Resistance Reimagined:

Disability and the Hidden Transcripts of Everyday Resistance

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B.A., Brandeis University, 2016

THESIS

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science
in Disability and Human Development in the Graduate College
of the University of Illinois at Chicago, 2020

Chicago, Illinois

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SUMMARY

Studies of resistance have transformed significantly over the last nearly 50 years. Largely informed by the seminal work of anthropologist and political scientist James Scott on "everyday resistance," scholars in the emerging, interdisciplinary field of resistance studies are attentive not only to moments of revolution and insurrection, but also to the small, informal, ordinary, and clandestine acts and practices of everyday resistance employed by marginalized people and groups. Despite the proliferation of resistance literature that accounts for this kind of small, ordinary, and clandestine resistance, the everyday resistance of disabled people remains underexplored and undertheorized both in resistance studies and in disability studies.

This thesis uses discourse analysis to explore discursive and conceptual linkages and fissures between disability studies and resistance studies scholarship on power, disability oppression, and everyday resistance. This analysis demonstrates that current frameworks for understanding disability resistance are partial; while resistance studies scholarship largely omits disability oppression and resistance from discussion, disability studies scholarship continues to overlook possibilities for everyday resistance and reinforce more conventional understandings of resistance as intentional, recognizable, collective, and effective. This thesis calls for a more attentive, interdisciplinary approach to researching disability resistance that draws on both disability studies and resistance studies perspectives to complicate and cultivate new definitions and theoretical frameworks for understanding resistance, identify and appreciate previously unnamed and unrecognized practices of everyday disability resistance, and explore the complex interplay of power and resistance that characterizes the conditions of disability and disability oppression.

I. INTRODUCTION

Lila Abu-Lughod argued in 1990 that one of the "central problematics in the human sciences in recent years has been the relationship of resistance to power" (p. 41). Indeed, throughout time and across disciplines, scholars, philosophers, and activists have studied and debated the meanings and mechanics of power, domination, submission, and resistance (Baaz, Lilja, Schulz, & Vinthagen, 2016). Baaz, Heikkinen, and Lilja (2017) suggest that in the past, power has often been associated with military power and centralized state violence, and therefore resistance has been conceptualized as overt opposition to or rejection of state power. As a result, most scholarly attention has been paid to protests, occupations, riots, revolutions, and other dramatic eruptions of discontent (Baaz et al., 2016; Scott, 1985). Paradigmatic shifts in thinking about power in the second half of the 20th century, influenced significantly by the work of French philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault, however, have generated new ways of thinking about resistance. As Baaz et al. (2016) articulate, "if power is not only a sovereign center that is forbidding (and punishing) but also more important a productive multiple network of power techniques, then the face of resistance also changes" (p. 139). Contemporary scholars across disciplines have begun to consider the possibilities of revolution's quieter companions: subversion, manipulation, feigned ignorance, slander, theft, and other small and ordinary acts of resistance that marginalized people and groups[1] employ to articulate their discontent and protect their interests.

The emerging field of resistance studies is interested in analyzing, in addition to those forms of organized resistance traditionally understood as resistance (i.e., overt, collective

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[1] I use the term marginalized people and groups throughout this thesis to refer to individuals and communities that experience social, political, economic, and other oppressions, and as a result are systemically excluded from participation in society. I alternatively use the terms subordinate individuals and groups and subaltern individuals and groups.

political organizing, protests, and demonstrations that challenge state power and violence), the more subtle, prosaic forms of hidden and everyday resistance first described by anthropologist James Scott in 1985. Resistance studies scholars identify and analyze a wide variety of resistance strategies, tactics, and discourses using a range and combination of methods, frameworks, and theories from fields including subaltern studies, critical race studies, social movement studies, queer studies, and anthropology (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2018). Resistance studies aims ultimately to investigate complex entanglements of power and resistance and explore how resistance responds to, informs, shapes, or undermines domination. A central issue for scholars in this burgeoning field remains defining resistance in a way that is flexible enough to account for creative, underground, and unconventional forms of resistance while narrow enough to be analytically useful. Resistance studies scholars, thus, are engaged in a continual process of revision, renegotiation, reconceptualization, and reimagining the co-constitutive relationship between power and resistance.

Despite the proliferation of writing on small and everyday resistance acts employed by marginalized people and groups, relatively few scholars have written about the resistance acts and practices of disabled people outside the context of social movements and activism. In both the emerging field of resistance studies and in disability studies, I posit, there is a dearth of scholarship that critically investigates, analyzes, and theorizes disability and resistance together. Although resistance studies aims to explore diverse resistance practices employed globally by marginalized people and groups, a majority of theoretical literature on resistance appears still to focus on resistance that challenges domination based on race, class, status, and gender with little attention paid to disability and the many intersections between race, class, status, gender, and disability oppression. Even Lilja and Vinthagen's (2018) fairly liberal definition of resistance –

"'resistance' challenges all forms of domination – not just the particular territorial configuration of power relations that we call 'the state,' but the exploitative practices, commodification, fetishism, alienation, and economic injustices of capitalism, the discursive truth-regimes and normative orders of status quo, and the gender, race, status, caste, and taste hierarchies of the sociocultural sector" (p. 213) – neglects to name disability as a sociocultural hierarchy that is challenged by resistance.

Likewise, in disability studies,[2] small, ordinary, individual resistance practices remain underresearched and undertheorized. Discourses around disability and resistance in disability studies continue to emphasize collective, coordinated, and visible resistance practices such as disability rights activism and protest while overlooking or discounting alternative resistance activities and practices. While notions of small, ordinary, and everyday resistance have been taken up by scholars in anthropology, sociology, resistance studies, and other fields, disability studies scholars have not yet significantly addressed the potential existence of a "hidden transcript" of everyday disability resistance. Taking into account the complex systems and networks of power that operate both separately and in tandem to isolate, exclude, control, surveille, and delegitimize disabled people, I propose in this thesis that there is an urgent need for disability and resistance scholars to reconceptualize disability oppression and resistance and cultivate new analytical and theoretical vocabularies that capture the complexity of these phenomena.

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[2] Disability studies is an interdisciplinary field of inquiry that emerged in relation to the disability activist and civil rights movements in the U.S. and U.K. in the second half of the 20th century. Disability studies scholarship insists that disability is located not within individual bodies and minds, but is produced by social and political environments, structures, and attitudes. Disability studies scholarship broadly aims to disrupt and counter conventional narratives of disability as inherently tragic and generate new ways to ask questions about disability and disability experience. According to U.K. disability activist and scholar Colin Barnes (2003), disability studies is interested in the "various forces; economic, political, and cultural, that support and sustain 'disability', as defined by the disabled peoples movement, in order to generate meaningful and practical knowledge with which to further its eradication" (p. 9).

The goal of this thesis is to investigate both the conceptual and discursive linkages and the gaps between resistance studies and disability studies scholarship on resistance, and to explore what possibilities lie in an interdisciplinary approach to thinking, reading, writing, and dreaming about disability resistance. In other words, I seek not only to only analyze discourses of resistance in resistance studies and disability studies in contrast, but also to explore the generative possibilities of integrating and centering disability studies perspectives, frameworks, and theories in resistance studies scholarship and incorporating resistance studies perspectives, frameworks, and theories into disability studies scholarship.

A.   **Everyday Resistance and Hidden Transcripts**

Crucial to developing frameworks in resistance studies and central to my analysis in this thesis is the notion of everyday resistance, first introduced by anthropologist James Scott in his 1985 book on rural class conflict and Malaysian peasant resistance, *Weapons of the Weak.* In *Weapons of the Weak*, Scott (1985) reflects on "the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labor, food, taxes, rents and interest from them" (p. xvi); he suggests that while scholars have focused most of their time and energy on studying revolutions and other highly coordinated and highly visible demonstrations of dissent, "much of the active political life of subordinate groups has been ignored because it takes place at a level we rarely recognize as political" (p. 198). Scott (1985) proposes "everyday resistance" as a way to understand how marginalized people resist domination and protect their interests in small, ordinary, subtle ways that often go unnoticed and unrecognized as resistance. It is important to note that Scott (1985; 1990) describes everyday resistance as purposefully concealed, disguised, or dispersed in the context of power relationships characterized by strong domination. In *Weapons of the Weak* (1985) and his later book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990)

Scott uses the metaphor of a performance to describe how power dynamics play out both "on" and "offstage." He juxtaposes what he calls the "public transcript" (the open interactions between subordinates and those who dominate them) and the "hidden transcript" (the discourse and actions that take place "offstage" beyond the observation of the power holders) (Scott, 1985; 1990). Importantly, while the public transcript often reflects subordinate groups' acquiescence and accommodation to existing power structures, the hidden transcript often reveals disagreement, critique of power structures, and anti-hegemonic thought. Scholarship that investigates only the public transcript, according to Scott (1990), therefore, tells merely a partial story of resistance.

Scott's (1985; 1990) conceptualization of everyday resistance and hidden transcripts remains useful because it problematizes overly simplified narratives of domination and subordination and suggests that subordinate groups indeed often understand and reject the conditions of their subordination. The notion of everyday resistance and hidden transcripts have been seriously taken up by scholars in resistance and peasant studies, as well as historians, anthropologists, and scholars in other social science and humanities fields. For example, Robin Kelley's (1994) *Race Rebels* examines the historically "unorganized, clandestine, and evasive" (p. 7) nature of Black working class resistance that has long gone unrecognized by historians; Kelley says, "people all over the world, and particularly ordinary working people in factories, mines, fields, and offices, are rebelling every day in ways of their own" (p.1). Scott's (1985; 1990) work on everyday resistance and hidden transcripts supports a reconceptualization of "the political," power, oppression, and resistance, and owing to its substantial impact on resistance studies scholarship, plays a significant role in the following analysis.

B. **<u>Disability Resistance</u>**

Throughout this thesis, everyday resistance and hidden transcripts serve as central frameworks for understanding how disabled people resist domination and disability oppression outside the context of overt, collective direct action. My primary interests are what I refer to as "disability resistance" and "everyday disability resistance." The term disability resistance as I use it in this thesis refers to all means, modes, and practices of resistance employed by disabled people to counter, disrupt, disturb, or challenge disability oppression. Disability resistance encompasses a wide range of overt and covert, collective and individual, organized and spontaneous articulations of resistance, and for this reason is distinct from "disability activism," "disability political organizing," and "disability protest." "Everyday disability resistance" is the term I use to describe the ordinary, small, clandestine, and prosaic ways that disabled people resist disability oppression in their everyday lives.

C. **<u>Resistance and the River</u>**

Before beginning this analysis of disability and resistance in earnest, I want to introduce Anton Tornberg's (2017) metaphor of the river. I find this metaphor to be a particularly apt (and beautiful) way to describe the mutually constitutive relationship between power and resistance:

> Metaphorically speaking, [the phenomenon of resistance] is reminiscent of river surging through a landscape, adjusting dynamically in relation to the physical conditions of the surroundings: to hills, slopes, ascents and obstacles that momentarily hinder its sweeping progress, but also to trenches and drains that may canalize the river in certain directions. Yet despite how it is affected by the environment, the river itself also contributes to changing this very landscape…Underground currents may, in certain circumstances, reach the surface and erupt into sudden cascades that generate waves and ripples across the surface. These can multiply and diffuse, and may ultimately contribute to the radical alteration of the river's shape. Other times, these underground currents may never reach the surface, but gradually and unnoticeably excavate the surrounding terrain, forging underground tunnels and passageways. In these conditions, even the smallest and most seemingly-insignifcant changes may sometimes have a large impact, constituting tipping points that lead to global consequences. (Tornberg, 2017, p. 5)

Tornberg's (2017) metaphor of the river skillfully characterizes the co-constitutive nature of power and resistance; it accounts for both the ways the river (resistance) is shaped and informed by its material, social, physical, and power realities or "landscapes" *and* the ways that resistance acts – in particular those that are hidden, submerged, underground, and clandestine – in turn, shape and inform the surrounding structures, realities, and landscapes of power. Ultimately, Tornberg's (2017) metaphor suggests that power and resistance are engaged in a constant process of "forming and reforming, shaping and reshaping" one another, and in turn, the "conditions of their existence" (p. 5). It is this complex, unpredictable process that interests scholars of resistance – and it is in particular the hidden, underground currents of ordinary, small, and everyday resistance that serve as the focal point of this thesis. It is my hope that revisiting Tornberg's metaphor of the river throughout this thesis will help orient toward understandings of power and resistance as co-constitutive and emphasize the malleable, unpredictable, complicated nature of domination and resistance that renders it not easily "measured, calculated or predicted" (Tornberg, 2017, p. 5).

D.   **Questions and Outline of Chapters**

This thesis explores discourses of resistance, first in resistance studies and then in disability studies, and moves, in a sense, from broad theoretical concerns to specific examples. Chapter II is guided by the question: How have meanings of resistance been articulated, altered, and contested by resistance studies scholars since the emergence of the field? The central issue in scholarship on resistance – and the central issue discussed in Chapter II – is the question of how to define resistance, or in other words, how and whether to draw boundaries around resistance conceptually. This chapter begins by examining the emergence of the field of resistance studies and identifying resistance studies' disciplinary and theoretical interventions. The majority of

Chapter II then explores discourses on resistance from within and outside the field, organized around four primary points of contention in the ongoing theoretical debate: intentionality, recognition, scale, and effectiveness.

Chapter III explores disability studies perspectives on disability oppression and resistance, and is guided by the question: What has been the role of resistance in disability studies scholarship, and are conceptions of resistance proposed by resistance studies scholars compatible with disability perspectives? I suggest in Chapter III that although disability studies is what Devault (1999) might designate an "oppositional field" dedicated to liberatory aims and grounded in the disruption and rejection of (read: resistance to) ideologies of disability as inherently negative, research on disability resistance is lacking. Employing Scott's (1985;1990) notions of everyday resistance and the hidden transcript, I suggest that disability studies scholarship primarily offers an analysis of the public transcript of disability resistance while neglecting the possibility of disability resistance that is small, subtle, individual, clandestine, or otherwise articulated. At the end of Chapter III, I introduce several works that, I argue, allude to a hidden transcript of disability resistance; these chapters, articles, and studies (Frederick, 2017; Hamilton & Atkinson, 2009; Jones, 1992; Menzies, 1999; Mills, 2014) collectively emphasize how disabled people have historically used tactics of stigma management, pretending, and escape to resist disability oppression.

Finally, Chapter IV orients toward questions of (re)imagining contemporary disability resistance and addresses ethical and methodological questions of researching hidden transcripts of disability resistance. Chapter IV is guided by the questions: (How) have shifts in political, economic, social, ideological, and technological conditions informed operations of disability oppression and disability resistance in the contemporary moment? And how can scholars

interested in disability resistance negotiate the methodological and ethical challenges implicated in un/re/covering hidden transcripts of everyday resistance? Chapter IV begins by revisiting some of the critiques of resistance studies scholarship introduced in Chapter II and explores the ethical and methodological challenges awaiting scholars invested in writing about disability resistance. Finally, I explore the possibility that changing social, cultural, economic, political, and technological conditions (in particular, neoliberalism and austerity) impact and inform contemporary conditions of disability oppression and shape contemporary means, modes, and tactics of disability resistance.

E.   **Methodology**

As noted linguist Norman Fairclough (1993) suggests, "language … is socially shaped, but also socially shaping" (p. 134). Throughout this thesis, I use discourse analysis as a method to examine how existing discourse around disability and resistance informs, (re)produces, and shifts knowledge about these phenomena, and in turn, how existing social and power structures shape discourse. In *Disability and Discourse Analysis*, Jan Grue (2015) argues that "there is a rich history of disability and discourse studies" (p. 8) and suggests that "analysing disability from a discourse perspective is a matter of continually redirecting one's attention (and the reader's) to context and usage, partly because usage-in-context has real political implications" (p. 9). In tracing and analyzing conceptual, theoretical, and rhetorical lineages of disability and resistance within the emerging fields of resistance studies and disability studies, this thesis attempts to redirect its reader's attention to both the context and usage of resistance as a practice and a theory. In other words, I use discourse analysis to explore the polysemic nature of disability and resistance, interrogating a plurality of definitions of disability and resistance and

attending in particular to the generative tensions and discords in scholarly discussions of these phenomena.

In Chapter II I focus on meanings and definitions of resistance as I explore the following question: How have meanings of resistance been articulated, altered, and contested by resistance studies scholars since the emergence of the field? My first aim in Chapter II is to trace lineages of resistance studies. In doing so, I necessarily work backward to explore how the writing of Michel Foucault and James Scott has informed representations of power and resistance in scholarly discourse. The texts I analyze in Chapter II include scholarly articles both about resistance and about the particular issue of defining resistance (Baaz et al., 2016; Hollander & Einwohner, 2004; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016; Lilja & Vinthagen, 2018; Richter-Devroe, 2011) written primarily by scholars in resistance studies, sociology, and anthropology. Following the conventions of discourse analysis, as I investigate the "problem" of defining resistance in scholarly discourse, I am interested less in providing clear or prescriptive answers to questions about how scholars should read, write, think about, and approach resistance. Rather, this discourse analysis investigates how the language employed by scholars within and outside of resistance studies produces and reproduces certain meanings about resistance, and how the changing academic landscape both informs and is informed by existing discourse around resistance.

Chapter III explores disability studies perspectives on disability oppression and resistance, and is guided by the question: What has been the role of resistance in disability studies scholarship, and are conceptions of resistance proposed by resistance studies scholars compatible with disability perspectives? In this chapter, I analyze scholarly discourses of disability oppression and resistance, primarily disability histories of activism and protest

including Barnartt & Scotch's *Disability Protests: Contentious Politics, 1970-1999* (2001),

theoretical overviews such as Charlton's *Nothing About us Without Us* (1998), and various

materialist (Barnes, 1997; Charlton, 2010; Russell, 2001) and aesthetic (Garland-Thomson,

2009; Loja, Costa, Hughes, & Menzes, 2013) perspectives on disability oppression. At the end of

Chapter III, I apply frameworks of everyday resistance introduced in Chapter II to examine a

small collection of scholarly articles and book chapters that allude to a hidden transcript of

disability resistance occurring in institutions, asylums, psychiatric hospitals (Hamilton &

Atkinson, 2009; Menzies, 1999; Mills, 2014), and in the everyday lives of mothers with

disabilities (Frederick, 2017).

  Finally, Chapter IV is guided by the question: (How) have shifts in political, economic,

social, ideological, and technological conditions informed operations of disability oppression and

disability resistance in the contemporary moment? In this chapter, I consider what it means to

witness, read about, write about, research, and do contemporary disability resistance. My

analysis in Chapter IV draws heavily on scholarly discourse around disability oppression as it is

related to and produced by neoliberalism and austerity (Goodley, Lawthom, & Runswick-Cole,

2014; Hande & Kelly, 2015; Mladenov, 2014) and considers the relationship between changing

operations of disability oppression and emergent forms of disability activism and resistance

(Hande & Kelly, 2015). Simultaneously, I examine how contemporary discourses of and about

digital disability activism both reproduce certain meanings of resistance and shift knowledge

about what resistance is and what it may look like. In particular, I examine how rhetoric of

"from-bed activism" employed by U.K. disability activist and blogger Sue Marsh in the context

of the U.K.'s online "We Are Spartacus" campaign and by writer, cultural worker, and

performance artist Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha in her new book *Care Work: Dreaming*

Disability Justice (2018) produce alternative meanings about disability resistance in the contemporary moment.

F.   **<u>Significance of Work</u>**

I argue throughout this thesis that further research on disability and resistance is essential in order to better understand: 1) Resistance and 2) The condition of disability and disability oppression. First, I propose that an interdisciplinary approach to researching disability resistance that draws on both disability studies and resistance studies perspectives has the potential to complicate and cultivate new definitions of resistance. Resistance studies scholars engaged in discussions and debates about the definition of resistance would benefit from studying disability oppression and resistance not only as a gesture of scholarly inclusion and in the interest of thoroughness, but also because disability and disability studies perspectives offer important insights. Accounting for disability resistance, I propose, is essential to crafting a more nuanced and complex rendering of resistance. Simultaneously, by drawing on theories and frameworks of resistance circulating in resistance studies, disability studies scholars may begin to account for previously unseen or unrecognized moments and acts of everyday resistance among disabled people, un/re/cover those stories, and apply a critical lens to their retelling. This kind of analysis is crucial to a more complete theorization of disability, disability oppression, and disability resistance. Considering especially that the history of disability studies scholarship is rooted in resistance, in opposition, and in disruption of mainstream and harmful ideologies about disability, I posit that this project is essential to more nuanced and more complete disability studies canon.

