Feminist Resistance Through the Lens of Everyday Lived Experiences of Young Women in India

Nabila Kazmi

University of Victoria

Author's Note

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Nabila Kazmi, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Victoria, MacLaurin Building A541. Email: nabilakazmi@uvic.ca

Abstract

In this article, I examine the lived experiences of two young women from urban slums in India who participated in an after-school program focusing on issues of gender inequality within their homes, communities, and schools. Through unstructured and semi-structured interviews and observations, this paper argues that young women from marginalized spaces resist patriarchal structures of society through everyday acts of resistance. Using narrative inquiry, the data reveal that young women use different yet interconnected means to resist oppression in their daily lives. The article makes a case for expanding feminist resistance scholarship to be inclusive of young women at the periphery and their everyday resistance for finding a voice.

Keywords: youth activism, narrative inquiry, lived experiences, pedagogical praxis, feminist resistance

Feminist Resistance Through the Lens of Everyday Lived Experiences of Young Women in India

By focusing on the lived experiences of young women who are challenging patriarchal social structures within their daily lives, I offer a unique perspective for understanding feminist resistance. "By placing all forms of resistance within the ordinary life of power" (Haynes & Prakash, 1992, pp. 2–3), I intend to create a more inclusive understanding of women's empowerment and feminist social justice. Both Ghosh (2008) and Ahmed (2020) call for a need to move beyond the overwhelming passive and silenced image of women from colonised South Asia. Resistance by such women in the past has been considered from the lens of participation in large mass struggles led by men or those within the existing conventional social fabric (Ghosh, 2008). Both these perspectives fail to consider the everyday negotiations of power that happen between the oppressed and the oppressor on a sustained basis (Haynes & Prakash, 1992). This is not just true for patriarchy but also for the class-caste connection that prevails in the complex social hierarchies existing in countries like India, as pointed out by Haynes and Prakash (1992).

"The personal is political," a phrase popularized by Carol Hanisch in her 1969 essay, holds great relevance to the feminist shift in understanding action by connecting individual practices in daily life to challenging structural institutions of power (Abrahams, 1992). The role of individuals in creating change has expanded into the alternative narratives of women and their informal actions for transformation (Martin et al., 2007). However, there is limited exploration of young people's resistance (including young women) in their daily lives and their struggles with lived realities as they challenge the status quo. Private spaces become sites of oppression as they enact the wider economic, social, cultural, and political dynamics of power, while at the same time also becoming a space for enacting agency. This is by no means to say that large-scale resistance and socio-political changes are equivalent in their force and influence on the everyday resistances of women. But an inclusive and diverse study of feminist resistance from a complex and multilayered lens of power struggle in the everyday life is important for examining agency within varied socio-cultural contexts.

Everyday Resistance

In this paper, I build on James Scott's (1985) theoretical concept of "everyday resistance" described as quiet, dispersed, disguised, or seemingly invisible. The concept of everyday resistance dictates that acts of resistance are so deeply integrated into social life that they become an ordinary part of people's existence. de Certeau (1984) also spoke about the concept of everyday resistance whereby people use tactics in their daily lives to turn things for their own benefit. These actions of everyday resistance can be seen through common acts of humor, sarcasm, physical reaction, coping, avoidance, or accommodation (individual or combination of these) that help in the creation of ongoing identities, and are, therefore, a way of creating oneself as an "agent of change" (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2019, p. 19). However, an important thing to note here is that everyday resistance is always entangled with power, intersectional and contingent on the contexts and situations that these acts of resistance are played out in.

Johansson and Vinthagen (2019) argued that there are two elements of everyday resistance: First, everyday resistance is practice/action that presents itself as actions such as those discussed in the previous paragraph and second, everyday resistance is an oppositional activity whereby power and resistance go together. Within both these elements, everyday resistances are activities or tactics employed by oppressed people to "both survive and undermine repressive domination; especially in contexts where rebellion is too risky" (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2019, p. 4). However, Simi and Futrell (2009) claimed that

researchers have not considered everyday acts of resistance as relevant to scholarship on activism. This stance has kept certain forms of resistance by actors (such as women) who have not had traditional access to public spaces absent from the literature. This absence establishes a need to break through the dichotomy and understand that everyday resistance goes along with the other larger scale, political, visible forms of resistance, sometimes one initiating the other. Understanding the theoretical underpinning of everyday resistance becomes important to this research as young women who find themselves at the periphery of society, struggling to find safe spaces to voice their concerns, could enact agency through these everyday acts of resistance.

