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Resisting for other reasons*

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ABSTRACT

Does a victim have to *intend* to resist oppression in order to discharge her obligation to do so, or is it sufficient to resist oppression *intentionally* in the course of pursuing other plans and projects of importance to her? I argue that resisting intentionally can be sufficient: given the ways that oppression interferes with the lives of victims, trying to counteract that interference by living the life you want is genuine resistance. Requiring that victims have justice-oriented or agency-preserving reasons before their actions count as resistance will distort or miss a wide range of everyday responses to oppressive burdens.

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1. Introduction

Everyday acts of resistance sometimes have little to do with combating oppression directly. For every group marching on the capital en masse, there's a mindful school athlete objecting to a homophobic joke simply because he sees the isolation of his gay teammate. For every woman of conviction enduring public humiliation for her refusal to conform, there's a parent teaching his children to work twice as hard so opportunities can't be unfairly snatched away from them. For every champion speaking out against workplace discrimination to advance the cause of equality for all women, there's a trailblazer pushing against those

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same barriers in the hopes of personally advancing in her male-dominated field. Every one of these actions counteracts oppression in some way, but only half of them are about taking a stand or making the world a better place. The rest find individuals resisting for other reasons. Because a friend looked sad. Because that's what loving parents do. Because sometimes you have to fight to lead the life you want.

The literature boasts a lively disagreement about what grounds the obligation to resist, and to whom the obligation properly falls. But when it comes to discharging that obligation, and specifically what kinds of *reasons* are necessary for an action to count as resistance, the few authors who consider the question settle on a surprisingly narrow range of options. Ann Cudd wants to set 'the most stringent requirement on the intentions of the agent' (2006, 194). She argues that an agent must 'intend to lessen the oppression or feeling of injustice or send a message of revolt' through their action, and that 'purely self-interested' acts are excluded (190, 187). Carol Hay is far more permissive about actions, but this latitude doesn't extend to the reasons victims might have for acting: for the Kantian Hay, 'there is a strict duty to set the end of resisting one's own oppression' because oppression puts our rational natures at risk (2013, 135, 122ff). These otherwise diverging accounts both constrain the intentions of victims.

This paper argues for a more inclusive account of why victims and their allies resist. Borrowing a distinction from the philosophy of action, I suggest that an agent doesn't have to *intend* to resist oppression in order to discharge her obligation to do so. It's often enough to resist oppression *intentionally*,[1] or in other words, to resist oppression for the sake of another valuable end. Someone who protests a Muslim immigration ban with the aim of defending religious freedom *intends* resistance. Someone who protests that ban because they're in love with a Muslim immigrant is still defending religious freedom, but they're only doing so with the further intention of saving a relationship that neither partner cares to live without. In the second case, the protestor doesn't intend resistance, but he does resist *intentionally*: he knowingly brings himself into conflict with oppression for the sake of some end beyond resistance.

Of course, not every end will do – an oppressor who joins a protest for the sake of avoiding closer scrutiny probably isn't discharging any resistance obligations. So, when should resisting *intentionally* count? It comes down to how oppression affects the lives of victims. On the view I'll develop, an action is sufficient to discharge the obligation to resist when it intentionally attempts to counteract an oppressive burden for the sake of protecting or promoting a constituent of victim well-being that is being oppressively burdened. When someone aims to live the kind of life that oppression tries to prevent, she resists. When an ally or fellow victim aims to help a victim live that kind of life, they resist.

In Section 2 I'll advocate a bottom-up approach for assessing the reasons why victims and their allies might resist oppression, and outline three feminist desiderata of sensitive action-guidance that push us to be inclusive about reasons.

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In Section 3 I'll show how the restrictions on victim intentions that Cudd and Hay support either distort or rule out cases that accounts of resistance ought to accommodate. In Section 4 I'll develop an account that allows resisting *intentionally* – or resisting for other reasons – to sometimes discharge the obligation to resist. The account will be primarily concerned with victims, but it's meant to apply to anyone engaged in acts of resistance.

2. The need for an inclusive account

Assuming the oppressed do have an obligation to resist,[2] what does it take to discharge that obligation? Two issues complicate our investigation of whether particular reasons are necessary. The first is that we can mean different things by 'discharging the obligation to resist.' Asking whether agents need to be moved by particular reasons is entirely distinct from asking about, say, the quantity of resistance an agent must perform in order to fully meet their obligation. While there are important issues at stake there, this paper is only concerned with what it means to respond to oppression in the right way, and doesn't aim to offer a complete theory of the obligation to resist.

As I've argued elsewhere, the second and much more difficult issue is that what counts as resistance likely depends on what you think grounds the obligation to resist in the first place (2013, 407f). For example, if the purpose of resistance is to end or minimize oppression, then actions will have to satisfy a success condition like 'contributing to social progress' in order to count. If the point is to take a symbolic stand against injustice, then instead of a success condition, actions will need to be public and there'll need to be uptake on the part of relevant agents or groups. If the point is to avoid complicity, then social progress, publicity, and uptake are all unnecessary, and subtle acts of sabotage will start to count, as will opting out of expected practices. We readily agree about paradigm cases like marching on the capital because they tend to be compatible with each possible ground of the obligation to resist – they at once try to change the world, stand for something, manifest the right dispositions, and so on. However, everyday responses to oppression often realize some of these aims but not others, and are performed for any number of reasons, not all of which are noble or civically minded. Because what grounds the obligation to resist is itself a contentious question, it's underdetermined whether many non-paradigm cases should count as resistance.

What should we do about this second complication? Rather than attempting to settle what genuine resistance aims at or what motivations must guide resisting agents, and then counting whichever actions happen to match those fixed points, I suggest a bottom-up approach. We should start with a focus on victims and their allies, and on the ways in which they might deal with the oppressive burdens interfering with their lives or with the lives of (other) victims. And unless we have a good reason for excluding particular motives, we should count *any*

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action that both brings a person into conflict with oppression[3] and is performed for the sake of counteracting one of oppression's many effects on victims.

Some might worry that this approach is ad hoc, as there's no specific moral system underlying it or guiding its distinctions.[4] Here I'm influenced by Iris Marion Young, who addressed a closely related set of concerns: 'Without a universal normative theory of justice grounded independently of the experience of a particular society, it is often assumed, philosophers and social actors cannot distinguish legitimate claims of justice from socially specific prejudices or self-interested claims to power' (1990, 4). Young disagrees, arguing that theory should concern itself with the claims of victims rather than the output of idealized conceptions of justice. As she explains, 'While everyday discourse about justice certainly makes claims, these are not theorems to be demonstrated in a self-enclosed system. They are instead calls, pleas, claims *upon* some people by others. Rational reflection on justice begins in a hearing, in heeding a call, rather than in asserting and mastering a state of affairs, however ideal. The call to 'be just' is always situated in concrete social and political practices that precede and exceed the philosopher' (5).[5] In focusing on the many reasons victims and their allies might have to resist oppression, I take myself to be following Young's emphasis on injustice as the starting point of theory, instead of trying to fit resistance into our pre-existing theories and distinctions.[6]

While some reasons get excluded because the bright lines of theory don't track messy, real-world phenomena particularly well, sometimes theorists actively discount motives because we aren't sufficiently sensitive to a set of circumstances. This is especially true with the circumstances of victimhood. Part of adopting a bottom-up approach is examining our reasons for thinking that genuine resistance must aim at broad social change or that overt considerations of justice and opposition must guide resisting agents. For example, are we hesitant to recognize a particular motive because we're neglecting to take the pressures victims face into account? Are we making overgeneralizing assumptions about what victims' priorities have to be, or what they need the most? Are we too influenced by a local, privileged ideal of what resistance looks like and why it's important? Are we too fond of exemplars and their compelling motives to value more modest aims? These sorts of reasons fail to reflect the specific burdens, vulnerabilities, commitments, and goals of unique individuals in radically disparate circumstances. In other words, these reasons do more to track what theorists value than they do to track the normative situations in which victims actually find themselves, and what might constitute an appropriate response to oppression in situations like those.