II. RESISTANCE

A.   **<u>Introduction</u>**

Rose Weitz (2001) argues that resistance is so loosely defined that some scholars "see it almost everywhere and others almost nowhere" (p. 669). Resistance and its companion concepts "protest," "revolution," and "power struggle" have become the subject of inquiry for scholars across disciplines (Baaz et al., 2016) and throughout the world. In political philosophy, social movement studies, subaltern studies, sociology, and anthropology, scholars have explored the multi-layered tensions between oppression and resistance, power, dominance, and control. In the past, power has often been associated with the military power of the state, coercion, and domination (Baaz, Lilja, & Vinthagen, 2017), and consequently resistance has been characterized as a rejection of and challenge to state power. Paradigmatic shifts in thinking about the operations of power in the 1970s have since motivated shifts in thinking about resistance. Contemporary scholars across disciplines are now considering the impact of diverse, hidden and overt, traditional and non-traditional forms of resistance that challenge not only state power, but sociocultural hierarchies of gender, race, class, and status, as well as what Freeman-Woolpert and Vinthagen (2019) call "the status quo's discursive truth-regimes and normative orders" (para. 3). Scholars of resistance are interested in the ways that the most marginalized among us negotiate and (re)appropriate space (Richter-Devroe, 2011), distribute and redistribute material goods (Scott, 1985), and employ language creatively to counter, subvert, contradict, or challenge domination. Therefore, in addition to those forms of collective, organized, and highly visible resistance such as riots, strikes, and protests, resistance studies scholars are interested in the implications of the more subtle, prosaic forms of hidden and everyday resistance employed by marginalized individuals and groups (Scott, 1985). Indeed, everything from false compliance

(Scott, 1990) to hairstyles (Weitz, 2001) to poetry (Abu-Lughod, 1990) has been described as resistance.

So then what exactly is resistance – and what is not? In this chapter, I will trace the emergence of the field of resistance studies and describe resistance studies scholars' struggles to answer these questions, to define their subject, and to draw boundaries (or not) around what resistance means. A majority of this chapter will be dedicated to a critical investigation of the dimensions of resistance identified by scholars in the field with the aim of clarifying ongoing theoretical debates about the nature of resistance. This exploration of resistance will emphasize the oft-ignored complexity of resistance, explore the tension between power and resistance, and address the challenges associated with researching and analyzing a subject as abstract as resistance.

B.   **Defining Power**

Because of their theoretical linkage, this discussion of resistance will begin with a brief discussion of power. Power and power relations have been analyzed, articulated, and debated by political philosophers, anthropologists, and sociologists for hundreds of years – from Nicollo Machiavelli's writings on coercive power and authority in the early 16th century to Thomas Hobbes' ideas about sovereignty and civil order in the 17th century to Antonio Gramsci's theories of cultural and political hegemony in the early 20th century and on. Across time and scholarship, power and the exercise of power have been described in many ways, taking on many forms: physical domination, ideological domination, bureaucratic and institutional authority, hierarchy, social stratification, gatekeeping, etc. Because of its substantial impact on the development of resistance studies writing, this section focuses primarily on the scholarship of French philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault in the 1970s. According to Baaz et al. (2016), Foucault's

writings about mechanisms of power in the 1970s fundamentally altered the way that power, and consequently resistance, were conceptualized. As opposed to his contemporaries, such as Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci, Foucault refused a localized theory of power that relies on binary oppositions of power, such as ruler/ruled, leader/led (Daldal, 2014). Rather than episodic or sovereign, Foucault characterized power as diffuse, circulating, and pervasive – and, importantly, rather than describing what power *is*, Foucault insisted on describing *how power operates* though a system of disciplinary mechanisms that transform and regulate bodies. Foucault (1978) described power as, "the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society; power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with..." (p. 93). Foucault's analysis of power led to a significant paradigm shift, altering and informing how academics across disciplines approach, imagine, and write about power. Though resistance was not the primary focus of his writings, and despite the fact that some scholars claim that Foucault's view of power is so bleak that it disallows for the possibility of resistance at all, Foucault (1978) argues in the *History of Sexuality*: "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (p. 95). Scholars have suggested that by this Foucault means that power and resistance are interrelated, or perhaps co-constitutive – that is, each operates to create and give meaning to the other (Baaz et al., 2016).

These claims have become crucial to resistance studies scholars' understanding of the relationship between power and resistance. This shift in thinking about power necessitates, according to Baaz et al. (2016), a fundamental shift in how academics (ought to) conceptualize resistance; they argue, "if power is not only a sovereign center that is forbidding (and punishing) but also more important a productive multiple network of power techniques, then the face of

resistance also changes" (p. 139). Transforming notions of power in academia – from a view of power that is centralized, violent, authoritarian, and dominating to one that is decentralized, diffuse, and pervasive – allow for, and potentially even insist upon new possibilities for resistance. How might resistance to surveillance or normalization techniques, for example, manifest differently than resistance to direct and violent state power?

Foucault's scholarship has not only transformed ideas about power and its operations, but it has also generated new forms of inquiry about power and resistance. As scholars identify and analyze different forms of non-conventional resistance, they continue to renegotiate and reimagine power and resistance, and the complicated relationship between the two. The proliferation of scholarship on "quotidian," "everyday," and "ordinary" resistance in the 1970s and 1980s responds, it seems, to this radical transformation in thinking about how knowledge and power are produced. American anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) argues that "at the heart of this widespread concern with unconventional forms of noncollective, or at least nonorganized resistance is…a growing disaffection with the previous ways we have understood power, and the most interesting thing to emerge from this work on resistance is a greater sense of the complexity of the nature and forms of domination" (p. 41). This "disaffection" with previous ways of understanding power has helped shape new discussions about the creation of, operations of, and contestations of power that drive the emerging field of resistance studies.

C.   **Emergence of Resistance Studies**

While resistance and its relation to power has been debated and discussed by philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists, poets, and activists, resistance studies as a formal discipline has just begun to emerge. The post-structuralist turn, according to Baaz, Lilja, and Vinthagen (2017), is largely responsible for the increasing preoccupation with resistance in its

"unlikely forms." Unlike more traditional inquiry into protest politics, resistance studies extends its scope beyond collective social movements to a wide range of resistance acts, discourses, tactics, methods, and stories. Baaz, Heikennen, and Lilja (2017) explain that "resistance studies is an ever expanding field, which is increasingly nuanced and multifaceted. Resistance studies embrace 'resistance' as a practice that might be played out by organized, large groups and movements, as well as individuals and subcultures. It might be articulated through or against power-relations or be inspired by other resisters" (p. 128). According to Tornberg (2017), "the field was developed partly in response to the alleged overrepresentation within Social Movement Studies on explicit, organized forms of resistance (i.e. what's manifest on the surface), which arguably risks to neglect or exclude those resistance practices that are performed in secret, disguised as hidden transcripts or concealed as symbolic codes" (p. 7). Largely influenced by Foucault's analysis of power and informed significantly by American anthropologist and political scientist James Scott's emphasis on everyday resistance, resistance studies scholars approach resistance as a "multidimensional, unstable, and complex social construction in dynamic relationships that are related to differences of context" (Baaz, Lilja, & Vinthagen, 2017, p. 14). Resistance studies scholars, furthermore, attend to a plurality of resistance acts and their meanings; while in the past resistance has sometimes been associated with antisocial attitudes, transgression, hostility, destructiveness, and explosions of violence, resistance studies scholars approach their subject with an understanding that resistance can also be productive, generative, creative, and ordinary (Baaz et al., 2016).

Furthermore, it is essential for resistance studies to problematize discrete dichotomies of power and deepen understandings of the ways certain resistance practices may "undermine certain relations of power while bolstering others along certain axes" ("Resistance Studies

Network", n.d., para. 5). Individuals and groups are indeed often affected by multiple, overlapping hierarchies of power that simultaneously afford privilege along one axis and impose domination along another. In Hahirwa, Orjuela, and Vinthagen's (2017) study of Rwandan peasant resistance to resettlement reform, for instance, the authors attempt to destabilize the binary class model of dominant superiors vs. resisting subalterns by emphasizing the ambivalent relationships that local reform implementers navigate "as a result of their 'in-between position' as leaders and members of the local communities" (p. 734). Furthermore, resistance acts themselves, resistance studies scholars suggest, indeed sometimes reproduce patterns or ideologies of domination. According to the Resistance Studies Network (RSN), resistance studies scholars reject binary oppositions of powerful/powerless by attending carefully to the "potentially problematic and contradictory patterns of reproduction of domination within resistance" ("Resistance Studies Network", n.d., para. 2).

Over the past decade and a half, scholars, activists, and scholar-activists have begun to formally organize academic spaces dedicated to the study of resistance and resistance practices, including "direct action, civil disobedience, everyday resistance, digital activism, mass protest, and other kinds of nonviolent resistance" (Freeman-Wolport & Vinthagen, 2019, para. 2). The Resistance Studies Network, launched in 2006, the interdisciplinary Journal of Resistance Studies (JRS), launched in 2015, and the Resistance Studies Initiative (RSI) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst are all sites of collaboration and critical research on resistance where scholars discuss and debate meanings and mechanics of resistance. According to the Resistance Studies Network website, researchers in resistance studies engage in philosophical, theoretical, and ethical interrogations of resistance practices and analyze the ontologies and epistemologies at play within or challenged by resistance. As the young field progresses, some resistance studies

scholars have begun to seek out systems of classifying different types of resistance acts, among them "off-kilter resistance," civil disobedience, critical resistance, digital activism, and everyday resistance, while others are more interested in the relationships between these various forms of resistance. Methodologically and theoretically, resistance studies scholars rely on a plurality of approaches; scholars in the developing field purposefully "combine several theoretical traditions, including, for example, the state-oriented, structuralist and public scope of 'contentious politics'" as well as "subaltern studies, the history-from below movement and 'autonomist' approaches to radical politics within post-Marxist and post-structuralist studies" (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2018, p. 213). Tornberg (2017) suggests that "there is indeed a rich repertoire of tools available to resistance scholars" (p. 6) ranging from discourse analysis to case studies, ethnographic studies to participatory observation.

One of resistance studies' main goals is to identify and analyze a wide range of articulations and manifestations of resistance in order to learn more about the complex entanglement of power and resistance. While scholars in resistance studies are united by their dedication to studying resistance in its many forms and facets, a central ongoing debate in resistance studies concerns the very definition of the subject. Despite the proliferation of research on it, scholars still find themselves asking: What is resistance? As the literature on resistance grows and evolves, so too do scholars' definitions of resistance. The field has gone through "phases" much like other studies of power, as described by Lilja and Vinthagen (2018) – from early studies' focus on dramatic and obvious articulations of resistance, toward an appreciation for subtle, everyday, and clandestine manifestations of resistance. This appreciation for a wide array of resistance acts has sparked debates both in and outside of the field regarding what exactly constitutes resistance and what does not. According to Johansson and Vinthagen (2016)

"resistance studies are simultaneously rich yet poorly developed. Specialized and systematic research on 'resistance' is uncommon; while at the same time 'resistance' is a concept that is at least (occasionally) used within most social science disciplines" (p. 11). As resistance studies scholars attend increasingly to subversive, creative, and clandestine acts of resistance, new knowledge about resistant practices emerges to destabilize once-sturdy categories. This destabilizing is at once generative and potentially detrimental. Rose (2002) explains the resistance studies dilemma this way: "if we choose criteria narrowly, we risk ignoring certain forms of contradictory practice, yet, if we accept every moment of contradictory practice as an example of resistance, our concepts of resistance become devoid of any practical use" (p. 383). Resistance studies scholars are now faced with the task of developing theories and definitions of resistance that are broad enough to allow for creative, subversive and transgressive, covert and prosaic forms of resistance employed by marginalized individuals and groups, while still narrow enough to provide useful information about resistance. The following section outlines and analyzes the primary points of contention in this ongoing theoretical debate.

D.   **Dimensions of Resistance**

Hollander and Einwohner (2004) propose that in recent years "there has been a rapid proliferation of scholarship on resistance but little consensus on its definition" (p. 533). In a 2004 study, Hollander and Einwohner, frustrated by the imprecise and often contradictory definitions of resistance in academic literature, conducted a search in the Sociological Abstracts database for all books and articles published since 1995 featuring the word resistance in the title. After reviewing several hundred publications, Hollander and Einwohner (2004) determined that only two features were consistently used by scholars to define resistance. Those core elements were action and opposition. Action, according to Hollander and Einwohner (2004), refers to the

physical, verbal, or cognitive quality of resistance. Opposition refers to the ways that resistors

challenge, counter, subvert, and/or disrupt domination (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). Aside

from these two consistent core features, Holland and Einwohner (2004) indicate that researchers'

definitions of resistance vary significantly. Based on their analysis, they claim that the two

primary dimensions of resistance that vary from study to study are intention and recognition –

that is, the question of whether resistance must always be intentional on the part of the resistor to

"count" as resistance and the question of whether resistance must always be recognizable as

resistance by others to "count" as resistance (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). The following

section will analyze the dimensions of intention and recognition (as laid out by Hollander and

Einwohner in 2004) and explore two additional dimensions of resistance prominent in resistance

studies literature: scale and effectiveness (Baaz et al., 2016; Hollander & Einwohner, 2004;

Weitz, 2001).

1. **<u>Intention</u>**

Must an act be intentional in order for it to "count" as resistance? Some scholars

insist that indeed resistance necessitates conscious intent. Paul Routledge (1997) defines

resistance as follows: "I use the term 'resistance' to refer to any action *imbued with intent*

[emphasis added] that attempts to challenge, change or retain particular circumstances relating to

societal relations, processes and/or institutions" (p. 360). Similarly, Seymour (2006) claims that

resistance refers to: "*intentional, and hence conscious* [emphasis added] acts of defiance or

opposition by a subordinate individual or group of individuals against a superior individual or set

of individuals. Such acts are counter-hegemonic but may not succeed in effecting change. They

can range from relatively small and covert acts, such as a surreptitious meeting between a young

unmarried woman and man in Nepal…to an organized feminist demonstration against the

burning of brides in North India" (p. 305). Based on these definitions, both Routledge (1997) and Seymour (2006) insist on the centrality of intention while accounting for varying forms and scales of resistance practices. In describing the potential for resistance practices to alter or challenge societal and institutional circumstances and by describing a range of resistance acts – from the "small and covert" to organized demonstrations – Seymour (2006) alludes to dimensions of effectiveness and scale in his definition which will be revisited in later sections.

On the contrary, Weitz (2001) and Baaz et al. (2016) propose that 1) Intent is not a necessary criteria for resistance and/or 2) That determining another person's intent is impossible, and therefore intentionality is not a functional measure of resistance. It is crucial, it seems, to consider who dictates and determines what constitutes an intentional act. The actor alone? The researcher or observer? Both? The task of determining intentionality, as Weitz (2001) and Baaz et al. (2016) propose, may be more complicated than it first appears. First, while it may seem evident that all actors are aware of and can articulate their intentions, Baaz et al. (2016) caution that intentions may be "plural, complex, contradictory, or evolving, as well as occasionally something that the actor is not sure about, views differently in retrospect, or even is not able to explain" (p. 140). It is worthwhile to consider therefore that actors may not be able to understand or articulate their own intentions, and indeed that they may reflect differently on their intentions as time passes. Furthermore, as Weitz (2001) notes, even if subjects can understand or articulate their intentions, often when asked by researchers, subjects purposefully conceal their motives, rendering determining intent difficult to impossible. Considering Scott's (1985, 1990) contention that resistance is often hidden, disguised, or dispersed in the context of power relationships characterized by strong domination, it seems possible that subjects may not reveal their

intentions honestly or openly to others (including researchers) strategically for fear of consequences.

These resistance scholars' attentiveness to the plural, complex, changing nature of intentionality (Baaz et al., 2016) and insistence that strong domination sometimes disallows for disclosure (Scott, 1985, 1990; Weitz, 2001) calls into question the eligibility of intentionality as a necessary criteria for resistance. While intentionality, when acknowledged by the actor and recognized by the researcher, can undoubtedly become a helpful indicator of resistance, resistance studies scholars should be wary of overlooking resistance acts whose motives are (for a number of reasons) disguised or unarticulated.

2.   **<u>Recognition</u>**

A second dimension of resistance debated by scholars in the field is recognition. Hollander and Einwohner (2004) describe the overarching disagreement between scholars about who needs to recognize a resistance act as resistance in order for it to "count." Hollander and Einwohner (2004) note that early studies of resistance focused on large-scale protest and "took for granted that resistance is visible and easily recognized as resistance" (p. 539). Indeed, public, openly articulated, visible acts such as riots, strikes, marches, and revolutions have historically fallen squarely into the category of resistance. Hollander and Einwohner (2004) explain that Rubin (1996) proposes one of the strongest arguments for what he calls a "minimalist" definition of resistance that insists that the word resistance be "reserved for visible, collective acts that result in social change" (p. 541). Indeed, incorporating recognition as definitional criteria could be especially advantageous for researchers because it eliminates ambiguity – the project of ascribing meaning to certain acts becomes less speculative.

With recognition as definitional criteria, however, resistance scholars inevitably encounter many of the same dilemmas described above. First, who needs to recognize a resistance act in order for it to be "recognizable"? Peers? Power holders? Researchers? What about resistance acts that are intended to be recognized by peers but *not* by researchers or power holders? Central to this dilemma once again is the notion that some resistance acts are purposefully or strategically hidden. Some resistance, as Hollander and Einwohner (2004) suggest, "is intended to be recognized, while other resistance is purposefully concealed or obfuscated" (p. 540). Scott's (1985) ethnographic study of Malaysian peasant rice farmers in the small village of Sedakah in Kedah State reveals that the subaltern often resist domination in ways that are purposefully covert. In Sedakah, for example, the introduction of combine-harvesting and double-cropping in the early 1970s dramatically impacted both wealthy land owners and poor peasants; the combine harvester outperformed manual labor and increased harvesting efficiency for land owning peasants while decreasing opportunities for harvesting work for poor peasants who depended on gleaning to earn their living. In retaliation, some poor peasants attempted to physically obstruct the combine harvesters' entry into the fields by surreptitiously removing batteries from the machines and filling gas tanks with sand and mud. These resistance acts were purposefully performed anonymously and secretly; by design, the malfunction of the machines might never be recognized by power holders (or by researchers) as resistance. Largely influenced by Scott's (1985) seminal work, resistance studies scholars have rejected "minimalist" definitions like Rubin's in favor of definitions that take into account the variable forms resistance takes on when oppressed people and groups have little voice and few tools. These resistance acts, as defined by Scott (1985, 1990), may include false compliance, pilfering, slow-downs, sabotage, feigned ignorance, etc. Because these resistance acts are hidden

by design, recognition (especially by power holders, but potentially also by researchers, peers, etc.) is an unfavorable and dangerous outcome.

Scholars of the everyday Johansson and Vinthagen (2016) define everyday resistance as resistance "that is done routinely, but which is not politically articulated or formally organized (yet or in that situation). It is a form of activity that *often avoids being detected as resistance* [emphasis added]. But it might also be made invisible by society, by not being recognized as resistance" (p. 10). Considering the noteworthy impact that scholarship on everyday resistance has made on resistance studies, recognition on the part of the researcher and/or the power holders as criteria for resistance, I suggest, may ultimately be reductive.

3.   **Scale**

A third criteria of resistance, which Hollander and Einwohner (2004) call "scale," refers to the collective/organized vs. individual/non-organized distinction (Baaz et al., 2016). Hollander and Einwohner (2004) explain that "the scale of resistance is also variable: acts of resistance may be individual or collective, widespread or locally confined. Related to scale is the level of coordination among the resisters, that is, the extent to which they purposefully act together" (p. 536). Beginning in the mid-1970s, research into collective action and protest politics became increasingly fashionable (della Porta & Diani, 2006). In France, sociologist Alain Touraine's writing on the student movement of May 1968 and in the United States, sociologist Charles Tilly's work on "contentious politics" formed the foundation for decades of research on collective action and protest politics. Notable sociologist Sidney Tarrow (2011) defines social movements as: "sequences of contentious politics based on underlying social networks, on resonant collective action frames, and on the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents" (p. 7). Tarrow (2011) explains that participants'

recognition of common interests "translates the potential for a movement into action." (p. 11). Protest movements of the 1960s such as the American Civil Rights Movement to end legalized racial segregation and discrimination and later the anti-Vietnam War movement serve as primary examples of social movements hinging on collective mobilization. While these collective actions undoubtedly fall into the category of resistance, resistance studies scholars might ask: Is collective coordination required for resistance? Does resistance have to be collective and organized, as in social movements, in order to count as resistance? And furthermore, what is the relationship (if any) between atomistic resistance and collective action?

According to Rubin's (1996) minimalist definition of resistance, the term resistance ought to be reserved for "visible, collective acts that result in social change" (p. 541). Rubin's (1996) definition appears to fit quite well with Tarrow's (2011) definition of social movements, but as discussed earlier, may be too narrow to encompass the sometimes invisible, individual, spontaneous, or clandestine forms of resistance discussed by Baaz et al. (2016). For example, Richter-Devroe (2011) investigates Palestinian women's practices of travelling alone across Israeli-imposed borders, claiming and reclaiming space, and subverting power relations by making use of that space for their own enjoyment. Richter-Devroe (2011) frames these as acts of resistance against the occupation as well as resistance to patriarchal power and control. In transgressing these imposed physical and gendered barriers, the women interviewed "create (a sense of) normal joyful life for themselves, their families, friends and community" (Richter-Devroe, 2011, p. 32). Rather than public, collective, and organized action, these women "struggle to indirectly and quietly re-appropriate and redefine their occupied, fragmented and dispossessed spaces" (Richter-Devore, 2011, p. 39). Richter-Devroe's (2011) study of

Palestinian women emphasizes that "resistance does not necessarily have to be violent, nor does it necessarily have to be public, collective, or confrontational" (p. 39).