Feminist Youth Resistance

There are numerous studies around youth activism and resistance that focus on political participation (Noguera et al., 2006), social movements (Earl et al., 2017), feminist perspectives (Gordon, 2008; Walker, 1995), use of digital media (Jackson, 2018; Keller, 2012) and interdisciplinary study of activism (Harris, 2012). However, youth resistance and their modes have shifted in recent times. As mentioned by Putnam (2000), a rising concern is the relative disengagement of young people in the politics of a nation. However, some scholars (see Dalton, 2009; Schlozman et al., 2010; Shea & Harris, 2006) argue that the forms of youth engagement are not declining, just changing their form (Earl et al., 2017). Within the context of India, with the growing attack on democracy, young people, especially students, have taken to the streets and digital media to express their dissent (Bhatia, 2019). As young people participate in social movements through campus activism, hashtag movements, and building communities (offline/online), the re-evaluation of what constitutes youth resistance is deemed important and necessary. By extension, the possibility of breaking through the traditional notions of resistance from the public (rallies, demonstrations, strikes) to the private has a precedent.

Conversations regarding resistance, if inclusive and diverse, will bring to the fore alternative forms of resistance that some women enact. In theorizing resistance, most of the research has focused on boys and young men, often ignoring ways in which girls act as "cultural contributors and political agents" (Keller, 2012, p. 431). Historically, young women were considered at the periphery of conversations of resistance because they were absent from the public domain. With the restriction on the physical mobility of young girls and women, particularly in India, compared to boys and men, their lack of visibility in public sites of resistance became further indicative of their exclusion. The inclusion of otherwise absent voices of young women from varying contexts has led to a global evolution that is on the rise (Jeffery & Basu, 1998). This exclusion posits the need to unfold the meaning of resistance through the study of private spaces that women and girls occupy and the everyday acts of resistance they employ against patriarchal and misogynist practices.

A step further is the contemporary evolution of youth resistance and feminist ideas of negotiating power seen in domesticated forms of action, invisible forms of dissonance, and feminist analyses of personal spaces. As noted by Jupp (2017), these forms of resistances are generally overlooked. This absence makes young women's everyday resistance through the building of communities, domestic enactment of dissent, and the negotiation of voices within their own personal spaces an area of study still minimally explored. Some research has been done (see Ahmed, 2020; Kabeer, 2011; Padgett & Priyam, 2019; Wade, 1997) on the idea of considering everyday acts of agentic enactment and resistance by women as important to the feminist scholarship. However, there is a gap in what this could mean for young women who are further disadvantaged at the intersections of gender and age. Furthermore, young people are "positioned at the leading edge of many aspects of contemporary change" (Hall et al., 1999, p. 501). This article builds on the premise that a re-examination of feminist resistance from the

lens of the everyday lived experiences of young women challenging the status quo is a necessary step in studying their social, cultural, and political engagement which is important to the study of feminist resistance.

I argue that young women employ varied means of everyday resistance to confront the gender (in)equity that they face in their communities and homes. The young women in my research invoke practices of (a) negotiating autonomy, (b) developing identities, and (c) building connections to confront gender oppressive practices. Their ways of evoking these practices differ based on the situations they encounter and their specific family contexts; however, they do resort to these practices on multiple occasions when dealing with gender (in)equity.

Setting the Context

As is the case for most of the families living in the urban slum communities in India, their great-grandparents migrated to the cities from rural areas in search of a better life and employment as their agricultural land was taken over by capitalist greed. Since most of the students who attend public schools in India come from the same locations where the schools are situated (Ambast, n. d.), it is not uncommon to have a high population of migrant children within public schools in urban slum communities. The fathers of the students in these schools are daily-wage workers, while their mothers mostly take up domestic work in the high-rise buildings situated next to their slum communities. Unlike what might appear at first sight, these urban slum communities are not homogeneous. People living in these communities have a heterogeneous composition along the intersections of class, caste, and religion (Phadke et al., 2011). Research participants were from varied castes (see BBC, 2019 for an explanation of the caste system in India) and had communal backgrounds, and the range of their economic status varied across the board. Some of the families struggled with extreme poverty with multiple children needing to be taken care of, whereas some households were single-child families qualifying as middle-class Indians (Kapoor & Duggal, 2022).

Some of the young women with whom I worked struggled with early marriage issues as their caste or religious practices dictated family expectations. Due to early marriage practices, some of them were unable to complete their schooling or were married immediately as they finished high school. Some young women are unable to make career choices informed by their personal passions due to the economic struggles of their families that need them to take up educational degrees that would likely give them better employment and financial aspects. Another major issue that most of the young women struggle with is physical mobility and access to public spaces because of safety issues, with the burden for safety falling on these young women. With no clear boundary between public and private, Phadke et al. (2011) asserted that women from slum areas must carry the burden of "marking their private bodies" (p. 131) based on what they wear, how they walk, and who they talk to. This marking severely impedes their social access and ability, which in turn impacts their confidence as they move to colleges in cities. Another interesting phenomenon is that most of the young women in this research are the first women in their families to get an education. This has created a huge gap in their learning from the rest of their family members. Parents of these young women at times find themselves unable to support their daughters, thus impacting their access to intellectual and social capital, role models within their own families and communities, and people they can reach out to for advice and help regarding college admissions, careers, and/or handling the educational pressures of assignments and projects.