Victim action-guidance is inherently fraught: we can't distinguish genuinely resistant responses without making judgments about what victims should value and prioritize, and what responsibilities they have to themselves and others. And these are precisely the kinds of judgments that should give us pause, not only for considerations of standing, but because victims and their circumstances

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vary so widely. Rather than condemning agents or undervaluing their actions because they lack what we judge to be the correct motivations, I think we should adopt an inclusive understanding of why victims and their allies might resist, and what kinds of reasons are sufficient to discharge resistance obligations. And that means being prepared to count almost *any* reason, so long as the act is done for the sake of some burdened victim and brings the agent into conflict with that oppressive burden in some way.

More specifically, I suggest that any account of victim action-guidance or assessment should satisfy three desiderata drawn from the feminist literature, and that counting a wider range of reasons is key to satisfying these desiderata.

First, dropping the requirement that one must specifically intend resistance is sensitive to the ways in which oppression can compromise victim agency, including the internalization of oppressive norms and limited knowledge of one's options or of the underlying social structures responsible for one's circumstances, as well as cases where developing an overt political consciousness is of little value given a victim's more immediate concerns. Second, relaxing the range of permissible intentions better attends to intersectionality (cf. Crenshaw 1989), or the insight that differences in identity and personal circumstances lead to unique manifestations of oppression that defy generalization or uniform prescription. Because of these differences, oversimplifying claims about what actions 'must' aim to do often fail to reflect the needs of victims at the margins, or worse, harm such victims by misrepresenting their situations or misdirecting our energies. Third, counting resistance that doesn't necessarily aim at ending oppression best reflects the lessons of transnational feminism. An inclusive account is compatible with different value systems and conceptions of the good, as it wouldn't require that responses to oppression conform to a particular liberal ideal of justice or civic focus. An inclusive account is also better at handling the challenge presented by everyday responses to oppression that have elements of both resistance *and* complicity, meaning that it captures Uma Narayan-style 'bargaining with patriarchy' cases (2002, 421f), and is in line with Serene Khader's agency-respecting approach to public interventions in the lives of people with adaptive preferences (2011, 5).

At first, expecting resisting victims to aim at ending oppression might seem reasonable – what's the point of resistance, if not to end oppression? But the requirement privileges an overtly political and empowered sort of agent, one motivated by a well-versed desire for social change, or at least a defiant understanding of how oppression harms them and why certain burdens aren't to be tolerated. There's no denying that such agents exist, and act well. They confront wrongs because they understand them to be wrong, and require no further reason to act. For example, when being denied a promotion reveals the presence of sexism in the workplace, we can readily imagine an employee whose subsequent protest isn't chiefly motivated by her own career prospects, but by a determination to work toward justice for all. A woman who hasn't

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internalized oppressive norms about her proper place, and who correctly identifies the power structures that keep people like her (and only like her) in their place. A woman who has the psychological and material resources necessary to focus her attention on those power structures, and who lacks dependents or other entanglements competing for her attention. A woman who's prepared to make workplace equality her mission until the day it becomes a reality. Such paladins are remembered for a reason, but if we're trying to understand morally worthwhile resistance, then we make a mistake by *requiring* their dispositional profile for all agents. Each necessary condition we add excludes more cases, and accounts should be able to accommodate the mundane, situational reasons of typical agents as well as the more complicated resistance of struggling victims.

There's a wide range of morally valuable responses that don't involve adopting resistance as an explicit aim, but still bring agents into conflict with oppression by attempting to counteract its burdens. Examples can be dramatic, like a person taking a disobedient stance in order to deflect attention away from a targeted friend, or a victim filing an unprecedented lawsuit to force others to take her experiences seriously, or a hopeless romantic defying repressive customs because they crave a certain kind of relationship, or a stigmatized person giving an assumption-challenging interview because she was tired of having to explain herself to each person she met, or a victim lashing out at a brazenly indifferent oppressor because he could no longer contain his mounting anger and wanted that oppressor to experience a comparable moment of vulnerability and fear. Even Huck Finn is an example. None of these agents aim at 'ending oppression', and if anything, most are focused on secondary burdens or compounding effects.

Small, everyday expressions of indignation or compassion can also be examples of worthwhile responses to oppression performed for other reasons. Imagine a summer camp where girls but not boys are discouraged from eating fatty foods.[7] A girl might complain about the policy because it's yet another instance of oppressive beauty norms that disproportionately govern women's bodies and self-conceptions. If so, she aims to end an oppressive burden, and thus counts as resisting. Or she might complain because she's feeling hungry, can't understand why only girls are forced to stay hungry, and wants the more substantial meal she sees others enjoying. If so, she doesn't intend to resist – she only acts with the further intention of appeasing her appetite or attending to her health. But given the way that oppression interferes with women's bodies and body image, appetite and health are excellent reasons for resisting. Alternatively, imagine a group of friends or coworkers. One of them likes to use the phrase 'That's gay!' to express disapproval, for which another eventually criticizes him. He might do so because he understands that phrases like 'that's gay', 'that's lame', 'I got gypped', and so on help to maintain privileged spaces by marginalizing or displacing others. If that's why he chips away at their widespread acceptability, then he intends to resist oppression. But he also might have noticed that

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whenever anyone in the group uses 'gay' to express disapproval, their gay friend withdraws a little more. If he criticizes the phrase because he's a caring extrovert and wants everyone to feel welcome, then he doesn't intend to resist – he only intends to accommodate a friend, and risks being mocked (or worse) for his efforts. But given the way that oppression manifests itself in everyday group dynamics, making spaces more welcoming is also an excellent reason to resist.

In the background of restrictions on acceptable reasons is an assumption that 'ending oppression' and 'sending a message of revolt' are the only sorts of ends at which genuine resistance can aim. If a victim isn't committed to minimizing structural injustice, then she must be servile, or indifferent to injustice, or selfishly concerned with looking out for herself, or outright complicit. And it's precisely this quick leap from 'not explicitly committed to ending oppression' to 'tacitly or overtly committed to ongoing oppression' that obscures the other reasons why victims and their allies might engage in resistance, including the array of reasons considered above.

