THESIS

A MORE-THAN-HUMAN LIFE: RETHINKING THE GOOD LIFE

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ABSTRACT

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Recently, within disabled discourses, there have been conversations surrounding who is considered worthy of participating in society and who is not. Additionally, those conversations have included how exhausting it can be to fight for the ability to participate in society. Lauren Berlant's concept of the good life acts as a way to understand why this feeling of exhaustion emerges in these conversations. However, it may not account for all ways of being and participating in the world. Therefore, in this thesis, I examine how a posthuman lens can help us rethink not only the broader normative ways of living a good life, but also the concept of *the good life*. I do this through a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the subreddit r/disability. Additionally, I examine if the discourse of the subreddit employs *good life* ideals or if cripistemologies emerge in the discourse. In analyzing the subreddit, I find that that while some of the conversations reflects good life ideals and normative ways of being, other conversations challenge normative ways of being and express alternate ways of being in the world. These alternate ways of being align with the posthuman lens I employ in this thesis and allow for ways of rethinking the good life through proposing pluralistic, interdependent ways of being in the world. From the findings of this CDA of r/disability, I aim to bring attention to pluralistic, interdependent, crip ways of knowing/being that can provide alternate ways of being for both disabled and non-disabled people alike, blur the boundaries between disabled/non-disabled, and challenge those normative ways of being.

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INTRODUCTION

Not many people would say that they aim for a bad life; most people strive for a good life. Despite this, when we look at other people's lives, we may consider someone's life to be objectively a bad life. Yet, what is it that makes someone's life good or bad? It's likely that most people have an idea of what having a good life means. In imagining a good life, would that life be a disabled life? It's doubtful that many, if any, people would answer yes to that question. Through looking at history, it's easy to see why disability is not conserved a good life, as disability does not operate as an ideal—a norm.

Disability scholar Lennard Davis points to the origins of the idea of "norm" as coming from the same origins as statistics. The origin of the statistical norm we know now arises from Adolphe Quetelet's "l'homme moyen," or the average man; anyone who deviated from this norm was "ugliness in body as well as vice in morals and a state of sick" (2). As statistics, or norming a population, developed in the 19th century, these ideas were adopted by the eugenics movement. While more than one eugenicist used statistical norms, Sir Francis Galton is whose work led to tools we still use to measure what an "average" human should be: IQ and scholastic achievement tests (Davis 5). It was not just mental achievement that could be measured, but also bodies via height, weight, and ethnicity/race (Davis 6). Furthermore, Davis argues that through the stories we're told, the stories of villains are often those of physically abnormal bodies (9). Michael Bérubé, Ruth Hubbard, David T. Mitchell, Jaspir K. Puar, and more echo Davis's sentiment that is covered in-depth in the *Literature Review*. Additionally, it's common knowledge that even in more recent history, hysterical women were locked away, if not lobotomized; those deemed "mentally insane" were locked away in asylums; children deemed "mentally retarded" were sent to state schools. If deviating from the norm was cause for euthanasia, incarceration, or labeled as bodies of villains, why would a good life include disability?

Despite this, there is little evidence that disabled people experience a poorer quality of life than able-bodied people (Johnson 515). Also, many scholars argue that disability is solely a construction of society's norms (Davis; McRuer; Shakespeare; Siebers; Straus). This thesis explores the ways that non-normative ways of being in the world re-construct normative ideals of a more specific good life: Lauren Berlant's the good life. In Berlant's good life, most people live life through an affective economy that operates on the hegemonic belief that if one just works hard enough, they will have a good life. This isn't to say that Lauren Berlant's concept of *the good life* reifies normative ways of being instead, it calls attention to the conditions in which people strive for a mythical, good life.

This thesis aims to trouble both the broader concept of what a good life is, as well as Berlant's *good life*, through analyzing digital discourses through the subreddit r/disability. I first look at how the discourse reflects the *good life* ideals that Berlant details in her book *Cruel Optimism.* Then, I expand on her good life ideals through examining how those normative views create an *abled good life* or, when pushing back on ableism, good life ideals still manifest through objects of attachment to a *disabled good life*. I also examine the ways that the subreddit's discourse attempts to push back on both parts of the expanded *good life* ideals. Then, I examine the ways that the discourse instead reflects cripistemology: crip ways of knowing and being through embodied knowledge. Finally, I examine how more-than-human ways of knowing and being can re-construct normative ways of being to build a life that may not strive for the good life.

Primarily, more-than-human ways of knowing and being have focused on the human/nature connection and, in particular, the human reconnecting with the natural world and other living beings. Yet, disabled humans have historically been considered less-than, and they experience already being associated with animals. While some scholars have opted to reclaim the animal, as covered more in-depth in the *Discussion*, my use of more-than-human aims to challenge the animal/disability connection and extend more-than-human to include digital assemblages. I use digital assemblages as a tool for understanding and discovering the ways that we can re-think ways of being through a crip lens of a more-than-human life: a collaborative, reciprocal, and plural way of being.

Research Position

My research is rooted in my position as a disabled person who participates in online disabled discourse communities; therefore, I take an insider/outsider perspective. More specifically, I am an insider to the community I am researching, but an outsider to the platform I'm researching. Reddit is not a site I use frequently. My position as an insider/outsider is not a new perspective, and it is employed in social sciences (Dwyer and Buckle). However, in many cases, able-bodied people still write on disabled people without our input. I aim to add my voice those of other disabled scholars writing on disability and participating in disability justice. In choosing transparency, I also take risks. This knowledge informs not only my research, but also my engagement with my corpus. I, too, am a part of the corpus of at-risk bodies due to both institutional polices and unspoken policies and beliefs on disability. I carry my own embodied knowledge, but it did not develop without the multitude of connections that occur through various assemblages of being. All of these things inform this thesis.

Terminology

Additionally, throughout this thesis, I choose to write using reclaimed terms. Reclaimed terms are words that were previously used as an insult towards a specific community that have since been reappropriated by that community as a form of empowerment. I use these terms either as a person who is a member of a group that falls under that term, or with respect towards those who do reclaim those terms. Specifically, these include the choice to use identity-first language over person-first language. For example, "disabled person" or "autistic person" instead of "person with disabilities" or "person with autism" (Brown). As this places disability as an integral part of the person's experience in the world. I also use the reclaimed term "crip" (McRuer) and "mad" (Price). I know not all people in the broader community reclaim these terms, but in my interactions and the research I've seen reclaimed terms have become not only preferred terms but often terms of disability pride.

Additionally, in this thesis I use old medical terms that were once used to describe people with specific presentations. Most, if not all, of these terms are considered harmful terms by today's standards. I use these terms in the context of the sources they come from and usually from other disability studies scholars quoting the source material the terms come from. This reflects the history of disability in society and medicine. I intentionally chose not to erase this harmful history.

Approach

As mentioned, I approached researching the subreddit as both an insider of the disabled community and an observer of this subreddit. Outsiders of a community researching the community can lead to the development of power dynamics within communities that are already marginalized. Often, researchers don't treat subjects as knowledgeable participants (Barron 43). Furthermore, I chose this approach as often times disabled stories are not told by disabled writers. Disabled writers and researchers are underrepresented both in academic settings and outside of them (Avery; Wong). Additionally, I knew, that in my own journey of disability, I had participated in the good life (Berlant). I have previously observed others doing the same in different discourse spaces as well. Yet, I'd also seen voices in discourse communities reject or push back on these norms, without naming them as such. I aimed to see if these ideals were reflected in the discourse. More importantly, I also hoped to see those affective attachments to the good life being rejected or at least pushed back on.

While this approach does include my own embodied knowledge, I look to other disability scholars as a way to understand embodied, disabled knowledge. As Rosemarie Garland-Thomson has said, "Knowledge emerges in the form of differing bodyminds moving through environments together, navigating barriers, and finding pathways, both materially and metaphorically" (McRuer and Johnson).Therefore, cripistemology builds my foundation for understanding the different embodied knowledge sets that come from my corpus and the ways that the knowledge emerges from these differing bodyminds. Additionally, I approach my research through a posthuman lens. More specifically, I draw on scholarship from theorists such as Rosi Braidotti, Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, and others to inform my approach towards understanding ways to not only trouble normative ways of being, but also trouble the binary between normative/non-normative and human/nonhuman. This understanding informs my approach to my research and my corpus by making space for considering pluralistic ways of being in the world.

I don't approach my corpus as a way to better understand disability, but as a way to highlight discourses and conversations already occurring. I more specifically approach my corpus from a critical discourse analysis (CDA) perspective. CDA, in this context, centers social practice, sees social structures as well as social action, agency, and is used to analyze linguistic and semiotic aspects of both social processes and social problem (Chiapello and Fairclough; van Dijk). I use CDA to analyze the social problems of normativity within and relating to disabled experiences. In many examples of CDA, speeches or texts by people in positions of power are analyzed in ways to draw attention to hegemonic notions of society.

Instead of analyzing discourses of those in power, I aim to use CDA to analyze how ordinary people are affected, or disaffected, by those hegemonic ways of being. As CDA comes from the critical linguistics, where scholars are explicit in their interests, that means that I am explicit in my stance toward disability studies, as previous mentioned (Wodak and Meyer). I approach my corpus with the intention of centering disabled voices in my analysis. In addition, I aim to see if the discourse that occurs in the subreddit participates in Berlant's good life or rejects/pushes back on the good life. Also, I aim to see if the subreddit's discourse reflected broader discourses both within disability studies and also posthumanism.

Situating a More-Than-Human Life

I began my research first with the research question of how, in the context of disabled discourses, a posthuman approach can re-frame what the good life is. To answer that question, I first had to see how discourse surrounding disability occurred in r/disability and then the ways that quality of life, or the concept of the good life, was discussed. Once I had found that my corpus did have discourse that included the ideals laid out in Berlant's good life, I looked to see the ways in which my corpus reflected cripistemology, crip ways of knowing and being. Finally, I considered the ways in which the subreddit's discourse could be rethought through a posthuman lens.

Commonly, posthuman approaches to disability include human/animal perspectives, which will be covered more in depth through my *Literature Review*. Because of this approach, I anticipated seeing that animality is often discussed in the intersections of disability discourse and posthumanism, but this didn't appear in my corpus. Instead, my corpus more closely showed non-normative ways of being that embraced the pluralities of Haraway's cyborg and reciprocal ways of being in the world through interdependency (Butler). This means that those participating in this discourse operated in interconnected, reciprocal ways with others within the digital assemblage of the subreddit. As opposed to striving for the good life, this seemed to operate as a more-than-human life: A life that accounts for ways of being that are not normative for the definition of "human" but also operates within "human" spaces through nonhuman mediated tools. The idea of striving for a more-than-human life includes striving for an interdependent, collaborative future that challenges socially constructed boundaries such as ability/disability.

Scholars within disability studies aim to challenge those same boundaries through challenging normative ways of being in the world. While posthuman (dis)animality scholars aim to challenge those same norms through reclaiming and embracing "the animal," I instead aim to challenge normative ways of being in the world through a more-than-human life. A more-than-human life can be collective, collaborative, animal, disabled, digital, cyborg, and/or any other multitudes; It moves beyond the binaries of normative/non-normative, abled/disabled, animal/human, human/nonhuman. I argue that a more-than-human life, through a crip lens, is a potential way to not only reframe the good life but also challenge the hegemonic norms of what humans should be striving for. Through this thesis I aim to show the ways the good life is reflected and challenged in my corpus and the possibilities for more-than-human ways of being that are rooted in cripistemology.