The after-school program in which my research was conducted met for weekly sessions for conversations led by the young women. The topics of discussion, decided collectively by the young women, included access to public spaces, physical harassment, lack of career

choices, parental pressure to marry and relationships, among others. As a participant in the program, my role was that of a facilitator. I initiated this project after identifying the lack of a safe space for young women to come together and talk about their everyday struggles. However, my role evolved into being an active participant sharing my own stories of struggle with patriarchal practices and my acts of everyday resistance.

The researcher must always be cognizant of her positionality whenever engaged in conducting research of any kind; it requires a constant state of reflexivity. The reason that I decided to undertake this project is based on my own experiences with patriarchy within my family and community. As a woman who comes from the minority religious community in India, I have struggled with systemic inequalities that come with being a woman with a minority status. I also come from a context that attempts to balance the modern with tradition by "allowing" its women to work and build careers within a certain limit of acceptable behavior for its women. Balance has been evident in the way I have been "given" the freedom to make choices about my education and career, to be able to move to Canada for higher education while at the same time upholding my family values, some of which are rooted in patriarchy. It is also important to establish here that my class privilege has given me access to resources and social networks. Therefore, it is important to examine my own positionality in this research with the overlapping experiences with patriarchy as well as examining the privilege that makes my experiences different from that of the young women in the research study.

Likewise, the research on women's experiences with everyday resistance is also connected to my personal experiences of confronting normalized patriarchal practices within my home and community. During our weekly after-school sessions, I was able to share my own experiences with the other participants. At the same time, as an older woman who has faced familial pressures while attempting to create space for myself, I could bring my tactics of dealing with some of these issues. In that process, I have also become a role model for some of the women who believed that they could learn from my experiences. This was evident in the way they would reach out and ask questions about ways to handle some of the situations they were faced with. Studying lived experiences as a relational research practice has also been a learning experience as I have gained insight into lives of women from different socio-economic contexts than my own. As noted by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), nobody leaves research (narrative-based) unchanged. Thus, the research process is a learning experience for both the researcher and the participants.

The lived experiences of women vary spatially and temporally, making diverse voices essential for studying their everyday forms of resistance. A contextualized portrayal of women and their lives offers a departure from the stereotypical representation of women in developing countries (Ahmed, 2020). By extension, young women who are assumed to enjoy even lower agentic power within the familial hierarchy might employ varied means of finding their voice and space. My argument is that even within the rigid patriarchal structures of urban slums in India, young women enact resistance through varied means within the larger socio-cultural context. I assert that an excellent means to studying these said acts of resistance is through their everyday lived stories and experiences.

One such tool for studying gendered experiences is through narrative inquiry, as it focuses on narratives as lived and told (Simmonds et al., 2015). Narrative is "one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 35). Within the narrative space, the researcher and the participants engage in meaning-making through the sharing of personal and social stories. This becomes significant to feminist research which distinguishes itself from traditional research by bringing richness and complexity into a study. Feminist research as inclusive,

contextual, experiential, and socially and contextually relevant (Nielsen, 2018) gains from the multi-dimensional perspectives that storytelling and narratives offer.

Research Design

Research Question

To frame this research, the following question was developed to capture the context of the study and the everyday lived experience of two young women looking back to a common school experience: "How do the lived experiences of two young Indian women who were involved in classroom activism projects speak back to normalized beliefs that limit their life opportunities and sense of emerging female identities?"

Research Setting, Data, and Methods

The article is based on in-depth conversations with two young women (aged 18 + years) from economically marginalized communities in India who were previously (in 2018-2019) part of the after-school project l. The conversations took place through two rounds of interviews, mostly unstructured or semi-structured. The first round of interviews conducted online (through video conferencing tools) was unstructured with a large question, "What was your experience like being part of the after-school project?" asked of them followed by a few probing questions as they related to their experiences. The second round of interviews was conducted face-to-face with the participants to delve deeper into their experiences discussed in the prior conversation to unravel the anecdotes and stories that would inform these beliefs. This conversation was semi-structured where some questions were prepared before and asked with the intention of collecting their experiences in detail. Examples of questions include the following: "Elaborate on the specific experience you were talking about last time?" and "What about negotiating with your parents was difficult?"

