had to change the narrative as quickly as possible and let the country know that our generation—the school shooting generation—wasn't going to stand for this anymore" (*Glimmer* 7). Kasky's arguments reflect Ong's description of self-making citizenship as "the demand of disadvantaged subjects for full citizenship in spite of their cultural difference from mainstream society" (738). In this case, children and youth are disadvantaged citizens as their age precludes them from several rights and responsibilities of traditional citizenship, as defined by Marshall and Bellamy. Voicing their concerns repositions youth as subjects who will actively make meaning from the shooting, which, in this case, is gun policies needing to be significantly reformed.

A specific instrument the MFOL activists utilized to narrate their experiences and amplify their voices was social media, especially *Twitter*. Emily Bent explains that the "MFOL student-activists utilized social media not only to expose adult

hypocrisy but to claim public voice and political agency in the gun control debate by intentionally violating youth citizenship scripts and codes of behaviour" (64). One such example of this comes from MSD survivor Sarah Chadwick who was frustrated by the "thoughts and prayers" unaccompanied with action being offered to victims by media and policymakers, many of which were communicated over social media. In one tweet, American President Donald Trump "offered his condolences and his thoughts and prayers," and these empty words from the highest governing power in the United States made Chadwick "so angry" that she spoke back to President Trump by retweeting, "we didn't want thoughts and prayers, we wanted policy and action" (*Glimmer* 43). Chadwick's tweet went viral: 300,000 likes and 100,000 retweets within hours (43). In this instance, social media offered the unique ability for Chadwick, a high school student, to respond directly to her president and voice her discontent regarding his muted response to the rampage shooting. Bellamy argues that alongside voting, speaking out is foundational to democratic citizenship. Chadwick, unimpressed with the hollow response by the White House, demonstrates her subjectivity as a citizen by voicing her discontent and expressing what she, as a citizen, demands (policy and action) in place of the meaningless and vague rhetoric.

Likewise, Jaclyn Corin, a founding member of MFOL, used "rhetoric that resembled no one else's" on several social media platforms (*Glimmer* 71). In emphasizing that she used distinctive language, Corin notes that youth narrating their experiences sounds different than when these experiences are filtered through adults. Corin's direct language and clear demands of policymakers regarding how the shooting should be addressed is what she credits as making several of her posts go viral. In one such instance, Corin posted "a picture that read 'MAKE IT STOP' above a drawing of a semi-automatic rifle. My caption read '… contact your state and local representatives, as we must have stricter gun laws immediately" (71). In both examples from Chadwick and Corin, their social media posts intervened directly with the adult-curated narratives surrounding the MSD shooting by exposing the empty nature of condolences without action. Both Chadwick and Corin refute the adult responses to the MSD shooting by demanding what should take the place of thoughts and prayers: gun reform. Corin's post goes a step further than Chadwick's in not only broadly expressing that policy change is required, but by also including a roadmap for other youth (and adults) in how this change could be achieved: speaking with representatives. Corin emphasizes the sustained need and value of citizens using their voices to apply pressure onto those in power when reform is needed. Neither Corin or Chadwick could legally vote at the time of their social media posts, but in voicing their discontent and providing demands, they potentially influence those who can legally vote to support a representative who would meet these demands. As well, in exercising their right and responsibility as citizens to speak out, Corin and Chadwick are taking part in the citizenship-as-practice model

that fosters political interest and involvement before they are able to formally take part in the electoral process.

Yet, both Corin and Chadwick's examples have limitations and showcase how these young citizens have internalized the belief that active youth citizenship is extraordinary. Chadwick explains that she eventually was made to delete her viral retweet to President Trump because "my dad wasn't too fond of my language," and she "tweeted out an apology that basically said 'I'm apologizing for my language I used but not my anger" (*Glimmer* 43). Here, a parent/adult dominates, polices, and revises a young citizen's "speaking out," and this betrays the difficulty for some youth in being active citizens while under parental control. Her tweet was an instance in which Chadwick had control over how she presented herself as a subject, and this instance was deemed unacceptable by an adult authority figure because it violated the accepted passive script, rhetoric, and codes of behaviour reserved for young people. Chadwick was made to apologize for her language and behaviour violation—in other words, for being a youth citizen. As Lawy and Biesta argue, in many "situations young people are not seen as legitimate participants, their voices are ignored, and they have limited opportunity for shaping and changing the situations they are in" (45). Chadwick's example demonstrates the heightened level of difficulty for youth citizens in being fully able to control their narratives, voice their discontent, and influence or shape their circumstances when under parental/adult control.