LITERATURE REVIEW

My approaches are interdisciplinary in nature, coming from digital rhetorics, discourse studies, affect studies, disability studies, and posthumanism. This chapter aims to describe the interdisciplinary theoretical frames I use throughout this thesis. These disciplinary overlaps and intersections are key to my analysis. I begin with the ways digital rhetorics inform my analysis. I also aim to highlight the nuances and ethics of internet research. From there, I lay the groundwork for my use of critical discourse analysis, which comes from a variety of theoretical models. Then, I lay the framework of affect studies, in which Berlant's good life and cruel optimism come from. Next, I provided a brief history of disability studies, which includes crip theory and cripistemology. Finally, I provide an overview of posthumanism, which informs my development of a more-than-human life.

The decision to use digital rhetorics over more traditional rhetorics partially comes from my decision to analyze a subreddit, but mostly comes from Alex Reid's call to expand upon the instrumentalist viewpoint of digital ecologies through distributed deliberation through human-nonhuman relations that renegotiate rhetorical capacities (97). In other words, devices, websites, and algorithms are not merely instruments for producing rhetorics, rather but co-creators of those rhetorics. As digital assemblages/ecologies are now commonplace, composition and rhetorics of those spaces are valuable ways of understanding the ways that knowledge and being are co-constructed. While disability is the main focus, the framework of digital rhetorics is paramount to con-constructive disabled discourse spaces.

Digital Rhetorics, Digital Discourses, and Internet Research

When using the concept of digital rhetorics, I use it in broad sense of rhetorics occurring in digital spaces. The definition of rhetoric I use is Kenneth Burke's concept of voices in dialectical conversation with one another (203). The digital space, in this context, is the subreddit r/disability. So, my digital rhetoric is dialectic conversations in the subreddit. This is similar to Barbara Johnstone's definition of discourse, which is specifically bits of communication in language but can also be more broadly defined as "meaningful symbolic behavior" across modes of communication (9). She further defines through Foucauldian discourses: linked ways of communicating and thinking that become ideologies that serve to circulate power in society (11), while discourse (non-plural) is a mass noun to describe symbolic behavior across modes of communication (10). She argues that they are crucially connected (Johnstone). In other words, discourse is both circulating ideologies and the semiotics of communication. While some discourse analysts look at sociolinguistics or functional linguistics, I use Johnstone's more broad definitions of discourse to inform my analysis of the discourse in the subreddit; therefore, I am looking at dialectical conversations instead of linguistics.

Much like discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis (CDA) comes from multiple disciplines and is transdisciplinary in nature but focuses on semiosis as a social process (Chiapello and Fairclough; Fairclough et al.). Eve Chiapello and Norman Fairclough expand on transdisciplinary research as a particular form of interdisciplinary research that does not "simply bring together different disciplines and theoretical-analytical frameworks" but also initiates conversation between two disciplines and frameworks (206). Teun A. van Dijk argues that CDA is a critical perspective on doing scholarship and focuses on social problems in the domain of production and reproduction of power (3). Teun A. van Dijk further argues that CDA is multidisciplinary, and its theories must account for "the complexities of relationships between discourse structures and social structures" (3). In other words, CDA is influenced by multiple disciplinary backgrounds and theoretical frameworks, but it must factor in social and political issues along with the structures of power that are reproduced. As the definitions are broad, I more specifically employ the multidisciplinary and critical aspects of CDA. I analyze discourse through the multiple lenses of affect, disability studies, and posthumanism to see the ways that dominant power structures construct disability and normativity. For the critical aspect, I align more with van Dijk's approach of CDA being a critical perspective that focuses on the social problems within the construction of disability and normativity.

The act of researching discourse on the internet, and social media in particular, doesn't come without its potential pitfalls. Slyvie Fainzang says that the use of online forums creates new forms of socialities as they operate on a level of anonymity that liberates discussions that would normally be withheld. She uses the example of online forums as ways for people to seek health information, for example, how to self-advocate or even cases of self-medication (Fainzang). Others, such as Lauren E. Cagle argues that assemblage-based problem solving on the internet can cause harm through normativity (76). She argues that the anonymity of social media sites such as Reddit allows for circulation of discourses that act as normative agents (75). In the case of her scholarship, it is more specifically the spreading of images of strangers as a way of mocking non-normative bodies, but even in Fainzang's examples it's easy to see how internet discourses are not always beneficial as information circulated could be incorrect or harmful.

The ethics of internet research is a complicated topic and has posed a complex issue for those using the internet for ethnography: users present themselves as anonymous, but their data are not (Beaulieu 144). In his thesis I do not aim to be ethnographic in nature and provide a solely textual analysis of discourse. Instead, I use Heidi A. McKee and James E. Porter's *The Ethics of Internet Research: A Rhetorical Case-Based Process* and work from the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) for guidance on how to ethically engage in my research and corpus. McKee and Porter's book provides detailed guidance for using the internet for research which includes internet forums, while the AoIR maintains updated guides to ethical practices regarding internet research. McKee and Porter explain that internet research is complex, lacks the clear-cut rules of the past regarding what is public versus private, and is shaped by a changed understanding of informed consent (5-7). Since I analyzed Reddit, I looked to what McKee and Porter had to say on the ethics of forum-based research. They argue that the internet is not merely a space of observation, but that it is also a "site for cultural production of texts" with a murky nature that is built in (81). Additionally, when it comes to informed consent for internet research, a rhetorical analysis of the site is helpful to determining when consent is needed (McKee and Porter 86). In the case of Reddit, it is a public site with forums that anyone can see or access, and that has an anonymized user base. Therefore, informed consent would only be needed for direct, personal communication which I do not conduct.

Of important value to McKee and Porter, the AoIR, and this thesis is the concern of harm to vulnerable populations. McKee and Porter are concerned that private information leading to a subject might be identifiable (107), whereas the AoIR is more specifically concerned with data breaches that can reveal sensitive information (franzke et al. 19). AoIR also shows concern with both the rights of subjects and the protection of the researcher. They delineate the ethical frameworks of deontological (protected rights of the subject being studied) versus utilitarian (risks to subjects are allowable if the benefits outweigh the risk) (franzke et al. 5). They call for a pluralistic approach that acknowledges regional and cultural norms of ethics; US based research tends to be more utilitarian, but that under pluralism deontological and utilitarian ethics intersects and interacts with other ethics such as feminist theory (franzke et al. 6). They also call for case-based judgment calls for handling the ethical issues of internet research (franzke et al. 6). In the case of my research, discussed later in the *Discussion*, the internet has become a space of situated knowledge for disabled people. I seek to analyze those discourses; therefore, my main goal is to accurately represent the community I'm analyzing as an observer while protecting the identity of my subjects. For my data specifically, my efforts to protect my subjects will be covered in depth in my *Methodologies*.

Affect

Many scholars theorize about emotions, affect, and how those ways of feeling circulate through affect economies—shared atmospheres of affect, feelings, or emotions. Specifically, I focus on the concept of the good life that comes from Lauren Berlant's book *Cruel Optimism*.

Berlant defines cruel optimism as an attachment to the unachievable fantasies of the good life, which operates as a kind of false hope—similar to the American Dream (*Cruel Optimism* 2). Berlant claims that everyone participates in the affect economy of striving for "the good life." She argues that it wears out the subjects who manage to find their conditions of possibility within it (*Cruel Optimism* 27). The good life comes with, often false, "promises of upward mobility, job security, political and social equality, and durable intimacy" (*Cruel Optimism* 27-28). In short, life's labors—occupational, domestic, and affective—often become the objects of attachment under cruel optimism. According to Berlant, the act of striving for the good life actually leads to a bad life for most people. Within the good life and the attachment to that life through cruel optimism, Berlant also introduces the concept of a slow death.

A slow death is "the physical wearing out of a population and the deterioration of people in that population that is a very nearly defining condition of their experience and historical existence" (*Slow Death* 754). Berlant argues this occurs in ordinary living under the structures of exploitative capitalism that forces those who are attempting to reproduce life to not just live but to endure living in particular ways (*Slow Death* 756). In making this argument, she invokes Foucault's biopower as a way to understand how slow death occupies the temporalities of "a biological threat posed by certain populations to the reproduction of the normatively framed general good life of a society," an endemic (756). In other words, as people work to maintain an ordinary life, they slowly lose the ability to participate in self-extension and only work for self-continuation—working to live versus working to survive. Berlant uses the obesity crisis as an example: Usually obese bodies are bodies in poverty, and more specifically often characterized as bodies of color (774). The conditions of survival through exploitative labor leave the bodies of US workers as more fatigued, in more pain, less capable of ordinary work, and lead to an earlier death; and obese, poor bodies will slowly become more sedentary not only because of more sedentary work and lifestyles, uneven work, less safe outdoor spaces, but "because it is harder to move" (776). In short, slow death shows how striving for the good life wears down the bodies of those who participate in it.

In addition to Berlant's definitions for slow death, Jasbir K. Puar expands and contextualizes slow death within disability. Puar agrees with Berlant that a slow death is not a death that occurs due to trauma or catastrophe, but instead is endemic (179). She expands the argument of slow death saying that it occurs through ongoingness within structural inequalities and occurs through the maintenance of living on (Puar 179). To further situate slow death in the context of disability, Puar argues that those who are targeted for premature (or slow death) are figured as members of "debility," or bodies that do not have capacity (180). She argues that disability justice activists avow that within working-poor and working-class communities of color disabilities and debilities are the "norm," and therefore contribute to pathologicalization of certain "unproductive bodies"; thus, precarious populations are subjects of debility and, by proxy, subjects of slow death (180-181). Therefore, Berlant's ideas of survival through exploitative labor that leads to slow death through obesity also lead to slow death due to debility. In considering the ways that attachments to objects of the good life leads to the wearing down of a population and thus lead to slow death, the ways that the good life leads to disability become evident.

Disability Studies

Within the concept of disability, there are two models of disability: medical and social. The medical model insists that disability is a problem that can be reduced, or easily cured, through medication, exercise, meditation, etc.; this is an issue with the disabled individual (Davis; McRuer; Shakespeare; Siebers; Straus). In the case of diagnoses such as autism or other neurodivergence, there is a medical narrative of lacking and involuntary ways of being (Yergeau 7). Whereas the social model of disability sees it as a material condition created by a person's environment and defined by society (Davis; McRuer; Shakespeare; Siebers; Straus). While impairments may impact day-to-day life, studies have found that life quality is not affected by the impairment but instead by the social impacts of a society that values ability (Johnson 515). So instead, what disables a person is not an impairment but instead the norms of society.

The idea of norm, or normative, has shifted somewhat throughout history. In the context of the US, norms can be defined as independence, self-reliant, ability to work, ability to have normal (heterosexual) relationships, good health (physical and mental), and of course a natural (unmodified) and able body (McRuer; Naraian; Nocella and Alaimo; Ray and Alaimo; Wadiwel). This is further complicated by the societal preference for also having a thin, white, male body. Disability scholars argue that those who do not meet these norms are Other (Erevelles; Lundblad; Mitchell). This disables the body that is non-normative (Nocella and Alaimo).

In the context of normative bodies, the goal is permanent ability: avoiding being or becoming disabled. If someone is disabled, then the goal shifts to recovery: If one can’t have an abled body, then they must become a supercrip to self-cure and achieve recovery through the willpower of self-reliance (Ray and Alaimo). Additionally, Stella Young calls this *inspiration porn* (inspoporn) which is when either a disabled person does something extremely extraordinary (climb a mountain) or does something mundane that is assumed to be something a disabled person is incapable of doing (graduates), or when they are on the receiving end of kindness from an abled bodied person (prom or party invitation to “be nice” to a disabled person). Ability becomes a personal virtue and straying from the norm creates difference that threatens the concepts of self-control and discipline that undergirds ideas of normalcy. Robert McRuer calls this way of being in society “compulsory able-bodiedness.”