The after-program was not part of the school curriculum, and the participation of the girls was purely voluntary. I also drew from my own experiences that I had during the project. The relationship I built with them is also built on a foundation of trust which was valuable as they shared their experiences with me honestly and openly based on the trust developed in our relationship. This relationship has shifted as we have moved on to conversing as women who have experienced living in India. The subjectivity of their experiences in connection with my own further offers validity, credibility and legitimacy to the research study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Given that the data was collected in the form of recollecting lived experiences through narratives and storytelling, the method used for analysing the research data was that of narrative inquiry. Narratives and narrative inquiry hold the key to viscerally engage the reader and emotionally move them to become a part of the lived experiences (Clandinin, 2006). Narratives involve a reader in a sensory manner by lending themselves to verisimilitude, evoking the instinctual knowledge of "this could have happened" along with the belief of "being there" for the reader. As a form of writing that speaks to the audience in a language that is not scientific, it has the added advantage of "broadening the researchers' audience" (Sparkes, 1997, p. 151) by including the nonscientific reader. Additionally, Wyatt (2007) and Sparkes (1997) argue, stories open avenues for the "unheard" and/or "untold." These avenues, in combination with feminist theories, promote inclusivity and social change.

The following section elaborates on the three themes that were recurring during the analysis of the data. These themes are complemented with snippets of the conversations that I had with the women along with recollecting my experiences as I interacted with them during the after-school program. These themes that emerge from the data are interconnected, each

influencing the other to a certain degree. Looking at them in isolation would not provide a complete picture of the lived experiences of these young women.

Findings

During data analysis, three themes emerged (refer to Appendix 1) that were common to the lived experiences of these young women who participated in the classroom activism project. The themes were negotiating autonomy, developing identity, and building connections. As these young women balanced the social and cultural expectations that were put on them by their families and communities, they constantly worked on generating spaces for exercising autonomy that in turn led to them re-examining and developing their identity. Through the weekly after-school program conversations these young women started to build connection beyond formal meeting spaces; they in turn learned from one another on new ways to negotiate their autonomy.

"I had to Learn to Balance Things Out": Negotiating Autonomy

Autonomy is the ability of an individual to act on their own values and interests. However, where there is conflict, the struggle of balancing opposing views becomes essential to reach consensus. Because the after-school program was non-academic, it was difficult for the young women to convince their parents (especially the father in one participant's account) to be a part of an after-school program. Because young women in India also play the role of caregivers to younger siblings, helping mothers in household chores, and taking up household responsibilities in order to be prepared for marriage, their time is highly contested (Srivastava, 2020). These factors made the regular attendance of some of the young women in the program rather difficult. In fact, in the initial days of the after-school program, some women were dropping out or rarely showing up. My own attempts at convincing the parents of the value of the program failed in some of the cases even though they sometimes showed up, though rather inconsistently.

Neha, now a 19-year-old, who participated in my study, talked about using tantrums and emotional outbursts to convince her father to let her make some choices on her own. These choices were limited, though, happening in exchange for other acts of obedience. "I have learned some tricks to handle my parents," she recounted. Neha understood that if she wanted to continue studying, she had to get excellent grades and obtain some form of scholarship, or her parents might not be willing to invest in her education given that "she had to eventually get married." Negotiating autonomy in the context of this research is the process that one undergoes where one maintains a sense of self by compromising on certain aspects of being (Mill et al., 2010). Neha says,

> I had to learn to balance things out and find ways of convincing the other person. And it helps! I am getting to study art education and learning to be a teacher. I am finally getting to do what I wanted.

The approaches to negotiating autonomy, as elaborated by Mill et al. (2010), could be to be defiant, passive, or proactive. I noticed that Neha found her voice, or maybe some part of it, through the after-school program. In fact, I am slightly proud of her maneuvers. It is not easy to be a young woman in India trying to convince the people around you to let you live your life the way you would like. Sometimes the only option is to "pick your battles," as Neha points out:

> Making art is my vent and it helps me keep my sanity on some of these days. The additional benefit being that I made a little money selling it and bought myself a phone, a proud moment. But I do what my parents expect me to do, and I get to continue studying, isn't it amazing how I figured this out.

As mentioned earlier, de Certeau (1984) talks about the use of tactics to gain increased voice to enact everyday resistance that the young women resorted to in my research study. This is also evident in young women who gained independence in one aspect of their other lives and thereby gained access to resources in other aspects of their lives. For example, as Neha gains access to financial independence, she is able to get a phone that gives her access to contexts beyond her own through media and social networks. This in turn gives her access to intellectual and social capital.

However, negotiating autonomy in Shabnam's case, the second research participant in my study, was done by lying to her family or hiding parts of her life. As the first person in her family to ever go to college, Shabnam has managed to defy multiple stereotypes (prone to early marriage, being submissive, and a lack of inclination towards a career) associated with Muslim women from low socioeconomic contexts in India. However, she has taken the approach of telling her family only the "things that they needed to know." She recollects her regular football practice in which she had to change from the "culturally appropriate" attire to her football uniform at the home of a friend. Reader (2007) points out that agency in certain situations is not apparent and cautions against assuming that non-agential aspects are less valuable. As Shabnam enacts the agency of participating in sports, she does so by showing passivity in certain other aspects of her daily practices, such as changing clothes at a friend's place that is closer to the football field and away from her community. Thus, having a binary understanding of agency and autonomy as either empowering or disempowering is problematic. As Ahmed (2020) points out that "such binaries fail to capture why women codeswitch to 'passive' behavior that appears disempowering at face value" (p. 1186). To this end, the act of negotiating autonomy needs to be examined. As these young women negotiate autonomy in certain aspects of their lives by giving up decision-making power in some other situations, it becomes important that their acts of agency not be considered nonexistent.