When we step back from the strict demands of moral theory, the diversity of possible motivations shouldn't actually concern us. If anything we should expect it, as a straightforward implication of intersectionality. Because identities and personal circumstances vary so widely, manifestations of oppression are often unique. But when it comes to assessing the motivations victims have for responding to their oppression, we sometimes default to an unusually narrow range of priorities, as if largely interchangeable victims were facing the same set of obstacles and burdens. Maybe a young black man who doesn't intend to send a message of revolt is displaying a culpable level of servility. Or more likely, he could be contending with a unique set of pressures that arise from the tendency to see the anger of black men as more dangerous and lawless than the anger of white men, leaving him motivated to convey the injustice of his circumstances without being too disruptive or challenging. Maybe a victim who aims to secure adequate nutrition for herself instead of directly combating the cultural norms that require familial sacrifice is indifferent to ongoing injustice. Or more likely, the intersection of her gender, class, and religion has produced a social position where food is simply a more pressing concern than fairness. Expecting a narrow range of reasons to motivate all resistance erases agents at the margins, and can result in poor action-guidance for the very agents moral theories should be trying to address.

Unfortunately, assumptions about what genuine resistance looks like are especially common when we consider victims in other cultures. As Narayan warns in the context of Western liberal judgments, when 'third world women' don't manifest the kind of outward resistance we imagine ourselves engaging in were we in their place, we tend to see them as either powerless prisoners incapable of resistance or as dupes of patriarchy that have fully internalized their oppression. And both reactions 'share the problem of imagining one's Others as *monolithic in their responses*, failing to recognize that one's Others have a *variety*

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of responses to the practices that shape their lives' (2002, 419).[8] Narayan insists that many of these women are shrewdly aware of when they can negotiate, and try to rewrite the scripts of the inferior roles they do accept (423). Some may intend to lessen their experience of oppression by 'bargaining with patriarchy' in this way, but some are simply choosing the inseparable 'bundle of elements' that best advances their interests, receiving some of what they want in life while resigning themselves to the rest (422). Since the latter set of women intend something other than ending their oppression, a narrow understanding of what victims 'must' intend will lead us to dismiss their choices as non-resistance, or even complicity. But responding to oppression in another way, or for other reasons, doesn't always mean that you've given in to its burdens.

Similarly, Khader cautions that even well-intentioned 'feminist theorizing about deprivation can function to obscure the agency of deprived people and misrepresent the causes of their deprivation,' in part because those concerned with cross-cultural interventions are engaged in 'a complex, high-stakes practice of making judgments about those who are different from them' (2011, 6f, 10). One of the ways in which we can misunderstand victims, especially those whose identities and circumstances differ from our own, is by treating their beliefs, attitudes, and apparent inaction as the proximate causes of their deprivation, 'as though it is their beliefs, rather than social structures, that need to be changed' (10f). The cavalier assumption that victims must not be resisting because they lack recognizable political commitments or priorities is especially worrisome, for our purposes. But if we instead think of agency as 'the capacity to make decisions and shape one's world in accordance with what one cares about,' then even victims with adaptive preferences aren't simply perpetuating their oppression – they're 'struggling to advance their own interests and desires, even if the struggle to do so must occur within the confines of limited opportunities' (31). And that should count.

I suspect part of the rationale for requiring that victims intend to end their oppression is to allow theorists to draw a clear line between resistance and impermissible responses like complicity. But that line doesn't map onto the realities of oppression. The very same act can be an instance of resistance as well as an instance of complicity, counteracting oppressive burdens in one domain of life while tolerating or reinforcing burdens in another. Imagine a woman in a heavily patriarchal society using the social status afforded by her impeccable obedience to custom to convince her traditionalist husband to make small changes in the home, instead of challenging his oppressive control or the norms and institutions that grant it to him. She resists her oppression by seeking to expand her opportunities in ways that matter to her, but also benefits from conforming to the very system that's responsible for her oppression. If an account requires that victims aim to end their oppression, then this Narayan-style case will be read as a failure to resist, when it should be assessed as partial or complicated resistance instead.[9]

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Taking stock of the argument so far, requiring that victims and their allies intend to resist is both overly demanding and too narrow. It's overly demanding because agents who resist for other reasons will never discharge their obligation, even if they continually and successfully counteract oppressive burdens. It's also too narrow, only recognizing the commitments of explicitly political and empowered agents, and judging good motivations like the desire to have a worthwhile life in spite of unfair obstacles to be the wrong reason for resisting those obstacles. It doesn't appreciate that resisting for other reasons can still expose agents to significant risks and costs, and that accepting those risks and costs is an expression of responsible agency under conditions of oppression. We need a very good justification if we're going to draw a distinction between motivations – it has to be agency-respecting and circumstance-sensitive, and should track something important about how victims relate to the burdens that oppress them. I'll argue that 'agents must intend resistance' fails this standard.

3. Intending to resist

While the literature is sparse on what kinds of motivations are necessary for genuine resistance, Cudd's account is a good place to start, both for its provision of clear, necessary and sufficient conditions and because it seems to define one end of the 'inclusive about reasons or exclusive about reasons' spectrum. Indeed, Cudd is notable for her desire to set 'the most stringent requirement on the intentions of the agent' (2006, 194). Her account is also worth highlighting because it's motivated by an analysis of oppression that's both empirically grounded and committed to eradicating real cases of injustice: she doesn't consider a theory of oppression adequate unless it can 'give some guidance for answering questions about specific cases' and 'point in the direction of a resolution or a reduction of oppression' (21). But I worry that this focus leads Cudd to zero in on actions explicitly intended to reduce oppression, thus discounting a range of worthwhile responses.

Cudd invokes a Davidsonian understanding of intention,[10] meaning that acts of resistance must be caused by beliefs or pro-attitudes about oppression that are themselves caused by oppression: 'the belief might be 'that my people are oppressed' or 'that oppression is unjust.' Likewise, a pro-attitude caused by an experience of oppression might be a wish that oppression end, or a desire that the oppressor be killed' (190). These beliefs and pro-attitudes must, in turn, cause the action the victim takes: 'For an action of resistance, R, to count as resistance to oppression, then, it must be that although R might have been brought about by many different sets of factors, an experience of oppression is a necessary condition … for the set of factors that did in fact bring it about that R' (190). Cudd is interested in specifying how oppression can cause a resisting response 'in the right way,' and what distinguishes morally good resistance from morally bad and non-moral cases (191, 188). While many actions are overdetermined,

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this emphasis on resistance being caused in the right way suggests that beliefs and pro-attitudes like 'I wish the oppression of my people would end' have to be the primary factors motivating an agent. An action doesn't count as resistance, or at least as morally good resistance, unless the experience of oppression moves the agent in prescribed ways.

These restrictions already narrow what counts, but they aren't the only ones Cudd places on genuine resistance. It's also necessary that resisting agents have one of four specified intentions. According to Cudd's account:

> A person *P* is said to be resisting the oppressive situation *S* through action *A* just in case, given a reasonable person *P'* who is situated as *P* is, the following is true:
>
> (1) *P'* would regard *S* as oppressive;
>
> (2) *P* believes *S* is unjust for someone;
>
> (3) *P'* would judge that *A* is not unlikely to effect the lessening of oppression or send a message of revolt or outrage, either for some individual member of or the entire oppressed group;
>
> (4) *P* intends to lessen the oppression or feeling of injustice or send a message of revolt through *A*;
>
> (5) The injustice in (2) and the intention in (4) cause *P* to perform *A* (193f).