However, the construction of normative bodies is rooted in centuries of eugenic policies and beliefs (Bérubé; Davis; Hubbard; Mitchell; Nocella and Alaimo; Puar; Ray and Alaimo). Concepts of what a normative body is has changed over time. Non-normative, or Othered, bodies have belonged to women, members of non-white races, and those from lower social classes, non-Western cultures, and non-Christian faiths. This of course, also applies to disabled people who have historically been classified as the following problematic terms: mad, hysteric, disfigured, lame, deaf, dumb, blind, mentally retarded, and of course crippled (Lundblad; McRuer; McRuer and Johnson; Nocella and Alaimo).

While I provide the context of the US, this is not a US exclusive practice. Lennard Davis has explain the history of normal in the context of eugenics as rooted in formulating the concept of the “average man” (2). This originally began with the French statistician Aldophe Quetelet, who sought to set the parameters of a normal man, and those who fell outside the boundaries of normal were ugly in body and morals (Davis 2). This led to the bell curve to measure intelligence through IQ tests by Sir Francis Galton and, as Davis says, “almost all the early statisticians had one thing in common: they were eugenicists” (3-5). The act of determining what an average intelligence should be created hegemony around what the human body should be (Davis 5). Ruth Hubbard details how Nazi genetic health courts could order the sterilization of anyone who had a “genetically determined” disease, which included “feeble-mindedness, manic-depressive insanity,” and hereditary diseases such as epilepsy, blindness, and deafness (78). She brings these practices to the present to explain that through modern genetic screening of pregnancy, we are once again “engaged in developing the means to decide what lives are worth living and who should and should not inhabit the world” (Hubbard 82). In contrast, Michael Bérubé takes a stance that disagrees with Hubbard. He says that even if they (Hubbard and Bérubé) find the reasons behind screening and termination to be trivial and caused by issues imposed by “society,” it’s not on the same continuum with Nazism (105). He instead takes a stance of the slippery slope of Designer Babies. He occupies a space that supports women’s reproductive rights, stem-cell research/biotechnology, and equality in healthcare that would allow for intimate decisions about child bearing and care for disabled people without coercion from the state (Bérubé 11). He argues that the focus should be on the building of social welfare for the independence of disabled people.

However, even while rightfully criticizing the acts of eugenics, whether situated in Nazism or not, Davis says, “While we tend to associate eugenics with a Nazi-like racial supremacy, it's important to realize that eugenics was not the trade of a fringe group of right-wing, fascists…it became the common belief and practice of many, if not most, Europeans and American citizens" (6). In other words, regardless of where one stands on the topic of eugenics, genetic determinism, and the selective nature of prenatal screening/designer babies, there are legacies from this history that impact the way these ideas operate in society in modern times. Harriet McBryde Johnson articulates why the consideration of eugenics cannot be considered just a "thing of the past," with moral philosophers such as Peter Singer making cases for infanticide and assisted suicide for disabled adults (507). Quality of life is the premise for his and many other folks' point of view on the issue of disability.

Yet, the idea of "quality of life" is the exigency for not only disability studies scholars and disability rights movements, but also the development of the concept of crip theory. Robert McRuer coined the term "crip theory" from queer theory. As opposed to queer theory, which contests LGBT studies and identity, crip theory does not "seek to dematerialize disability identity," but instead critiques the identity of disability (*Crip Theory* McRuer). He does not speak necessarily of the self-identity of disability, but instead the able-bodied terms of identification or containments of disability (*Crip Theory* McRuer). In this context, *crip* becomes a reclaimed term. More importantly, McRuer aims to critique the able-bodied/disabled binary and compulsory able-bodiedness. He argues, "Crip theory extends the conversation/contestation, speaking back to both nondisabled and disabled liberalism…crip experiences and epistemologies should be central to our efforts to counter neoliberalism and access alternative ways of being" (41). To later build upon crip theory, McRuer with Merri Lisa Johnson developed the concept of cripistemology in a roundtable discussion. Cripistemology is explored as a multitude of disabled, or crip, ways of being, knowing, accessing, and centering disabled people in the production of knowledge. Future cripistemologies aim to critically and consistently engage with "varied historical attempts to produce knowledge and political action" (McRuer and Johnson 158). During this round table, Margaret Price builds upon cripistemologies not only to critique the binary between ability and disability, but also to critique Cartesian mind-body dualism through crip bodyminds as a transitive act—an act that crips mind-body knowledge (154). In *Defining Mental Disability, Price* credits Babette Rothschild for bodyminds, the idea that the body and mind can't be separated and are instead deeply intertwined (306). In the roundtable discussion, *Proliferating Cripistemologies*, Johnson and McRuer further define a crip bodymind as first-person, first-hand knowledge about topics that affect disabled people and communities (158). Therefore, crip ways of being and knowing push back on the able-bodied ideals of what a "quality" life is while highlighting society's compulsory ways of being and knowledge production. I employ these concepts as a way of making sense of the ways that cripistemology not only troubles normative ideas of being, but also of understand the ideals surrounding the good life. While these concepts can do this on their own, these ideas can be further expanded through a posthuman lens.

Posthumanism

To understand what the posthuman is, first the historic idea of a human has to be defined. *Human* has been loosely defined as a subject with sentience or agency, self-awareness, autonomy, self-sufficiency, intelligence, or "Man as a rational animal" (Adams; Braidotti; Butler; Nocella and Alaimo) More specifically, the things that have been defined as "not human" over time are more telling—human is opposite of Other. The Other includes slaves, colonized people, non-white people, and disabled people (Butler; Lundblad; Nocella and Alaimo). Rosi Braidotti argues, "Subjectivity is equated with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behaviour, all of them equating masculinity and European civilisation, whereas Otherness is defined as its negative and specular counterpart: irrationality, immorality, femininity and non-westernness" (2). Judith Butler calls this the "anthropocentric norm," or a way of embodying the normative ideal of a human (689). Butler also argues that those who fail to embody human are more animal than those who successfully embody human (690). Scholars Rachel Adams, Nirmala Erevelles, Jan Grue, Michael Lundbald, David T. Mitchell, Srikala

Naraian, Sunaura Taylor, Sara E. Orning, and Dinesh Wadiwel come to the same conclusion as Butler does: those who do not embody the anthropocentric norm are turned into less-than-human animals but are not quite nonhuman animals.

The posthuman subject challenges the dualism of human and nonhuman. Braidotti argues for alternative models of the human subject that are rooted in anti-humanist, postcolonial, anti-racist, and post-anthropocentric ideas that challenge the norm of human embodiment (4-5). She argues that the relational capacity of the posthuman is not confined just within the human species but also within all non-anthropomorphic elements: “living matter is intelligent and self-organizing” (Braidotti 6).

Additionally, Donna Haraway proposes the cyborg to not only challenge the binary of human and animal but also the binary of natural and unnatural. Haraway calls the cyborg a “disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self” (302). In other words, the cyborg highlights the boundary of plurality between human/animal and natural/unnatural with intent to trouble those dualisms of being. While Haraway’s cyborg does not necessarily name itself as a posthuman subject, and has been critiqued for being totalizing, it rethinks the boundaries of the human. Narian also pushes for rethinking dualisms, more specifically Cartesian dualism, and believes that the posthuman approach, through Karen Barad’s onto-epistemology, or the act of not separating knowing from being, is key for rethinking the human (16). Bart Simon argues that the posthuman is not a “radical break from humanism” but instead an “ongoing critique of what it means to be human” (8). In other words, the posthuman is not either human or nonhuman but an ongoing state of embodiment in the spaces between.

In addition to the posthuman subject, there is the more-than-human subject. The idea of being more-than-human is originated by David Abram’s book *The Spell of the Sensuous* in which he argues that the more-than-human realm is created by the human connection to the natural world through sensuous perceptions (Zavalkoff 124). Abram further argues that indigenous communities develop participatory relations with nature through synaesthic ways of being in the world (Zavalkoff 123). Put more simply, more-than-human participates in the same pluralistic ways of embodiment that posthuman does, but it more specifically participates through nature and other living beings.

Similarly, Anna Tsing, in *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, argues for multispecies assemblages as a means for collaborative and mutual survival (5). In agreement with Tsing, in *Staying with the Trouble,* Haraway calls for collaborative multispecies assemblages that entangle "myriad temporalities and spatialities and myriad intra-active entities-in-assemblages—including the more-than-human, other-than-human…" and beyond (101). Similar to Tsing's argument for multispecies assemblages, Haraway's more-than-human assemblages are a part of making kin, or caring for, both humans and nonhumans (103). Haraway and Tsing differ from Abram by including nonliving things and technology in multispecies, more-than-human collaborators (Haraway 99; Tsing 29). While these proposed connections with nature made by Abram, Tsing, and Haraway are not exclusively connections with animals, Fijn and Kavesh refer to this broader, nature-based more-than-human as "embracing the 'animal turn'" (8). This is not unsimilar to many posthuman approaches to disability.

Within posthumanist approaches to disability, human/animal is often the topic. This creates the animalized human. As previously mentioned, those who do not embody the human norm become less-than-human and are usually conceived as animal. Scholars such as Butler, Taylor and Orning, and Wadiwel argue for embracing the human animal and acknowledging the interdependency between human animals and nonhuman animals. In doing so, we gain understanding of a type of equality that troubles the able-bodied and disabled while also pushing for better treatment of nonhuman animals. However, Erevelles, Grue, Lundblad, Mitchell, and Naraian argue against doing so. Lundblad says the "idea of reclaiming 'the animal' as positive simply cannot stand up to the weight of history or the harm it can still produce" (776) . Lundblad also points out, citing Cary Wolfe, that the act of animalizing has historically used the binary of human/animal to justify slavery, colonization, and imperialism and adds discrimination, abuse, and violence of disabled people to the list (788). In other words, while many posthuman disability scholars lean towards reclaiming the animal in disability, (dis)animality, most of the time these scholars do so in the context of animal rights. However, the act of reclaiming or embracing the animal may not help animals at all and may further harm disabled humans.

To contrast the reclamation of the animal, some scholars have pointed out that, when it comes to disability and posthuman futures, transhuman futures emerge. David T. Mitchell defines transhumanism as " the exertion of human dominion over its own nature" (828). Mitchell argues that transhumanists look to transcend disability in order to end suffering or escape the "dying animal," and thus draws parallels to the Nazi T4 program, which included cleansing of disabilities from humans (831). Jan Grue argues that transhumanism is a "reductionist view of life" (807). She also says, "Transhumanism, in its philosophical discourse, may not itself be a metaphor—it tends toward the literal—but it does stand in a metonymic, even prosthetic, relationship to broader and more significant trends in contemporary biopolitics, chief among them a utilitarian view of embodiment." (Grue 820). In other words, a select few people look to overcome the human condition of contingent embodiment in favor of eliminating disability, or any connection to the animal roots of being human.

However, other alternative futures, such as a crip future, embrace the existence of disability (Taylor and Orning 680). In other words, a posthuman future can be a future that embraces embodiment as variable and more-than-human without the need to transcend or eradicate disability. As argued in my *Analysis* chapter, alternate futures themselves can become an object of cruel optimism, but they can also be ways in which the good life is challenged.