Shabnam was one of the most active participants in the after-school program. Every time I met her, I spent hours talking to her about her life and the stories just amaze me. Negotiating autonomy has a complex relationship with resistance where acts of gaining higher education, pursuing a career or making choices that go against parents' wishes could be counted as acts of resistance (Al-deen, 2007). However, these may not be counted as resistance when young women's pursuit of choices adhere to the moral code of the community and family (Meyers, 2014). Shabnam says:

> Human nature is unique and complex in so many ways and I for one, enjoy the prospect of understanding it. But I cannot tell my family about the things I am studying. Gender and sexuality? They would not approve! I didn't even know what the third gender was about. I know what this means to my parents and how taboo the idea is, I am not sure if I would bring this up. If they asked me what I was studying, would I lie?

This is true to a large extent for the two young women in this research study. However, it is important to move away from a strict understanding of resistance as open defiance and consider the complexities and subjectivities of the term. Levels of autonomy vary in different sociocultural contexts, requiring that the relationship between autonomy and resistance be examined from an intersectional lens of gender, class, and race (Al-deen, 2007). Thus, examining ways in which young women exercise autonomy in their daily lives could offer a perspective to understanding resistance through negotiating and bargaining.

The struggles of these young women are real, and I am aware of the notion of hiding parts of oneself or negotiating the terms of our freedom with those who do not approve, yet whose approval we deem necessary. Even though hiding parts of ourselves from people who are close to us causes an internal struggle, it gives us the ability to have experiences that shape

our identity. Maybe revealing parts of oneself slowly is the only possible way for some, who are still tiptoeing around, to inspire lasting change through their stories. This leads to the overlap that exists between the way one learns to negotiate autonomy and the impact that this has on their identity development.

"I Hate Being a Girl": Identity Development

Identity development is a complex process by which people develop a sense of understanding of themselves within the contexts of cultural demands and social norms (Kroger, 2006). As a theme in this research study, identity development highlights an individual's pursuit to fulfil needs, interests, aspirations, desires, and a sense of self. This happens by integrating experiences, opportunities, social values, and abilities. It is an ongoing process as people are exposed to new learnings and experiences which leads to construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of identities. As young people grow up to be adults, the young women in the research study are in the process of shaping their identities. Their identity development is informed by their surroundings, experiences, and contexts. Most of the young women that were part of the after-school program are the first in their families to attend college. Their sense of self is developing differently that others in their families and communities and this difference has resulted in numerous clashes between them and their families.

However, these young women have identities that are composed of multiple meanings that are attached to the different roles that they play in societies (Stryker & Burke, 2000). This is evident in the way they talk about the duality of their lives outside and inside homes. As Neha says,

> I am not the same person at home. Sometimes I do not speak my mind at home, I wonder what would happen if I did. But I cannot do so when in college. I must tell others what I think, even if it a person of authority.

Neha takes a course on queer studies and feminist theory in college but does not intend to tell people at home about it since she is unsure of their reaction and is scared of the repercussions it could have on continuing her education. This augments the notion that people have many identities in the various social networks they occupy and these identities, as outlined in identity theory, are the internalization of the role one is expected to play within a group (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

Shabnam reiterates during our conversations that she has always hated being a girl. She attributes this to the bias she has noticed in the treatment of her brother and herself at home and in the community. She says:

> I have always hated being a girl, I think you know what I am talking about. Nobody worries about the safety of my brother as he goes out at night, it's so utterly irritating that I must bother my parents with this. I still remember the time when I would go out to play football but had to stop at my friend's house to change into shorts on my way to football practice and change out of them on my way back home. *Log kya kahenge* [what will people say], my mother would exclaim.

This treatment is not uncommon in society, especially those rooted in patriarchal values. However, she also points out that she has recently become extremely uncomfortable with this notion of inequity. Her developing sense of self outside her home has inculcated this dissatisfaction with a situation she and others around her have accepted as the norm.

However, the complexity of identity cannot be simply explained through the evolving sense of self of these young women and their perceived place in the world. But the research intends to point out the need to move beyond the stereotypical and monolithic discourse around

the identity of young women in the said context. Their identities are formed at the intersections of the multiple minority statuses (sex, gender, class, religion) with which these young women are confronted (Cerezo et al., 2020). Thus, their acts of resistance also need to be understood through the complex lens of their developing intersectional identities. This evolving sense of self and identity formation becomes, in and of itself, an act of resistance that is born from the marginalization that people face when confronted by "important persons and social spaces in their lives" (Cerezo et al., 2020, p. 77). The article posits that the process of identity formation born from navigating the world as a person facing multiple forms of oppression is rooted in resistance.