Corin, in writing about her social media posts and her travels to legislature to meet with Florida senators, explains that "[n]ever in my life did I think I would involve myself in the world of politics" (*Glimmer* 73), nor did she think she *should* be involved in this political arena: "no kid should have to" (74). While it is of course true that no child, youth, or adult should have to be inspired to become an active citizen because of surviving a tragedy like a rampage shooting, Corin also discloses that she has internalized the assumption that children and youth are not *meant* to be involved in politics, and that it is only extraordinary measures that push them to do so.

This belief that children and youth should be "spared" having to be active citizens until they reach legal age is what Jessica Taft calls the "Exclusion Assumption," which is "an ideal of childhood innocence that suggests that children should not be concerned with social and political problems" (*Kids* 7). Taft furthers that this assumption and belief in childhood innocence "ignores the fact that many children are living these problems on a daily basis and do not have the option to ignore them" (*Kids* 7). As in the case of MFOL, the activists were often criticized for voicing their opinions concerning gun control as many conservatives argued "they are too young to know what they are talking about and that they have been manipulated by liberals" (Cummings), and that liberal-lensed adults were puppeteering the student survivors "to push their [adult liberal] agendas to the rest of us" (Carlson qtd. in Sanchez). These critics rarely acknowledged that the MSD students' lived experience with gun vio-

lence had made it impossible for them to ignore this issue—their peers have died as a direct result of lax gun legislation.

Even when immersed in "social and political problems," often when children and youth become involved in politics they are labelled as being "special" and "extraordinary," which the youth in Taft's study found to be damaging labels. In her interviews with female youth activists, Taft found that these young women "adamantly and actively refute the idea that they are special" (*Rebel* 44). Comments that position youth who are active citizens as being extraordinary assumes that "most youth are not capable of such involvement" and that in proclaiming youth activism and citizenship as

> extraordinary, adults perpetuate an association of youthfulness with political inaction or inability. Normal youth, in this narrative, are apathetic and politically disengaged. It is only the talented and committed few who are seen as capable of becoming politically active. (44)

Corin meaningfully used her voice to apply pressure to policymakers to meet her and her peers' demands for substantial gun reforms. However, in her writing, Corin demonstrates that she has internalized the belief that she should not have to be political, nor be a youth citizen—she is functioning in a citizenship-as-achievement model. Corin's assertion that "no kid should have to" be involved in politics communicates that she, as a youth, should not be taking an active role in democratic citizenship, and the fact that she has is only because of extraordinary circumstances.

In contrast, many of Corin's peers in the MFOL movement see their citizenship as a practice and that the MSD rampage shooting was a wake-up call that they needed to be actively involved in the procedures and structures that makes up their lives. For example, MSD survivor Jammal Lemy describes that "after previous school shootings happened, the last thing on my mind was to take action and fight the people who … have constantly dropped the ball … this is why young people needed their voices to be heard" (*Glimmer* 93, 97). In being directly involved in a school shooting, Lemy's perspective changed: "I know it's our duty as the youth of America to never stay quiet" (198). Regardless, Corin's internalization of the exclusion assumption demonstrates how difficult it is for children and youth to become more politically engaged when they have been socialized to believe they are "passive objects of socialization" rather than active citizens-in-practice (Taft *Kids*, 6).

"You work for the people": Talking to Legislators

The MFOL activists did not only engage with community and elected officials over social media, but also voiced their concerns and demands face-to-face with legis-

lators, embodying the right of citizens to bring their concerns to elected officials. While the activists took part in events that average citizens (youth and adult alike) would not be afforded, like the CNN televised townhall where MSD students asked questions of Florida representatives, they also attended state and federal open sessions in legislature to share concerns and make demands: a practice available to any citizen.

Early in the MFOL organization's genesis, Corin, because of her viral social media posts, was encouraged by a Congresswoman to attend a session in the Florida Legislature. Corin knew that for her demands of policy change to be met she needed to speak directly to those with the power to make these policy changes: "I felt as though it was all up to me to urge the House to bring a bill to the floor regarding stricter gun laws" (*Glimmer* 72–3). Corin organized a group of MSD students to accompany her in order to meet with as many representatives as possible. During their visit, the group met with Democrat and Republican representatives, the attorney general, lieutenant governor, and governor to advocate for stricter gun laws (76).