METHODS

As mentioned in the *Literature Review*, internet research holds ethical complexities. In this chapter, I explain the research choices I made and discuss why I chose to analyze discourse on the r/disability subreddit. Additionally, I show how my coding scheme informs my analysis.

Analyzing Reddit

I chose to analyze discourse on Reddit specifically with internet research ethics in mind. Disabled discourses occur across various social media sites, forums, blogs, and even chat venues such as Discord. While an individual can choose to operate anonymously across any of these internet platforms, Reddit allows for a greater deal of anonymity across all users. Reddit users have avatars that they can decorate that act as a profile picture, but unlike many other platforms the avatar cannot be replaced with a profile picture. Also, usernames are used over real names. The anonymity of Reddit makes it appealing for both users and researchers (Amaya et al.). Therefore, Reddit offers a level of privacy that doesn't necessarily exist on sites such as Facebook (ID confirmation required) or Twitter (ID is not required, but names, titles, location, and place of work are not uncommon). This makes Reddit an ideal choice for analyzing discourse without putting vulnerable populations at risk.

Furthermore, McKee and Porter raise the issue of public versus private information when it comes to internet research. Posts across Reddit are public, including subreddits and comments (Amaya et al.). Anyone on the internet can access a subreddit with the only limits being that only registered users can comment. Reddit even calls itself "The Homepage of the Internet." This means that Reddit users are aware that their posts are public. This eliminates the concern of analyzing private data. That being said, I have still changed all thread titles in my corpus, avoided usernames, and limited whole quotations to best protect the humans behind the anonymous posts.

Additionally, as an insider to the disability community, I myself engage in online conversations surrounding disability. However, I did not want to undertake a full participant-observer position as I didn't want to skew my data by interacting in ways that may change the discourse (McKee and Porter 97). Also, the subreddit r/disability is not a platform I use as a participant. Despite this, I do use Reddit broadly; therefore, it is still a familiar platform to navigate and did not require extra research before use. As this subreddit is not a discourse community I'm a part of, I didn't run the risk of personal knowledge of the corpus I was analyzing. This doesn't eliminate the risk of my analysis containing an individual I know, but if my corpus does include people, I know I have no way of knowing who they are due to the anonymity of Reddit posts. For these reasons, Reddit was an ideal place for conducting a discourse analysis.

Developing My Corpus

Critical Discourse Analysis is how I worked to understand the discourse occurring within my corpus; however, I used a grounded approach to code my data and find emerging themes within the data. Because of that I did not search for specific keywords to collect data. Instead, I read and coded entire Reddit threads over a two-month period to the point of saturation, meaning that, at a certain point, most threads were of similar content or ideas and did not contribute further to my corpus. To create my dataset during this time, I sorted the subreddit by "new" to see posts in chronological order, as "hot" and "top" would only contain the most popular posts. By collecting in chronological order, I optimized the variety of posts in my dataset by being able to see all threads, not just those that had the most upvotes (likes) revealed to me by Reddit's algorithm. I initially analyzed a total of thirty-five posts, later but excluded eight of those posts. After coding three threads regarding advice for navigating SSI/SSDI and the Social Security Administration, I excluded the other posts on that topic after checking that the similar themes were emerging in them. Other posts were excluded on the basis of being opinion posts about a specific thing, such as microfiber cloths where the replies were "yes I like them" or "no I don't." These conversations did not participate in broader disability discourses. I also excluded threads that did not have replies unless the original poster's (OP) topic or text shared emerging themes with the rest of the discourse in the subreddit.

My coding procedure was developed with my main research question and sub-questions in mind:

- In the context of disability, how can a posthuman approach re-frame what the "good life" is?
- How are the ways that disabled communities discuss quality of life or the concept of "the good life" (even when not explicitly named)?
- Does the discourse surrounding disability on social media employ the concept of cripistemology (again not necessarily explicitly named)?
- How are the ways that posthumanism looks at quality of life and disability (either explicitly or implicitly)?

First, I coded my data on whether or not the OP or comments reflected Lauren Berlant's concept of the good life. Second, I looked at whether or not my data contained instances of cripistemology. Finally, as my corpus didn't necessarily show posthuman theories on its own, I instead coded my data on whether or not it could be re-analyzed through a posthuman lens. Because I was analyzing not only the OPs but also replies, this did mean that one thread could hold multiple themes.

Since I was approaching my data coding from a grounded approach, I analyzed my data as I collected it. This means my data was coded multiple times as new categories and sub-categories emerged to develop meaningful categories and themes. As previously mentioned, I analyzed twenty-seven posts. When excluded posts are accounted for, across those twenty-seven posts, I analyzed 552 replies with 460 of them relevant to my research question. Including the OPs of the main thread, this made for 487 total posts and replies analyzed.

However, I kept analyzed replies within different categories or subcategories with their OPs and, if a substantial number of replies held similar information or themes, I lumped them all together since I was looking for themes across the discourse as opposed to quantitative data.

During my first round of coding, I analyzed whether or not the original post or replies exhibited aspects of the good life, cripistemology, or posthumanism. The criteria for *the* good life were based on whether or not the post showed normative ways of striving for the future, "bootstrap" ideals, or any beliefs that a disabled person could just be cured or overcome their disability or barriers. The criteria for cripistemology included whether or not information shared showed a situated, disabled knowledge set. My original criteria for posthumanism were related to nonhuman assistance: did an individual use assistive technology, mobility aids, service animals, etc. Unfortunately, very few threads showed this as a main discourse outside of advice for using mobility aids and most discourse was more utilitarian than anything. However, keeping track of this category helped me to eventually build my proposed more-than-human life.

Over time, I found that not all posts or replies fit neatly into those categories but would fit into a sub-category. Initially, those sub-categories were also broad, but because I was analyzing my data as I collected it and re-analyzing it as a whole, eventually neater, clearer categories emerged. My final categories and subcategories (see Table 1) developed from the content of the threads analyzed. The final criteria for those categories were similar to the original categories. Both those categories and the subcategories criteria are detailed in my *Analysis*. Despite the fact that I specifically tracked only the main threads, if a reply didn't fit the OP's category, I quoted that reply in my database and coded it for the category it belonged to. Doing this allowed me to see the interlinking discourse, and meant that an OP could exhibit one category, but a reply chain could be a different category while still on topic of the OP. This allowed for seeing the nuances of discourse in my corpus.

Understanding My Corpus

My final pass at looking at my corpus took place after I had developed my final results. I did this in order to make sure that my final categories of themes were appropriately represented across my corpus. By this point, I was extremely familiar with each Reddit thread, so this final double check was more straightforward than my initial coding. As my themes and data were still in alignment, I was able to determine that my corpus did indeed show that the discourse both participate in and reject the good life. The discourse also showed cripistemology which means that an individual could be participating or rejecting the good life but was coming from the lens of knowing/being in the world through disability. Additionally, when looking at my corpus in conversation with my literature, a posthuman approach not only could re-frame the good life, but it also could provide an alternative: a more-than-human life.

ANALYSIS

In this analysis, first I explain the ways that the good life appeared in the discourse and then how crip ways of knowing/being emerged. I do this through categorizing and subcategorizing my data (see Table 1). The final categories and subcategories that emerged are good life discourse, crip discourse, and more-than-human discourse. Within good life discourse, the sub-categories that I defined were abled good life (external), abled good life (internal), and disabled good life. An external abled good life meant that the expectation of good life came from external sites such as friends, family, or society, whereas an internal abled good life meant that the expectations of the good life came from the OP or commenter. Within crip discourse, the sub-categories I defined were whether or not the discourse embodied crip ways of rethinking the good life, cripistemology, or crip tips (smaller tips and tricks content that showed embodied knowledge). Finally, more-than-human discourse, which accounted for both living and nonliving components of more-than-human, did not contain sub-categories as it was discourse that was informed by my literature review, and therefore, it is not included in the table.

Table 1: Coding Categories

Good Life Discourse	**Crip Discourse**
Abled Good Life (external)	Rethinks Good Life
Abled Good Life (internal)	Cripistemologies
Disabled Good Life	Crip Tips

In this analysis, first, I show the abled good life as operating through external ideals. This is the ways that the abled good life worked as a frame for ways that non-disabled people view disability. This occurred as able-bodied people feeling inconvenienced by disabled people’s needs, the view of disabled people as people who do not reproduce or extend “life” through relationships and sex, and how disability cannot operate within capitalism. Second, I explore the ways that the abled good life appeared through internal factors through relying on internalized ableism, continuing to have good faith about discrimination and access barriers, and continuing to participate in institutions that uphold those barriers with the belief that one day those barriers can be overcome. Finally, I show the ways that a *disabled good life* emerged as a way to push back on the good life and disability re-imagining the good life. However, disability can also push back on the abled good life by questioning the models of productivity, acknowledging value beyond doing/participating, and calling out how systems are intentionally set up for failure. Finally, disability also can re-imagine the good life into a disabled good life, even while still falling under Berlant's cruel optimism. It does so by focusing on happiness over operating in poorly designed systems, rethinking what it means to be a "productive," if productivity matters at all, and radical acceptance of disability.

My analysis shows how crip discourses emerged. I first show how this can occur through non-normative ways of being in the world and how these emerge from disabled, situated knowledge. Then, I explore the ways that the discourse embodied cripistemology through disabled ways of being/knowing in the world. Finally, I explore how these various ways of being/knowing create a crip lens for rethinking the good life through rejecting normative ways of being in society and expressing acceptance and joy in disability without perpetuating good life ideals.

Disability As Seen through Good Life Ideals

The good life, in the context of how non-disabled people view disability, appears to be one in which disability does not have an impact on a non-disabled life: an abled good life—a life in which they are not affected or inconvenienced by the disabilities of other people, even those close to them. It is a life in which disability is only something that occurs in old age—not something that participates in the reproduction or extension of human life. Finally, an abled good life is one is which bodies are able and capable of working in, participating in, and contributing to a capitalist society. To participate in the abled good life, one must develop social and financial capital.

In looking at the abled good life as a frame for the ways that non-disabled people view disability, a recurrent theme found in posts and comments in which disabled people discuss the ways that their disability inconveniences those around them. This manifests in various ways such as loss of relationships because the disabled person cannot participate in activities, accusations of falsifying disabilities in order to game systems, or the messaging disabled people receive from society or institutions about disability.

A post in the subreddit, titled *Non-Disabled Victims*, highlights the ways in which loss of relationships due to disability being an inconvenience manifests in interpersonal relationships. In this post, the OP is frustrated because of the ways that non-disabled people act like their disability is victimizing the non-disabled person. In the OP's experience, people get upset with them for refusing to do things they physically cannot do. Because they refuse to do these things, non-disabled friends think that OP's disabilities are an inconvenience. The OP says they experience loneliness and isolation. In this thread, many commenters express that they have lost friends or relationships because they can't do activities such as hiking, camping, labor-intensive chores, or even making advanced plans but having to cancel because of symptom flare ups.

In addition to friendships, this post's comments express that the same issues occur in other relationships. One comment stated that they had experienced doctors expressing that their disability was an inconvenience. Their doctors accused them of acting disabled for the purpose of gaining disability benefits. However, the context this user provides makes their situation more complicated. The user had experienced a stroke and was begging their doctors to rehabilitate them so they wouldn't lose their career. In their frustration, the user stated that being a doctor won't prevent someone experiencing disability. In other words, this user is aware that ability is temporary, and no one is exempt, which participates in a broader discourse covered later both in this chapter and in the discussion. In similar stories in the comments, users shared experiences with teachers not believing them as well. Overall, commenters and the OP shared experiences of relatives, loved ones, friends, teachers, medical professionals, and more feeling inconvenienced by their disabilities or accusing them of faking/exaggerating their disabilities. These stories illustrate how non-disabled people approach the inconveniences of disability.