The range of permissible intentions is explicitly restricted, in that a resisting agent must intend to lessen oppression or the feeling of injustice, or send a message of revolt or outrage. And there's good evidence that Cudd meant these to be the ends at which resisting agents must aim, because her account also requires that a reasonable person, suitably situated, would judge the agent's actions not unlikely to effect such ends.

Putting it all together, certain beliefs or pro-attitudes like 'I wish that oppression would end' must cause an agent to act with the explicit intention of bringing about a lessening of oppression, or a lessening of the feeling of injustice, etc. Discharging the obligation to resist thus requires that an agent match a fairly precise dispositional profile. This rules out both resisting for any other reason and counteracting oppression for the sake of some further end, and it does so without adequate justification. Recall the lessons of Section 2. Given the imprecision of assessing victims with varied identities and personal circumstances, and the messiness of real-world motives, we shouldn't expect to so neatly isolate the correct response to oppression.

Even setting aside beliefs, pro-attitudes, and the rest of the motivational story, it might be thought that I'm making too much of the specific intentions that Cudd lists. A lot of ground is covered by 'lessening oppression or the feeling of injustice, or sending a message of revolt of outrage.' Are there really resisting agents that don't aim at any of Cudd's four stated ends? Yes, including some paradigm cases. For example, while Cudd's account accommodates slaves who rose up, ran away, or committed suicide to end their torment, many slaves

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who engaged in more subtle forms of sabotage wouldn't count. Bernard Boxill describes cases where slaves in the U.S. 'broke their tools, pretended to be sick, stole from the master, acted stupid, were always late, and in general did what they could to frustrate the point of their oppression' (2010, 8). While reducing the profitability of slavery, such acts predictably did little to lessen the oppressive burdens of being enslaved. In fact, by pretending to be lazy and dull, victims may have even increased their oppression by reinforcing stereotypes,[11] or by 'causing' the increased cruelty that came with lagging profits. Nor were these acts of sabotage intended to send a message of revolt or outrage – quite the opposite! Since insubordination would be met with violent reprisal, the idea was to derail production while also supplying benign explanations for non-cooperation.

Perhaps these acts of sabotage were meant to soothe the feeling of injustice? Maybe, but it's equally possible that some slaves intended to hinder their masters' projects out of well-placed contempt or a desire for revenge, or because it was grimly satisfying to make fools out of whites who thought themselves intelligent as a matter of racial superiority, or simply because they lacked any motivation to be especially useful to their oppressors. If so, then two slaves engaged in the exact same sabotage could either succeed or fail to discharge their obligation to resist, depending on the feelings or states their respective acts of sabotage most spoke to. I can't see a good reason to privilege 'lessening the feeling of injustice' above those other responses. Cudd says she wants to exclude 'purely self-interested, vengeful, or misguided antisocial actions' from counting, even when agents claim that their actions are intended as resistance (187). But if that's the justification, then a lot of interesting, morally ambiguous motivation in the middle is being discounted for the sake of drawing bright lines around morally good resistance. And that's assuming vengeful and purely self-interested reasons do make an act of resistance morally bad, which isn't immediately obvious to me.

Perhaps there's an easy fix. If Cudd's four intentions are too narrow, why not just add a couple more to the list? Perhaps 'cultivate defiance without sending an outward message'[12] or 'sabotage oppressive projects'? These intentions would cover the slaves in the last example. But there are other paradigm cases out there, and that means more additions. What about 'opting out of a practice as a matter of integrity or self-respect'? Or 'sending a message of love and compassion to a victim'? As the list continues to expand, it gets harder to make principled distinctions, and we start to lose our conceptual grip on what makes some intentions count and others not. Extensive itemization isn't a theory, and as a strategy for being inclusive, it's sure to miss cases – especially as we turn our attention to intersectional and transnational contexts, where beliefs, pro-attitudes, and intentions are almost guaranteed to sprawl in highly individualized and unpredictable ways. We need a different approach.

Hay's account of resistance is especially relevant for our purposes, as its permissiveness allows it to capture many of the cases that Cudd's account couldn't.

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In fact, if all we needed was an understanding of resistance that allowed a wide range of actions to discharge the obligation to resist, and did so without resorting to ad hoc enumeration, then we'd have everything we need. But on closer inspection, the latitude with respect to actions doesn't extend to *reasons*. Surprisingly, Hay's account may actually be more exclusive about reasons than Cudd's.

Hay urges feminists to make use of the conceptual resources that can be found in Kant, namely his account of 'what our rational nature is, why it is valuable, how it can be compromised and deformed, and why it must be fostered and protected' (2013, 50). On Hay's view, victims have an obligation to resist their own oppression, one that's far from supererogatory (118, 134). This is because 'harms to one's rational nature are among the worst harms an oppressed person can face,' and specifically in the case of women, 'are among the most egregious problems that arise from women's oppression' (72). If we understand our capacity for practical rationality as an ordinary human capacity, then we can easily see how oppression causes damage: it can cause self-deception, harm capacities for rational deliberation, and cause weakness of will (123–125). So if Kant is right that our rational nature has ultimate value, then 'Because one has an obligation to prevent harm to one's rational nature, and because oppression can harm one's capacity to act rationally, one has an obligation to resist one's oppression' (122).

Hay's explicit focus 'is on the particular *actions* one must take to actually protect this nature,' and thus on the actions that could 'fulfill the obligation to resist oppression' (122, 140).[13] The specific threat that grounds resistance, coupled with Hay's sensitivity about demandingness and available resources, yields an account that allows many different actions to discharge the obligation to resist, including those that don't involve any direct confrontation with one's oppressors. This is because a wide range of actions *do*, in fact, help to protect our rational natures (139). And none of these actions are privileged over the others, because for Hay, resistance is an imperfect duty. Unlike perfect duties, 'imperfect duties are not, strictly speaking, duties to perform specific *actions*. Rather, imperfect duties are duties to adopt certain *general maxims*, or principles of action. These maxims can be satisfied by more than one action. Imperfect duties thus allow a latitude of choice that perfect duties do not' (135).[14] So, agents have a lot of discretion about how to resist – as long as their actions are motivated by the specific end they're obligated to adopt. In this case, the protection of one's rational nature. Thus for Hay, the obligation to resist oppression is actually an obligation to protect one's rational nature.

This general maxim can cover Cudd's range of cases. Hay argues that 'One could resist oppression by participating in some form of *activism* intended to engage with, and ultimately change, the social norms, roles, and institutions that make up an oppressive system' (140).[15] Examples include directly confronting one's oppressors, committing sabotage, publicly refusing to accept humiliation, setting an example for others, and so on (140f). But these aren't the only actions

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that can protect rational nature. 'Another way to resist oppression is to *opt out* of oppressive social norms, roles, and institutions,' with examples including isolating oneself from oppressors to foster solidarity with fellow victims, and refusing to behave in ways considered appropriate for members of one's group (141).[16] Finally, Hay allows certain attitudes and dispositions to count: 'resistance to oppression could be *internal* as well; someone could, at least theoretically, fulfill the obligation to respect her rational nature by becoming the sort of person whose rational nature was simply not damaged by oppression, perhaps by building up mental walls against many of the harms' (141).[17] Being wary of the corrosive effects of oppression and refusing to believe oppressive messages may not manifest outwardly, but if they succeed in protecting one's rational capacities, 'they would qualify as actions that successfully fulfill the obligation to resist one's oppression' (141).