Following this state legislature trip, MFOL member Delaney Tarr writes of the group's visit to Washington, D.C. to "have an open conversation with the people who can make real legislative change" at the federal level (*Glimmer* 93). For Tarr, the ability to speak directly with federal leaders made her and others feel like "more than just teenagers" (93). Tarr, like Corin, has internalized the belief that this sort of active citizenship should not be normally enacted by teenagers, and thus speaking directly with federal lawmakers is diametrically opposed to her "naturalized" subject position as a youth who has no real power or value in the present. Tarr remembers feeling "powerful" when standing inside the Capitol building because she was "there with a voice … to make real change" (94–5). Tarr initially felt empowered simply by physically inhabiting the Capitol building—empowered that she, as a teenager, was actively present in an adult-regulated space, and thus a subject with opinions and beliefs worthy of being heard.

However, these visits were also disheartening and revealed the difficulties of youth citizenship. The initial trip to the Florida Legislature was a lesson to Corin and her peers regarding the language games played by politicians: they offered their sympathy, but "avoid[ed] any real conversations about guns" (*Glimmer* 76). Sitting in a Senate meeting, the MSD students witnessed politicians send "thoughts and prayers to Parkland, but promised no action" (76)—direct and clear demands from the students from MSD were met with vague and slick language. Even though the students were disappointed that their presence did not immediately result in dramatic policy changes—indeed, after they asked for more psychologists to be placed in schools, mental health funding was instead cut shortly after their visit—and the politicians evaded genuine dialogue, Corin insists that their physical presence and their voices "made a difference" as they (the politicians), "surely did not expect immediate action, specifically one hundred teenagers swarming their building like bees"

(77). Put another way, Corin expresses that lawmakers did not expect to be answerable to, and to be applied pressure from, youth who were enacting their rights as citizens to express their discontent and demand change. Though it was of course disheartening that this visit did not end in substantial policy changes, it did show elected representatives how the MSD students were re-subjecting themselves as citizens who would not be passive.

Like Corin, Tarr also learned about the power dynamics and language games that take place at the Capitol: "[u]nsurprisingly, they would try and manipulate the conversation so they would get to say their piece, and often left us without any time to get a word in" (*Glimmer* 96). The Capitol politicians monopolized the room for speech to keep youth voiceless, and thus powerless: if youth citizens are not given space to express their concerns, then politicians do not have to directly address these concerns. Tarr's initial empowerment from taking up space in the Capitol was quickly extinguished: the first person she approached questioned why she and her peers were there and "treat[ed] us like kids and was rude to us" (95). However, among those who monopolized conversation or dismissed the group, there were some that listened and this "was very powerful" for the students (95). While Tarr is unsure if these figures took them seriously because "nothing has really happened yet," her meeting with Representative John Lewis bolstered her resolve to continue using her voice: "[t]o hear a civil rights activist say, 'We support you guys. We stand with you. We marched, now you do your marching'" (96–7). Representative Lewis did not marginalize the students, but he drew meaningful parallels to his own citizenship as a youth to encourage the groups' sustained political actions—a wonderful example of adult-allyship.

Cameron Kasky shares similar frustrations to Corin and Tarr over the elusive conversations that he experienced during the CNN townhall. Kasky describes that Senator Mark Rubio gave "political answers" and "sidestepped" a yes-or-no question: "[w]ould he stop accepting money from the NRA?" (*Glimmer* 83). Kasky argues that representatives like Senator Rubio have the obligation to answer questions directly and frankly: "[i]f you are a politician, you work for the people, and it is your responsibility to answer the questions that the people rightfully raise" (83). Kasky notes that Senator Rubio most likely hoped he would "make it out with zero consequences" from the town hall in having to field questions from youth, but Kasky was not going to "let him get away that easy" (83), further stating not only his status as a citizen who has the right to express discontent and have questions answered, but as having the responsibility of holding those in power accountable.

Just as youth citizenship is complicated as it crosses arbitrary boundaries to demand rights and responsibilities not yet bestowed, the outcomes of the MFOL visits with lawmakers is complex. There is no fairy-tale ending with gun laws being substantially and meaningfully reformed. Rather, like most institutional change, these visits moved the needle on gun reform. Even these small changes are significant

because of the role that the pressure from MFOL played in making these changes. A week after the MFOL's visit to the Florida Legislature, the governor, Rick Scott, signed into law the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act. This law calls for a ban on bump stocks and raised the minimum age to purchase firearms from eighteen to twenty-one. While this law is "progressive," Corin argues "it wasn't enough" (78). Regardless of this small victory, Corin left the Florida Legislature with the resolve to "never stop fighting," and that "it might take years, but we must continue to move forward as a united front to bring about the change this country desperately needs" (78). Though many of the conversations with lawmakers were disappointing, it taught Corin that citizenship is an ongoing practice, not a single-event achievement.