Other scholars, such as Nathan Brown in his 1990 study on the nuances of rural peasant politics in Egypt, divide resistance acts into categories based on the level of coordination. Brown (1990) identifies three types of resistance: 1) Atomistic: resistance acts performed by individuals and small groups to "strike out at local manifestations (and perceived injustices) of the prevailing order" (p. 94), or in other words, individual attempts to defeat an immediate enemy. These kinds of acts might include vandalism or cattle poisoning; 2) Communal: collective efforts at disruption, including violent confrontation between authorities and groups of peasants; and 3) Revolt. While Brown (1990) differentiates between these types of resistance, he also describes their interrelatedness, suggesting, for example, that atomistic (individual) resistance acts may bleed over into communal resistance.

Indeed, scholars Lilja, Baaz, Schulz, and Vinthagen (2017) are interested in the interrelationships between these various forms of resistance, posing the question: What is the relationship between individual acts of resistance and collective efforts to disrupt or challenge circumstances of domination? Does individual resistance lead to collective resistance? Does collective resistance inspire or provoke individual resistance acts? Lilja et al. (2017) explore these possibilities in an article entitled "How resistance encourages resistance: theorizing the nexus between power, 'Organised Resistance' and 'Everyday Resistance.'" These scholars describe two alternative dynamics: "linear development dynamics" in which everyday resistance might transform into collective, organized resistance, and "oscillation dynamics" in which everyday forms of resistance and collective resistance are employed by the same people but in different spatial and temporal contexts (Lilja et al., 2017). Lilja et al. (2017) explore the

relationship between collective and individual resistance using empirical research from organizations that work against gender-based violence (GBV) in Cambodia. The authors explain that many such organizations concentrate on training men to resist "on behalf of the women" by disrupting problematic discourse on violence and masculinity (Lilja et al., 2017, p. 48). Though these anti-gender-based violence trainings are formally and collectively organized, interviews with the men who participated in the training programs revealed that resistance "within the formal organization became the base for more subtle forms of resistance" (Lilja et al., 2017, p. 48). In this way, Lilja et al. (2017) propose, collectively organized resistance encourages individual acts of resistance in everyday life. The authors conclude that resistance often "inspires, provokes, generates, encourages or eventually discourages resistance" (Lilja et al., 2017, p. 52). Though social movements often (or perhaps always) do "count" as resistance, Richter-Devroe's (2011) study demonstrates the power and value that individual, quiet, and non-organized resistance plays in the lives of marginalized people. Furthermore, Lilja et al. (2017) reinforce the entanglement and interrelatedness of forms of resistance at differing scales and levels coordination. Collective mobilization, much like intention and recognition, serves as a useful indicator to researchers that resistance is occurring. However, resistance studies scholars, in order to maintain a commitment to exploring those multiple, non-conventional, and unlikely forms of resistance, need to continue to consider the meaning and impact of resistance acts on varying scales – from the atomistic to the revolutionary, and everything in between.

4. **Effectiveness**

Is a failed coup resistance? An unsuccessful attempt to steal livestock? Is resistance "resistance" if it is ineffective? Weitz (2001) argues that effectiveness is a weak (and much too narrow) criteria for resistance, "for even failed revolutions would not qualify" (p. 669).

Weitz (2001) complicates the question of effectiveness by posing questions of scale: "Is a strategy effective if it improves an individual's life without creating broader change or if its effects are short-lasting?" (p. 669). If an individual is impacted by their own resistance in any way, has it not been effective? Seymour (2006), discussed above, claims that resistance refers to: "intentional, and hence conscious acts of defiance or opposition by a subordinate individual or group of individuals against a superior individual or set of individuals. Such acts are counter-hegemonic but *may not succeed in effecting change* [emphasis added]" (p. 305).

Stombler and Padavic (1997) argue that while some researchers suggest that "whether an act qualifies as resistance depends on whether its chief outcome counters the dominant ideology or furthers it," they disagree, claiming that "outcomes cannot determine the existence of an act" (p. 258). Stombler and Padavic's (1997) argument against evaluating resistance based on outcome is well supported by other scholars in resistance studies who contend that resistance acts sometimes simultaneously resist *and* reinforce the/a dominant ideology. Hollander and Einwohner (2004) indeed suggest that "even while resisting power, individuals or groups may simultaneously support the structures of domination that necessitate resistance in the first place" (p. 549). For instance, Hennen's (2005) analysis of the gay subculture of "Bears" (men that "valorize the larger, hirsute body") emphasizes the ways that Bear culture "as a gendered strategy for repudiating effeminacy…simultaneously challenges and reproduces norms of hegemonic masculinity" (p. 25). While Hennen (2005) argues that Bear culture was born of resistance and that it challenges dominant assumptions about male sexuality, "on the other hand, insofar as their rejection of effeminacy signals a broader devaluation of the feminine, Bear masculinity recuperates gendered hierarchies central to the logic of hegemonic masculinity" (p. 27). In evaluating the "effectiveness" of resistance through Bear subculture, this researcher

attends to the ways that subversive practices both counter and reinforce dominant ideologies about gender and sexuality. Resistance acts are not always entirely in opposition to dominant ideologies and systems; indeed, some resistance acts unintentionally bolster those ideologies and systems. Effectiveness, therefore, is ultimately difficult if not impossible to measure. It seems to me that rather than attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of a resistance act, researchers of resistance need to attend to the (possibly multiple, potentially contradictory) effects of resistance acts and practices, if there are any – on the resistor, the power holder, the system, the community members, etc. By shifting the focus from measuring effectiveness to analysis of the (multiple, conflicting) effects/non-effects of resistance acts, scholars will be better positioned to avoid constructed binaries of success and attend to the nuanced results of resistance acts.

E.   **Categories of Resistance**

   1.   **Everyday Resistance**

           According to Richter-Devore (2011), beginning in the 1970s, the notion of everyday life "became a focus in scholarly attempts to identify both the location and quality of transformative agency" (p. 34). In 1974, Michel de Certeau published *The Practice of Everyday Life*, which investigated the routine practices of everyday life – walking, talking, cooking, and reading – and the creative and ordinary tactics the non-powerful use to resist the strategies of institutions and other powers. This focus on the everyday disrupts common conceptions of what resistance looks like, reimagines the political, and gives new insights into how power operates. In everyday resistance writing, the everyday is recognized as an "important site that not only bears traces of power and policies, but also reacts to, challenges, and gets by and around those power imprints in various, often unrecognized ways" (Richter-Devroe, 2011, p. 34).

The work of American anthropologist and political scientist James Scott on the everyday quality of resistance has undoubtedly shaped the course for resistance studies, peasant studies, and subaltern studies. Scott's fourteen-month fieldwork in the small rice-farming village of Sedakah, in Kedah State, Malaysia post-Green Revolution informs his theories about material and ideological resistance in his 1985 book *Weapons of the Weak.* In *Weapons of the Weak*, Scott (1985) reflects on "the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labor, food, taxes, rents and interest from them" (p. xvi). He argues that scholars have overlooked or discounted the dissident discourses, acts, and practices of subordinate groups because they "take place at a level we rarely recognize as political" (Scott, 1985, p. 198). Scott proposes that rather than an exclusive focus on peasant revolution, explosions of violence, and mass insurrection, understanding everyday resistance "helps us understand what the peasantry is doing 'between revolts' to defend its interests the best it can" (1985, p. 29). He refers to this level of under-the-surface, disguised, dispersed, informal, everyday resistance as "infrapolitics."

Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* (1985) is an intervention in the study of power and resistance that implores scholars to look more carefully and more critically at the everyday lives of the subaltern. Scott (1985) challenges definitions of resistance and of the political in ways that generate new thinking about the operations of power; what if there is resistance that is non-visible, under the surface – and purposefully so? How does this trouble our previous understandings of how power, domination, and submission operate? What might we (scholars of power struggle, protest, and contentious politics) be missing due to our limited view of what resistance is – or to use Tornberg's (2017) metaphor of the river, by looking only at the surface of the water? In placing Scott (1985, 1990) in conversation with the other scholars discussed above, he might respond to the assertion that resistance must be recognizable, effective, and

collectively organized by arguing that infrapolitics and everyday resistance are precisely the opposite: quiet, invisible, and small.

According to Scott, everyday resistance acts are the product of a system of domination which disallows for (makes too risky) large-scale, open, and organized rebellion by peasants and other subordinate people and groups, and encourages more immediate material and ideological undermining and subversion. According to Lilja et al. (2017), Scott "argues that, certain behaviours of subaltern groups – such as: escape, sarcasm, passivity, laziness, misunderstandings, disloyalty, slander, avoidance or theft – are tactics that they use in order to both survive and undermine repressive domination; especially in contexts where open resistance is considered too dangerous" (p. 42). As described by Baaz et al. (2016), while these kinds of resistance acts and practices may have in the past been characterized as destructive, violent, or antisocial, Scott (1985) encourages scholars to consider how complex power relations determine the possible resistance strategies. This interpretation of everyday resistance, furthermore, supports the claim that power and resistance are co-constitutive – that they shape, inform, and give meaning to one another.

Scott (1985, 1990) proposes that as scholars observe, study, and analyze resistance, they are only exposed to a partial reality, or what he calls a "partial transcript." In *Weapons of the Weak* (1985) and his later book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990) Scott uses the metaphor of a performance to describe how power dynamics play out both "on" and "offstage." He juxtaposes what he calls the "public transcript" (the open interactions between subordinates and those who dominate them) and the "hidden transcript" (the discourse and actions that take place "offstage" beyond the observation of the power holders and that often reflect critique of power structures) (Scott, 1985, 1990). Going along with Scott's metaphor of the staged

performance, it is "in the wings," in the audience, or perhaps outside of the theater altogether that the subaltern construct social sites of dissidence beyond power holders' line of vision. Importantly, while public transcripts often reflect accommodation and acquiescence to existing power structures, hidden transcripts often reveal dissident conversations, songs, jokes, slander, and resistant dreams. The public transcript, thus, is often only a partial transcript.

Scott (1990) offers what might be considered a methodological intervention when he argues that by "assessing the discrepancy between the hidden transcript and the public transcript we may begin to judge the impact of domination on the public discourse" (p. 5). When we measure resistance, Scott (1989) suggests, perhaps what we are truly assessing is the "repression that structures available options" (p. 51). In other words, if we declare that only visible, collective, or "radical" protest is resistance, we may be simply allowing the structure of domination "to define for us what is resistance and what is not resistance" (Scott, 1985, p. 299). Scott argues that the "disguises" that resistance takes on are diagnostic of the power it responds to. This argument would later be expanded upon by anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod in a 1990 article on the various forms of resistance employed by Bedouin women in Egypt's Western Desert. Abu-Lughod (1990) argues that we can use instances of everyday resistance as a "diagnostic" of power, asking what small-scale resistance tells us about power in context. Scott (1985, 1990) and Abu-Lughod's (1990) assertion that resistance acts can serve as diagnostics of power adds layers of complexity to previously binary or uni-directional understandings of power, oppression, domination, and resistance, and the process of studying them.

The idea of everyday resistance has been seriously taken up by scholars in resistance and peasant studies, as well as historians, anthropologists, and scholars in other social science and humanities fields. Everyday resistance has been used, for example, to describe the experiences of

Black working class individuals in America (Kelley, 1994). In the 1994 book *Race Rebels,*

Robin Kelley uses the theory of everyday resistance to propose a re-reading of the history of the

Black working class, explaining that most Black working class resistance has been "unorganized,

clandestine, and evasive" (p. 7) and therefore has long gone unrecognized by historians. "People

all over the world, and particularly ordinary working people in factories, mines, fields, and

offices, are rebelling every day in ways of their own," Kelley (1994) claims, but their efforts

have "few chroniclers" (p. 1). In *Race Rebels*, Kelley recovers the history of Black working class

resistance – not only in the context of Civil Rights Movement protests and direct action – but

also in the context of everyday commutes on public buses, Sundays in church, at work, in dance

halls, and barber shops. Scott's (1985, 1990) work has raised crucial questions about power

operations and infrapolitics, motivating resistance studies scholars to look beneath the surface for

instances and patterns of everyday and covert ideological, symbolic, and material resistance – or

in terms of Tornberg's (2017) river of resistance, to look for the undercurrents.

2. **Quiet Encroachment of the Ordinary**

In a 2000 article, sociologist Asef Bayat critically explores literature on everyday

resistance, urban social movements, and survival strategies, advancing his own alternative

perspective of "quiet encroachment of the ordinary" to describe the resistance strategies of the

urban poor. According to Bayat (2000) processes of global restructuring have produced both

social exclusion and increased informalization for the urban poor. This double effect has served

to further marginalize the urban poor in developing countries, pushing them into the category of

the subaltern (Bayat, 2000). In his analysis of the resistance of the urban poor, Bayat (2000) is

critical of Scott and broadly of poststructuralist writers' decentered notion of power. He argues

that these writers' approach to understanding resistance underestimates and minimizes the

impact that state power has on the urban poor. In fact, Bayat (2000) argues, state power significantly informs the circumstances of the urban poor. Furthermore, he argues, this decentered and flexible notion of resistance has led resistance writers to "overestimate or read too much into acts of agents" (Bayat, 2000, p. 544).

Bayat's (2000) response to these writers is his theory of "quiet encroachment of the ordinary" which refers to "non-collective but prolonged direct action by individuals and families to acquire the basic necessities of their lives (land for shelter, urban collective consumption, informal jobs, business opportunities and public space) in a quiet and unassuming illegal fashion" (p. 536). Quiet encroachment is, Bayat (2000) contends, not an organized social movement aiming for larger social change, nor is it simply an underground "survival strategy" (p. 547). The informalization of the lifestyles of the urban poor, rather, Bayat (2000) argues, is connected to informal resistance techniques. The goals of the urban poor are twofold, he suggests: first to redistribute social goods, opportunities, and public space, and second to attain autonomy from the state and modern institutions (Bayat, 2000). Bayat (2000) points to the mobilization of squatters in Tehran in 1976 and street vendors in the 1980s as examples of quiet encroachment; in post-revolution Iran, he explains, the poor began encroaching upon and settling on public and private urban lands, including apartments, public utilities, and street sidewalks (Bayat, 2000). Bayat (2000) explains that the streets are a central location of political and power struggle between the urban poor and state power. While encroachment and colonization of streets may be motivated by survival, when gains are threatened, he asserts, the urban poor become conscious of their gains and defend them collectively. Despite not having previously organized to act in a coordinated manner, the threat of state power mobilizes squatters and street vendors to act collectively.

Bayat's notion of "quiet encroachment" and Scott's notion of "everyday resistance" are both crucial to developing understandings of how power operates, and subsequently how resistance takes on different shapes in different contexts. While Scott (1985) is interested in the everyday resistance techniques of peasants in rural Asia, Bayat (2000) specifically discusses the resistance strategies of the urban poor in the Middle East. It is crucial to consider how these unique theories of resistance are developed to describe resistance practices *in context*; while many post-structuralist writers have found that a decentered notion of power better captures the complex and multiple networks of domination, coercion, and oppression that marginalized individuals and groups encounter, Bayat (2000) finds that in certain social, political, and economic locations, this decentered notion of power does not adequately account for the power that the state continues to wield. As resistance studies scholars and social scientists interested in resistance continue to examine diverse resistance practices among the subaltern globally, it is important to avoid totalizing theories that attempt to account for resistance in all forms and contexts; rather the theories and frameworks we develop to describe how power operates will need to continually be questioned, critiqued, revised, and reimagined.

3. **Resistance that Creates Resistance**

Lilja et al. (2017) move beyond discrete theories and categories of resistance to explore the ways that everyday/individual and organized/collective resistance encourage, inspire, and create one another. Lilja et al. (2017) take up Scott's (1985) theory of everyday resistance and Bayat's (2000) theory of quiet encroachment and consider the how these various forms of resistance are often linked. While it has been suggested that everyday and individual resistance can often lead to more collective and organized mobilization, Lilja et al. (2017) suggest that often organized resistance "becomes the very origin for more subtle forms of everyday

resistance" (p. 45). As discussed above, Lilja et al. (2017) studied Cambodian programs aiming to reduce gender-based violence in which male trainers were educated to resist "on behalf of women" to prevent gender-based violence through disruption of notions of toxic masculinity. In interviews with the male trainers and through empirical observation, Lilja et al. (2017) discovered that organized resistance was, for some participants, a starting point for individuals' "very subtle practices of everyday resistance" (p. 49). Lilja et al. (2017) suggest ultimately that resistance "inspires, provokes, generates, encourages or eventually discourages resistance" (p. 52). Lilja et al.'s (2017) assertion that not only does power create resistance, but *resistance* creates resistance is important for a number of reasons, both theoretical and practical.

As an emerging field, it seems that resistance studies scholars are oscillating between two competing agendas: one influenced by the desire to produce a classification of particular and discrete forms of resistance that occur in particular contexts, i.e. to neatly separate out unique categories of resistance, as in Hollander & Einwohner's (2004) typology of resistance, and another influenced by the desire to explore the entanglement and enmeshment of multiple hybrid resistance practices and techniques. While these two agendas may appear to be in tension, both of these goals (honing and broadening) are central to the development of scholarly discourse on resistance. Sensitivity to the various modes of resistance employed by marginalized people and groups in different contexts (different spaces and times) is crucial to advancing understandings of patterns of resistance, while exploration of the interlinkage between these forms allows for a more nuanced understanding of the hybrid and often unpredictable nature of these different forms of resistance in relation to one another.

F.   **Limitations, Challenges, and Critiques of Resistance Studies**

As resistance has joined power in the academic spotlight, studies of it have garnered critique as well as acclaim. One major critique levied by Bayat (2000) and others (Brown, 1996; Sahlins, 1993) is that scholars interested in resistance "read too much" into the acts of their subjects. Bayat (2000) warns that if scholars go searching for resistance, "almost any act of the subject potentially becomes one of 'resistance'" (p. 544). In their attempts to challenge essentialist beliefs about the poor and marginalized as "passive," Bayat (2000) suggests, many scholars fall into the "trap of essentialism in reverse" (p. 544). In other words, rather than assuming that nothing in the realm of the everyday is political, scholars assume that every action carries some hidden political meaning. In addition, Brown (1996) asserts, the "indiscriminate use of resistance and related concepts undermines their analytical utility" (p. 730). I agree that scholars in resistance studies, and indeed any field, should be self-critical, attempt to avoid bias, and strive for analytical rigor – though what is meant by "analytical rigor" is perhaps less clear. It seems to me that these critiques are not disputed by scholars in the emerging field, but indeed that they lie at the heart of the ongoing scholarly debate about how to determine with as much specificity as possible what resistance is and what we mean when we write and think about resistance. It is undisputable that the recognition of "the everyday" as an important site of knowledge and the recognition of marginalized people and groups as curators of knowledge and practitioners of (innovative, unlikely, unpredictable) resistance has opened scholars up to new possibilities of understanding and analyzing the political, power, domination, submission, and resistance. However, scholars interested in these forms of resistance must continue to be conscientious of the power of their interpretation and mindful of the ways that their positionality

informs the way they think, read, write, and theorize the resistance of others, in particular marginalized individuals and groups.

Another critique of resistance studies and similar scholarship is that it overly romanticizes resistance and heroifies resistors. Abu-Lughod (1990) suggests that there has been a tendency to romanticize resistance and "to read all forms of resistance as signs of the ineffectiveness of systems of power and of the resilience and creativity of the human spirit in its refusal to be dominated" (p. 42). This romanticization is especially risky because it reinforces overly simplified dichotomies of oppressor/oppressed and neglects the reality of multiple, conflicting hierarchies and systems of power. Miller (1997) argues that most studies of resistance are problematic because "they begin by dividing the population into the powerful and the powerless" (p.32). As discussed earlier in this chapter (Hennen, 2015), resistors can both reinforce dominant ideologies and resist them, and in addition, an individual may occupy both privileged and marginalized positions simultaneously, as in the case of Hahirwa et al.'s (2017) study of Rwandan local peasant reform implementers. It is crucial for resistance studies scholars to attend critically to resistance and resistance acts with the recognition that resistors themselves occupy neither an inherently antagonist nor heroic role. Thoughtful studies of resistance should, and more and more often do, avoid dichotomies such as these.

G.   **What About Disability?**

Scott revealed in 1990 that "much of the active political life of subordinate groups has been ignored because it takes place at a level we rarely recognize as political" (p. 198). Since that time, resistance, especially quiet, everyday, and ordinary resistance has taken center stage in academia. Despite the proliferation of resistance writing, disability and disability resistance (outside of collective social movements) remain underrepresented in the resistance literature.

Although resistance studies aims to explore diverse resistance practices, a majority of theoretical literature on resistance appears still to focus on resistance that challenges domination based on race, class, status, and gender. As discussed previously, even Lilja and Vinthagen's (2018) fairly liberal definition of resistance – "'resistance' challenges all forms of domination – not just the particular territorial configuration of power relations that we call 'the state', but the exploitative practices, commodification, fetishism, alienation, and economic injustices of capitalism, the discursive truth-regimes and normative orders of status quo, and the gender, race, status, caste, and taste hierarchies of the sociocultural sector" (p. 213) – neglects to name disability as a sociocultural hierarchy that is challenged by resistance.