Hay's account captures a wide range of actions, and because they share the end of protecting oneself from the damage oppression can do to our capacity for practical rationality, no ad hoc enumeration is required to explain why certain actions count. Any action that 'function[s] to protect one's rational nature while destabilizing or undermining oppressive social structures' is sufficient to fulfill the obligation (144). This is very much a step in the right direction.

The problem is that all sorts of harms can constitute an oppressive burden, not just damage to one's rational nature. And presumably, these other harms give victims distinct reasons to resist their own oppression, reasons that go beyond protecting their rational nature. All the previously canvassed problems with exclusive accounts reprise if Hay limits the range of cases where victims owe themselves resistance to those where rational nature is at stake.

Hay attempts to accommodate these cases by arguing that our rational natures are at risk even when no damage is being done to them. This is because 'rational nature can be harmed in almost invisible increments,' with even harmless slights potentially having 'a cumulative effect on people's rational nature' (145). As she argues, 'many individual instances of oppression can be borne without discernibly harming one's rational nature, but eventually they will accumulate and discernible harm will occur. … Because rational nature is so valuable, one needs to err on the side of caution, obviously, and to be careful not to let the corrosive effects of oppression accumulate' (146). This means that victims always have a rational nature-based reason to resist, even when other aspects of their lives are being harmed and require immediate intervention.

If a victim protests the racist assumptions that cause young black men to be read as inherently dangerous by police, and does so because those assumptions directly endanger valuable aspects like his health and physical security, then on Hay's account it doesn't seem like he's acting for the right reason. But if he's also concerned that those racist assumptions can have corrosive effects on his rational nature, and that years of constant gaslighting might eventually cause him to develop deceptive attitudes about men like himself, then protesting

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becomes sufficient to discharge his obligation to resist. Why? Because Hay's obligation to resist is explicitly an obligation to protect one's rational nature. If health and physical security are going to count as reasons, it's only because we can tell a story about how a victim's capacity for practical rationality depends on both. But then telling that story is redundant, because the mere risk to a victim's capacity for practical rationality is already grounding resistance, regardless of what's happening to their health and physical security. And that picture distorts the motivational profile of victims.

While Hay revises several elements of the Kantian framework, her account is still Kantian in two key respects. First, nothing can be more valuable than rational nature, meaning that other reasons for resisting are inherently going to miss what 'should' be a victim's primary concern. Second, acting from an explicitly moral motive – such as the duty to protect one's rational nature – is necessary to discharge one's obligations. Early in the book, when Hay is urging feminists to give the Kantian framework another look, she addresses the objection that Kant can't make room for emotional motives. Her response? Kant doesn't actually condemn non-moral reasons for acting, so long as the right reason is *also* present:

> When it comes to acts that are morally required, however, our commitment to morality must be necessary and sufficient for action. This is not to say that emotional motives cannot also be present for these acts, however. There is nothing wrong with acting out of an emotional attachment to those we love, for example. Our actions are usually overdetermined anyway; as long as the motive of duty, by itself, would be sufficient to make us do what is right, then if we happen to perform an action also because we possess another emotional motive, there is nothing amiss. (59)

Her response seems to open the door to other reasons, but it's not entirely clear how we're supposed to model this motivational profile, or what we should infer about cases where resisting victims really aren't concerned about their rational natures.

For example, is this a counterfactual account? A victim can permissibly resist for any reason, so long as, absent that reason and others like it, the victim would have acted the same way, and done so because the action is morally required? That's a hard counterfactual to assess, because subtracting motivations means subtracting the things that people care about, and that can change a person's identity too much to draw any kind of reliable conclusion about what they otherwise would have done. It also reinforces the idea that other reasons victims might have are superfluous, and that what really matters is whether they can be moved by the right reason. Meaning we're right back to prescribing the 'real' reason why diverse agents in radically different circumstances should act, which Section 2 warned against doing. So maybe this is an overdetermination account, instead? A victim can permissibly resist for any reason, so long as one of their reasons is the moral requirement to protect their rational natures? But this has the same implications about real versus superfluous motivations, tolerating a victim's resistance as long as it conforms to a philosophical account

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of why victims should resist. It doesn't just insert a particular reason into the motivational profile of every victim out there – it makes that one reason, out of all possible reasons, necessary. This approach is insensitive to the range of oppressive effects that victims might properly choose to care about.

Even if Hay could avoid the unintended implications of treating a concern for rational nature as a necessary and sufficient reason for resistance – a tall order, given her Kantian framework – her account would still mischaracterize cases where acting for some other reason is crucial to acting well. Imagine a father who isn't driven by love when he resists the oppression of his children, and acts from a sense of impartial duty instead. It's a virtue if an account leaves some room to criticize such agents. Ultimately, I agree with Helga Varden on this point: 'I'm not quite convinced, however, that Hay's way of responding to Williams's (and related) feminist objections is sufficient. For example, it seems to me that Hay fails to engage a core challenge from this corner, namely that *simply* acting out of love is sometimes *normatively required*. Hay's view, by first establishing moral permissibility and second an act of love, still involves 'one thought too many" (2013, 3).[18] If you want a reason to count as properly motivating, you have to count that reason on its own terms. A reason that's only included because a better reason happens to overdetermine it is a reason that isn't doing any work.

Hay set out to demonstrate that the value of rational nature yields a unique and worthwhile account of resistance. I think she wanted to add an additional consideration to the mix, and didn't mean to rule out other reasons for resisting. But I fear her Kantian framework is at odds with her aim. At best, Hay's account inserts a requirement that distorts the motivational profiles of victims. At worst, it rules out cases where victims resist for other reasons.

To be clear, I still think Hay moves us in the right direction. I just want to extend her latitude about actions one crucial step further: to the reasons why victims and their allies perform those actions in the first place. We need an account that can track motivations without implying that one of them is the 'real' reason. We need an account that's inclusive, but isn't so flexible that it's incapable of drawing distinctions and ends up letting any reason whatsoever count. I think we can get the right amount of latitude if we count intending to resist *as well as* cases where agents resist the oppression of victims intentionally.

4. Resisting intentionally

Imagine two women who confront the same wrong and respond with the same action, but do so for different reasons. The first, Champion, is denied a promotion due to blatantly sexist double standards. So she calls attention to discriminatory practices in the workplace in order to advance the cause of equality for all women. Champion speaks out with the intention of thereby resisting oppression. The second woman, Trailblazer, is also denied a promotion due to sexist double standards. So she calls attention to discriminatory practices in order to

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advance in her sexist but otherwise rewarding profession. She aims to live a certain life, and pushes back against oppressive barriers she finds in the way. Trailblazer doesn't intend to resist oppression, but she does resist it intentionally.

The distinction means that only Champion adopts 'ending oppression' as a project in of itself, making resistance the kind of end that shapes her *other* ends. She's likely to look for new ways to contribute to women's equality, such as writing op-eds and attending rallies. And she rules out actions inconsistent with her project of resistance, like accepting an exclusive promotion or pay raise that leaves her coworkers' situations unchanged. Trailblazer won't necessarily act the same way, because 'ending oppression' isn't her project. Instead, her ends are shaped by projects like 'pursuing personal achievement' and 'securing professional status and respect.' That means she'll look for new ways to deservingly advance in life, and will rule out actions – like accepting any other unfair limitations – that prove inconsistent with bettering herself and her situation.