The inconvenience or discomfort around disability goes beyond just interpersonal relationships and is also seen in public messaging surrounding disability. A cross-posted post, *Stop Changing Non-offensive Terms,* features an image that comes from a government website in the UAE. This image shows that the UAE plans to rename disabled people as "people of determination." The OP does not share their own opinions on the matter in their post allowing for the title to work as their standpoint. Commenters in the post were also opposed to this renaming and showed agreement with the OP's title. In response, a user comments that this is nothing new. They say it's called *The Euphemism Treadmill* and provide a link to Wikipedia. Many users share the sentiment that "disabled is not a dirty word," while one comment argues that the people who invent these terms do so to be able to call disabled people "heroes" without bothering to make actionable change to accommodate them. The discourse that occurs in this post highlights the ways that broader society not only pushes the concept of the abled good life but also is uncomfortable by the idea of disability.

When considering how the good life is something that most people are striving for, and that it is dependent on things such as social equality and "durable intimacy," it becomes clear the ways that these two posts uphold abled good life rhetorics as messages from broader society to disabled people. In the first post, we can understand how it affects both abled and disabled people. To the commenters in this post, a good life is one in which they are seen as social equals to their abled peers. They don't want to be seen as inconvenient, exaggerators, fakers, or cheaters. Additionally, intimacy is lost when disabled people feel as if they are a burden to those closest to them. In an attempt to strive for a good life, as it is defined by their abled peers, they fall into a bad life. This is evident in the OP's feelings of loneliness and isolation as not only are they a source of frustration for their loved ones, but they are also upset and frustrated; their loved ones don't attempt to be patient or flexible with their disabilities—by proxy their loved ones are not patient or flexible with them. As Berlant says, "the good life wears out people who try to operate within it," and this is equally true here: the abled good life wears out those trying to participate in it.

In looking at the second example, it is evident the ways that society sees disability as operating within an abled good life. There is a prevailing belief that *disabled* is a bad word because it is a bad thing to be. The comment about the euphemism treadmill is an effective way to consider how abled-bodied people feel discomfort at the idea of disability. Karen Stollznow defines the Euphemism Treadmill as a term no longer being accepted as it references an offensive concept, then a non-offensive word is introduced to replace it, and then eventually the euphemism becomes stigmatized and also replaced (*Ableist Language and the Euphemism Treadmill*). This means that being disabled is equated to being offensive. While the disabled people in this reddit post disagree with that sentiment and feel that disability is not a bad word, it doesn't change the ways that society defines disability: The good life is a non-disabled life.

Another recurring theme in the way that disability is viewed by non-disabled people in Reddit discourse is that disabled people are sexless beings who do not reproduce or form romantic/sexual attachments (Shah). This can be seen in both disabled people mirroring this belief about themselves or in ways that disability is shown in fictional portrayals. The abled good life includes experiencing love and relationships as a part of the object of attachment building required to live the fantasy.

This can be seen in the post *Advice Needed*. The OP is a teenager and wheelchair user. They express frustration with their anxiety and dating. They experience a lot of rejection from potential partners because they are in a wheelchair. They express that they realize they might be the issue but are seeking advice from other wheelchair users regarding dating. A user comments saying that kids have a phase in which everyone should be “normal” and that it is “an awful time for anyone who diverges from the norm.” They also reassure OP that as an adult wheel-chair user, they have no issues dating. They do mention that the dating pool they get to choose from is smaller, but “that’s because it doesn’t include the jackasses who wouldn’t date a wheelchair user.” Other users echoed this sentiment by putting an emphasis on finding non-judgmental people and by telling OP they shouldn’t be with someone who has problems with their disability in the first place.

In another post, *Able-bodied Writing Disabled Characters*, the OP is looking for advice on how to write a disabled protagonist. They describe their protagonist and ask for advice. While most of the advice is debating on whether or not non-disabled people should write disabled characters, one comment highlights the idea of romance and sexuality for disabled people. The author of this comment says, “For the love of cream cheese DO NOT make the character asexual,” and goes on to explain that media often portrays disabled people as unable to participate in or uninterested in relationships. They are tired of society not seeing disabled people as sexual beings. This has been reflected in discourses outside of Reddit as well, such as the Twitter hashtag #DisabledPeopleAreHot from 2019 (Rose), as a way to boost confidence within the disabled community there. Another post, on a similar topic, *Writing a Disabled Character*, the OP is asking for advice on how to write a disabled super-hero and not make the character’s super power a “fix” for his disability. In the feedback, one comment someone mentions a valuable part of representation for them is a character with a romantic partner.

The discourse surrounding romantic and sexual relationships in the subreddit shows that while disabled people find that to be an important part of their lives, an abled good life does not include romance or sexuality for disabled people. Outside of Reddit, there are blogs and columns dedicated to doing away with the media trope of desexualizing disabled people. While this discourse was not prominent during my data collection period, it operates as part of that larger discourse of disability and sexuality. So, if a good life is one in which a person finds the object of “love,” and disabled people are viewed as people who don’t participate in that act, then disability does not participate in the abled good life fantasy.

The third way that disability is viewed by non-disabled people through the idea of an abled good life is through the ability to participate in and contribute to society. This comes through in both themes of ableism and capitalism. Through ableism, disabled people are discriminated against, and non-disabled people are favored. Through capitalism, disabled people are not seen as contributing to the work force or economy.

The ways that ableism participates in the abled good life is across accessibility which becomes complex in the case of the post *Apartment Hunting*. OP asks whether or not they should disclose disability to get first floor apartment accommodations. They are uncertain if it would be beneficial or not to disclose disability, or if they would face discrimination. They also know that if they want to pursue their right to accommodations that they must disclose that they require accommodations. The comments are mixed and a lot of them participate in the abled good life that will be discussed in the next section. In this case, ableism operates as a way of gatekeeping the ideal of said good life. There are comments that believe that OP can just request a ground floor without disclosing their disability. One user argues that non-disabled people can prefer ground floor apartments, and they provide a potential reason for that preference: having a dog. Another user agrees and claims it’s not an accommodation in the sense that OP would get “preferential treatment.” These comments imply that access is a preference not a need. Another comment added that as a wheelchair user they recommend not disclosing as they were unable to get an apartment until they stopped disclosing. This could be a case of coincidence, as it is unlikely that an apartment complex is going to outright deny an accessible apartment, but it implies that disability disclosure could lessen one’s odds of acquiring housing. Non-disabled people believe that the good life is equal access to housing through simply stating the need for such as a preference: something non-disabled people do successfully.

This also operates in the system of disability resources, as seen in the post *Physical Appointments for Paperwork*. OP is frustrated with the fact that so many appointments related to disability are physical or in-person, even though those appointments could easily be done over video calls. They mention the struggles with proximity to the places needed to be at and transportation—disability resources are not accommodating. One user mention “flunking out” of required therapy preventing them from receiving aid, and another comment say that it’s “silly” that doctors and government officials think that disabled people have nothing to do all day. This shows a non-disabled system that operates on the beliefs that *truly* disabled people have the time and ability to navigate the system along with meeting a specific set of criteria to qualify as disabled on paper. If they don’t have the time or don’t meet the criteria, then they must not actually be disabled and capable of participating in the abled good life.

An example of ways capitalism operates in the abled good life is seen in multiple posts surrounding SSI/SSDI, which detail the process, unclear polices, and struggles disabled people have working through the system. One post in particular, *Disabled Melancholy*, the OP posts sharing that they are feeling melancholy lately. Most of their feelings manifest from them having to fight for SSI, they feel that all that matters is their productivity. They are also grateful they have a loving partner but sad they can’t marry as OP will lose their SSI if they do. They express sadness that disabled people have to live under certain rules to receive assistance and have to make choices between marriage or benefits. They dislike having to live under the narrative that says, “If you can’t work, you are just lazy.” This sentiment occurred across the posts about SSI/SSDI, usually in the comments.

This discourse clearly highlights the ideals of a good life. Being on benefits already violates the ideals of an abled good life, but the inability to participate in upward mobility (either through work or marriage) and gain social equality (through the ability to work and be married), and while marriage is not required for durable intimacy, it still comes with a certain level of security. The discourse reflected in the OP's post and comments on the topic of income assistance is that of how a normative, non-disabled life should look. While the people participating in the discourse were disabled people, they still either pushed back on that ideal or desired the ability to participate in it. It reflects the norms that are set by non-disabled people.

Participating in the Good Life

Disabled people inadvertently participate in the abled good life through internalized ableism. This means that they internalize stereotypes or negative messaging about themselves and their disability/disability broadly, and then either believe them to be true or mirror those beliefs about themselves or disability. Broadly, internalized ableism came across in the discourse through acknowledging that discrimination was a reality, but not a likely experience they would have. More specifically, there were beliefs that they would not be discriminated against and that any potential access barriers (physical or non-physical) could be easily overcome. If they were unable to overcome barriers in the moment, they would still participate in the institutions and relationships that uphold those access barriers with the belief that one day they would actually overcome them. This shows the ways that abled good life ideals proliferate through disabled discourses.

An example of both internalized ableism and having cruel optimism about discrimination and access barriers through this lens is seen in the previously discussed post *Apartment Hunting*. The OP recognizes they may be discriminated against or written off as not a candidate for an apartment because of their disability. They are aware of the ableism they may face. Many of the comments do not acknowledge the potential discrimination, but instead believe that the potential barrier is a non-issue. The OP will just be able to say they prefer a ground floor apartment without stairs, as anyone can do that.

One user provides advice, as both a disabled person and someone who works in housing, that there are pros and cons to disclosure. They further explain that if an apartment has a wait list and OP is only allotted a specific number of passes, then disclosing is useful so that they don't get kicked off the wait list for turning down upstairs apartments. They also mention that in the case of needing an accessible unit, as opposed to just needing a ground floor unit, is often times the only way to jump a wait list. They go on to say that the OP is protected under Fair Housing Regulation and can't be forced to state their diagnosis, only that they have a disability that prevents them from using the stairs. Stating this does not necessarily participate in internalized ableism, but another user joins in by replying in agreement saying that any apartment that denies OP based on disability can be reported for denying a reasonable accommodation.

In the case of these two comments, they both believe that in good faith the OP would not be denied an apartment based on their disability. This is an assumption that the barriers that OP potentially faces would be minimal or easily overcome. It also assumes that everyone has equal access to venues needed to take legal action or that apartment managers would be honest in their denial. These ideals participate in both cruel optimism and an abled good life. In this situation, access to an apartment becomes the object of attachment under cruel optimism. If OP cannot achieve securing an accessible apartment, these ideals potentially will cause harm. This falls under an abled good life. As previously mentioned, many commenters believed that the OP could just request a ground floor apartment out of preference, as non-disabled people could do the same if say they were a dog owner. This conflates a need with a preference and makes accessibility optional. Treating accessible needs as a preference, over a necessity, puts the OP at risk of being without a place to live if waitlists are longer than the time they have to search for an apartment.