In thinking about how theories of disability and power are related and how resistance studies could benefit from integrating disability studies perspectives, we can turn to disabled feminist philosopher Shelley Tremain (2017) and others who have begun to bridge the theoretical gap between existing literature on power and disability. Particularly salient is Tremain's (2017) discussion of the relevance of Foucault's work on bio-power, normalization, discipline, and security to disability theorizing, discourse, and scholarship. Tremain (2017) describes disability as an apparatus of power and suggests that Foucault might be "useful to understanding the complex social/power relations surrounding disability" (Violet, 2020, p. 175) despite the fact that Foucault did not explicitly write about disability himself. These insights about the historical, material, and discursive constructedness of disability and technologies of discipline in relation to power have important implications, I suggest, for the study of resistance and for the study of disability. I propose that consideration of Tremain (2017) and other disability scholars' analyses of power, disability oppression, and resistance are important to broader discussions of power and resistance. I aim, in the coming chapters, to I explore how

disability studies scholars make meaning about resistance in their writing and consider what an interdisciplinary approach to thinking about disability resistance might contribute. For instance, what might further scholarship on disability resistance tell resistance studies scholars about "the political," innovation at the margins, oppression, or precarity? How might this new knowledge trouble, challenge, or bolster resistance studies definitions of resistance? And how might application of frameworks of resistance from resistance studies complicate or complement disability studies perspectives on protest, resistance, activism, or social movements?

H.   **Conclusion**

Studies of resistance have transformed significantly over the last nearly 50 years. Shifting notions of power and the complex relationship between power and resistance have drawn the attention of scholars to the subversive nature of resistant discourse, art, actions, and stories "from below" in addition to more traditional articulations of dissent such as protests and demonstrations. Influenced significantly by the scholarship of Michel Foucault and James Scott, the emergence of the field of resistance studies reflects a move toward more attentive study of power and resistance as phenomena that are co-constitutive, malleable, complex, and shifting. Resistance studies scholars continue to debate and discuss meanings of resistance, and in turn generate new ideas about how power, control, domination, oppression, and repression operate. Indeed, scholars have identified resistance in American factories (Kelley, 1994) on the streets of Tehran (Bayat, 2000) and in fraternities on college campuses (Stombler & Padavic, 1997), and in doing so, uncovered and recovered nuanced histories of resistance among marginalized people and groups. These investigations of resistance are crucial because they offer the potential to disrupt narratives of powerlessness among marginalized people and groups and because they contribute to a more nuanced and complex rendering of power and resistance.

Despite the proliferation and expansion of resistance literature that accounts for quiet, dispersed, informal, or individual resistance practices employed by marginalized people and groups, disability resistance and everyday disability resistance remain underresearched in resistance studies and in disability studies. Turning to the next chapter, I will explore how disability studies scholarship approaches disability oppression and resistance theoretically and examine how and whether concepts of everyday resistance and hidden transcripts could be useful frameworks for disability scholars to understand alternative disability resistance practices.

III. DISABILITY AND RESISTANCE

A.   **<u>Introduction</u>**

Disability resistance has largely been understood by scholars through the lens of activism and collective political organizing. Through careful analysis, historical comparison, and meticulous cataloguing of protest events, scholars such as Barnartt & Scotch (2001) have examined patterns of collective political action in the second half of the 20th century. Indeed, research on disability activism and social movements has been crucial to developing understandings of disability as a group and political identity (Kelly, 2010; Scotch, 1988), disability consciousness and mechanisms of empowerment (Charlton, 1998), and the conceptual relationship between disability and citizenship. In this chapter, I propose, however, that a primary focus on disability resistance as collective political action is insufficient. I posit here that disability resistance may not be captured fully by theories of social movements nor by the more "traditional" (and narrower) definitions of resistance explored in Chapter II. I suggest, furthermore, that coordinated and/or overt articulations of dissent by disabled people, including collective political action, may be constrained or discouraged in some contexts due to material, geographic, and social barriers and in response to the complex networks of power that operate to isolate, exclude, surveille, and delegitimize disabled people.

Throughout history and still today, people with disabilities have faced recurring coercion, discrimination, abuse, marginalization, domination, segregation, and exclusion on individual and structural levels. Critical disability studies scholars Diane Pothier and Richard Devlin (2006) posit that disabled people experience "deep structural economic, social, political, legal, and cultural inequality" that leads to unequal citizenship (p. 1), and I propose, may disallow for or make difficult overt and collective resistance. Charlton (2010) suggests that disabled people are ensnared in a "seemingly endless condition that locks [them] out of opportunity and possibility

and…into subalternity, the underclass, institutionalized dependencies, the periphery everywhere with little chance of escape" (p. 198). This peripheral positionality characterizes in large part the condition of people with disabilities worldwide, many of whom experience intersecting disability, race, gender, class, status, and other oppressions that lock them "out of opportunity and possibility," including, I suggest, the opportunity to engage in collective political action. Furthermore, unlike some marginalized minority groups for whom achieving the "common social space" fundamental to building a social movement is uncomplicated, disabled people remain demographically and geographically dispersed and may face additional obstacles to collective organizing including "constraints on transportation, communication, and freedom of movement" (Barnartt & Scotch, 2001, p. 58).

Questions around why, how, and to what extent disabled people resist domination outside of social movements therefore become essential. Recently some scholars and activists (Frederick, 2017; Mills, 2014; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018) have begun to attend more carefully to what Scott (1985, 1990) might call a "hidden transcript" of everyday disability resistance – that is, resistance that is covert, subtle, or undocumented, that might be individual, unorganized or disorganized, that utilizes subterfuge or feigned ignorance, that occurs online in chatrooms and blogs, within institutions, from beds, and from wheelchairs. While the notion that these forms of non-conventional and everyday disability resistance occur and are meaningful is emerging, resistance in general – and particularly everyday disability resistance – remains underresearched and undertheorized in disability studies. By attending more carefully to instances and patterns of everyday resistance of disabled people, disability scholars may not only begin to reimagine what resistance means, but also more critically evaluate how structures of domination operate to oppress disabled people.

B.   **Resisting Together: Social Movements and Disability Activism**

The notion of resistance has been central to disability studies scholarship since the field emerged. In their work, disability studies scholars challenge, refute, reject, disrupt, and resist mainstream and pervasive notions of disability as individual deficit, biological inferiority, and tragedy. In fact, disability studies may qualify as what Devault (1999) terms "oppositional research" – a label she applies to "feminist research committed to challenging many oppressions and also research with other kinds of liberatory foundations and aims" (p. 3). By resisting mainstream ideas about disability as unfortunate, unavoidable tragedy, disability studies scholars work to disrupt and challenge harmful discourses about disability and center the voices and experiences of disabled people. For this reason, it seems especially fitting for disability studies to engage critically with developing scholarship on resistance.

The development of the academic discipline of disability studies in the 1970s and 1980s alongside the advancement of disability activism and political organizing in the U.S. and U.K., furthermore, implies an interconnectedness between scholarly, theoretical, and embodied disability resistance. Scholar-activists Colin Barnes and Mike Oliver (2010) argue that "the development of disability studies as an academic discipline is inextricably linked with rise of the disabled peoples' movement that effectively began in the 1970s" (p. 547). Considering this inherent link between the development of the academic field of disability studies and concurrent political organizing and activism, as well as the activist identities of many of the architects of the field (including Oliver himself, who theorized the social model which underlies a significant portion of disability studies writing) and contemporary scholars, it comes as little surprise that much of the existing disability studies literature on resistance views resistance through the lens of social movements and activism.

Indeed, a number of scholars interested in sociology, disability studies, and disability history have written about the emergence, development, maintenance, function, successes, and shortcomings of disability resistance in the form of collective organizing, activism, and protest (Barnartt & Scotch, 2001; Beckett, 2006; Carling-Jenkins, 2014; Charlton, 1998; Pelka, 2012; Scotch, 1988; Winter, 2003). Many of these scholars focus on the events of the Disability Rights Movement (DRM), a social movement dedicated to securing equal rights and access for disabled people, impelled by the existence of a collective disability consciousness (Barnartt, 1996). Activists involved with the Disability Rights Movement in the second half of the 20th century mobilized for equality, invoking rights rhetoric and utilizing direct action tactics including protests, sit-ins, demonstrations, and occupations to demand (among other items) improved accessibility in architecture and transportation, equal opportunities in independent living, employment, education and housing, and freedom from discrimination and abuse. According to Winter (2003), the goal of the Disability Rights Movement was "the elimination, or at least amelioration, of the disabling marginalization of persons with impairments, and, thereby, to empower them to influence social policies and practices so as to further the integration and full inclusion of individuals with disabilities into the mainstream of American society. Concomitantly, it [was] to facilitate their taking control of their own lives" (p. 5). Recalling Tarrow's (2011) definition of social movements as: "sequences of contentious politics based on underlying social networks, on resonant collective action frames, and on the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents" (p. 7), we can appreciate why scholars would employ the concept of social movements to describe disability activism.

Near the turn of the century, scholarly analyses of the Disability Rights Movement flourished. James Charlton's *Nothing About Us Without Us* (1998) for perhaps the first time

placed disability rights activism and the Disability Rights Movement in their broader global, political-economic, and socio-cultural contexts. *Nothing About Us Without Us* (1998), furthermore, offered one of the first theoretical overviews of disability oppression and resistance, exploring the concept of a raised disability consciousness and raising the question of empowerment. In 2001, sociologists Sharon Barnartt and Richard Scotch contributed one of the most comprehensive and meticulous histories of disability protest in the U.S. from 1970-1999, attending to patterns of cross-disability and impairment-specific activism and characterizing the DRM as a sustained, coordinated movement to assure equal rights for disabled people. Finally, Winter (2003) bolstered the position of the DRM as a social movement when he described how the Disability Rights Movement can be said to have developed in three phases, much like other social movements: phase 1: defining the problem, phase 2: developing solutions to the problem, and phase 3: the aftermath. All of these scholars contributed significantly to an understanding of disability resistance in the context of social movements – as a collective, coordinated, and sustained political effort that shares features with other human rights, civil rights, and liberation movements. Indeed, the Disability Rights Movement has been characterized by some as the "last civil rights movement" (Dredger, 1989).

The significance of this research is unassailable; scholars interested in disability activism and social movements have posed fundamental questions about how social change occurs in the public sphere, how and why disability has emerged or failed to emerge as a political identity, what it means to be a member of a minority group, and how social structures, state powers, and cultural values shape political action. What I suggest in this chapter is that social movements and social movements discourse may represent only a partial transcript of disability resistance – that which is visible, collective, occurring in the "public sphere," or in other words, that which has

been recognizable as resistance. In the coming sections, I investigate the question: Did/does disability resistance exist outside of the Disability Rights Movement – and if so, how and why?

I propose furthermore that collective and/or overt articulations of dissent by disabled people may be constrained, discouraged, or disallowed due to inherent and material challenges of collective organizing for disabled people as a group as well as the complex networks and mechanisms of power (including, but not limited to surveillance and monitoring, delegitimizing and undermining, controlling and restricting autonomy) that characterize the peripheral position of disabled people worldwide. In the following subsections, I will begin by addressing material and other barriers to collective organizing for disabled people and ultimately suggest that collective political action may be difficult, inaccessible, undesirable, or dangerous for some disabled people. Therefore, I suggest, social movement discourses may not fully capture the range and scope of resistance activities employed by disabled people.

1. **Finding and Cultivating Common Social Space**

In *Disability Protests: Contentious Politics, 1970 – 1999.* Barnartt and Scotch (2001) analyze "key factors in the success of social movements" and building group consciousness (p. 57). One of those factors, according to Barnartt and Scotch (2001) is common social space. I propose here that disabled people may encounter barriers to finding, creating, controlling, or maintaining common social space. Barnartt and Scotch (2001) acknowledge that the condition of disabled people is characterized by extreme isolation and exclusion that makes organizing and participating in social movements difficult; they suggest that the "issue of achieving common social space is more of a challenge to the disability community than it has been for many other social movements" (p. 58). While other social movements, including the labor movement "grew up within workplaces such as factories, mines, farms, and, more recently,

offices" and the Civil Rights Movement "grew up within the easily defined geographic and cultural boundaries of the African American community, and in the 1950s and 1960s, more particularly within African American churches and colleges," people with disabilities were, and remain, significantly more dispersed demographically and geographically (Barnartt & Scotch, 2001, p. 58). That disabled people belong to widely dispersed socioeconomic, geographic, and racial groups (Scotch, 1988) may mean that they are geographically and/or socially isolated or disconnected from other disabled people. If common social space is integral to the formation and expansion of social movements, therefore, many disabled people likely face a significant barrier to participation.

I do not intend to suggest here that disabled people do not or cannot find or form common social space. Barnartt and Scotch (2001) and Patterson (2012) are just a few of the scholars who have suggested to the contrary that historically, summer camps and rehabilitation centers have served as common social spaces for disabled adolescents and adults to foster disability consciousness. Patterson (2012), in fact, locates the origins of the DRM "in the experiences of adolescents with disabilities at rehabilitation centers and summer camps" and "traces the social roots of political activism from these institutions through higher education, where the intertwined processes of consciousness-raising and network formation transformed activists' understanding of accessibility — both physical and social" (p. 473). These scholars demonstrate that common social space does exist for people with disabilities, and furthermore, they hint at the ways disabled people have historically subverted and manipulated oppressive tactics such as segregation and confinement to their advantage, finding community and solidarity even and especially in that confinement. Furthermore, the possibility of reconceptualizing what "common social space" means in the twenty-first century and using tools and technology to

create "common social spaces" online has important implications for reimagining accessible activism, thinking about digital and new media social movements, and ultimately supporting a more expansive understanding of resistance. These possibilities will be taken up in further detail in Chapter IV. For now, I posit only that for many disabled people worldwide who are geographically and demographically dispersed, these common social spaces, whether they are physical or digital, may be difficult or near impossible to access. Even for disabled people seeking out physical common social space, "constraints on transportation, communication, and freedom of movement" as well as lack of resources may interfere with these goals (Barnartt & Scotch, 2001, p. 58). Restricted access to common social spaces, and thus solidarity, a shared language, or disability consciousness may serve as a barrier to participation in social movements for many disabled people. As a result, collective action may not be accessible to all disabled people worldwide.

2.   **Barriers Within Social Movements**

Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge that the U.S. DRM has been critiqued by both scholars and activists as historically non-representative and even hostile toward Black disabled people and disabled people of color. Political scientist Jennifer Erkulwater (2018) suggests that "although racial minorities are more likely to become disabled than whites, both disability activism and the historiography of disability politics tend to focus on the experience and achievements of whites" (p. 367). In a 2018 article, Erkulwater describes the tension between the Disability Rights Movement's desire to be inclusive of all disabled people and the reality of a movement that struggled and pushed back against the inclusion of minority voices, including those of Black disabled people. In the search for a single unified "disability identity" or "disabled voice," Black disabled people and other disabled people of color have historically been

excluded from disability rights movements. "Though they yearned for racial solidarity," Erkulwater (2018) suggests, "in practice, activists could not overcome institutions that separated antipoverty and racial politics from disability policy, nor could they figure out how to incorporate minority voices in an identity-based movement forged around disability rather than color" (p. 368).

This tension has been identified by contemporary scholars and activists as well. Disability activists of color, including Patty Berne, Mia Mingus, and Stacey Milbern propose that the DRM "is single issue identity based; its leadership has historically centered white experiences; its framework leaves out other forms of oppression and the ways in which privilege is leveraged at differing times and for various purposes; it centers people with mobility impairments, marginalizing other forms of impairment; and centers people who can achieve rights and access through a legal or rights-based framework" (2015). Therefore, in addition to experiencing material and physical access barriers to collective organizing, disabled people of color, immigrants with disabilities, poor disabled people, queer people with disabilities, and other multiply marginalized disabled people may have faced – and still may face – barriers to participation in disability rights activism. Collective, organized disability activism, then, may represent only subset of disabled people and their interests – and therefore only a partial transcript of disabled resistance. Considering their exclusion from mainstream disability activism, it is crucial to attend to the possibility of resistance by disabled people of color and others overlooked by or barred from participation in the DRM, and interrogate how alternative resistance activities, discourses, and practices may have been (and continue to be) invisible or invisiblized.

3.   **<u>Complex Operations of Power</u>**

Finally, centering Foucault's writings on the operations of power discussed earlier in Chapter II may allow us to shift from an understanding of disability oppression rooted singularly in violent and centralized state power to an understanding of disability oppression that is (in addition) decentralized, diffuse, pernicious, and pervasive. As Avery Gordon (1997) suggests, "power can be invisible, it can be fantastic, it can be dull and routine. It can be obvious, it can reach you by the baton of the police, it can speak the language of your thoughts and desires" (p. 3). In shifting our focus to include power that is "dull and routine," diffuse and decentralized, we (scholars) may be able to reframe and reconceptualize disability resistance not only as overt confrontation to state power and violence, but also as individual or subtle acts of defiance, dissent, or protest – as a phenomenon that itself may be obvious or invisible, fantastic, or dull and routine. Considering that the oppression of disabled people may well be invisible and routine, so deeply embedded in our social structure or belief systems – in paternalism, in a medical gaze that measures or surveilles disabled bodies and disabled people, for example – is it then likely that resistance to domination of this kind may also be invisible or routine? Baaz et al. (2016) suggest, "if power is not only a sovereign center that is forbidding (and punishing) but also more important a productive multiple network of power techniques, then the face of resistance also changes" (p. 139). It is this "changing face" of oppression and resistance that I aim to explore in the subsequent sections on disability oppression.

C.   **<u>Disability Oppression</u>**

In order to explore what disability resistance is or could be, it is crucial to begin by considering the context in which it may occur. What is the relationship between power and

control, domination and subordination, marginalization and exclusion as it relates to disability and how have scholars in disability studies come to articulate this relationship? In other words, are disabled people oppressed? And if yes, how? In this section, my goal is to first explore several distinct theoretical approaches to "disability oppression" and next to consider whether disability oppression still exists today. According to disability rights activist and scholar Andrew Batavia (2001), "oppression" is a term that is "bandied about in a vague manner in everyday speech but has specific meaning from different perspectives" (p. 109). In an effort to explore these specific meanings and various perspectives, this examination of disability oppression will consider the operations and impacts of political, economic, socio-cultural, and aesthetic exploitation, discrimination, and marginalization. Such analysis provokes several essential and fundamental questions: What is oppression and what causes oppression? How does oppression work? Who can be oppressed by whom, and what does it mean to be a member of a minority or oppressed group?

According to James Charlton (1998) "oppression is a phenomenon of power in which relations between people and between groups are experienced in terms of domination and subordination, superiority and inferiority" (p. 33). The phenomenon of disability oppression, sometimes referred to in the literature as "ableism" is complex and multi-layered, rife with tensions and contradictions, and indeed, while disability oppression often plays out and is experienced on an individual/interpersonal level, from a disability studies perspective, disability oppression is a widespread and systemic issue wherein "oppressive structures and institutions reproduce themselves through the myriad power relations in everyday life" (Charlton, 1998, p. 153). The following sections will introduce several key theoretical approaches to understanding the structures, systems, and institutions that contribute to the oppression and marginalization of

disabled people in order to provide context for understanding disability resistance. It must be noted that this exploration of disability oppression cannot claim to be exhaustive nor can it claim to capture any universal experience of disability oppression in all its complexity. Rather, it is my hope that explicating these relatively few perspectives on disability oppression will contribute to an at least more complex rendering of disability oppression, and therefore, of disability resistance.

1. **Exclusion and Webs of Dependency: Political Economic and Materialist Perspectives**

Very broadly speaking, oppression has traditionally been understood by scholars in terms of political-economic exclusion and socio-cultural beliefs and ideals. Scholars with Marxist and other materialist perspectives define oppression in terms of the exploitation of the working masses to their detriment by the capitalist class (Russell, 2001), while others have focused on cultural oppression, which involves the "social transmission of false beliefs, values, and ideals about how to live, and the attitudes, motivations, behavior patterns, and institutions that depend on them" (Kernohan, 1998, p. 13). Some scholars, such as Oliver (1990), Finkelstein (1980), and Russell (2001) describe disability oppression as systematic exclusion from employment and exploitation under capitalist economic systems. Russell (2001) argues that "any struggle for freedom from oppression has something in common with Marxism. Marx's contribution to history was to pinpoint the primary (but not the only) cause of oppression as economic" (p. 87). Scholars who share this perspective generally argue that while the "capitalist class exploits the working masses (wage earners) for profit to the detriment (alienation) of the working class," disabled people are excluded from that exploitation and subsequently "perceived to be of less use to the competitive profit cycle" (Russell, 2001, p. 89).