If we want an account of resistance that can accommodate agents that, like Trailblazer, resist for other reasons, then we have three options. First, we can flat-footedly insist that all the diverse and uniquely situated agents we've discussed so far really *do* intend to end oppression. They might not be thinking explicitly in terms of justice, solidarity, or reform, and they might not be concerned with ending oppression as a whole. But insofar as oppression is the immediate source of Trailblazer's career frustrations, the friend's isolation within his 'That's gay!' spouting peer group, the father's drive to teach his vulnerable children to work twice as hard, and so on, one might be tempted to say that these victims and their allies are acting with the intention of ending at least one oppressive burden each.

The problem is, this strategy doesn't accurately reflect how projects structure actions. Imagine a variant of the Champion/Trailblazer case where they face sexism in every aspect of their lives except the workplace. Champion* would still speak out, because she aims at full equality. But since Trailblazer* aims at career advancement, she would only begin to speak out if sexism in other domains started impacting her job performance – say, if she were unable to work overtime due to an unfair distribution of household chores and primary caretaking obligations. And even then, Trailblazer* would characterize these wrongs differently, highlighting her inability to keep up with the output of her male colleagues instead of criticizing her gendered exploitation in the home. In G.E.M. Anscombe's terminology (2000, 37ff), Trailblazer* isn't plausibly acting under the description of someone who's resisting sexism in her private life.[19] At a minimum, claiming that an agent intends to ϕ should correctly explain her actions, but saying Trailblazer* intends to resist the sexism she experiences at home would mischaracterize her motivations and preferred outcomes, and it would get all sorts of predictions about her future actions wrong. The same is true if we claim that the original Champion and Trailblazer intend the same thing with respect to sexism in the workplace.

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The second option for accommodating other reasons is to endorse a self-effacing, consequentialist account. Sometimes acting for the wrong reason can yield a comparable or better result than aiming for that result directly. True, Trailblazer doesn't intend to resist double standards in the workplace, but her actions still contribute to the goal of ending women's oppression. That's what trailblazers do: they make it easier for others to follow in their footsteps. So if we think what matters is that agents actually try to end oppression, then perhaps we should recommend whatever reason gets them there. This strategy might appeal to readers who worry about counting self-interested careerism as 'resistance' because they see resistance as fundamentally justice-oriented, or because they think at least some concern for helping others is necessary to discharge a moral obligation. But relying on this strategy would permit far too many actions to discharge the obligation to resist, including those intended to contribute to oppression. Consider cases where egregious bigotry shocked the public imagination, leading to increased awareness and self-reflection, anti-discrimination legislation, and so on. On balance, these bad actions had beneficial outcomes.[20] Even a crass joke can become a teachable moment. Clearly then, helping to end oppression isn't enough – intentions do matter.

That leaves a final option: expand the account to include cases where agents come into conflict with oppression for reasons other than ending oppression. This is resisting *intentionally*. Michael Bratman suggests that 'when I *A* intentionally I intend *something*, but I may not specifically intend to *A*' – one may intend *B* instead, and do *A* in order to *B* or for the sake of *B* (1999, 119).[21] Bratman criticizes Davidson for neglecting 'the role that my future intentions play in constraining and influencing the further construction and adjustment of my plans' (1985, 25). A central feature of intentions is their coordinative function in getting agents what they want, a function that imposes standards of internal consistency and means-end coherence. Rational agents who want to realize their ends will integrate their projects into their broader life plans. That's why they'll look for other ways to bring about their intended ends, and rule out actions that prove inconsistent with those ends. But actions performed intentionally don't coordinate ends the same way, and aren't subject to the same standards of internal consistency and the like. What we capture by saying that Trailblazer resists, but resists intentionally, is the idea that her resistance is a means to some other end like career success – and that it's career success, not resistance, that plays the coordinative role for her.

But while Trailblazer only protests inequality with the further intention of pursuing her career goals, that's not to say that she engages in resistance unknowingly or haphazardly, or that she isn't subject to all the same risks and potential costs that come with resisting oppression. The 'for the sake of' relationship is key to acting intentionally. Bratman's marathon example is instructive, here. Someone who intends to train for a marathon will need to wear down her shoes, but she doesn't intend to wear them down. She wears them down intentionally,

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or for the sake of completing her marathon training. How do we know this? Well, if her shoes are still in mint condition after the race, she won't sit down on the side of the road and finish the job with a pumice stone, or search for other shoes in need of similar treatment (1999, 123, 136). But nor is the act of wearing down her shoes an accident. It's still an action that she deliberately chose to perform. And she's still responsible for the state her shoes are in, can still be subject to reactive attitudes based on their condition, and so on. The same is true of Trailblazer. She knowingly chooses to protest the sexism in her workplace. She's only doing it with some further intention in mind, and she'll stop if the last oppressive barrier in her way is ever removed, but in the meantime she's committed to resisting for the sake of her career, including deliberately exposing herself to the risks and potential costs of resistance.

There are all sorts of criticisms we might make of Trailblazer, and all sorts of debates that are worth having about her motivations. But discounting her protest means that demanding to be treated equally is only genuine resistance if a victim is bothered by her inequality *selflessly*. And that conclusion far exceeds the implications of any reasonable criticism or debate about Trailblazer. To see why, let's work through some of them.[22]

For example, is Trailblazer's resistance less impressive than Champion's? Sure, but we should disabuse ourselves of the notion that exemplary moral action is the same as a necessary condition for moral action. Do Champion's actions have a better chance of effecting desirable change? Quite possibly, though any action can fail to achieve its ends or make matters worse, and meanwhile, the name 'Trailblazer' *is* a deliberate nod to one of the ways in which real-world progress sometimes happens, so this is probably an empirical question.

Does Champion display a greater morally sensitivity than Trailblazer? Well, perhaps. This one risks question-begging in favor of other-regarding considerations. Champion could neglect her own needs just as easily as Trailblazer might neglect the needs of others, and under conditions of oppression, I'm not sure that one form of neglect is better than the other. But if Trailblazer is unaware that other women also face workplace discrimination, or if she's aware but totally unmoved by her coworkers' struggles, then yes, this version of Trailblazer is morally insensitive. Part of moral sensitivity is paying attention to the full range of moral considerations in the right amounts, so it seems fair to conclude that Insensitive Trailblazer isn't as good of an agent as she could be. Even this variant case doesn't warrant discounting her resistance, however – culpable ignorance and indifference are distinct wrongs from failing to resist, as we can easily imagine both a sensitive person who fails to take any action and a dedicated activist with lamentable blind spots. Plus, it's not clear why Trailblazer's priorities are uniquely disqualifying, when it's doubtful that anyone in the world is both aware of every single oppressive burden and genuinely feels motivated to resist them all.