"We Found Each Other": Building Connections

Resistance in and of itself develops into lasting change when the focus is shifted from the disheartening rhetoric of "what can I do alone" to finding collective cause (Kirshner, 2007). For this research, the building of connection revolves around the notions of finding companionship through a common rhetoric for the oppression and exclusion that one faces. It also extends into collective problem solving, interdependence, finding support, and bonding over common experiences. During our conversation, the notion that these young women were able to find one another and others in the group was central. They talked about feeling less lonely in their experiences by coming across other young women who were facing similar issues at home and communities. Shabnam says:

> I would have other girls come up to me to seek advice. I thought that was strange given that I had no clue what I was doing. They would tell me the problems they were facing at college or home. I tried to help them in whatever way I could. You see, if I was facing something similar, I was able to help in a better way but if I didn't, I would just listen, at times that felt enough.

Community development can generate collective identities—we are all girls, we all come from marginalized communities. Irrespective of some of the differences, as Shaw et al. (2020) noted, marginalized communities foster connections that are built through collective oppression and lead to accountable relationships. These relationships instigate marginalized people to raise voices against unequal power dynamics in their lives. Such can be the underlying power of collectively organizing through acts if resistance.

As Nagar (2000) pointed out, it is important to understand the inner mechanisms of structure and power in the home to sense the challenges to these structures and power in the South Asian context. This commonality of experiences leads women to "rely on each other" (Ahmed, 2020, p. 1188). At times, this gathering of people can be an act of resistance when the intention is to discuss ways to confront the bias and injustice. Neha says, "We would on most days, call each other up when we all got back home. Ask if we had all reached safely." As pointed out by Neha, this is an act of community building with a deep underlying intent of care. This formation of community and building connections within them creates spaces whereby marginalized groups can collectively resist inequality and oppression (Rothrock, 2017). These collective acts of resistance become powerful narratives in the face of violence and discrimination. I propose that studying the everyday acts of building connections and community is the key to understanding the scholarship on feminist resistance.

However, we must be careful not to homogenize women and their experiences. At the intersections of race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, age, and caste in the case of India, different women experience life differently. Young women in urban slums experience the community in various forms and express their everyday resistance and practices differently. The heterogeneity of experiences gives rise to the tensions that sometimes exist with individual

and collective experiences. The experience of everyday resistance by young women in my research also questions the Western perception of third-world women and their struggles. Western feminism has assumed that women in the perceived third-world struggle with the same challenges, and these are not carefully examined through the lens of racism and colonialism and the varied impact it has on women from different parts of the world (Mohanty, 1991). Additionally, this view is further tainted by the "White feminist" idea that agency and empowerment are enacted in concrete and fixed ways. As Ahmed (2020) pointed out, the empowerment and agency of women in developing countries should be considered in their cultural and historical contexts.

Conclusion

Activism and feminist resistance scholarship could gain from studying these forms of politically invisible, and "counterhegemonic embodi[ed]" everyday acts of resistance (Kwan & Roth, 2011, p. 194). These acts of everyday resistance are difficult to capture as they are based on individual, contextual, constantly shifting, and momentary actions. However, this study highlights that everyday acts of resistance are entangled with power relations as these acts occur continuously, over a prolonged period, and consistently. Research on resistance has the risk of marginalizing and excluding certain discourses and articulations of resistance irrespective of their ability to resist power. The research here aims to establish the need to study everyday resistance within the existing literature on feminist resistance. Additionally, it established that lived experiences and narratives are a powerful feminist tool for studying these everyday acts of resistance as they are inclusive of marginalized voices and available to a larger audience. Studying these forms of resistance can also offer other people struggling with oppression, ways or tactics to deal with power relations (Scott, 1989). These everyday acts recounted through lived experiences can become ways for the same or other people in different time, space or relationships. Thus, they become an avenue of learning about feminist resistance praxis.

This research intends to expand the study of feminist resistance theory and research by studying the everyday resistance of people with intersecting and marginalized identities. Furthermore, everyday resistance and social action is an embodied form of learning as people learn through their participation, emotions, cognition, and collective action (Ollis, 2012). Such research studies, thus, also offer critical pedagogical tools to examine the necessary skills to envision a socially just and equal society along with the skills necessary for "feminist social change" (Martin et al., 2007, p. 199). Safe spaces for discussing everyday resistance should be incorporated into educational spaces (such as schools and adult education) and these everyday acts of resistance need to be part of the feminist resistance scholarship. As a doctoral student, I see myself building on this research in my doctoral work by expanding on the experiences of young women with more participants with diverse experiences. The research also would benefit by studying everyday resistance in the specific domains of its enactment for example, creating inclusive and safe spaces within urban slum communities by young women.