Notable scholars in disability studies including Oliver (1990) and Barnes (1997) have suggested that exclusion from participation in the political economy creates, informs, or affirms (at least in part) disability oppression. Barnes' (1997) account suggests that "the basis of disabled people's oppression is founded upon the material and ideological changes which occurred as a result of the emergence of capitalist society" (p. 9). Some scholars have argued that the shift toward capitalism and industrialization in particular contributed to the oppression of disabled people; during industrialization, as factories relied on fast paced production systems that required more precise and mechanical movements, some impaired people were seen as less "fit" to work and excluded from paid employment (Finkelstein, 1980). Scholars with materialist and political economic perspectives often emphasize that disabled people are oppressed through this exclusion from work and "systemic compulsory unemployment," resulting in widespread poverty *and* informing social notions of which bodies are useful, productive, and therefore which bodies are valuable (Russell, 2001). While few scholars claim that poverty is "proof" of oppression per se, some do argue that poverty due to exclusion from the labor market is a form of structural violence (Cassiman, 2007).

In "Peripheral Everywhere" Charlton (2010) describes the condition of disabled people worldwide as one characterized by poverty and exclusion, emphasizing the ways that disability and exclusion from participation in the economy push disabled people to the "periphery" and trap them in webs of dependency. Worldwide, he claims, disabled persons are situated "uniquely at the extreme edge of the poorest and most marginal, as 'double outcast'" (Charlton, 2010, p. 195). Charlton (2010) describes the position of disabled people as "locked in" to structures and processes of dependency wherein "disabled persons have, over hundreds of years, been forced into relationships where others control us, our lives and how we survive" (p. 198). This

dependency, he explains, is operationalized "in the developed world primarily through welfare, charity, social services and institutional arrangements and secondarily through informal work, family assistance, begging, and crime" and in developing countries as violence, subservience, etc. (Charlton, 2010, p. 198). Ultimately, Marxist and other materialist perspectives emphasize the impacts of exclusion from work, resultant poverty, and in turn, the reinforcement of ideologies and realities of violence, dependency, and undesirability in describing the roots and repercussions of disability oppression.

2.   **Aesthetic Oppression, Normalcy, and the Non-disabled Gaze**

Some scholars conceptualize disability oppression as invalidation of disabled or impaired bodies via the "non-disabled stare" (Garland-Thomson, 2009) or the "non-disabled gaze" (Hughes, 1999; Loja, Costa, Hughes, & Menezes, 2013). Loja et al. (2013) argue that the "non-disabled gaze for disabled people is an experience of power relations playing out on the surface of the body" (p. 194) whereby "the body and the appearance of the disabled person serves as a means not of recognition of personhood but of the performance of difference" (Lourens & Swartz, 2010, p. 211). These scholars suggest that the non-disabled gaze "invalidates impaired bodies. Its mode of perception is derived from the carnal point of view of non-disablement, recognizing 'truth' and 'perfection' only in normality" (Loja et al., 2013).

Indeed, the construction of normalcy has been a primary focus in disability studies writing. In the introductory chapter of *The Disability Studies Reader* entitled "Normality, Power, and Culture" Lennard Davis (2013) declares that "we live in a world of norms" and that to "understand the disabled body, one must return to the concept of the norm, the normal body" (p. 1). By attending to the history and construction of "the normal" rather than accepting that "normal" is a natural, true, and always-there state of being, Davis (2013) calls into question the

legitimacy of a "hegemony of normal" (p. 10). This critique has become central to disability

studies scholarship. According to Oliver (1990) such ideologies of normality, and relatedly,

abnormality, underpin, among other practices, the "professional approach to the issue of

disability from prebirth until death" that strives to approximate normalcy (p. 55). Similarly,

anthropologist Leslie Fiedler (1996) has called the pressure to conform or attain "normal" status

the "tyranny of the normal." Socio-cultural and professional preoccupation with attaining and

maintaining normalcy significantly impacts perceptions and treatment of disabled people; as

Shakespeare (1994) puts it, disability functions as a "dustbin for disavowal" for the category of

normal. In other words, understandings of disability as abnormal and deviant, and accompanying

scrutiny, dissatisfaction, and desire to change disabled embodiment reflects and enacts what

some scholars refer to as aesthetic or cultural oppression.

3. **<u>Institutionalization: Regulation, Restricted Autonomy, Segregation, and</u>**
<u>Confinement</u>

Many scholars and activists write about institutionalization as a tool or apparatus

of disability oppression. Through dialogues with people who survived life in institutions and

critical analysis of institutional archives, scholars in disability studies, history, and sociology,

among other fields, have endeavored to understand how power operated/operates within

institutions for disabled people and recover the stories of everyday life within. I suggest in this

section that the institution might serve as a site or apparatus of "strong domination" where

disabled people were (and are) highly regulated and controlled, where their autonomy and

privacy are restricted, and where risk of abuse and violence is high (Stanley, Manthorpe, &

Penhale, 1999).

In a 1999 article, sociologist Robert Menzies "reconstructs the organizational and human environment that prevailed" between 1919 and 1933 inside the Colquitz Mental Home, a specialized facility in British Columbia that focused on the containment of "criminally insane" patients (p. 181). Menzies (1999) explains that his analysis "is primarily about power, and its myriad operations, limitations, and oppositions, as it is actuated in facilities like Colquitz" (p. 184). Menzies' (1999) description of Colquitz refers to the "prison-like built environment, the relentless preoccupation with security, the all-male population, and the presence of disproportionate concentrations of 'criminally insane,' penitentiary inmates, and assorted 'unmanageable' patients" (p. 183). He characterizes existence at Colquitz as both claustrophobic and isolating, explaining that the "overarching feature of life at Colquitz was the unrelenting presence of regulatory forces in virtually every detail of daily existence" (Menzies, 1999, p. 189). He describes, furthermore, how expressions of "medico-legal power infused the entirety of patients' experience" including everyday choices and routines of "food and dress, activity and sleep, leisure and labor" (Menzies, 1999, p. 189). Menzies' (1999) analysis suggests that life in the institution was permeated by inescapable surveillance and monitoring, security, and regulatory power of the genre described by Foucault.

Though institutional life is often conceptualized as a relic, as in Menzies' (1999) analysis of an early 20th century asylum, it is crucial to consider that many disabled people still live in segregated institutions. As Friedman (2019) points out, "although deinstitutionalization of people with IDD is at an all time high, the legacy of institutionalization is far-reaching and many people are still institutionalized" (para. 2). A 2012 article by Andrea Hollomotz offers a contemporary look at institutional life, violence, and hostility; Hollomotz (2012) investigates how disabled people experience "subtle forms of oppression" in institutional settings and how those

experiences expose "structural inequalities and a societal ratification of hostility towards disabled people" (p. 477). Hollomotz (2012) argues that "restrictions to autonomy, lack of opportunities to develop equal social relationships, and social exclusion and hostility are often engrained in disabled people's everyday lives" (p. 489). Hollomotz (2012) finds that restricted autonomy and control in contemporary institutional settings "impacted both 'minor and major choice[s]'" such as what to eat or wear, which activities to do, where to sleep, and the appropriateness of sexual relations (p. 482). Striking similarities between Menzies' (1999) report on the operations of power at the Colquitz Mental Home over one century ago and Hollomotz's (2012) contemporary analysis suggest that disability oppression within the institution endures, and implies the use of regulatory and disciplinary power resulting in restricted autonomy, increased isolation, and increased risk of violence.

4. **Intersectionality and Disability Oppression**

Finally, it is crucial to consider that disability oppression does not often function alone; as Charlton (1998) suggests, "disability oppression is itself most often a partial experience of oppression. People with disabilities experience other crucial kinds of oppression based on class, race, and gender" (p. 20). Black feminist scholarship and thinking (in particular produced by the Combahee River Collective, a Black feminist lesbian organization active from 1974-1980) provides a "fundamental insight about power: that the various systems of oppression – such as racism, patriarchy, capitalism, and heterosexuality – are interacting and co-constituting" (Disch & Hawkesworth, 2016, p. 8). In 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw first publicly laid out the theoretical framework of intersectionality in "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," when she described how multiple interlocking systems of oppression affected Black women in discrimination law. Since that time, intersectionality has been taken up by activists and scholars

across disciplines to describe how overlapping categories of identity and oppression impact individuals' experiences.

Understanding disability oppression necessitates a recognition that many disabled people are marginalized not only due to their disability, but simultaneously, in combination with, and *as a result of* class, gender, race, caste, sexuality, and other forms of oppression. At the fraught intersection of these multiple identities, power relations operate in unique ways to oppress individuals, and as discussed earlier in regards to the U.S. DRM, may disrupt solidarity and efforts for collective action. Much like disability activism, disability studies scholarship has been critiqued as characteristically ignoring concerns specific to class and race (Bell, 2006; Erevelles, 2011). However, some contemporary scholars are taking a critical and intersectional approach to writing on the connections between race, gender, oppression, and constructions of disability (Ben-Moshe, 2020; Erevelles, 2011; Frederick, 2017; García-Santesmases & Balaguer, 2017; Meekosha, 2009; Samuels, 2014; Timander & Moller, 2018). Increased scholarship that attends to the intersections of disability oppression and other forms of oppression and that acknowledges that disability and disability oppression are inherently tied to race, class, gender, and status are essential to continued scholarship on disability, oppression, power, and resistance. Neglecting the complexity of disability oppression and the intersections of disability oppression and other oppressions will ultimately offer only a partial view on disability, oppression, power, and resistance.

D.   **Does Disability Oppression (Still) Exist?**

While disability oppression is recognized as a unique and ongoing phenomenon among scholars (Charlton, 1998; Hollomotz, 2012; Russell, 2001), others remain critical. Some (Batavia, 2001; Gallagher, 2001) suggest that while disabled people may have been oppressed in

the past, conditions have significantly improved such that "disability oppression" is no longer an adequate descriptor. Batavia (2001), for instance, suggests that "the contention by some disability rights advocates that people with disabilities are an oppressed minority must be subject to academic scrutiny. Certainly, people with different impairments and functional limitations have been subject to a history of discrimination, much of which has been state supported. Yet, this does not mean that the entire disabled population is now and will forever be an oppressed minority" (p. 107). Ultimately, Batavia (2001) argues that disability oppression as a term does not apply to the majority of people with disabilities in the contemporary U.S because disabled people as a group have achieved a certain "level of political self-determination" (p. 111). Challenging Marxist and other materialist perspectives described above, Batavia (2001) argues furthermore that people with disabilities may not constitute a social/economic class, and in fact, have more in common with a racial group such as African Americans who have witnessed a "growing middle class" (p. 10). Batavia (2001) insists that "some people with disabilities are quite wealthy for a variety of reasons including their own hard work, wise investments, good fortune, lawsuits, or family wealth" (p. 110). Finally, Batavia (2001) argues, "claiming oppression" as a strategy will inevitably "backfire on people with disabilities" because it sends a strong negative message that people with disabilities are powerless (p. 112). In reality, Batavia (2001) suggests, "most people with disabilities are fully capable of self-direction and dealing with whatever discrimination and other wrongs directed at them" (p. 112).

Author and disability advocate Hugh Gallagher (2001) similarly argues that disability oppression no longer applies for Americans with disabilities. Gallagher (2001) juxtaposes the condition of disabled people under the T4 Euthanasie program of Nazi Germany to the contemporary condition of life with a disability in the U.S. He suggests that "under the T4

Euthanasie program of Nazi Germany, people with physical and mental disabilities were put to death against their will by their physicians. These individuals were oppressed in every sense of the word"; by comparison, he proposes, Americans today are not (Gallagher, 2001, p. 96). Gallagher (2001) claims that "as a general proposition, American disabled citizens today are oppressed only so far as they allow themselves to be oppressed. They have the right, as they choose to exercise and demand the right, to control their bodies, their lives, and their destinies" (p. 99).

E.   **The Five Faces of Oppression**

In all, these scholars make compelling points about the complex nature of disability oppression. It is my contention that disability oppression does exist and that disabled people (including disabled Americans) continue to be oppressed today. I posit that disability oppression is a complex and fraught phenomenon that utilizes a range of visible and invisible mechanisms, taking on many forms to systemically oppress and disempower disabled people. In analyzing the perspectives on disability oppression above, I propose Iris Marion Young's (1988) five faces of oppression as a useful conceptual model of oppression that incorporates both political economic and socio-cultural perspectives to demonstrate the multiple faces, or forms, oppression may take on. Young (1988) maintains that "it is not possible to define a single set of criteria that describe the condition of oppression" (p. 40). In other words, oppression is not a single unified phenomenon. Rather, she suggests that oppression refers to "several distinct structures or situations" (Young, 1988, p. 271). Young's five faces of disability oppression are: 1. exploitation 2. marginalization 3. powerlessness 4. cultural imperialism 5. violence. She suggests that "applying these five criteria to the situations of groups makes it possible to compare oppressions without reducing them to a common essence of claiming that one is more fundamental than the

other" (Young, 1988, p. 59). Considering the complexity of disability oppression and what some might describe as the shifting nature of disability oppression over time, Young's (1988) model may be a useful conceptual tool to analyze disability oppression in the U.S. today as compared to fifty years ago, or in the U.S. compared to another country.

While Batavia (2001) and Gallagher (2001) propose that hard-won rights, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 have eliminated disability oppression, I posit that such an explanation is overly simplified for a number of reasons. First, I argue, an understanding of how "institutional ableism" and "regimes of ableism" function may help us recognize that disability oppression is deeply embedded in the organization, systems, languages, history, and practices of the society. While rights may protect against certain state sanctioned discrimination, violence, and abuses, they cannot and do not necessarily protect against marginalization, socio-cultural oppression, ideologies of desirability, and tyrannies of normalcy described above. Furthermore, following Young's (1988) explanation, I propose that one could reasonably compare disability oppression at multiple points in history as one might compare oppression for different groups without reducing or negating the existence of the other. In other words, though the "face" of disability oppression may have changed from violence to marginalization, for example, disability oppression is, nonetheless, disability oppression.

Finally, considering the multiple, marginalized identities people with disabilities may hold, I propose that Batavia (2001) and Gallagher's (2001) assessments of disabled peoples' "freedom to protest and the power to change what is wrong in society" (p. 99) may not be universally experienced. According to activist testimony (Berne et al., 2015) and scholarship (Erkulwater, 2018), people who hold multiple, marginalized identities have historically encountered more barriers to participation in collective political action than do white disabled

people. Therefore, while it may be true that white, upper or middle-class individuals with disabilities are free to take part in collective social movements and may wield the power to change their individual circumstances, these freedoms may be out of reach to people with disabilities also experiencing racism, sexism, poverty and class discrimination, etc. – especially when racism, sexism, and classism occur within disability activist communities.

Power relations, as we have seen through this exploration of perspectives on disability oppression, are "never as transparently clear as the names we give to them imply" (Gordon, 1997, p. 3). Disability oppression is complex, rife with tensions and contradictions, carried out through mechanisms of interpersonal and institutional, disciplinary and regulatory power, both visible and invisible. In order to appreciate how resistance to these forms of oppression – surveillance and monitoring in the institution, the harmful medical gaze, exclusion from political economy – for example, may be different or similar to overt, coordinated resistance to state violence, new and alternative theoretical approaches and frameworks are needed. In the following section, I begin to explore discourses of disability resistance that allude to the underground, subversive, submerged, or clandestine nature of disability resistance and consider how Scott's (1985, 1990) "everyday resistance" may be a useful analytical framework for understanding such disability resistance.

F.   **The Hidden Transcripts of Disability Resistance**

Relatively few scholars in disability studies have taken up the notion of everyday resistance critically to examine how disabled people resist domination outside of organized social movements such as the Disability Rights Movement, and fewer still have drawn from resistance studies literature. Considering that the condition and operations of disability oppression explored previously in this chapter may repress, stifle, disallow for, or make

dangerous or inaccessible overt opposition, I propose that asking critical questions about how, why, when, and under what circumstances disabled people resist domination outside of formal social movements is crucial for more thorough understandings of both disability and resistance. Although relatively little scholarly work seeks explicitly to answer these questions about disability resistance, stories and memories of individual, radical, subtle, unconventional resistance exist. This section will explore these stories as glimpses at the hidden transcripts of everyday disability resistance.

1. **The Pills in the Sock: Pretending, Manipulation, and Sly Normality**

China Mills, in *Psychiatry Disrupted: Theorizing Resistance and Crafting the (r)evolution* (2014) examines the phenomenon of "pretending to be normal" or what she names "sly normality" as a tactic of resistance against the colonial violence of psychiatry, structures of institutionalization, pathologizing language and ideologies, and notions of rationality, normality, and civility. Mills (2014) opens the chapter by telling two stories of patients in psychiatric care who pretended to comply in order to manipulate staff and avoid hospitalization and institutionalization. One of the stories Mills (2014) tells is about a man named George who was one of the first patients in a clinical trial for chlorpromazine (Thorazine) in the 1950s. According to the story, physicians and nurses closely monitored George's behavior while on the medication and noticed that his condition began to improve rapidly. Quickly, he was "promoted" to a different ward for "less disturbed patients" (Mills, 2014, p. 209). His progress awed the doctors. Thirty-eight days after his first dose of chlorpromazine, George was released from the hospital. As he was completing the paperwork for his release, George revealed to an attendant an old sock with thirty-eight days' worth of chlorpromazine pills stuffed inside.

This story, Mills (2014) suggests, may tell us something about pretending as a subversive strategy of resistance to counter the colonial violence of psychiatry. Mills (2014) names "pretending to agree, pretending you don't hear voices, pretending to be 'normal,' pills hidden under tongues, inside cheeks, and inside socks" (p. 209) and other acts of false compliance, disguise, dissimulation, and deception as resistance that "enables some freedom, at a cost" (p. 212). Drawing on the work of Scott (1985, 1990), Mills (2014) suggests that "psychiatry is haunted by such pretending, by a hidden territory of survival and resistance, like the 'infrapolitics' of disguise and deception employed by colonized peoples while they may outwardly appear, in power laden situations, to willingly consent" (p. 209). Rather than outward dissent, she suggests, sly normality produces the signs of "normative compliance" (Mills, 2014, p. 214) that protect and release individuals from the violence of colonialism and oppression. Mills (2014) quotes Scott in calling this a "troubled political terrain that lies between quiescence and revolt" (p. 210). Indeed, she suggests that appearing to agree or comply and to "improve" to approach acceptable levels of normalcy is a weapon that disabled people use to knowingly manipulate their doctors, psychiatrists, teachers, parents, and others (Mills, 2014). Tactics such as mimicry and invisibility render individuals "incalculable" and therefore undermine the pathologizing and medicalizing power of psychiatry as an institution.

Mills' (2014) analysis demonstrates that complex, nuanced, and often invisible oppression and violence produces complex, nuanced, and often invisible resistance. Indeed, purposeful obfuscation is a feature of this kind of resistance; as described by Scott in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990), if performed well enough, this kind of resistance may never be detected at all. Mills (2014) says simply, "we will never know the number of pills hidden under tongues and inside socks" (p. 223). This is surely one of the challenges of studying hidden

transcripts. Indeed, in considering how pretending as a resistance tactic or strategy fits with the dimensions of resistance analyzed in Chapter II (intentional, recognizable as resistance, collective, effective) it is evident why this kind of resistance may be overlooked and/or discounted. Importantly, Mills' (2014) analysis, recalling Scott's (1985; 1990), reveals that people who are institutionalized are not only aware of the conditions of their oppression, but employ a unique set of skills to subvert the status quo and to manipulate those around them in order to leverage freedom. This analysis is one of the few works that employs Scott's writing on everyday resistance and hidden transcripts to understand disability-related resistance. This is important as it offers insight into the ways that scholars interested in disability experiences, disability oppression, and resistance can apply or make use of frameworks of everyday resistance and hidden transcripts.

2.   **Resistance in/to the Institution**

As Mills' (2014) chapter and the earlier conversation on disability oppression suggest, the institution is one of those peripheral spaces occupied by disabled people where disability oppression, tyrannies of normalcy, confinement, isolation, surveillance, and monitoring restrict opportunities for freedom, and, by design, for resistance. Despite the difficulties of protesting within the institution, some scholars (Menzies, 1999) suggest that even within the walls of the institution, there exists a "reflexive interplay" of domination and resistance. Through critical reading and analysis of case files and records, as discussed previously, Menzies (1999) reconstructs the "organizational and human environment that prevailed" at the Colquitz Mental Home in British Columbia from 1919-33 and documents the "efforts undertaken by patients to resist authority, transcend their surroundings, and seek redemption and hope both inside and beyond the Colquitz walls" (p. 181). Menzies (1999) proposes ultimately that despite the power

of institutional authorities to regulate and control every aspect of daily life and the inescapable carceral atmosphere of the institution, "a reflexive interplay of regulation and resistance…permeate[d] every aspect of life at Colquitz" (p. 184). **"Just as the regulatory discourses and methods of authorities were everywhere present in the Colquitz historical documents,"** he suggests, "so too were the multitude of strategies and activities through which patients acknowledged, attempted to subvert, and sometimes successfully transcended the powerful forces that enveloped them" (Menzies, 1999, p. 199). Menzies (1999) identifies through the case files and clinical records a range of responses to domination, from "outright and unconditional compliance (and even collusion) to quite spectacular feats of dissent and revolt" against institutional authorities and oppressive systems (p. 199). Instances of overt and covert everyday resistance, Menzies (1999) finds, ranged from "assorted acts of intransigence" to threats of violence to "passive resistance through refusal to speak, eat, or work," satire, parody, and other forms of cultural dissent, as well as efforts to "psychologically and physically escape" (p. 201). Through meticulous analysis of case records, Menzies (1999) constructs a nuanced rendering of institutional life and power relations, attending particularly to the interplay of everyday resistance and regulation and avoiding dichotomies of powerful/powerless, acquiescence/revolt.