For Tarr, after her visit to the Capitol, she views the MFOL's impact as a successful threat the incumbency of many politicians through the education of those who can vote on gun reform: "the best way to make [a] difference is to get people to vote for the right leaders" (*Glimmer* 99). While the MFOL youth are limited in their citizenship in that they demand action from representatives who do not technically represent them (as they are not voting citizens), Tarr demonstrates the potential for youth to be part of the electoral process in educating those who can vote.

"Politicians: either represent the people or get out": The March for Our Lives

It is estimated that between 200,000 (aerial estimates) and 800,000 (estimate of the MFOL organizers) people participated in the March for Our Lives protest in Washington, D.C., and approximately 800 "sibling marches" simultaneously took place across the globe (Lopez). Because of the momentum behind organizing the protest and the extensive media coverage leading up to it, it would be easy to position the protest as the pinnacle of the MFOL movement. In reality, though it may have been the most visible, the march was just one of several vehicles used by the MFOL's youth citizens to reframe themselves as subjects with the right to make demands of policy makers. Kasky describes protesting as "patriotic" and situates it as an act of citizenship: "getting out there and demanding more from our country is one of the best things you can do for yourself" (*Glimmer* 183). MFOL organizers John Barnitt, Sarah Chadwick, and Sophie Whitney compared their march to those of the Civil Rights movement and protests against the Vietnam war, and they align themselves with an American history "of the greatest changes … [being] brought up by young Americans who were sick of not having their voices heard" (47). In situating the march as being American, patriotic, and part of a noble history, the youth organizers further reframe themselves as American subjects in that they are actively participating in patriotic methods of citizenship. The above statements not only imbue the youth

activists with the right to protest as American citizens, but also with the right to have their concerns heard and seriously considered.

In addition to the physical act of marching in Washington, there were dozens of speeches given by the organizers of MFOL during the march, and *Glimmer of Hope* includes excerpts from several of the organizers' speeches. One such excerpt from David Hogg's speech makes significant and complicated rhetorical moves that both limits his political power as a youth, and re-subjects himself and other youth as American citizens who have the right to have their demands heard and met, and if not, a reckoning will follow:

> The winter is over. Change is here. The sun shines on a new day, and the day is ours … If you listen real close, you can hear the people in power shaking. They've gotten used to being protective of their position, the safety of inaction. Inaction is no longer safe … get your résumés ready. (150–1)

Hogg maintains the standard definition of democratic citizenship that Bellamy purports in that voting is the most essential act, but Hogg also expresses that youth have the power to remove policy makers right now. In the present, those that can legally vote are listening and being educated by youth like the MFOL activists, and their votes have the power to remove policymakers who do not support reform. Additionally, the youth citizens making these demands will soon be of legal voting age, and their concerns cannot be forever ignored. But this type of argument is the embodiment of the assumption that children and youth are citizens-in-the-making and only hold tangible political power in the future. Emily Bent explains that the complicated language that is used by Hogg "claims political voice and authority as a future voter … [but] by threatening politicians to fall in line with young people's demands and visions of the future, he paradoxically solidified age as a political threat and signifier of political innocence" (68). Although Hogg and others actively "reject … their status as only future citizens," they continue to position themselves as "future voters, future policy makers, and future citizens who will change the world" (68). However, as Bent argues, the MFOL activists' current engagement as "leaders and participants in the gun control movement" demonstrates the "necessity of seeing young people's politics as more than merely practice for the future" (69). In making demands before reaching legal majority, Hogg embodies citizenship-as-practice by learning how to be a citizen because of his current political participation.