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Issues of ignorance raise a related question about epistemic requirements: Does Trailblazer have to know that the wrong she's protesting is oppression? Something like that, yes. An agent doesn't have to think in terms of 'resistance' and 'oppression', let alone have a complete understanding of the structural forces arrayed against her, but she does have to conceive of the action she's performing as an attempt to counteract a burden, and conceive of that burden as something unfair or wrong, not just undesirable. An agent needs to believe that she's ϕ-ing in order to ϕ intentionally. Imagine a variant where Trailblazer is denied a promotion due to a sexist double standard, but doesn't believe that any injustice was involved. Instead, Mistaken Trailblazer thinks her employer is disorganized and simply overlooked her file. Correctly believing herself to be the most qualified candidate, she protests the 'managerial blunder.' Although she's in fact bringing herself into conflict with oppression for the sake of pursuing her valuable ends, the better description is that she's *unintentionally* resisting her oppression. Agents can certainly do the right thing without realizing it, and her action will still have self-regarding moral worth, but it's hard to say that – unbeknownst to herself – she discharged her obligation to resist. She doesn't even realize that she has resistance obligations in this case, because she doesn't think her situation is oppressive to begin with.

That said, I believe epistemic requirements should be kept as minimal as possible, in order to accommodate the ways in which oppression can compromise victim agency. Recalling the first desideratum from Section 2, oppression can lead to the internalization of oppressive norms, diminishing a victim's sense that there's something systematically wrong with her situation. It can also limit a victim's awareness of available options, and of the underlying social structures responsible for the burden she's facing. And there can be barriers to cultivating a political consciousness, including the existence of more pressing needs. An agency-respecting and circumstance-sensitive account shouldn't rule these agents out. So I contend that a victim is intentionally resisting as long as she has at least some sense that she's being burdened, that this burden rises to the level of a moral wrong or an unfairness, and that her action has the potential to counteract that wrong or unfairness. The better she understands her circumstances, the more explicit her beliefs and reasons will likely become, but even well-informed agents can be caught unawares, or fall victim to gaslighting, or believe the best about others in ways that make it hard to acknowledge the extent of their own mistreatment.

I don't think the difference between Mistaken Trailblazer and the original Trailblazer is whether or not they're doing the right thing – it's how insidious their epistemic subordination is. Mistaken Trailblazer hasn't betrayed any moral failing. And as soon as she suspects the reason why her 'disorganized' employer didn't promote her after being reminded of her qualifications, or as soon as she begins to dig deeper into his seemingly arbitrary decisions, she'll begin to discharge her obligation in full. After all, resistance under poor epistemic

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conditions is sometimes just a matter of investigating your circumstances until you appreciate that you were right to sense that something was off about them, that what you face is indeed wrong or unfair, and that you should resist it.

Last question. Is Trailblazer's self-regarding focus evidence of a vicious character, or a preference ordering that's morally lacking? No. I don't think this criticism takes the particulars of victimhood seriously enough, in just the ways Section 2 warned about. I suppose it would get harder to accept that Trailblazer discharges her obligation if we updated the case, making her actively opposed to helping her coworkers instead of merely self-regarding in her focus. What should we say about this variant of Trailblazer? Well, Anti-Solidarity Trailblazer certainly comes across as cold and indifferent, but mean people can resist just like culpably ignorant people can – again, distinct criticisms. If it seems to you that Anti-Solidarity Trailblazer just isn't resisting anymore, then it's likely because you antecedently assume that resistance has to be about helping *other* victims instead of helping yourself, even when you're a victim. And that begs the question.

If there's simply no convincing a reader on that last point, then maybe that's evidence that 'the obligation to resist' is ambiguous between a few distinct obligations we habitually run together in the literature: something like an obligation of justice to fight back against oppression, an obligation of well-being to counteract oppressive burdens, and an obligation of beneficence to help *other* victims burdened by oppression. Let's suppose a victim has all three obligations. Then maybe the thing to say is that Anti-Solidarity Trailblazer, who only protests her own inequality because she refuses to help her coworkers, indirectly discharges the first obligation by clearing a path, directly discharges the second obligation by improving her own circumstances, and fails the third obligation outright. Now, instead of a simple verdict like 'Anti-Solidarity Trailblazer fails to resist,' we have the more nuanced verdict that Anti-Solidarity Trailblazer resists in some ways but not in others. And this puts us in a better position to accommodate the kinds of messy, half-complicity cases that Section 2 anticipated would be a staple of victim action-guidance and assessment.

Even if you think the original Trailblazer is uniquely liable to each of the above criticisms, that still doesn't warrant the conclusion that Trailblazer fails to resist. At worst, you have the conclusion that Trailblazer's demand for equal treatment is too narrow, and that she's blameworthy in some respects. That, in other words, she's morally imperfect. But there are all sorts of ways that agents could be better that have nothing to do with whether their actions should count as resistance. They might not be living up to all of their responsibilities, or they might not be developing their characters well enough, but we don't increase the clarity of agent-assessment when we conflate these concerns. Let distinct obligations be distinct.

Accommodating these various considerations with mixed moral assessments also puts us in a better position to distinguish between disparate agents. Consider two more versions of Trailblazer: Early-Career Trailblazer and Successful

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Trailblazer. Although she's by no means free of sexism, it makes sense that a woman who's reached the highest rungs of her profession has a stronger obligation to both fight back against oppression directly and to help her fellow victims. She's uniquely positioned, both socially and epistemically, to speak out about certain kinds of barriers. She has a comparative amount of privilege, which means both expanded resources and a degree of insulation against backlash. There's also the possibility that people will use Successful Trailblazer's status as evidence that there's no more sexism in their profession, and if she stays silent on the issue, she may be contributing to oppression in a way that an equally silent Early-Career Trailblazer just isn't. To be clear, yes, it's permissible for Successful Trailblazer to continue to focus on her own career – self-regarding resistance tracks a set of real moral considerations, and shouldn't be mistaken as a second-best alternative for agents too vulnerable to engage in other-regarding resistance. Successful Trailblazer's reasons *remain* good reasons to resist oppression. But if we expand the obligation to resist so that it's no longer a simple discharge/fail binary that tracks ideal moral behavior, then we have the flexibility to say that while both Early-Career Trailblazer and Successful Trailblazer resist by overcoming the oppressive barriers in their way, Successful Trailblazer can reasonably be expected to do more than she is, and is thus open to criticism. That's a better pair of verdicts than saying that early-Career Trailblazer resists while Successful Trailblazer does not.

One still might worry that because the original Trailblazer is only resisting for the sake of some other end, her protests will be too situational or sporadic to discharge her obligation to resist. This leads me to an important observation. As constructed, the original Trailblazer case employs a strong simplifying assumption, namely that Trailblazer's career aspirations are only burdened by oppression in one way, in one place, at one time, by one policy or antagonist. And that's an unrealistic depiction of sexism in the workplace, let alone oppression. Oppression usually affects many or all domains of victims' lives, saturating their everyday lived experience. In reality, a victim's valuable plans and projects will be burdened in all sorts of ways. So in order to live the lives they want, victims motivated to resist for other reasons will find those reasons activated with considerable regularity. The gregarious friend who worries about marginalizing language will witness social isolation more than once. The father who wants to equip his children for the obstacles ahead will have his work cut out for him. All of the examples I've considered so far are simplified versions of constant, multi-domain struggles that will likely persist as long as oppression continues to interfere with the lives of victims.