Escape from the institution, as alluded to by Menzies (1999), and running as resistance is another recurring theme in disability literature. In their article "A Story to Tell," Hamilton and Atkinson (2009) collected life-stories of older people with intellectual disabilities in the Republic of Ireland and used a "narrative approach to exploring how services might begin to enhance the quality of support currently provided to older people with intellectual disabilities" (p. 316). According to Hamilton and Atkinson (2009), "research participants recalled their experiences of

confinement, coercion and exclusion that resulted from their being labelled as having intellectual

disabilities" (p. 316). Importantly, the stories that the older adults with intellectual disabilities

told researchers suggested a reflexive interplay of domination and resistance similar to the

dynamic described by Menzies (1999); their stories emphasized both their acquiescence with

institutional expectations and their conscious resistance to institutional regimes of confinement

and exclusion. "One response to the reality of institutional life was, at least for some people, to

seek a means of escape from it," Hamilton and Atkinson report (2009, p. 318). Hamilton &

Atkinson's (2009) participants shared stories such as the following:

> ... I used to go to bed at night (then I'd) climb out the window and run away. I use to hide
> behind pillars to see if there was anything looking at me. Then I'd go out through the
> front gates ... (male, 54).

> ... I had a pass key you see. I'd open the door. He didn't know where he was going, he
> was from Wexford, and he's going straight down the drive. (The priest) was very cross.
> Have you keys? I said no, I haven't Father, I said. I'd pretend I hadn't. But I had one
> ...(male, 79). (p. 319)

At the same time, Hamilton & Atkinson (2009) explain, many individuals described experiences

of compliance and acquiescence with institutional and staff punishment. The following story is

just one example Hamilton & Atkinson (2009) report:

> ... They'd be a lot of fights... arguing between their-selves, giving out. So they'd put you
> to bed ... and maybe there for a few days. Stay there, and you'd be left out. You'd want to
> behave yourself. You wouldn't be blaggarding you wouldn't. It worked all right it did.
> Kind of taught a lesson on it ...(male, 59). (p. 319)

 Hamilton & Atkinson's (2009) participants' stories, like Menzies' (1999) case records,

contribute to a complex rendering of power relations within the institution. Kathy Jones' (1992)

investigation of the experiences of adults who spent a majority of their lives in the Hurionia

Regional Centre, a residential institution for children with developmental disabilities in Ontario,

Canada reinforces this notion that even within the walls of the oppressive institution, there exists

a "reflexive interplay of regulation and resistance" (Menzies, 1999, p. 184). Jones (1992) argues that the "process of understanding, resisting and compliance within these cultural practices is fluid and resists the polarity of absolute acceptance and absolute domination" (p. 347). While regulatory and disciplinary discourses and practices dominate(d) life within the institution, disabled people resist these modes of domination using a range of overt and covert resistance activities, including running away, lying, refusal to eat or to speak, and sometimes compliance. These acts, though they might be characterized as "bad behavior" or pathologized by medical professionals, if interrogated critically, I propose, might indeed reveal a long, hidden history of disability resistance. As disability studies scholars deepen our understandings of disability resistance, we must attend carefully and critically to this complexity, rejecting notions of absolute domination and absolute subordination in favor of nuanced readings of power relations between disabled people and dominant ideologies, discourses, and practices.

3. **<u>Stigma Management</u>**

Finally, it is worthwhile to consider how literature on stigma and stigma management may be useful in identifying and analyzing everyday disability resistance. Noted sociologist Erving Goffman (1963) defined stigma as an "attribute that is deeply discrediting" (p. 13) and one that, as a result, disqualifies a person from full social acceptance. Matthew Clair (2018) explains that for Goffman, "stigma is a general aspect of social life that complicates everyday micro-level interactions – the stigmatized may be wary of engaging with those who do not share their stigma, and those without a certain stigma may disparage, overcompensate for, or attempt to ignore stigmatized individuals" (p. 1). Goffman's ideas about stigma have proven useful to disability studies scholars as they describe the social invalidation and disqualification disabled people experience in society. Indeed, in disability studies literature, "stigma

management" emerges as a key form of resistance to disability oppression – and I suggest, could be considered a tactic of everyday disability resistance. One of the few scholars to explicitly frame stigma management as a practice of everyday resistance is sociologist Angela Frederick. In a 2017 article, Frederick explores how mothers with disabilities employ various everyday resistance strategies in order to challenge or manage negative stigmas. While she initially intended to categorize the 42 mothers with sensory and/or physical disabilities she interviewed "along a continuum from activist to non-activist, empowered to disempowered," she found that the data "told a more complicated story in which participants used various resistance strategies, or none at all, in variation and in combination depending on the social context" (Frederick, 2017, p. 133). Importantly, Frederick (2017) claims that becoming and being a mother is resistance itself against medical and cultural preferences for able-bodied parents and the belief that disabled mothers are "unfit for the role of mother" (p. 133). Becoming and being a mother, she articulates, is resistance against the "imperative of childlessness" (Frederick, 2017, p. 133). Furthermore, Frederick (2017) identifies three strategies of everyday resistance used by the disabled mothers she interviewed: visibility politics, respectability politics, and disengagement. According to Frederick (2017), visibility politics "often includes openly embracing a positive disability identity, assuming the role of educator, and advocating for access and more inclusive practices" (p. 134). Some mothers, she notes, practiced visibility politics by "asserting a strong presence in public places such as their children's schools" (Frederick, 2017, p. 134). Respectability politics, she explains, "involves presenting a carefully cultivated public image to defy negative stereotypes. These practices are also referred to as compensation or normalization in the stigma literature" (Frederick, 2017, p. 135). Several mothers practiced respectability politics in attempts to protect themselves and their families from surveillance, Frederick (2017) explains. Eleanor,

one of the mothers interviewed and a woman who is partially paralyzed on one side "recalled being visited by a social worker after her pediatrician reported her to child protective services" (Frederick, 2017, p. 135). In the interview with Frederick (2017), Eleanor "described how hard she had worked to perform a highly-disciplined form of motherhood in the face of surveillance from the state and discouragement from family members and friends. During several moments in her interview, Eleanor emphasized the importance of keeping her home and her children clean as a marker of good motherhood" (p. 135). The impact of negative stigma and the accompanying surveillance of disabled mothers, as demonstrated by Eleanor's encounter with her suspicious pediatrician and child protective services, may have devastating consequences for parents with disabilities. Finally, Frederick (2017) defines "disengagement" as "practicing various kinds of restraint to protect against or challenge stigma. These types of restraint include avoidance, concealment, or false deference" (p. 135). These three strategies to manage stigma for disabled mothers, some centering visibility and others invisibility, Frederick (2017) explains, are small or subtle forms of resistance to negative stigmas that may indeed go unnoticed or unrecognized as resistance. Frederick's (2017) study is crucial to the developing scholarship on everyday disability resistance and especially compelling is her attention to the fraught intersection of disability and gender oppressions.

Finally, before concluding I want to acknowledge the importance of rejecting an entirely romantic view of disability resistance; just as scholars of resistance must be wary of overly romanticizing resistance, disability studies scholars of resistance must be wary of overly romanticizing disability resistance. As discussed in Chapter II, resistance itself is rarely "pure" contestation of dominant ideologies – in fact, one of the challenges of studying resistance is that it oftentimes (intentionally or unintentionally) simultaneously reinforces and counters dominant

ideologies. This simultaneous accommodation and contestation may be related to the multiple identities a single individual holds (some privileged – for example male, and others marginalized – for example disabled) or it may be due to a strategic and intentional performance of acquiescence or "sly normality" as described by Mills (2014), or engagement with visibility and respectability politics as described by Frederick (2017). While disabled people may employ these strategies in order to manipulate stereotypes of ignorance, helplessness, or harmlessness to their advantage, they sometimes simultaneously reinforce those same dominant ideologies and stereotypes. Frederick (2017) explains the relationship between resistance and acquiescence this way: "resistance is tightly interwoven with tactics of survival and resilience, and an action can simultaneously challenge and accommodate power" (p. 137). It is crucial therefore to consider that both resistance and acquiescence may be necessary to survival for people with disabilities, and it is important that scholars interested in disability resistance to continue to tease apart the relationship between the two. In other words, analyses of disability oppression and resistance need to both account for the complex interplay of domination and submission that characterize the condition of disability and attend to contradictory patterns of reproducing domination in resistance.

G.   **<u>Conclusion</u>**

Existing literature on disability resistance in disability studies largely reflects an interest in conventional, intentional, recognizable, and collective forms of resistance, including disability protest and activism. While this research is crucial to understandings of disability group and political identities, mobilization, empowerment, citizenship, and other concepts important to disability studies, a singular focus on social movements and disability resistance reinforces artificial boundaries around meanings of resistance and risks overlooking more covert, everyday

acts of resistance. I have proposed in this chapter that the complex networks and mechanisms of power that segregate and confine, surveille and regulate, delegitimize and exclude disabled people as well as material barriers to collective political action may disallow for or make dangerous overt opposition. Social movements therefore may represent only a partial transcript of disability resistance. Disability studies and resistance studies, in order to appreciate the fullness and complexity of disability oppression and resistance, need to seek out the "full transcript" of disability resistance.

I have also argued that everyday resistance may offer a new way to think about disability resistance. Hidden transcripts of disability resistance have thus far revealed a range of everyday resistance activities from "sly normality" and performing compliance (Mills, 2014) to running as resistance (Hamilton & Atkinson, 2009). Furthermore, everyday resistance, as Abu-Lughod (1990) has argued, may serve as a useful "diagnostic of power"; by attending to everyday, subtle, individual or covert acts of resistance or dissent rather than ignoring or belittling them, I have proposed, disability studies scholars may appreciate the ways disability oppression, too, can be tricky or sly, invisible or hidden.

The fourth chapter of this thesis looks toward the future of scholarship on disability resistance. New political frameworks for disability activism, such as "disability justice" that "interweave the politics of cultural recognition with radical visions of a new society" (Hande & Kelly, 2015, p. 963) are emerging to disrupt old repertoires of resistance. Meanwhile, political, ideological, social, and technological shifts continue to transform the ways that disability oppression and resistance operate. The final chapter of this thesis explores possibilities for reconceptualizing contemporary disability resistance with a particular emphasis on dreaming radical resistance, imagining disabled futures, and resisting "from-bed."

IV. REIMAGINING DISABILITY RESISTANCE TODAY

A. **<u>Introduction</u>**

"We are living through 'activist' times" (Berghs, Chataika, El-Lahib, & Dube, 2019, p. 3). Neoliberalism, austerity measures, carceral violence, digitalization, and the rise of far-right movements have begun to transform the face of disability oppression once again. Simultaneously, political, ideological, social, and technological shifts have informed and generated new opportunities for collective and individual action, new platforms for voicing dissent, and new ways of writing, reading, imagining, and remembering disability resistance. In this chapter, I propose an analysis of disability resistance that accounts for changes in "repertoires of contention" (Tilly, 1995) by incorporating resistance studies, disability studies, and new media activism perspectives. In order to attend critically to disability resistance, I suggest, it is crucial to conceptualize it as "plural, malleable, and evolving" (Baaz et al., 2016, p. 138) – or in terms of Tornberg's (2017) metaphorical river, as "adjusting dynamically in relation to the physical conditions of the surroundings: to hills, slopes, ascents and obstacles that momentarily hinder its sweeping progress, but also to trenches and drains that may canalize the river in certain directions" (p. 5).

Having explored discourses on resistance, disability oppression, and disability resistance in previous chapters, I take the opportunity in this final chapter to grapple with questions of how to traverse this relatively uncharted academic terrain. I begin by considering the challenges (both practical and ethical) associated with recognizing, accessing, excavating, decoding, and exposing hidden transcripts of disability resistance. Central to this discussion is the question of what is at stake with projects of un/re/covering and what it means to un/re/cover something that has been purposefully concealed. For instance, what does it mean for scholars of disability resistance to

accept or reject an "activist standpoint" (Allan, 2017) in conducting their research, and how does the project of un/re/covering hidden transcripts of disability resistance complement or conflict with tenets of resistance studies and disability studies writ large?

In the second part of this chapter, I attend to the changing tactics and strategies of disability oppression and resistance. I suggest that both disability oppression and disability resistance are at least partially facilitated, informed, or impacted by the ideological, social, and technological circumstances of the moment. In an effort to address the (maybe) changing landscape of disability activism and resistance in response to the political, ideological, and technological shifts of the early 21st century, I explore the writing of disability activist and blogger Sue Marsh and disability activist and cultural worker Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, both of whom organize and write "from-bed," as I consider what it means to resist remotely and imagine other futures.

Ultimately, I propose, there is much work to be done at the intersection of resistance studies and disability studies, both in order to understand the legacy of hidden transcripts of disability resistance and to recognize, analyze, and pursue everyday disability resistance today. At the intersection of resistance studies and disability studies, I suggest, there is potential for a radical reimagining of disability, resistance, and disability resistance that could inform or transform discourses about, and studies of, each of these phenomena. Applying disability activist and disability studies academic perspectives (Kafer, 2013; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018), furthermore, I argue ultimately that this act of imagining and reimagining is itself a practice of contemporary everyday disability resistance.

B.   **Un/Re/covering Hidden Transcripts**

The question of how to uncover what has purposefully been hidden – and what it means to do so – is indeed a question that has concerned resistance studies scholars for some time (Tornberg, 2017). After all, to take as an object of study items, conversations, actions, or moments that are invisible and/or invisiblized, and indeed which may be ephemeral, is no effortless task. That resistance practices may be purposefully hidden or concealed by resistors means that they may go – and according to Scott (1985, 1990) and other resistance studies scholars, have for many years gone – unnoticed or unrecognized by researchers as resistance. The question remains: How can researchers gain access to and analyze hidden transcripts of disability resistance while also avoiding "reading too much" into the ordinary acts of their subjects (Bayat, 2000; Brown, 1996; Sahlins, 1993) and risking "essentialism in reverse"? What tools, instruments, or methods can be used effectively to do so? And furthermore, what does it mean to access and make public hidden transcripts of disability resistance?

Within the emerging field of resistance studies, Martines (2016) suggests, there is "a virtual absence of systematic textbooks and discussions of methodological models, challenges and possibilities suitable for researching resistance" (para. 1). As resistance studies scholars (Baaz et al., 2016; Lilja & Vinthagen, 2018; Tornberg, 2017) indicate, and as discussed previously, resistance studies as a field does not employ a singular methodology or framework to research and understand resistance, but rather "combine[s] several theoretical traditions, including, for example, the state-oriented, structuralist and public scope of 'contentious politics'" as well as "informal 'everyday forms of resistance' within subaltern studies, the history-from below movement and 'autonomist' approaches to radical politics within post-Marxist and post-structuralist studies" (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2018, p. 213). Baaz, Lilja, and Vinthagen (2017) note

that, "considering the multidimensional character of resistance studies, the field is probably best understood as an academic pursuit located on the edge between multi- and inter-disciplinarity" (p. 21). While the combination of approaches and methods utilized by resistance studies scholars – and which we have seen in examples from Chapter II, including discourse analysis, case studies, narrative inquiry, and ethnographic studies – might be criticized as scattered or disorganized, lacking disciplinary convention or rigor, Tornberg (2017) and other resistance studies scholars suggest that, to the contrary, these combinations of approaches provide "a rich repertoire of tools" for understanding the multiple facets of this complex and dynamic phenomenon (p. 6). Tornberg (2017) argues that the methods, tools, and instruments scholars use to examine resistance acts provide at best "a limited insight into these processes," and that ultimately, different methods, and indeed in some cases combinations of methods are needed to illuminate different resistance practices (p. 6). "While some instruments capture what happens on the surface," Tornberg (2017) suggests, "others are needed to illuminate the processes occurring underneath" (p. 6). Considering that resistance studies as an academic pursuit is dedicated to investigating resistance as a complex, changing, and variable phenomenon, a singular, universal methodological model or instrument likely could not capture resistance in its many contradictory and changing forms. In order to avoid reductionist accounts of resistance, and especially in order to capture the hidden transcripts of disability resistance that might avoid detection using methods traditionally associated with understanding overt, collective resistance (i.e., social movements and direct action), I posit that methodological pluralism is crucial.

Disability studies, likewise, as a young and interdisciplinary field, pulls from a variety of frameworks and methodologies, including materialist and cultural perspectives. Methods including ethnography, discourse analysis, narrative inquiry, oral history, and participatory and

emancipatory action research are employed by disability studies scholars in order to better understand disability as a political, social, and cultural phenomenon. As noted in Chapter III, disability studies as an academic discipline developed alongside disability activism and political organizing in the U.S. and U.K. in the 1970s and 1980s and shares commitments to disrupting and challenging harmful discourses about disability and centering the voices and experiences of disabled people. Furthermore, according to Barnes (2003) and Stone and Priestly (1996), a central tenant of disability studies is a commitment to emancipatory and/or participatory action research methodologies. These methodologies resist scientific conventions of placing disabled people in the position of "passive research subject." Rather than viewing disabled people as objects of knowledge to be observed and studied, in other words, disability studies demands that we understand disabled people as producers of knowledge, and practitioners and curators of culture. Emancipatory research models and methodologies insist on authentic collaboration between disabled people and researchers and are ultimately liberatory in aim. Barnes (2003) says, "in essence, emancipatory disability research is about the empowerment of disabled people through the transformation of the material and social relations of research production" (p. 6). Barnes (2003) goes on to outline what he calls "key characteristics" of emancipatory research models; these include accountability to the disabled community, commitment to seeking out practical outcomes, and empowerment of disabled people.

Studies discussed in Chapter III including Menzies' (1999) analysis of clinical records, Hamilton & Atkinson's (2009) collection of life stories of older adults with intellectual disabilities, and Mills' (2014) discussion of pretending and "sly normality" in psychiatric treatment allude to the existence of a long history of hidden transcripts of resistance by people with disabilities and provide some insight into how scholars invested in everyday disability

resistance might begin doing this work. By critically analyzing clinical records that detail the events of daily life for disabled people (Menzies, 1999) and listening carefully to the stories that disabled people tell about their lives (Frederick, 2017; Hamilton & Atkinson, 2009; Jones, 1992), these scholars center the voices, stories, and experiences of disabled people, and in so doing, acknowledge disabled people not only as producers of knowledge but also as agents of resistance. I suggest that by integrating theories, frameworks, and perspectives on resistance from resistance studies and theories, frameworks, and perspectives on disability from disability studies into analyses of historical documents, clinical records, oral histories, and stories, scholars of disability resistance may be able to more critically attend to hidden or unrecognized transcripts of disability resistance. Regarding the study of everyday disability resistance, it should be noted that the same methods, frameworks, and theories that have been used to understand disability activism may or may not support scholars' understandings of hidden transcripts for reasons described in Chapters II and III.

In order to recognize and write about everyday disability resistance in all of its complexity, it is crucial that scholars reconceptualize resistance, and in so doing, reevaluate what it means to research resistance. I propose that methodological pluralism – and potentially methodological innovation – should be regarded as generative for scholars interested in disability resistance. Scholars committed to researching, reading, writing, and thinking about disability resistance can pursue methodological pluralism by both participating in interdisciplinary discussions about researching resistance and by drawing on existing repertoires of approaches and tools across disciplines.

1. **<u>Ethical Concerns</u>**

Tornberg (2017) states that "questions of methodology are always closely and inevitably related to ethical concerns" (p. 9). Indeed, researchers of resistance and disability studies scholars may encounter a series of ethical dilemmas as they design and execute research studies and particularly as they choose how to disseminate their findings. In terms of research on hidden transcripts and everyday resistance, a central question is: What does it mean to uncover or recover something that is purposefully hidden? In other words, what is the impact or effect (material or symbolic) of exposing resistance acts that are expressly hidden? And furthermore, what is the researcher's obligation to their subjects/sources of knowledge in these cases?

While historically scientific research has participated in the reification and reproduction of social hierarchies, resistance studies and disability studies, along with other fields interested in the views and experiences of subjects with marginalized positions or identities, endeavor to disrupt these harmful practices (Barnes, 2003). As a result, scholars in these fields are often sensitive to questions of researcher positionality and reflexivity. "Methodological reflexivity," Williams and Mavin (2007) explain, "draws the researcher's attention to the social relations between researcher and research participants, the level of collaboration and involvement in the research project and in particular in the interpretation of data; that is to critically appraise our own practices" (p. 7). Methdological reflexivity, in other words, requires scholars to reject notions of objectivity or neutral analysis and recognize the role they play in producing and interpreting knowledge. Scholars in these fields often endeavor to consider how their own socio-cultural location or position (including their power to facilitate and direct research, interpret "results," etc.) contributes to and informs the process of knowledge production. In both resistance studies and disability studies, questions of positionality and reflexivity have been the

subject of some debate. For example, how do researcher identities, sympathies, or ideologies impact or not impact the way scholars conduct their research and interpret their results? How do relationships between researchers and subjects/sources of knowledge impact the results of the research? And how do power dynamics shape those relationships and those results? These questions and tensions regarding ethical imperatives for researchers of everyday disability resistance are central to the discussion that follows.