While this post is an example of an abled good life through continuing to participate in harmful institutions, other posts previously covered do so as well. This occurs in *Physical Appointments for Paperwork* and *Non-Disabled Victims*. In *Physical Appointments for Paperwork*, both the OP and users are upset about the lack of accessibility throughout the institutions they need as resources for their disabilities, such as doctors, mental health professionals, insurance, benefits, and more. In most cases, opting out of these systems is not an option. Therefore, disabled people are forced to participate in the belief that if they just keep trying, they will be successful.

While in *Non-Disabled Victims*, these conversations occur mostly in the comments. Much like the previous post, many of the access barriers and ableism people mention in the post are often things that they can't opt out of, but ableism, in particular, also shows up in interpersonal relationships. Within this post there were many comments that showed how this occurs within disabled communities. A user comments sharing wisdom they received from their father: If someone truly loves and cares about someone, they are willing to adjust and accommodate. While this is sage advice and we can all agree this should be true, the belief that say maybe a parent or partner "truly loves and cares" about someone is harmful. This ideal implies that they *will* make the adjustments required to accommodate. An abled good life is one in which those who are supposed to truly love and care about someone will make necessary changes. This perpetuates an attachment to the object of a "loved one" that already exists instead of connecting with individuals who will truly accommodate.

In an attempt to "play devil's advocate, another user commented explaining that they have found most people to be accommodating, but that at the beginning of their journey they found themselves "cranky and inadvertently self-absorbed." They argue that just because someone has a disability doesn't mean that they don't have to consider that those around them are human too. In short, the user believes that non-disabled people deserve friends who aren't always negative. The user ends their comment saying that in their opinion, "goodness and empathy far outweighs negativity" and that "we," disabled people, must sometimes examine their own behaviors in a situation. Again, this comment makes a good point: relationships should be reciprocal.

However, this doesn't account for power imbalances in relationships or closer relationships that involve a more intimate knowledge of the person. For example, a comment in the post shows how this occurs. The user's supervisor found out the author of the comment had invisible disabilities (PTSD) and became "abusive" over issues caused by their disability (small mistakes and using PTO for therapy appointments). Their anxiety became so bad that they had to resign. While this story doesn't account for the supervisor's side of the story, it still shows that relationships can't always be reciprocal. That user couldn't just opt out of not expressing the effects of their disability and choose to remain positive—anxiety and PTSD do not operate that way.

Another comment in the post further contributed to this discourse by saying that those who are fed up with others' disabilities are probably experiencing compassion fatigue. This statement implies that loved ones of disabled people opt out of the relationship or mistreat them due to the exhaustion and burn out from caring for them. Compassion fatigue in caregiving is not a new phenomenon, and it is why there is a higher turnover rate within caregiving professions. However, it also implies that the disabled person's needs are the cause of this burnout not larger societal issues surrounding disability and care. Do disabled people have the same privilege of losing compassion with their loved ones when they are tired of having to minimize themselves?

Pushing Back on an Abled Good Life

While these posts show the ways that abled good life ideals happen in disability discourse, they also show ways that a disabled good life manifests within the discourse in opposition to the abled good life. These, and other posts, do so by questioning the normative models of productivity, acknowledging that disabled people are more than what they can do, and calling out how systems are set up for failure.

A good example of questioning normative models of productivity occurs in the previously discussed post *Disabled Melancholy.* When the OP mentions their frustration with the dominant belief that if someone can't work then they're lazy or that someone's productivity is all that matters, they are questioning those models. A user comments that "none of us ASKED for our disabilities" and goes on to say that disabled people live in a world that they can't participate in like everyone else. They acknowledge that, although everyone lives in this world, the privilege of participating in the world in a normative way is not afforded to all people. Much of the OP's frustration is directed towards their inability to fully participate in "life." A different user reassures the OP that their feelings are valid, that disabled resentment happens for a reason, and that they hope the OP can find a way to not blame themselves. In doing so, they push back at the idea that the inability to fully participate in society is on the disabled person, thus questioning what it means to remove the onus from the disabled person.

Within this same post, the acknowledgment of disabled people being more than what they can do occurs in the comment by a user: "I will say this however: We are more than what we can do. We have meaning. Even if we are all alone and feel invisible. I've got your back." In other posts, it is not so explicitly stated, but instead comes across in other forms of encouragement such as focusing on oneself instead of other's expectations of what someone should be able to do. Acknowledging that people are more than their ability, or disability, creates a disabled good life that focuses on people's abilities instead of their deficits.

Finally, in a disabled good life calling out systems that are set up intentionally for failure pushes back on the belief that powering through will solve a disabled person's problems. This is seen the most in the post *Physical Appointments for Paperwork.* A comment says, "How are our safety nets so inhumane and callous? I'm terrified and exhausted and desperately need to rest and stop stressing but trying to get help from our systems is the hardest work ever." The author of the comment says that their heart breaks for those treated poorly by a system that is supposed to help them. Comments throughout call out disability resources systems as failing disabled people while blaming disabled people for that failure instead of fixing the broke system.

Another way this shows up is in an errant comment in a post covered in the *Cripistemology* section. At the very bottom of the post, an either intentionally off-topic or misplaced comment participates in this discourse. It is likely the user posted in the wrong place, but it still does the work of calling out the failures of disability assistance programs. The user is not disabled, but instead is posting for their disabled wife. The user is upset as they feel systems don't even serve the people who need it and those people "fall thru the cracks." A disabled good life is a life in which systems operate to benefit disabled people, not further harm them.

While a re-imagined, disabled good life seems like a better way of viewing disability and the world, these ways of pushing back still embody the larger concept of the good life. The idea of a good life still represents cruel optimism through the attachment to a normative idea of what a proper life should look like: productivity as a primary value, being seen as a valuable individual, and adequate systems. The act of criticizing these norms still relies on the belief that one, norms should still exist, and two, they can be shifted to included disability.

In analyzing the subreddit's discourse, the ways that the ideal of the good life influences this discourse are evident. We see how non-disabled people view disability and what abled good life ideals are represented across posts in the subreddit. The ways in which disabled people also participate in abled good life ideals and push back on them while inadvertently creating a disabled good life can be seen. It becomes evident that some users simultaneously participate in these discourses while rejecting the ideals all together. According to Berlant, the good life, as a facet of cruel optimism, operates in all areas of life. However, the lens of cripistemology is an alternate way of looking at disability discourse on this subreddit.

To look at how cripistemology rethinks the good life, first it's important to understand the ways discourse embodies cripistemology and how it operates in the discourse. This occurs through showing non-normative ways of being in the world and situated knowledge from a disabled standpoint. Through this understanding, it can then be seen how this discourse, through a crip lens, can rethink the good life, or even push against it. Re-thinking the good life, both abled and disabled, can include rejecting objects of attachment that are determined by normative society or expressing joy in disability.

Embodying Cripistemology

For disabled people, being in the world does not always look the same as abled ways of being in the world. Much of the discourse in my corpus recognized, both implicitly and explicitly, that there was an understood norm of being, and that they did not meet—nor approximate—that norm. In acknowledging being in non-normative bodies, many posts also showed alternate ways of being as acceptable ways of being.

Some of this discourse was simple acknowledgments of diverse bodies or existences. For example, in the post, *Straight Leg*, the OP posts two pictures of themselves: one before a leg straightening surgery and one after. They are celebrating the difference it has made in their life, mostly in pain reduction, while still celebrating a non-normative body. The replies to the post are celebrating with the OP. Some comments praise the OP as being beautiful in both, while others express similar experiences with corrective surgery. It is important to note here that, in these cases of corrective surgery, the goal is not to approximate a normative body, but instead to gain physical comfort in one's own body. The OP's reply to a comment asking if they experienced pain before the surgery, due to their legs being unable to straighten all the way shows this. The OP replies, "It's always been painful, it still is, I feel like I can go further walking now." In this specific example a disabled person sharing their disabled experience and non-normative body, and the support and celebration of their experience by other disabled people emerges.

Despite the positivity of that post, as the OP mentions they have always experienced pain, and the pain still exists. For many other posts that share experiences of non-normative bodies, there seems to be a process of acceptance that occurs over time. Therefore, discourse participants are in the process of accepting their own bodies and seeking support of those who have experienced the same process. This process is seen in my corpus throughout about half of the threads looked at, three of which I will cover here. The post *Things Learned* expresses that they have recently realized that being in pain and tired all the time isn't normal. They express not knowing "what to do with this information" and express guilt about "everything." The replies to the post are others sharing that they didn't know their experience was not normal as well. Many express the sentiment of "I thought other people experienced X too." These comments show the realization that there is a norm, and their bodies are not performing it. While the OP expresses struggling with this realization, others express acceptance of their own experience saying, "It's okay to have slow days or take breaks," or "I'm slowly trying to build in more allowances for myself to do less." These replies encourage OP to do similar things through not being too hard on themselves and resting when possible. The agree it's difficult to discover that an experience is not "normal." This expresses not only experiencing a non-normative experience but also potentially the beginning process of acceptance.

The *Accessible Bathroom* is a thread where the OP is having conflicted emotions about whether or not it is appropriate for them to use accessible bathrooms as a crutches user. The OP is worried about taking up space made for people more "disabled" than they are; yet they also feel at risk of falling in non-accessible stalls. They also find the non-accessible stalls not big enough for their medical supplies. The replies to the OP are a resounding " yes, you can use accessible restrooms." Many express the sentiment that if using a resource will benefit OP, they should absolutely use it. One reply says, “There is no ‘disabled enough’ you are disabled. Allow yourself the use accommodations, we don’t have many so use all you can.” While this comment could potentially be seen as reinforcing a binary of disabled or non-disabled, it is still acknowledging that there is no such thing as “not enough.” Thus, this comment occupies a space that is more fluid than disabled or non-disabled, which will be covered in the *Discussion*. This thread takes a turn in a reply to the above comment. A user replies, agreeing, “disabled is disabled,” and there is no such thing as not being disabled enough. They go on to say, “Anyone who thinks differently has ableist views whether they realize it or not.” This reply leads to a shift in the discourse.

This shift begins with a (downvoted) reply arguing that the OP is not feeling this way due to ableism but instead “politically correctness” and implies that OP shouldn’t feel the need to put other disabled people’s needs before their own. There is back and forth between the two commenters, but then the OP responds to them. The OP admits that they are working on not only accepting who they are but also their disability. The conversation shifts to sharing of experiences with internalized ableism and imposter syndrome surrounding “disabled enough.” They discuss how these feelings are the result of living in an ableist society and is created by society expecting disabled people to want to be “fixed and not a burden.” Another reply echoes the sentiment that an ableist society is what creates internalized ableism. The shift in discourse removes the blame from the OP and places the burden of those feelings right onto a normative society that medicalizes disabled bodies, which examples of will be seen later in this chapter. This thread shows explicit experiences and feelings of being in a disabled body and the acceptance that comes with the experience.

The thread, *Ruined Concert,* tells a concert goer’s experience in ADA seating that wound up being directly across the stage from the floodlights, which led to the lights shining in their eyes for most of the concert. The OP says that the ADA section emptied within minutes of the concert starting due to how bad the lights were set up. The OP tried to move a bit to avoid the lights or use people in front of them as shields from the lights. However, it didn't work, and they had a breakdown as the lights were triggering a severe migraine. The OP noted that the staff was helpful, and they even asked if it was okay to move their wheelchair before doing so. In the end, paramedics had to be called. The OP felt that they not only ruined the concert for themselves, but for their dad attending with them, and those around them. This post is showing that disabled people experience events such as concerts differently than an able-bodied person would. Things that would be fun or exciting, such as bright lights, can be painful or even cause medical emergencies for disabled people. However, the larger discourse of this thread is that the OP blames themselves for the experience and not the venue. Most replies echo this sentiment that the OP is in no way at fault. Whoever set up the lights is at fault for not only ruining the concert for them, but also everyone else in ADA seating. One reply says that if the OP was their family, they would be securing an attorney and approaching the event organizers for compensation as "disabled people are not an afterthought" and that a simple run through could have prevented OP's experience. Again, this is a moment where the discourse shifts.