References

Abrahams, N. (1992). Towards reconceptualizing political action. *Sociological Inquiry*, *62*(3), 327–347. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-682X.1992.tb00285.x

Ahmed, S. (2020). 'I am my own person,' women's agency inside and outside the home in rural Pakistan. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *27*(8), 1176–1194. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2019.1664420

Al-deen, T. J. (2019). Agency in action: Young muslim women and negotiating higher education in Australia. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 40*(5), 598–613. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2019.1576120

Ambast, S. (n. d.). The public school education system and subalternity in India. *Periferias*. *Public School: Potencies and Challenges*. https://revistaperiferias.org/en/materia/the-public-school-education-system-and-subalternality-in-india/

BBC. (2019, June 19). What is India's caste system? *BBC News*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-35650616

Bhatia, S. (2019, December 27). India's young are the real heroes of the year. *The Wire*. https://thewire.in/rights/young-india-students-caa-protests

Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry: A methodology for studying lived experience. *Research Studies in Music Education, 27*(1), 44–54. https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X060270010301

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry : Experience and story in qualitative research* (1st ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Clandinin D. J., & Rosiek J. (2007). Mapping a landscape of narrative inquiry: Borderland spaces and tensions. In Clandinin D. J. (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 35–75). SAGE.

Cerezo, A., Williams, C., Cummings, M., Ching, D., & Holmes, M. (2020). Minority stress and drinking: Connecting race, gender identity and sexual orientation. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *48*(2), 277–303. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000019887493

Dalton, R. J. (2009). *The good citizen: How a younger generation is reshaping American politics*. CQ Press.

de Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life.* University of California Press.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). SAGE publications.

Earl, J., Maher, T. V., & Elliott, T. (2017). Youth, activism, and social movements. *Sociology Compass, 11*(4), e12465. https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12465

Ghosh, A., (2008). *Behind the veil: Resistance, women, and the everyday in colonial South Asia*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Gordon, H. R. (2008). Gendered paths to teenage political participation: Parental power, civic mobility, and youth activism. *Gender & Society, 22*(1), 31–55. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243207311046

Hall, T., Coffey, A., & Williamson, H. (1999). Self, space and place: Youth identities and citizenship. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *20*(4), 501–513.

Harris, A. (Ed.). (2012). *Next wave cultures: Feminism, subcultures, activism*. Routledge.

Haynes, D. E., & Prakash, G. (Eds.). (1992). Contesting power: Resistance and everyday social relations in South Asia. University of California Press.

Jackson, S. (2018). Young feminists, feminism and digital media. *Feminism & Psychology, 28*(1)*,* 32–49. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353517716952

Jeffery, P., & Basu, A. (Eds.). (1998). *Appropriating gender: Women's activism and politicized religion in South Asia.* Routledge.

Johansson, A., & Vinthagen, S. (2019). *Conceptualizing 'everyday resistance': A transdisciplinary approach.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315150154

Jupp, E. (2017). Home space, gender and activism: The visible and the invisible in austere times. *Critical Social Policy, 37*(3), 348–366. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018317693219

Kabeer, N. (2011). Between affiliation and autonomy: Navigating pathways of women's empowerment and gender justice in rural Bangladesh. *Development and Change, 42* (2), 499–528. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2011.01703.x

Kapoor. A, Duggal, J. (2022, March 10) Where does the Indian middle class lie? Here's looking into the need for a definition. *The Economic Times*. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/where-does-the-indian-middle-class-lie-heres-looking-into-the-need-for-a-definition/articleshow/90105146.cms

Keller, J. M. (2012). Virtual feminisms: Girls' blogging communities, feminist activism, and participatory politics. *Information*, *Communication & Society, 15*(3), 429–447. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2011.642890

Kirshner, B. (2007). Introduction: Youth activism as a context for learning and development. *The American Behavioral Scientist, 51*(3), 367–379. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764207306065

Kroger, J. (2006). *Identity development: Adolescence through adulthood*. SAGE.

Kwan, S. & Roth, L. M. (2011). The everyday resistance of vegetarianism. In C. Bobel & S. Kwan (Eds.), *Embodying resistance*: *Challenging the norms, breaking the rules* (pp. 38–57). Vanderbilt University Press.

Martin, D. G., Hanson, S., & Fontaine, D. (2007). What counts as activism? The role of individuals in creating change. *Women's Studies Quarterly, 35*(3/4)*,* 78–94. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27649696

Meyers, D. T. (2014). Feminism and sex trafficking: Rethinking some aspects of autonomy and paternalism. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, *17*(3), 427–441. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-013-9452-1

Mill, A., Mayes, R., & McConnell, D. (2010). Negotiating autonomy within the family: The experiences of young adults with intellectual disabilities. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities, 38*(3), 194–200. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-3156.2009.00575.x

Mohanty, C. T. (1991). Introduction - Cartographies of struggle - Third world women and the politics of feminism. In C. T. Mohanty, A. Russo, & L. Torres (Eds.), *Third world women and the politics of feminism* (pp. 1–50).