Disability studies and resistance studies scholars broadly share a commitment to liberatory scholarship. In disability studies, emancipatory research paradigms reject the historical pattern of conducting research *on* and not *by*, *with*, or *for* disabled people; they insist on research that centers the voices of disabled people and prioritizes their liberation and justice (Barnes, 2003; Barton, 2005). Because it is explicitly emancipatory, many argue that disability studies scholarship is inherently political. Likewise, resistance studies paradigms require, rather than a traditional commitment to "objectivity," a commitment on the part of researchers to political and liberatory aims. This commitment to liberation can be seen in the Resistance Studies Initiative's (RSI) website description of resistance studies as a "*liberationist* [emphasis added] social science analyzing and *supporting* [emphasis added] the efforts of activists worldwide who are employing direct action, civil disobedience, everyday resistance, digital activism, mass protest, and other kinds of nonviolent resistance" ("Resistance Studies Initiative," n.d., para. 2). Scholars and scholar-activists in these fields, therefore, must navigate the questions: What does it mean to share ideological sympathies with our research participants (Tornberg, 2017)? And what are the obligations of disability studies and resistance studies scholars to our participants?

Joanna Allan (2017) in an article entitled "Activist ethics: the need for a nuanced approach to resistance studies field research" addresses this tension and calls for an activist

ethics for researchers that demands a "highly nuanced and politically-aware approach with regards to ethical considerations" (p. 2) and a preparedness to actively contribute to the resistance being studied in conflict settings. The activist standpoint, she argues, is the only standpoint that researchers of resistance can take (Allan, 2017). Stetsenko (2018) similarly defends the "justification of research with activist commitments and agenda, whereby the sociopolitical ethos is not only acknowledged but advanced, legitimized and established as the guiding principle and the key methodology to combat the presently dominant scientistic orthodoxy" (p. 7). Stetsenko (2018) proposes that, indeed, "values and commitments are not outside science and research, but belong to them as dimensions within one system of ethico-onto-epistemology" (p. 7).

While largely scholars in both disability studies and resistance studies recognize something already-political in their approach to research, it is crucial to note that there is not consensus on how researchers of disability and/or resistance should position themselves in their work. The tension between neutral analysis and advocacy, objectivity and subjectivity, detachment and relationality remain pertinent. Baaz, Lilja, and Vinthagen (2017) for instance, state that:

> the origins and character of resistance studies – in particular regarding the discussion on commitment vs. detachment or, put somewhat differently, the tension between, on the one hand, the academic goal of value-free analysis and, on the other hand, advocacy – is in several regards reminiscent of for example peace studies (including peace and conflict studies, peace and development studies and conflict resolution). Peace studies has, since its inception after the end of the Second World War, struggled to be accepted as a full member of the social sciences. On occasions, it has been rejected and criticized by other fields for crossing the line between neutral analysis and advocacy, and turning research on peace and conflicts into 'peace activism' disguised as critical theory. (p. 23)

Baaz, Lilja, and Vinthagen (2017) disagree that an activist standpoint is necessary to do resistance studies work, arguing that:

as a researcher…it is of great importance to be aware of when the focus of the research is 'empirical' – that is when the aim is to describe, explain and/or understand particular resistance activities and their role in achieving social change – and when the focus is normative or constructive and ultimately directed towards giving (policy) recommendations, regardless if these recommendations are 'problem-solving' (conservative) or 'critical' (radical). Put somewhat differently, in order not to undermine the legitimacy of resistance studies, it is essential that scholars pay attention to the difference between analysis and advocacy. A resistance studies scholar can also be an activist, but (s)he does not have to be one. There is nothing that contradicts this. (p. 24)

I propose that these critical conversations on research ethics, and in particular this tension between "neutral analysis" and activist standpoint are crucial to the development of resistance studies and disability studies as emerging fields, and especially in the context of un/re/covering hidden transcripts of everyday disability resistance. Furthermore, it is important to note that although a researcher may not explicitly express or adopt an "activist standpoint," as Stetsenko (2018) explains, "all research schools carry with them – and, importantly, in them as their inherently constitutive dimensions – particular ethical-political orientations (systems of values and desired endpoints) tailored to and derivative from certain socio-politically situated and ultimately, always practical projects of organizing social life and its practices" (p. 1). In order to further these discussions, scholars interested in the project of un/re/covering hidden transcripts of everyday disability resistance should ask ourselves: Are our aims liberatory or analytical? Can they be both without sacrificing analytical or academic rigor? How should our relationships with our participants and shared ideologies guide (or not guide) our research practices, methodological approaches, and interpretations? Furthermore, disability studies would have us ask: What is the effect of this type of research on the community?

Scott (1985, 1990) has asserted that everyday resistance strategies, or as he calls them, the "weapons of the weak" are employed by those most marginalized among us, for whom outward rebellion might be dangerous or inaccessible. I have argued thus far that disabled people

likely use everyday resistance strategies to challenge the conditions of disability oppression that characterize their everyday lives, and especially in circumstances when outward rebellion might be dangerous or undesirable. So then what are the consequences of revealing or exposing purposefully hidden resistance for the disabled people implicated? For disabled people writ large? For the "academic" community? For disability studies? For resistance studies? I propose that before (and in order to) conscientiously contribute to disability and resistance discourses on hidden transcripts, scholars interested in this research need to consider the tensions, risks, and implications of this un/re/covering work. Tornberg (2017) discusses some of the political and material implications of exposing hidden transcripts when he argues that such research "poses a potential risk for the resisters" (p. 10). For one, accentuating, exposing, and drawing attention to these types of hidden resistance, Tornberg (2017) argues, "risk rendering them less effective or even useless" (p. 10). Furthermore, Tornberg (2017) suggests, "there is always a risk that insights generated from studying these resistance acts are used by those in power to develop even more effective counter-measures" (p. 10). The relationship between visibility and violence is articulated well by transgender and surveillance studies scholar Toby Beauchamp in *Going Stealth: Transgender Politics and U.S. Surveillance Practices* (2019); while greater visibility can sometimes lead to harm reduction for trans people and activist groups, visibility can also be used as a mechanism to enable and increase surveillance, monitoring, and controlling of transgender people and groups. These concerns are particularly important for scholars invested in hidden transcripts of disability resistance to take up considering the roles that surveillance and monitoring already play in the lives of disabled people.

China Mills (2014) articulates additional concerns about how to document and disseminate stories about these subversive, stealthy, and ordinary resistance practices without

risking them becoming commodified or pathologized. She asks, "how do we document these experiences and strategies; how do we make such maps without having them rearticulated within the technocratic language of the market (i.e. as manuals where mimicry becomes a coping strategy, available to buy), without them being capitalized upon as new commodities in a global (mental) health marketplace, and without them being rearticulated as new disorders by the pharmaceutical industry within an ever expanding Diagnostic and Statistical Manual?" (Mills, 2014, p. 218). Moving forward, scholars interested in reimagining, redefining, and renegotiating the meaning of disability resistance will need to consider the ethical implications of this kind of scholarship in order to determine whether, ultimately, it serves the liberatory aims of disability and resistance studies or whether exposing hidden transcripts of disability resistance might bolster surveillance and perhaps unintentionally strengthen oppressive structures and systems.

C. **Contemporary Everyday Resistance**

    1. **Living in "Activist Times"**

Berghs et al. suggest in the opening of the newly released *Routledge Handbook of Disability Activism* (2019) that "we are living through 'activist' times with differing formal and informal expressions of what activism looks like from individual actions, artistic movements, mass protest marches, hashtag activism (e.g. #ArabSpring, #BlackLivesMatter, #JeSuisCharlie, #MeToo movement, #ThisFlag), consumer activism, climate activism, peace activism…" (p. 3). In this section I take up Berghs et al.'s (2019) claim that we are living through "activist times" and examine the contemporary context for both overt and covert disability resistance. I posit that the social and political atmosphere, shaped by post-2008 recession austerity cuts throughout Europe and North America and neoliberal pushes for inclusion (termed "neoliberal ableism" by Goodley et al., 2014) combined with shifting ideological and technological circumstances,

continue to transform the faces of contemporary disability oppression and contemporary everyday disability resistance. As explained throughout this thesis, I advance that disability oppression and resistance are co-constitutive, shaping and informing one another; therefore, as tactics, means, and practices of disability oppression change and shift, tactics, means, and practices of resisting that oppression likely change and shift, too. If, as Baaz, Lilja, and Vinthagen (2017) note, resistance is best understood as a "multidimensional, unstable and…complex social construction in dynamic relations that are related to differences of context" (p. 14), scholars of disability resistance – and resistance writ large – must ask how these changes in context inform contemporary everyday disability resistance *and* how they impact our means of identifying and analyzing moments, acts, and practices of contemporary everyday disability resistance.

Following Johansson and Vinthagen (2016), I employ sociologist Charles Tilly's language of "repertoires of contention" to describe the tools and means of protest groups have access to at a given moment in time. Johansson and Vinthagen (2016) suggest that, "among other things, the concept of repertoires allows us to capture contextual and situational bound combinations of everyday resistance, and its complex and dynamic character – all in relation to power" (p. 419). The metaphor of repertoires of contention, furthermore, allows us to avoid making conceptual or semantic distinctions between "forms," "types," "modes," "strategies," and "tactics" of resistance (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016, p. 419). Building on Johansson and Vinthagen's (2016) explanation, this thesis will use the term repertoires hereafter in referring to these various means, modes, and strategies of resistance in context. With this appreciation for changes in repertoires of contention in mind, the following discussion addresses possibilities for

(and challenges associated with) analyzing repertoires of contemporary disability oppression and contemporary everyday disability resistance.

2.   **Neoliberalism, Austerity, and Disability Oppression in the Digital Age**

In order to learn more about repertoires of contemporary disability resistance, it is essential to critically examine the context for such resistance. In other words, what constitutes contemporary repertoires of disability oppression and how do contemporary structures, strategies, or tactics of power play out in the everyday lives of disabled people? Two important dimensions of contemporary disability oppression discussed by disability studies scholars (Goodley et al., 2014; Hande & Kelly, 2015; McRuer, 2018; Mladenov, 2014) are neoliberalism and austerity. Neoliberalism is a policy model that tends towards free-market capitalism and away from government spending and regulation. This preference for free-market capitalism and deregulation is often linked to austerity measures, and subsequently ideologies of "personal responsibility" wherein individuals are expected to hold themselves accountable for their production, consumption, and well-being. In the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008, austerity measures were imposed in several European countries including the U.K., Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Greece to eliminate budget deficits. As a result, spending was cut significantly from social services, welfare payments, and housing subsidies. These neoliberal policies and austerity cuts force disabled people into a state of poverty and precarity that is deeply entrenched in political ideologies of productivity and labor while informing social and cultural attitudes toward people with disabilities.

Hande and Kelly (2015) propose, indeed, that disabled people have been "unevenly affected" by post-2008 recession austerity cuts; against the backdrop of austerity cuts and neoliberal agendas in Canada, Hande and Kelly (2015) suggest, "programmes and services that

provide support in daily life for disabled and ill people are threatened as potential avenues for cost-savings" (p. 962). Mladenov (2014) emphasizes the material and socio-cultural impacts of austerity cuts on disabled people, stating that austerity cuts influence widening "income inequalities between disabled and non-disabled people" *and* have "an impact on disabled people's cultural recognition and political representation as well" (para. 1). Mladenov (2014) explains that austerity works by "reinforcing the assumption of human self-sufficiency. Since the ascendance of neoliberalism in the 1980s, this assumption has provided a rationale for the retrenchment of the welfare state. Post-2008, it has been recycled and reinvigorated to underpin an unprecedented assault on disabled people's social support. The government efforts to reduce the number of people receiving long-term disability benefits by reclassifying them as 'fit for work' finds its rationale in this over-valuing of individual self-sufficiency" (para. 7).

Indeed, austerity cuts in Europe and in North America have led to financial and medical instability and uncertainty for disabled people as well as bolstering already-existing suspicions of disabled people and the welfare state more broadly. Some authors argue that underpinning austerity are discriminatory cultural narratives that represent disabled people as lazy scroungers or scammers. Mladenov (2014), for instance, argues that "the conception of disabled people as 'scroungers' serves to legitimise economic maldistribution through cuts in disability benefits and services, whilst the cuts increase the marginalisation of disabled people, thus facilitating their cultural misrecognition…In terms of cultural recognition of disabled people, austerity measures have summoned the spectre of the disability 'scrounger'. This negative image has been multiplied and inflated by the media through a moral panic about a supposedly widespread disability benefits fraud (a statistically hollow suggestion). Accordingly, disabled people have

been lumped together as a burden on the public budget, undeserving of support, fraudsters"

(para. 5).

Liz Crow's (2014) visual inquiry examines images of disabled people in the press in the

context of 2012 U.K. welfare reform and affirms that "two interwoven themes emerge from the

images: fraudster and scrounger. The first is a portrayal of working age non-disabled people

charged with defrauding the state through benefits secured for a non-existent impairment. Family

snapshots and grainy surveillance video show claimants 'caught' taking pleasure in leisure

activities most likely precluded by their alleged impairment: playing golf, digging gardens, on a

roller coaster. Scrounger reporting, in contrast, focuses on 'workshy' disabled people

'languishing' on benefits in preference to work, in a shift of gaze from non-disabled fraudster to

disabled parasite" (p. 169). These cuts and suspicions have led to increased surveillance of and

hostility toward disabled and poor people. Both state technologies of discipline and surveillance

and more informal community surveillance, (termed "neighborly surveillance" by Crow) are

designed to "catch" claimants taking pleasure in leisure activities "most likely precluded by their

alleged impairment" (Crow, 2014, p. 169). The hostile rhetoric of scroungers and fraudsters in

austere times motivates and justifies closer monitoring and suspicion of disabled people. The

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2016) has suggested indeed that

narratives of disabled people as "dependent or making a living out of benefits, committing fraud

as benefit claimants, being lazy and putting a burden on taxpayers" (p. 14) may be associated

with a rise in hostility toward disabled people and what they term "disability hate crimes."

Furthermore, this surveillance, discipline, and hostility is both facilitated and informed by

new technologies and digitalization. In a 2018 study, Leah Burch used critical discourse analysis

to explore how, in a climate of austerity, disablist hate speech emerges online on Reddit. In her

analysis, Burch (2018) finds that rhetoric on Reddit has "clear parallels to the language of austerity that has been broadcast across many media outlets…comments labelled welfare recipients and disabled people 'scum of the earth', 'thieves', 'cheats', 'leeches' and 'fraudsters'" (p. 400). Burch (2018) argues ultimately that "the facilities of the online domain provide an opportunity for people to interact across the globe with few barriers. These findings suggest that this opportunity has been manipulated to bolster a relatively protected platform for the proliferation of hate against certain groups. The Internet presents an opportunity to communicate anonymously, which, as suggested, may allow the online space to become a platform for the expression of hate speech" (p. 407). While few studies have taken up the interrelated issues of austerity, neoliberalism, hostility toward disabled people, and digitalization (Burch, 2018), future studies should consider how these online platforms may serve as sites of continued disability oppression, characterized by increased surveillance, hostility, and hateful rhetoric that furthers ideologies of disabled people as "parasites," "drains," "scum," "scroungers," and "fraudsters."

Considering the co-constitutive nature of disability oppression and resistance, I suggest that as repertoires of contemporary disability oppression continue to transform and take on new shapes and forms, likely so, too, do repertoires of disability activism and everyday disability resistance. The following sections will revisit the notion of "common social space" introduced in Chapter III to explore how disabled activists, organizers, and resistors curate new kinds of "common social space" online in which individuals and communities resist harmful narratives and ideologies, foster solidarity, voice their dissent, tell stories, and reimagine what resistance means. This analysis will consider both how online spaces facilitate access to mainstream political engagement and representation as well as how they serve as sites of innovative, creative, small, alternative, and subversive disability resistance.

3.   **<u>"From-Bed Activism"</u>**

Related to the new "economic and social realities" of neoliberalism and austerity,

new forms of disability activism have emerged and been brought to light (Hande & Kelly, 2015,

p. 963). Modern technologies at once enable and facilitate surveillance of, and violence toward,

disabled people and inform new modes of disability resistance. As the *Sage Handbook of*

Resistance suggests, "resistors today must learn to appropriate or re-deploy the technologies of

control they confront in their everyday lives" (Courpasson & Vallas, 2016, p. 19). According to

Massa (2016), resistors in general have made good use of new technologies; he suggests that

"online communities have become pervasive, increasingly sophisticated and culturally rich forms

that support interaction and influence how individuals engage in several forms of 'resisting

work' – activities that translate dissent into solutions that may lead to changes in power relations

and social norms" (p. 247). This kind of online activism has been characterized as an approach to

civic participation, a community and solidarity building effort, and an expression of political and

personal identity by many different groups and communities, including disabled people and

allies. In the section that follows, I am interested in further exploring how disabled people,

activists, and groups re-deploy technologies that might otherwise (or simultaneously) be used for

control, surveillance, or hostility, and how, in doing so, they innovate resistance. By locating

sites, spaces, and repertoires of contemporary everyday disability resistance online in blogs,

hashtags, Facebook groups, etc., I aim to both draw attention to changing repertoires of disability

oppression and resistance and ask questions about how scholarship on disability, resistance, and

disability resistance might be impacted or informed by working in these digital archives.

Taking a cue from the title to the preface of Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarsinha's 2018

book *Care Collectives: Dreaming Disability Justice* called "Writing (With) A Movement From

Bed," I want to first examine how remote activism, also called "from-bed activism" challenges stricter definitions of resistance and constitutes new sites of contemporary everyday disability resistance. In recent years, scholars in the fields of disability studies, Internet studies, and social movement studies have engaged critically with online activism, also referred to as "cyberprotest," and "new media activism," questioning the meaning, validity, viability, and effectiveness of these forms of resistance and investigating the blurring lines between public and private spheres. While its community building and organizing power are celebrated in disability activist communities, online activism is still heavily critiqued in blogs, opinion pieces, and on- and offline activist discourses. Skeptics derisively refer to these forms of activism as "clicktivism," "armchair activism," and "slacktivism," and characterize online movements and their participants as ineffective, fleeting, superficial, and lazy. The tension between traditional notions of "boots on the ground" resistance and online disability activism is exemplified by these critiques that center a preference for embodied protest and operate within a framework of compulsory able-bodiedness (a presumption, expectation, and demand for able-bodiedness) (McRuer, 2006).

Indeed, crucial to contemporary online everyday disability resistance is a collapsing of boundaries between public and private life and individual and collective action. "With the impact of social media," suggest Berghs et al. (2019) "boundaries between public and private life collapse. The personal now can become political and part of public discourses, as well as imagery, and experienced as individually empowering" (p. 3). It is my contention that both "informal" and spontaneous writing and communication (in/via blogs, on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other platforms) as well as organized online activism and "hashtag movements" trouble the traditional binaries between public and private domains and individual and collective

action; both should be seriously taken up as disability resistance. In considering two instances of from-bed activism, first, the 2012 "We Are Spartacus" online activist campaign based out of the U.K. and led by activist and blogger Sue Marsh, and second, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's (2018) meditations on writing, resisting, and creating communities from bed, I suggest that contemporary disability resistance concerns both the utilization of technologies to facilitate accessible, organized, political participation as well as the cultivation of alternative, informal, individual, and subversive resistance practices.

Disability activist and blogger Sue Marsh coined the term from-bed activism (Pearson & Trevisan, 2015) to describe a new form of disability activism that is "empowered by social media and operating largely outside conventional media and charity channels" (Butler, 2012, para. 10). In a 2015 article, Pearson and Trevisan describe from-bed activism as an emerging structure of disability activism that has "begun to offer a more visible profile to challenge government policy and negative stereotypes of disabled people" (p. 924). "Since the outset of the austerity programme," Pearson and Trevisan (2015) claim, "platforms such as blogs, Twitter and Facebook have proved important tools for disability activism in challenging government policy" (p. 928). In the U.K., Sue Marsh and a "tiny group of disabled activists co-ordinating a storm from their living rooms" (Ryan, 2014, para. 1) inspired the "We Are Spartacus" campaign[3] to respond to proposed welfare cuts. "Whilst the Spartacus Report had been largely ignored by traditional news media," Pearson and Trevisan (2015) note, "interest generated by activists on Twitter led to support across the political and celebrity spectrum and to an unprecedented level

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[3] The We Are Spartacus campaign was an online disability activist campaign in the U.K. launched in 2012 to draw attention to the perspectives of disabled people on proposed welfare reform, including cuts to Disability Living Allowances (DLA). The Spartacus Report was written by Sue Marsh, Dr. Sarah Campbell, and others in 2012. The We Are Spartacus campaign was a "hashtag movement" on social media that used the hashtags #realWCA #sparatcus and #wearespartacus to increase public interest in and recognition of welfare cuts as a disability issue.

of public interest" (p. 928). Sue Marsh (@suey2y) tweeted: "For sick and disabled people campaigning, social media has been revolutionary. It's been a magic bullet. It's given us political influence, media respect and international impact. I can't think of any [other] way sick and disabled people could have done what we and all of the campaign groups together have achieved." Fellow Spartacus activist Kaliya Franklin agrees that it was social media, the internet, blogs, and Twitter that "enabled disabled people to get their voice heard, unmediated by traditional media" (Butler, 2012, para. 14). "None of this would have happened without social media," Franklin said, "the campaign has been done by people mostly from their beds. We would not have been able to find each other had we not had access to social media" (Butler, 2012, para. 14).