In response to the reply about compensation, a user replies, "People who are sensitive to lights shouldn't go to concerts." They say that if they had to describe concerts glaring lights and explosives are a major part of them and "any reasonable adult would know this." They also say that you can't file complaints about this issue, and if you do it won't actually "go anywhere." The person they reply to comes back and says that the OP mentions they had never had (light triggered) migraines before, did not know to expect it, and that they weren't the only ones affected by the light. They argue that it's clear that the event organizers "threw a section together," and says that it is likely so the organizer "could check off the legal ADA-compliant box" without ensuring that it was ADA accessible. They argue that for that reason the issue is worth pressing and the win may not be a "classic win" but may force the organizers to plan better—which is a good thing.

While this reply chain ends here, the user who was arguing that it's the OP's fault for going to a concert and being upset that there were lights continued to make similar comments throughout the thread to anyone who claimed the OP should press the issue. One commenter calls out the comments as victim blaming. The person says that it's not the event organizer's fault that the OP can't "deal with reality," and that "disability is about learning what you can or cannot do." They say that they've had to accept their own limits many times, and that there are no accommodations that can fix their body to allow them to do some of the things they want to do.

This turn in discourse shows more than one disabled way of being in the world. The OP was already disabled but was unaware that lights were a migraine trigger for them. They already knew one way of being but suddenly discovered a new one. Others knew that concert going shouldn't involve bright lights directly in one's face throughout a concert, and that this happening was a violation of ADA accommodations. Yet, another felt that knowing one's limits and acceptance of what someone can or cannot do was the correct way of being disabled. Cripistemology includes embodied knowledge. While comments such as "any reasonable adult would know this" or "deal with reality" are rooted in ableist ideas, and could be internalized ableism on the commenter's part, overall, their comments still show a situated knowledge based on their own disabled experiences.

Situated, crip knowledge also shows up in other ways in my corpus through *crip tips:* smaller bits of tips, tricks, or advice regarding accessibility aids, navigating disability services/accommodations, or more general life tips. In many cases, there is not much discourse to be analyzed across these threads, but the existence of multiple instances of these threads implies they are a broader part of disability discourse itself. For example, threads on how many hours of work or what the income caps were for filling for Social Security Insurance (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) act as a disabled knowledge set. Usually, the OP is asking what the requirements are, if working will affect their SSDI, what jobs they can have and still qualify for SSDI (usually in the context of the idea, that if someone is able to do a specific job, why would they not be able to work full time), or other advice surrounding the process. Replies usually are solely focused on providing the information or advice requested through a lens of experience.

Other crip tips were more specific, asking what to do if their SSI was up for review or flagged. Others offered advice for navigating physical situations, such as how to carry hot soup or liquids when using a wheel chair; what tools are recommended for power chair users such as joystick covers, clip on umbrellas, grabbers, etc.; and power chair/wheel chair users sharing knowledge about how to stay warm and dry in their chairs during colder months. These all fit into a broader discourse regarding ways of being that are not typically considered normative but are normalized in these discussions through open discussion about disability and the tools that go with it. It's safe to guess that, unless faced with the situation, most people don't consider how to use an umbrella while using a wheel chair.

Despite a majority of the crip tips being mundane knowledge sharing, there was broader discourse that ties back into the idea of different normative ways of being in a more complex manner, two of those threads will be discussed here. First, *Urgent Care*, where the OP is asking others what the tipping point for them is when deciding to seek emergency care for pain or "small" illnesses. They were curious how other disabled people handle this situation. They work on the assumption that disabled people have a different pain scale and that for some people small illnesses (colds, stomach bugs, etc.) can mean serious issues for their disability. They were not seeking medical advice, something that is against the subreddit's rules, but instead just getting a feel for what other people do and how they navigate decision making.

Most responses were along the lines of only going when their body stops functioning in ways necessary for survival, or if there is a new, unfamiliar reaction/pain/illness that seems life-threatening. Most also expressed past experiences that they thought warranted an ER visit, only to be dismissed by doctors as not "sick enough" to be in the ER. One user explained their own experience and process of making that decision of whether or not to go for pain. They say they started experiencing pain, but they couldn't tell if it was their "classic" sciatic nerve pain from sitting too long or something more serious. They laid in bed a while to stretch out their back. When that didn't work, they took a hot shower. Nothing was really reducing their pain, but it really felt like their sciatic nerve pain. Their partner persuaded them to go to the ER, but they were worried that they were just wasting everyone's time. In the ER, they learned they had a large kidney stone, and wound up admitted for six days due to infection. They said, "In my case I just had to trust that it was something." In other words, they relied on their own instinct to know it wasn't "just sciatic nerve pain." Another user shared that both them and their partner have both had negative ER experiences in which they were ignored, despite their chronic illness, to the point of malpractice. They refuse to go to the ER unless the specialist on the nurse line agrees to meet them at the hospital. Additionally, they have both day and night shift patient advocates in their phones for their local ERs. Other replies to the post shared that most people preferred to handle the issue themselves until they could get in with their regular specialist.

The examples in this thread show a different kind of situated, crip knowledge: ERs are not necessarily helpful places for disabled people. Not only that, but disabled people have also developed a skillset that allows for them to handle their own health as needed and reject reliance on ERs. As seen in the user's story about kidney stones, this is not necessarily a positive set of embodied knowledge. Yet, in the other case, it is a necessary set of embodied knowledge that includes self-advocacy skills and advocacy resource knowledge when self-advocacy is not sufficient.

The second thread, *Walking Stick Comeback,* is more lighthearted, but still embodies self-advocacy. The OP shares their personal best comeback when asked by strangers why they have a walking stick. In their experience, they find often times the ask is not necessarily well-meaning, and usually meant to imply that they shouldn't have one or don't need one. Their tactic is to ask their inquisitor a personal medical question in response. When the response is "why would you ask that?" they respond with "I just thought we were asking each other invasive medical questions." Then the OP asks what others' comebacks are when they are faced with unwanted questions about their mobility aids. Many other users had witty comebacks for their own mobility aids, such as "Oh this isn't a walking stick, it's a *whack*ing stick. It's for whacking people who ask rude questions about someone else's medical condition." Others make up outlandish stories that involve bear or tiger fights, while others opted for oversharing about their condition to intentionally create discomfort. While others said that they will genuinely explain if they think they're being asked in a sincere way, but otherwise ignore the ask if they believe it to be disingenuous. This discourse occupies a space of embodied knowledge based on experiences that have shown that there is a set of people who should be disabled (elderly) and a set who should not be (young people). The OP mentions in their post that they are 28 years old and therefore are aware that they do not occupy the age of what is presumed appropriate for disability status. The sharing of this knowledge within the subreddit acted as a way of sharing tips on how to navigate complex social situations without conforming to, or even ways of actively rejecting, normative ways of being in the world.

Re-thinking Good Life

While much of the discourse showed disabled knowledge through cripistemology and attempts to reject norms, some of the OPs and commenters participating in the subreddit's discourse had accepted their own bodies. Yet, they still experience the pressures of the abled good life via family or friends. These posters want to know how to get their loved ones to accept them as they are instead of pushing them to be able bodied. In contrast to that, other posters showed radical acceptance in disability through what I would call crip joy. Many of the threads that show the pressure of the abled life have already been discussed in that context but looking at them through the lens of cripistemology shows an alternate way that these threads function.

An example of this is in the thread *Non-Disabled Victims*. In that thread, the OP and many other users are upset that while their able-bodied loved ones can just find new people to do activities with, they are now limited and isolated by their disability and their loved ones refusing to modify activities. However, this line of thought is disrupted by brainstorming for accessibility in camping, such as disability accommodations at larger campsites, rentable cots, shower chairs, bigger tents, and more. This sentiment is also seen in the thread *Stop Changing Non-offensive Terms* and the thread *Advice Needed.* Sentiments arise such as focusing on one's own happiness and well-being over trying to fit into norms, not wasting time on people who made someone feel bad about their disability, and not wasting time forcing friendships or relationships with people who put them down. This all sounds like solid life advice but, in the context of disability, many people spend so long trying to approximate the norm that they may have forgotten to make themselves happy. This pushes back on the good life by rejecting the happy objects of attachment that people theoretically strive for in the first place. Yet, it does still potentially occupy the space of a disabled good life as these objects may not be realistic for all disabled people.

This idea is expanded to include notions such as found family in a comment on a post not previously discussed, *Hypocritical Situation*. The OP is upset that their parents are hypocritical when it comes to their disabilities. The context they provide is that their parents are also disabled, but frequently minimizes the OP's disability. The OP is frustrated because they can't expect any help or empathy from their parents. In a reply, a user empathizes with the OPs experience. They share their own experiences with dismissive parents and offer up advice of not bothering to keep their parents in the loop, and instead find other people who understand them and accept them. In sharing this knowledge, not only are users sharing crip experience of interpersonal relationship struggles, but they are also pushing back at the ideals of what a family should be. This differs from the abled good life object of attachment of a "loved one," discussed previously in the section *Participating in the Good Life*. Family becomes a non-normative concept once it no longer conforms to the boundaries that define normative family: caring parents, grandparents, siblings, children, (heteronormative) partners, etc. This user's advice includes pushing against and rejecting that norm and therefore rejecting the object of attachment of “family.” However, much like the other examples, this runs the risk of creating its own object of attachment to strive for that could replicate the good life.

In contrast to the threads that express frustration, another way that cripistemology re-thinks or rejects the good life is through expressing joy in disability. While previous posts show users who have radically accepted their disability, they have not necessarily found joy within their disability. This is not to say that finding joy in disability is a necessary step, but the act of doing so for those who desire to re-thinks what it means to be disabled. However, the act of finding joy in disability actively re-thinks the object of attachment to normative ways of being that would be a part of both the abled and disabled good life. This can be seen throughout the discourse in the subreddit, but I will focus briefly on a thread previously discussed, *Straight Legs*, and one thread not previously discussed, *Drawing*.

The OP of *Straight Legs* does not have a normative body, even after corrective surgery. This is not something the OP or users replying to their thread care about. There is nothing but radical acceptance of progress, or success, of the OP and joy in the beauty of the OP. Comments such as “you look beautiful in both,” “I love your outfit in both pictures,” “heck yes for progress! Also, you are super cute,” “I love your fashion style,” and one user saying, “You look amazing in both pictures, im glad youve gotten to a place where you are happy,” all show the ways that the discourse in the thread is about the OP’s happiness, success, and beauty. This rejects the ideas of normative ways of being and achieving success, as most people would consider having straight legs a default way of being.