Like Hogg, Cameron Kasky, in his march speech, addresses policymakers directly and warns that if youth citizens' voices are not engaged with, these same youth citizens have the power to remove them from their positions: "[p]oliticans: either represent the people or get out" (160). Kasky makes a strong demand here in positioning himself, and other youth, as "the people"—a direct reference to the preamble of the Constitution of the United States that opens with: "We the People of the

United States" ("Constitution: Preamble"). Erwin Chemerinsky and Michael Stokes Paulsen explain the significance of the preamble's first line in that it "proclaim[s] who is enacting this Constitution—the people of 'the United States,'" making this document "the collective enactment of all U.S. citizens" ("The Preamble"). In positioning "The People" as those who enact the Constitution, it is then "The People" who own the Constitution, and not the Government. In owning the Constitution, citizens of the United States "are the stewards of the U.S. Constitution and remain ultimately responsible for its continued existence and its faithful interpretation" (Chemerinsky and Paulsen). Kasky claims guardian-membership of the Constitution for himself, the survivors of school shootings, and other youth generally. In claiming this membership, Kasky simultaneously positions youth as citizens and as being stewards of upholding the Constitution alongside their adult counterparts, and thus makes porous the boundaries that "socially indenti[fy] [young people] as distinct from and 'other' to adult citizens" (Smith 429). Kasky's rhetoric places responsibility on youth, adults, and lawmakers to faithfully institute the Constitution: if youth are citizens and part of the collective "we the people," then they have the responsibility to uphold the Constitution and apply pressure to those in power to ensure it is enacted and enacted faithfully. For elected officials, it is the role of politicians to represent "The People," which Kasky has defined as encompassing youth, and thus it is their responsibility to hear and address the concerns of these citizens. Though these are clever rhetorical moves, Kasky's argument is undercut by his inability to vote. With children and youth not being directly involved in electing these officials, are they truly part of "The People," and are policymakers obligated to hear and meet the concerns of subjects outside of their constituency?

Kasky enveloping youth into the Constitutional umbrella of "The People" grants youth the rights and responsibilities of citizenship before they are legally recognized by the state and nation as having these rights and responsibilities. Therefore, Kasky is asking for elected officials to represent a body of subjects that do not directly participate (i.e., casting a vote) in the election process. Kasky is, as Judith Butler explains, "asserting a right they did not have in order to make the case, publicly that they should have that very right" (iv). Butler analyzes an instance in May 2006 in which illegal immigrants took to the streets of Los Angeles and sang the American National Anthem in English and Spanish, and Butler finds that "singing is a way of articulating a right to freedom of expression, to freedom of assembly, and the broader rights of citizenship by those who do not have that right, but exercised it anyway" (v-vi). The example Butler gives, and that of the march organized by MFOL, "raises the question of how a right can be exercised when it is not already conferred" (vi). In other words, how can the MFOL activists position themselves as "The People" when they have not legally been conferred the rights and responsibilities that go along with being the custodians of the American Constitution? For Butler, laying claims to the rights one does not yet have "means to translate into the dominant lan-

guage, not to ratify its power, but to expose and resist its daily violence, and to find the language through which to lay claim to rights to which one is not yet entitled," and that "sometimes it is not a question of first having power and then being able to act; sometimes it is a question of acting, and in the acting laying claim to the power one requires" (x). Using the language of the U.S. Constitution, Kasky lays claim to the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. In doing so, he exposes how youth are actively excluded from participating in the structures that govern their lives and (in this case) deaths. Kasky resists this exclusion through using the language of the Constitution to lay claim to the power that he and other youth require.

Conclusion

Bellamy argues that speaking out is essential in democratic citizenship, and the MFOL activists have modelled various means of "speaking out" to policymakers. The MFOL youth embody a citizenship-as-practice model that affords them participation in the present, not just in the future as adult-citizens. Lawy and Biesta argue that citizenship should not be a rite of passage or an achievement that is granted when one is able to suitably reproduce a certain set of practices, but rather citizenship "is a practice, embedded within the day-to-day reality of (young) people's lives, interwoven and transformed over time in all the distinctive and different dimensions of their lives" (47). However, as this chapter has explored, there are limitations to youths' citizenship-as-practice: they must navigate adult/guardianship control and surveillance as they demand action from policymakers that are in principle unbeholden to them. This analysis has shown the difficulty of claiming democratic citizenship rights before one is legally able to formally take place in voting processes. The MFOL activists have demonstrated means of transgressing these boundaries, most significantly in educating those who can legally vote and laying the groundwork for their own future democratic practice. However, the orientation of future citizenship continues to leave children and youth disenfranchised in the present. In claiming and enacting rights they do not yet have, MFOL prepare for future amendments that address some of the constrictive arbitrary boundaries that enclose democratic citizenship. If continued and adopted by other youths, the MFOL youths' collective dissent may have the potential to push a reconsideration of the arbitrary boundaries of democratic citizenship and stop the marginalization of children and youths' political engagement.

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