Marsh and Franklin's comments speak to the formation of alternative "common social spaces" as discussed in Chapter III; these alternative shared social spaces allow disabled people who may be geographically isolated to communicate and share ideas, feelings, and thoughts about the injustices they face and organize around them. These online campaigns and actions serve, on one hand, therefore, as accessible platforms or mediums for collective dissent, and could be considered an extension of the larger disability rights social movement. Applying Tilly's (1995) notion of repertoires of contention, and in particular the notion of "innovation at the margins" helps us understand how resistors "generally innovate at the perimeter of the existing repertoire rather than breaking entirely with old ways" (p. 28). In other words, this kind of organized, collective online disability activism is not an entirely novel form of resistance, but rather a "creative modification or extension of familiar routines" (McAdams, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001, p. 49). The internet could be considered a tool that enables or facilitates this creative modification (from in-person direct action and protest to "hashtag movements") and enables

disabled people's engagement in resistance activities and activist work, in part providing a solution to the challenges of co-presence for collective organizing described in Chapter III, including geographic isolation, barriers to transportation and communication, etc. Rejecting critiques that digital protest is lazy or ineffective as these critiques are often grounded in compulsory able-bodiedness and reimagining what counts as "recognizable" resistance and "common social space" (Barnartt & Scotch, 2001), we may find that "hashtag activism" that collectively, visibly, and recognizably challenges state power and violence falls within even those stricter definitions of resistance outlined in Chapter II.

Writing about Black women's resistance through blogs, Catherine Knight Steele (2011) argues that "minority bloggers may use blogs as means of mobilizing their readers around particular political causes and issues. While this work causes us to consider blogging as an avenue of incorporation into mainstream political participation, it does not chart the ways in which blogging may be used as subversive act to resist oppression by Black women in particular" (p. 1). Steele's (2011) analysis "attempts to account for the ways community conversations can function as an act of resistance even when overt political motivations and advocacy are not the primary goal" (p. 2). I want to suggest here, in a similar way, that disabled people resist from bed in ways that both align with, and depart from, conventional understandings of collective political engagement. I am interested as well in how everyday disability resistance may be (either/both) overt and politically articulated and seemingly non-political – an act of curating culture, navigating identity formation, sharing knowledge, talking and discussing, and contributing to digital testimony that counters not only state violence, but also other sociocultural oppressions. In *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (2018) activist, writer, and performer Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarsinha says, "writing from bed is a time

honoured disabled way of being an activist and cultural worker" (p. 1). In her 2018 book, Piepzna-Samarasinha specifically discusses how the Sick and disabled queers (SDQ) Facebook page started by disabled Mizrahi genderqueer writer and organizer Billie Rain in 2010 began as an "experiment in building online community open to all sick and disabled queer people that would center sick and disabled queer people of color and other folks who had traditionally been marginalized from mainstream disability rights spaces, that would also be accessible to the many sick and disabled queers who were isolated, homebound, or had limited energy or ability to travel physically" (p. 37). This online space served eventually as a site for sharing tools, writing poetry, building friendships and solidarity (Piepzna-Samaransinha, 2018). Based on Piepzna-Samarasinha's (2018) description of the SDQ Facebook page, is it possible to read participation in the conversations there – this cultivation of alternative social spaces and intimacies, writing, and sharing of "insider" secrets – as resistance to disability oppression, loneliness and isolation, or imperatives of voicelessness? Despite the fact that participation in groups and online communities such as SDQ may or may not be associated with overt mainstream political participation, it is my contention that scholars interested in contemporary everyday disability resistance need to take up these discourses, acts, and practices in order to build knowledge around quiet, subtle, ordinary, and non-conventional contemporary disability resistance. In many ways, for instance, these shared online sites of resistance reconstitute the notion of "common social space" discussed by Barnartt and Scotch (2001) and present unique possibilities for creating intimacies and alliances between disabled people. Future scholarship on contemporary disability resistance should continue to focus on understanding how technology facilitates access to mainstream civic participation and serves as a platform for disseminating disabled people's political perspectives, but also examine how social media and blogs offer alternative possibilities

of resistance tied up in solidarity building, sharing intimacy and "insider secrets," and connecting, in quite ordinary ways, to other disabled people.

D.   **Questioning, Imagining, and Dreaming Resistance**

In a 2017 interview, James Scott said, "in a world of injustice, there's going to be dreams of justice." In this section, I apply disability activist and disability studies academic perspectives to propose that contemporary everyday disability resistance may have something to do with remembering disabled pasts and imagining crip, accessible, disabled futures (Kafer, 2013; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018). Talia A. Lewis in the *Resistance and Hope Anthology* (2017) writes, "indeed, dreaming is among the most difficult and brave kinds of advocacy work. Its value cannot be overstated. When we create space for ourselves and others to dream, we embody recurring hope, active love, critical resistance, and radical change" (p. 33). I argue in this section that this sentiment that dreaming, imagining, and working towards better disability futures *is* resistance is central to disability activism, disability resistance, and disability studies theory.

Alison Kafer argues in her book *Feminist, Crip, Queer* (2013) that disability is often conceptualized as "the future of no future" or as "what ends one's future" (p. 33). Rather than accept this prediction, Kafer (2013) envisions new possibilities for crip futures and feminist/queer/crip alliances, articulating that "resistance comes from insisting on a crip future and an accessible future (p. 153). McRuer (2014) says of Kafer's *Feminist, Crip, Queer* (2013), "it is only through such questioning (a rhetorical mode running throughout the book) that the then and there of crip futurity – or what Kafer terms 'the crip vision of an elsewhere' – can be perceived" (p. 533). This questioning and visioning of elsewhere, sometimes called prefiguration, I propose, is a form of resistance to the mandate of futurelessness that disability activists and disabled people continually confront.

Some activists and scholars use the term prefiguration or prefigurative politics to describe the practice of questioning, dreaming, and imagining new and better futures. Lightsey (2017) suggests that the term has been used by both activists and academics to describe the theory and practice of imagining an ideal or desired future, and was introduced by social theorists Carol Boggs (1977) and Wini Breines (1980) in discussing pre-World War II workers' movements and the New Left respectively. Prefiguration is particularly important to consider in discussions about resistance because, as described by Scott (1985), this kind of thinking reflects the "imaginative capacity of subordinate groups to reverse and/or negate dominant ideologies" (p. 331). In other words, prefiguration troubles the Marxist notion of false consciousness by suggesting that marginalized people are able to recognize the conditions of their subordination and imagine other possibilities for themselves.

According to Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018), prefiguration "is a fancy word for the idea of imagining and building the world we want to see now" (p. 93). In an Imagine Otherwise podcast from 2018, Piepzna-Samarasinha meditates prefiguratively on a just disability future, saying:

> …in my decolonized disability justice future, I want worlds where there is no one right or wrong way to have a body. We get to be born as all the multiplicitous bodyminds that we are. I want a world where disabled, sick, and neurodivergent, and deaf folks can get to choose. I want a future where the abuse of disabled children is over….I want a future where the idea of care is decolonized from the ways in which it is seen as shameful and week and less than. One where we have sophisticated care economies, where everybody gets the care they need, everybody's able to offer care in ways they are able to… I want a decolonized, revolutionary world where we are welcomed, and we are thanked for being here. And, I cannot wait for that world, and I cannot wait for the sick and disabled, neurodivergent, and deaf folks who grow up in that world, where they have only been known as gifts and as treasures, and as being able to be complicated, imperfect people who have what we need to thrive. Yeah, that one. I want that future.

Questioning, dreaming, imagining, and reimagining allows resistors and scholars alike to engage critically with our realities and futures, to question operations of power, and to reject reductive,

pre-determined meanings of and outcomes for disability and for resistance. Dreaming (and making) disabled futures is a crucial resistance practice for disabled people and one that cannot be discounted or overlooked. The language employed by Kafer (2013) and Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) in their meditations on imagining crip and disabled futures, I propose, can help scholars of disability resistance trouble dominant narratives of disabled peoples' ignorance to the conditions of their oppression and subsequent acquiescence, and advance understandings of how disabled people make sense of their (current and future) situations.

E.   **Implications for Scholars**

Before concluding, I want to recognize that changing repertoires of contemporary everyday disability resistance have important implications for scholars interested in researching resistance. Tornberg (2017) suggests that increasing use of social media and online forums for creating community and fostering solidarity beyond physical and geographical limits has opened up new possibilities for practicing resistance and, importantly, for gathering data. "This includes" he suggests, "both text and documents produced directly by movement actors, but also – and perhaps more importantly – a unique and unprecedented access to previously unimaginable data; traces of the lives, dreams, and feelings of hundreds of millions of people. In this way, digital data provides new access to resistance practices and contentious activities in detail as they are unfolding" (Martines, 2016). The question of access is particularly salient in this discussion of disability resistance – how does access to these transcripts, public or hidden, change, complicate, or inform our research? How is the process of doing disability resistance research impacted by this unprecedented – and perhaps overwhelming – access? Furthermore, as Tornberg (2017) suggests, the pace and temporality of resistance activities and practices, as well as the pace of research on these practices, seems to be quickly changing. New technologies and

repertoires of resistance provoke new questions about how to do research on everyday disability resistance, including, for instance: What, if anything, is different about studying resistance as it unfolds in real-time as opposed to resistance as a memory? What does access to this seemingly unlimited data mean for scholars of disability resistance and how can we possibly parse it? As articulated by Gerbaudo (2012), the link between the "power of the street and the power of the tweet" has yet to be understood.

F.   **Conclusion**

Treating disability resistance as a phenomenon that is "plural, malleable, and evolving" (Baaz et al., 2016, p. 138) requires scholars to attend critically to articulations and manifestations of resistance potentially unseen and unnamed as resistance before, and to constantly renegotiate, reconceptualize, and reimagine what disability oppression and resistance mean. In order to better understand how contemporary disability oppression and resistance operate, I have suggested, there is an urgent need to investigate how neoliberalism and austerity inform contemporary disability oppression and how cyberprotest and online repertoires of resistance both innovate at the margins of social movements and forge new paths for resistance to that disability oppression. Looking forward, scholars interested in disability resistance must continue to attend to shifting political, social, cultural, economic, ideological, and technological circumstances.

Furthermore, in this chapter, I have explored possibilities and challenges to un/re/covering and analyzing hidden transcripts of disability resistance, advocating for research on disability resistance that takes into account resistance studies and disability studies values, theories, frameworks, and methods while holding space for discussions about the material and symbolic impacts of doing such research on disabled people and communities. Ultimately, scholars interested in everyday disability resistance need to engage in critical and

interdisciplinary conversations about the types of tools and instruments we can use to explore, expose, excavate, and recover hidden transcripts of disability resistance and reflect on whether this scholarly project can be reconciled with the ethical commitments of disability studies and resistance studies writ large.

V. CONCLUSION

Studies of resistance and its relation to complex entanglements of power as well as studies of disability and the condition of disability oppression have changed significantly over the last nearly 50 years. Emerging scholarship in resistance studies and disability studies has contributed compelling frameworks and theories that help us make sense of our worlds, complicate our understandings of power dynamics, and call into question binaries of powerless/powerful, dominated/dominant, political/non-political. Despite the ongoing process of defining and redefining, imagining and reimagining what disability and resistance mean, I have argued throughout this thesis that there is a dearth of scholarship that critically and thoughtfully takes up disability resistance as a phenomenon that is complex, malleable, and changing. Throughout this thesis, I have used discourse analysis to explore how existing literature on disability and resistance reproduces and shores up more traditional definitions of resistance (that is overt, collectively organized, and recognizable) while discounting or neglecting resistance that is covert, clandestine, subtle, or small. An analysis of language employed in scholarly articles from within and outside of the field of resistance studies and influential books such as James Scott's *Weapons of The Weak* (1985) and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990) in Chapter II revealed continued uncertainty, tension, and discord among scholars attempting to define and theorize resistance. Furthermore, an analysis of scholarly discourses of disability oppression and resistance in disability studies literature in Chapter III demonstrated that current frameworks for understanding both disability and resistance – and indeed power and oppression – are partial. By examining online discourses of and rhetoric about disability activism in the U.K.'s "We Are Spartacus" campaign and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's (2018) writing

on the SDQ Facebook page in Chapter IV, furthermore, I have provided an analysis that accounts for contemporary conditions and practices of disability oppression and resistance.

I argue throughout this thesis that an interdisciplinary approach to researching disability resistance that draws on both disability studies and resistance studies perspectives has the potential to complicate and cultivate new definitions of resistance. By drawing on theories and frameworks for understanding resistance, most significantly Scott's (1985, 1990) everyday resistance, disability studies scholars may begin to account for previously unseen or unrecognized moments and acts of everyday resistance among disabled people, recover stories of these practices, and apply a critical lens to their retelling. In effect, I argue, doing so will require us to confront ongoing and harmful ideologies about disability and powerlessness and renegotiate the very meaning of resistance. Considering especially that the history of disability studies scholarship is rooted in resistance, in opposition, and in disruption of mainstream ideologies about disability, I posit that this project is essential to a more nuanced and more complete disability studies canon.

A.   **Review of Thesis Structure**

I opened Chapter II with a description of the emergence of the field of resistance studies and suggested that the establishment of the field represents a significant advancement in contemporary theoretical work on resistance. Central to Chapter II was an analysis of the ongoing debates in resistance studies regarding the definition of resistance; as discussed, resistance studies scholars face an extraordinary challenge in crafting a definition of resistance that is both analytically rigorous and narrow *and at the same time* broad enough to account for the variety of creative resistance acts and strategies employed by marginalized people and groups. In my analysis, I explored four dimensions of resistance salient in resistance studies

literature: intention, recognition, scale, and effectiveness. Drawing heavily on James Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* (1985), I ultimately posited a definition of resistance that rejects mandates for coordination and recognition in favor of one that is flexible enough to account for resistance acts and practices that are, following Scott's (1985, 1990) logic, necessarily underground, covert, or individual. Furthermore, I troubled definitions of resistance that insist on "effectiveness" and intentionality due to the inherent challenges of measuring or evaluating these dimensions, and with the understanding that certain resistance acts may simultaneously shore up power dynamics and resist them (Hennen, 2005; Seymour, 2006), making them paradoxically neither wholly "effective" nor ineffective. I made the case at the conclusion of Chapter II that although resistance studies and other scholars have begun to recognize and appreciate a diversity of resistance acts and practices employed by marginalized people and groups, the resistance acts and practices of disabled people have largely been excluded from this scholarship.

Just as disability resistance has been neglected in resistance studies scholarship, I argued in Chapter III that complex notions of resistance have not yet adequately been taken up in disability studies discourses. Through an examination of scholarly discourses on disability resistance (which focused predominantly on disability activism, protest, and social movements), I determined that disability studies literature reflects an interest in conventional, intentional, recognizable, and collective forms of resistance. As a result, disability studies scholars have largely overlooked the possibility of creative, underground, subversive, and hidden disability resistance. As the complex networks and mechanisms of power that serve to oppress disabled people through segregation, surveillance, regulation, exclusion, and de-legitimization are often pernicious and invisible, resistance to these tactics of disability oppression may also be hidden, I argued. I proposed at the end of Chapter III that Scott's (1985, 1990) concept of everyday

resistance might offer a new way to think about disability resistance that is ordinary, small, invisible, and unrecognizable. China Mills' (2014) stories of "sly normality" and Hamilton and Atkinson's (2009) stories of running away as resistance, I argued, allude to the existence of a hidden transcript of disability resistance that urgently needs to be taken up by scholars interested in disability, power, disability history, and disability resistance.

Finally, in Chapter IV, I considered what disability resistance might look and feel like in the contemporary moment – or what Berghs et al. (2019) refer to as these "activist times." I opened Chapter IV with a discussion of the methodological and ethical possibilities and challenges associated with the project of un/re/covering hidden transcripts of everyday disability resistance. Advancing the argument presented in the introductory chapter that oppression and resistance are co-constitutive (meaning that they shape and help give meaning to one another) I explored the possibility that changing social, cultural, economic, political, and technological conditions (in particular, the effects of neoliberalism and austerity) have impacted and informed repertories of disability oppression as well as invigorated new repertoires of disability resistance. I identified "from bed-activism" as a potential site of thinking, reading, writing, and dreaming disability resistance differently in modern times and discussed the ways that cyberprotest, hashtag movements, disability blogs, and other online disability resistance activities represent both an accessible avenue to mainstream political participation and potentially also serve as subversive sites of community and solidarity-building and curation of culture.

B. **Limitations**

The scope of this thesis is at once quite narrow and incredibly vast. While I have focused on discourses on resistance formally incorporated into resistance studies and disability studies literature, it is crucial to acknowledge that scholars in resistance studies are not the first to

explore the issues of complex power dynamics, methods, and means of resistance "from below" or even quotidian resistance. Scholars, activists, and thinkers in fields such as gender and women's studies, queer studies, and feminist theory have long been engaged in these conversations in ways that have undoubtedly informed and shaped thinking in resistance studies today. While this thesis invokes some feminist scholarship, future research should more fully investigate writing on resistance with a particular focus on feminist scholarship and queer of color critique in order to locate and situate resistance studies within a broader intellectual tradition of oppositional research. Conceptions of resistance have much longer histories than have been explicated here, and it is important to not only acknowledge that, but also to commit to investigating how mainstream notions of power, domination, and resistance have been contested and imagined otherwise by scholars, writers, thinkers, and people outside the formal boundaries of resistance studies.

C.   **Future Scholarship**

Ultimately, I contend that the continued study of disability resistance is crucial for several reasons. As Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) has argued, resistance may serve as a useful diagnostic of power; by attending to everyday, subtle, individual, or covert acts of resistance and dissent rather than ignoring or belittling them, disability studies scholars may appreciate the ways disability oppression, too, can be tricky or sly, invisible or hidden. A reimagining of disability resistance requires us as scholars to step outside of our prepared discursive frameworks for understanding disability, oppression, and resistance and think more critically about what these things mean; such a reimagining of disability resistance requires, first, a disruption of ideologies that position disabled subjects as powerless or ignorant to their situation. For disability studies, a reimagining of disability resistance is crucial to potentially re-inscribing power to disabled subjects,

recovering evidence of disability experiences, fathoming a disabled past and a future that is radical in big and small ways, and to appreciating the complex interplay of power that has characterized the condition of disability. For resistance studies, a reimagining of disability resistance may disrupt and complicate what we think we know about power, oppression, and resistance, who is a resistor, and what resistance looks like or should look like. I posit that a reimagining of disability resistance is essential to cultivating a more robust dialogue on what it means to be disabled, what it means to resist, and the how to understand the relationship between power and resistance more broadly.

However, even as we endeavor to uncover and excavate the hidden transcripts of disability resistance, we must be aware of the ethical stakes of exposing, decoding, and revealing what has been purposefully hidden. As this research progresses, scholars need to be aware of the potential impacts of their work on the communities they research. As described by Tornberg (2017), exposing the everyday resistance tactics of the subaltern poses substantial risks to those involved in those resistance activities. Moving forward, scholars interested in this work need to ask themselves and one another whether the project of un/re/covering hidden transcripts of disability resistance is ethical. While this thesis largely argues for an exploration of the hidden transcripts of everyday disability resistance in the interest of developing more nuanced understandings of power operations, disability oppression, and resistance writ large, this work cannot be done without thorough and critical discussion of the material and symbolic impact on those communities in question. While revealing hidden transcripts has the radical potential to reframe and reimagine resistance, recover histories of resistance, and disrupt narratives of disability as powerlessness, scholars interested in hidden transcripts of disability resistance need to consider the ethical implications of re/un/covering what may purposefully be hidden. Do these

histories need or want to be "recovered" or do they best serve resistors as they are, underground? Does revealing or exposing hidden transcripts of disability resistance pose a risk to disabled subjects? And do our research methodologies and methods of disseminating research results align or conflict with resistance studies and disability studies commitments to liberation and solidarity? As disability studies and resistance studies scholars endeavor to better understand disability resistance in all of its complexity, it is crucial to consider both the advantageous and potentially harmful effects of our work.

Finally, drawing on Tilly's (1995) notion of repertoires of contention, future scholarship interested in disability resistance must continue to attend to shifting political, social, cultural, economic, ideological, and technological circumstances as these contexts inform possibilities for oppression and resistance. Contemporary sites of disability resistance and repertoires of disability resistance may indeed look and feel different than social movements and perhaps even different than Scott's "hidden transcripts." In order to do this work, scholars need to engage continually with the process of conceptualizing and reconceptualizing resistance, imagining and reimagining resistance, and in so doing, reevaluate what it means to research resistance.

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