Nagar, R. (2000). Mujhe jawab do! (Answer me!): Women's grass-roots activism and social spaces in Chitrakoot (India). *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, *7*(4), 341–362. https://doi.org/10.1080/713668879

Nielsen, J. M. (Ed.). (2018). *Feminist research methods: Exemplary readings in the social sciences*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Noguera, P., Cammarota, J., & Ginwright, S. (Eds.). (2006). Beyond resistance! Youth activism and community change: New democratic possibilities for practice and policy for America's youth. *Routledge Taylor & Francis Group*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203961001

Ollis, T.. (2012). *A critical pedagogy of embodied education: Learning to become an activist*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137016447

Padgett, D. K., & Priyam, P. (2019). Gender, everyday resistance and bodily integrity: Women's lives on Delhi streets. *Affilia*, *34*(2), 170–185. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109918818078

Phadke, S., Khan, S., & Ranade, S. (2011). *Why loiter?Women and risk on Mumbai streets*. Penguin Books.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon & Schuster.

Reader, S. (2007). The other side of agency. *Philosophy. The Journal of the Royal*, *82*(4), 579–604. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819107000162

Rothrock, R. M. (2017). Community as resistance: Reconceptualizing historical instances of community within Latin@ education. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, *16*(3), 263–267. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2016.1231611

Schlozman, K., Verba, S., & Brady, H. (2010). Weapon of the strong? Participatory inequality and the Internet. *Perspectives on Politics, 8*(2), 487–509. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25698614

Scott, J. C. (1985). *Weapons of the weak*. Yale University Press.

Scott. (1989). Everyday forms of resistance. *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies,* 4(89), 33–62. https://doi.org/10.22439/cjas.v4i1.1765

Shaw, J., Howard, J., & Franco, E. L. (2020). Building inclusive community activism and accountable relations through an intersecting inequalities approach. *Community Development Journal, 55*(1), 7–25. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsz033

Shea, D., & Harris, R. (2006). Why bother? Because peer-to-peer programs can mobilize young voters. *PS: Political Science and Politics, 39*(2), 341–345. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20451744

Sparkes, A. C. (1997). Ethnographic fiction and representing the absent other. *Sport, Education and Society, 2*(1), 25–40. https://doi.org/10.1080/1357332970020102

Simi, P., & Futrell, R. (2009). Negotiating White power activist stigma. *Social Problems, 56*(1), 89–110. https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2009.56.1.89

Simmonds, S., Roux, C., & Avest, I. ter. (2015). Blurring the boundaries between photovoice and narrative inquiry: A narrative-photovoice methodology for gender-based research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *14*(3), 33–49. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691501400303

Srivastava, A. (2020). Time use and household division of labor in India—Within-gender dynamics. *Population and Development Review, 46*(2), 249–285. https://doi.org/10.1111/padr.12309

Stryker, S., & Burke, P. J. (2000). The past, present, and future of an identity tTheory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *63*(4), 284–297. https://doi.org/10.2307/2695840

Wade, A. (1997). Small acts of living: everyday resistance to violence and other forms of oppression. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, *19*(1), 23–39.

Walker, R. (Ed.). (1995). *To be real: Telling the truth and changing the face of feminism*. Anchor.

Wyatt, J. (2007). Research, narrative and fiction: Conference story. *The Qualitative Report, 12*(2), 317–331. https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol12/iss2/10

Appendix 1

Table 1

Componential Analysis on Emerging Themes

Category Theme	Subtheme	Participant#1 Interview	Participant #2 Interview
Negotiating Autonomy	Family	Not academic...not help with studies. Started doing some things they expected	I don't even know if I can talk to my parents...stop me. Keep my freedom Nobody in my family has been to college before
	Emotion	Tantrum	Hide...stereotype associated with being a girl
	Other girls	My problems were not as big as those faced by other girls	Girls should choose what we want to study; need more women in politics
	Expression	Art. create art and that is how I express myself; Even able to sell these to make money	Write. To write my own story, my life story. By writing I can make people know what I feel
Developing Identity	Aspirations	I want to teach. Teaching art and craft in a school; financial independence	I want to stay in the country and change the situation of people in this country. I love working for humanity
	Values	Learning is important; hard work; balance the thought on both sides	To speak my mind; dignity, equality and respect for all
	New learning	Confidence to present my point of view	Brave conversations; questioning things
Building Connections	Companionship	Started opening up. Trust. Building a bond	Share and vent with people. Motivated by others
	Collective problem-solving	A lot of other girls kept coming to me and sharing their problems. I would give advice	Getting in touch with others and asking if they reached home safely. Meeting outside the project time
	Interdependence	Everybody in the group	Others had similar experiences

		was going through something similar Brother - his approval helps me and having him on my side	as me. Shocked Grandmother - she is the reason I can/want to do things