And this kind of commitment, this ongoing campaign to counteract burdens, is exactly what resistance accounts say victims and their allies should be doing under conditions of oppression. These are agents pushing back against limitations and pushing through barriers. They're victims endeavoring to improve their circumstances, their lives, and themselves, and victims or their allies

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endeavoring to help others do the same. Career success, being respected by others, and even being happy aren't misguided or 'merely' selfish projects in the normative situations in which victims find themselves. They're worthwhile projects, wrongly denied. If the Trailblazer case has any intuitive pull, it's because she's working to live the very sort of life that oppression works to thwart. And striving to have that life *anyway* is morally relevant. It may not be about resisting oppression for Trailblazer, motivationally, but her actions are an attempt to counteract the effect that oppression is having on her, performed precisely because she thinks her desires are too valuable – and herself, too deserving – to surrender those desires without a fight. Remember, Trailblazer isn't just fighting for a promotion. She's fighting for a *valuable* promotion *that sexism prevented her from getting*.

Given that oppression interferes with the valuable plans and projects of victims, I think the active pursuit of those same plans and projects (or assistance in pursing them, by allies or fellow victims) can discharge the obligation to resist. But valuable projects aren't the only aspect of a victim's life that can be burdened by oppression. Exclusive focus aside, Hay was right about victims having good reason to protect their rational nature. There's also self-respect, happiness, connection, autonomy, security, health, and valuable external goods – all constituents of well-being that oppression can burden, and all important enough to give agents good reasons to resist. We should count any reason that involves protecting or promoting a burdened constituent of victim well-being. When an agent counteracts oppression for the sake of burdened well-being, they're intentionally resisting oppression, whether they intend to end it or not.

Because burdened well-being is doing the explanatory work, we can multiply reasons without risking ad hoc enumeration. All of the examples in this paper involved one burdened constituent of well-being or another. Trailblazer fought for self-respect and the ability to pursue her plans and projects. The father teaching his children to overcome barriers was motivated by connection and by their nascent autonomy. The friend who objected when hearing 'That's gay!' was concerned about his teammate's happiness and security. The girl who wanted more to eat at camp resisted for the sake of her health and autonomy. The woman who leveraged adherence to patriarchal customs for more freedom in the home did so for the sake of autonomy and security. Every example was about burdened well-being, because oppression burdens victims' well-being.

On my view, then, an action is sufficient to discharge the obligation to resist when it intentionally attempts to counteract an oppressive burden for the sake of protecting or promoting a constituent of victim well-being that's being oppressively burdened. Given the way that oppression interferes with the lives of victims, trying to counteract that interference with the further intention of thereby enjoying (or contributing to) a life without such interference is genuine resistance.

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There are two jointly sufficient conditions built into this account. First, in order to discharge the obligation to resist, a victim (or her ally) must *intentionally* bring herself into conflict with an oppressive norm, practice, institution, or agent, meaning that her action is an attempt to counteract an oppressive burden. The second condition specifies what these intentionally performed actions must be done for the sake of. In order to discharge the obligation to resist, it's sufficient that an agent *intend*, whether explicitly or implicitly, to protect or promote the burdened well-being of a victim. This includes a victim's own well-being, but it also captures victims acting for the sake of their fellow victims' well-being, and non-victims acting for the sake of some victim's well-being. It excludes non-victims acting primarily for the sake of their own well-being.

Critically, these two conditions can't be met independently. The counteracting action in the first condition (ex. boycotting) has to be done for the sake of the well-being constituent in the second condition (ex. preserving her self-respect); again, the 'for the sake of' relation is key to acting intentionally. Nor can the constituent of well-being mentioned in the second condition (ex. self-respect) be unaffected by the oppressive burden the agent is bringing herself into conflict with in the first condition (ex. a set of norms and institutions that threaten, say, her sense of security, but have no effect on her self-respect). The reason Trailblazer's protest is sufficient to discharge her obligation to resist is because she's intentionally counteracting sexist barriers to her valuable plans and projects, and is doing so for the sake of those plans and projects. She isn't protesting for some unrelated reason, like jealousy or competitiveness. And the protested sexism is, in fact, interfering with her plans and projects. Her action brings her into conflict with oppression, and is performed for the sake of counteracting oppressive burdens on her well-being.

Most importantly, this account satisfies all three desiderata of sensitive action-guidance. By dropping the requirement that agents cultivate a political consciousness or think beyond their own projects, and by adjusting epistemic requirements to capture all but the most extreme cases of internalization, the account is sensitive to the ways oppression can compromise agency. By expanding the range of permissible intentions, the account avoids oversimplifying or distorting what victims do or should care about, thus accommodating the unique struggles and priorities that intersectionality instructs us to expect. And by being neutral between a variety of value systems, and avoiding any hierarchy of reasons that might privilege a liberal ideal of justice or civic focus over 'unfamiliar' motivations, the account avoids the kind of impositions and biased assessments that plague transnational feminism. It can even accommodate actions that have elements of both resistance and complicity, instead of insisting that there's always a bright line between the two.

All formalism about resisting intentionally aside, I also think the account has intuitive results. I suspect most people don't really want to police the motivations of resisting victims to make sure they're angry about their oppression for

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the best available reasons. I suspect most people are happy to welcome a fellow protestor to the march, and don't worry about whether romantic connections or professional aspirations motivated them to show up – so long as they have our backs.

Notes

1. I'm drawing on Bratman's distinction between intending and acting intentionally.
2. Support for some version of this position includes Hill (1973), Cudd (2006), Young (2006), Boxill (2010), Harvey (2010), Hay (2011), and Silvermint (2013), among others.
3. Motives, alone, aren't enough to settle whether an action should count. Some actions will fail to discharge obligations because they're unrelated to resistance or because they directly contribute to oppression. See: Section 4.
4. My thanks to a referee for raising this concern.
5. Original emphasis.
6. To be clear, while the account I'll develop in Section 4 ultimately explains 'resisting intentionally' in terms of objective well-being, that's because I think well-being does the best job of capturing the output of this bottom-up methodology. But that doesn't mean considerations of well-being underlie the methodology. The methodology is solely justified by the feminist desiderata outlined in this section.
7. My thanks to Rosa Terlazzo for suggesting a version of this example.
8. Original emphasis.
9. This concern partially updates my earlier treatment of resistance (Silvermint 2013).
10. While I'll be borrowing from Bratman's understanding of 'intention' rather than Davidson's, my disagreement with Cudd isn't merely terminological, as our differing verdicts will reveal.
11. Epistemic dominance makes it difficult for victims to control the messages their actions send, since those messages are interpreted against a backdrop of oppressive assumptions and expectations.
12. Cudd may be able to cover some additional cases if sending a message of outrage *to yourself* counts (192f). But other intentions more naturally capture this worthwhile aim.
13. Original emphasis.
14. Original emphasis.
15. Original emphasis.
16. Original emphasis.
17. Original emphasis.
18. Original emphasis.
19. Cf. Davidson 1980. I thank Matthew Smith and Mark Alfano for a discussion of these issues.
20. Perhaps the self-effacing approach should only count reasons that *reliably* lead to resistance, thus blocking bad actions with unexpectedly good outcomes? But the reasons that reliably move people to act are highly individual and situational, making it unclear which, if any, of the 'other reasons' would count.
21. Original emphasis.
22. My thanks to a referee for urging me to consider a few of the questions that follow.

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