The thread *Drawing* also embodies this sense of radical joy. In the thread, the OP shares a drawing they’ve done based on a childhood photo of themselves. They say the reason they felt compelled to draw the picture is because of the smile they wore. The OP shares both the drawing and original photo. Most of the comments consist of users either complimenting the OP on their drawing skills or how cute they were as a child. One user compliments the OP, saying, “beautiful drawing and a beautiful soul captured in both!” Another user calls it a “beautiful example of disability pride.” Many others call it heartwarming and thank the OP for sharing. This thread shows joy in a way that does not fit the expected norm of disability when viewed through an abled lens, yet it does through a crip lens. Through an abled lens, there are certain disabilities associated with happiness, i.e., Down’s Syndrome, but being a wheelchair user does not carry this stereotype. When a disability is not one of “happiness,” the disability must then be a source of inspiration through narratives that are inspoporn or supercrip stories. Were this thread not shared by the disabled person that is the subject of the post, to a disabled audience, this post would likely resemble inspoporn. It would also hold the potential of a supercrip story if the narrative was about how the OP overcame their disabilities to be able to draw. However, neither of these things occur. Instead, this post acts solely as sharing art and joy.

Cripistemology does not have to embody happiness. However, crip bodies and stories within cripistemology offer a counter narrative to normative bodies, which can be seen in the threads analyzed. Furthermore, this embodiment and knowledge sharing offer a discourse that also challenges societal norms surrounding ability and disability. The ways cripistemology pushes against the ideas of an abled or disabled good life, that I have previously outlined, show that not only does being simply abled or disabled exist, but also different ways of being within disability emerge. Additionally, it acts as a way to challenge the status of knowledge itself (McRuer and Johnson 164) by challenging normative ways of being and knowledge production. However, the ways in which it rejects these norms, in the context of the discourse analyzed here, run the risk of creating new objects of attachment that would fall under the good life and its cruel optimism. To further compound the issue, concepts such as a good life/bad life and abled/disabled create binaries of participating in one or the other, when in reality the boundaries between those, and other binaries, are not so clearly defined. Re-thinking, or even rejecting, the good life is not something cripistemology can do on its own.

DISCUSSION

In order to rethink good life ideals, I propose a more-than-human life that works together with crip ways of being/knowing. In this chapter, I will discuss how reciprocal ways of being through the cyborg and interdependency can operate as a framework for creating a more-than-human life. In my analysis I considered how my data operated in context to the good life and how cripistemologies emerged from that data. However, if the good life is a bad life for most who operate within it, then this discussion seeks ways to see life as neither a good life nor a bad life. To propose that, first I will briefly examine how the posthuman lens I employ informs disability and what "human" is. Then I will discuss the ways that posthuman future ideals could unintentionally replicate good life ideals through (dis)animality and nonhuman objects as extensions of the self. I explain that within these ideals those striving to achieve these ways of being still do so as an individual goal: if disabled people can convince abled people of specific things, then the standards for normative being will include disability. This perpetuates the binary of ability/disability and human/nonhuman.

Instead, through my data, I propose that reciprocal ways of being through interdependency create pluralistic ways of being in the world that see binaries as continuums instead to create a more-than-human life. In proposing a more-than-human life, the definition of more-than-human I employ differs from that of scholars such as Abram and Fijn and Kavesh. While they define more-than-human as relations and connections with nature, I aim to expand the notion to include technology through both digital assemblages and tools. My use of a more-than-human life does not exclude the possibility of nature connections but does consider that disability does not connect with nature in the same ways that ability does. Instead, I examine a more-than-human life as mediated through various technologies that propose an alternate more-than-human way of being.

The Human, Posthuman, and Disability

As human, or what has historically qualified as human, and posthumanism have already been defined in the literature review, I will not define them here. However, in relation to posthumanism and disability, there are two topics worth briefly reviewing: (dis)animality and the transhuman. As noted, in modern, Western history, the boundary of human and nonhuman has been fluid. Many times, the nonhuman subject has been equated to the category of animal (Adams; Butler; Erevelles; Grue; Lundblad; Mitchell; Naraian; Taylor and Orning; Wadiwel). The animal human has consisted of women, people of color, queer people, and disabled people (which includes physical and mental disabilities). This classification has existed to determine who deserves to live and be cared for (Butler; Erevelles; Lundblad). A binary between humanity and animality within humans is established and to achieve humanity was to achieve the privilege of living and having rights. To challenge this notion of the binary between human and animal and gain equality for them both, some posthumanist scholars have aimed to trouble the boundary between the two. In doing so there has been a push to embrace the classification of animal. To embrace the animal is to also liberate the animal. The fight for equal rights and liberation has included historically incarcerated groups in both categories: people of color, women, disabled people, factory farmed animals, and zoo animals (Butler; Erevelles; Lundblad). For disabled scholars, from this push for liberation (dis)animality emerges. This is a move that seeks equality for both animalized disabled people and nonhuman animals. Throughout my discussion, I show how (dis)animality operates as an object of attachment to the good life.

On the other hand, some theorists have sought to instead reject not only animality but also marginalized status by transcending human. This becomes a form of flawless embodiment that rejects both the human and the animal: transhumanism. Most of the time, the idea of the transhuman is situated in a posthuman future that is bionic and cybernetic. These ideals are represented in science fiction often and imagine a world where technology has advanced to the point that body upgrades can be achieved, and suffering eliminated. In the context of disability, this is often an imagined future of a disability-free existence. However, Jan Grue and David T. Mitchell, consider this notion to be “escapist fantasy,” a “reductionist view of life,” and an “exertion of human dominance over its own nature” that are biocentric with “imperialist and racist undertones.” Therefore, while I will discuss posthuman futures, I do not consider transhuman futures to be compatible with the future potentials offered within this discussion. I instead draw upon interdependent, cyborg futures.

The More-Than-Human Life

When we look at the ways that posthuman values are currently in conversation with disability, it can seem as if many of these values are participating in the good life. Embracing non-normative ways of being such as the animal, the cyborg, or a more-than-human whose daily tools become an extension of self instead of an object of shame hold the potential to become new objects of attachments to an idealized good life. Putting these ideals into practice still rely on the rest of society recognizing the value of these ways of being. Scholars that speak of (dis)animality see a multitude of possibility in embracing or reclaiming the animal: becoming animal is gaining empowerment. The process includes fighting for the rights and well-being of animals as well. The logic rests on the belief that by disabled humans embracing (dis)animality, animals gain equal rights to autonomy and freedom. Yet, as other disability scholars have pointed out, many animal rights activists see animals as more worthy of life than disabled people who are a burden on systems and their loved ones. As Harriet McBryde Johnson points out, people—such as the aforementioned Singer—see lives such as hers as “avoidable mistakes” (515). Rachel Adam’s points this out as well, arguing that Singer’s stance is that “some animals are more deserving of our care than disabled humans.” The logic Singer provides Johnson is that “in times of limited resource the burden of care will fall on an oftenfemale caregiver, preventing her from having a life of her own” (Johnson 515). Adams notes this as well when talking about how care is itself a limited resource and that it is “unjustly extracted from women and people of color” (696). The act of caring, and caretaking, in this context shifts the object of care to that of something incapable of self-care. Therefore, if one cannot care for themselves and thus burdens another marginalized human, then they are less than the animal whose is deserving of care due to their animal status. With utilitarian mindsets, such as Singer’s, (dis)animality is still merely a future dream, an object of attachment to a happy life.

Additionally, if the concept of Haraway’s cyborg, as a challenge to binaries of being, is applied to blur the lines between animal and human, meaning that we are not simply just human or just animal but occupying a space that is both human and animal, then the cyborg can also occupy ability and disability. The cyborg becomes a way to re-think the stratification of status that exists between human (worthy) and animal (unworthy). If the human/animal is worthy of life and care, then so is the abled/disabled. Within disability theory, theorists use phenomenology as a way to critique the binary between abled/disabled as well—all bodies “are always becoming” (Ray and Alaimo 59). This exemplifies the sentiment of the cyborg; there is a space of becoming that occupies a continuum between abled and disabled. At some point in life, for those lucky to live long enough, all humans will experience disability; yet until that point in time, most people don’t consider their future a disabled future (Butler; Davis; McRuer; Ray and Alaimo; Shakespeare; Straus). However, able-bodied people will not see their cyborg existence between abled/disabled nor their occupation of being human/animal. Therefore, cyborg ideals alone become an object of attachment to a happy life that reifies the good life.

The final potential object of attachment is tools as an extension of self instead of an object of shame (Ray and Alaimo 60). These tools are tools of accessibility and freedom—a slight liberation from limiting barriers. However, they also act as beacons of disability. They eliminate any possibility at an attempt to approximate the norm by immediately highlighting the fact that the user of the tool is incapable of the task without the tool. These tools become objects of shame, as seen in the threads *Advice Needed* and *Walking Stick* where the user of the tool must find ways to navigate social relationships in defense, or in spite, of the tool. As Alaimo, Ray, and Nocella argue, within Western society humans are viewed as natural and tools as unnatural, thus upholding dualisms between natural/unnatural and human/tool. Nocella and Alaimo more specifically point to the belief that to be natural, and connect to nature, that connection must be unmediated (53). They use the example of outdoorsmanship culture to say, “Machines are dismissed as impure, but adventure culture relies on, even fetishizes its gear” (Nocella and Alaimo 58). However, they point out the double standard of access in nature as hiking gear, such as trekking poles and GPS units, is a technological extension of the self that facilitates nature just as much as ramps, wheelchairs, and walking sticks should (Nocella and Alaimo 58). To further that point, within society it’s more acceptable and natural to drive a nail into the wall with a hammer than it is with a hand. This means that some tools are deemed acceptable and natural to act as an extension of the self and others are unnatural: normative human should not need a tool to walk, reach, grab, stand, speak, eat, etc. To not be able to do those things independently is deemed unnatural and thus nonhuman. Therefore, tools as an extension of self, and even identity, become a disabled object of attachment.

Despite the potential for perpetuating good life ideals through cruel optimism of pluralities of human/nonhuman/animal/cyborg/extended self, a posthuman lens into crip ways of knowing and being can reject the good life, both abled and disabled. It can instead shift the focus on the self and interdependency over objects of attachment to normative happy lives. Interdependency allows freedom for disabled people, and most other people, through interconnectedness. In other words, the good life is an act of an individual striving towards a collective goal. A more-than-human approach is interdependent and relies on taking care of the self and others: It is a collective approach to living, being, and knowing.

To understand how this could operate, first it’s important to revisit how a good life, abled good life, and disabled good life operate. A good life is an abstract goal of happiness and success that people strive for, but it wears out those who do manage to operate within in it: a slow death through physical deterioration of those simply working to survive. This goal of happiness is not only that of financial capital but also social capital. An abled good life is a frame for the ways that able-bodied people view disability operating in the broader concept of the good life: usually equally able to overcome barriers or act as non-participants all together. Disabled people can participate in this framework, both intentionally or inadvertently, through internalized ableism or beliefs in good faith that barriers will not affect them or will be easily overcome. Then a disabled good life re-imagines the good life by focusing on happiness instead of operating in poorly designed systems, rethinking productivity, and radical acceptance of disability. All of these ways of striving for a good life rely on individuals acting in larger society, whether that is aiming for success, approximating the norm, or rejecting norms and the system. The human strives for the good life, happiness, productivity, success, or rejects those external objects of desire. However, those objects of desire do not strive for humans. The good life is a non-reciprocal life.

The posthuman lens I employ can instead mediate a reciprocal way of being in the world which works to rethink these values of individualism. The first way of doing this is by redefining the boundaries of self. The concept of the humanist self comes from Cartesian dualism, which separates mind from matter, leaving "matter" as passive (Narian 16). The posthumanist self that I am proposing here extends beyond the boundaries of mind and even the "passive" body: a bodymind. In this case, self is an interface between bodies, is always intersubjective, and intercorporeal—a fluid and always becoming self that co-evolves with a variety of other selves (Narian; Braidotti). This creates a collaborative concept of self that accounts for pluralities of being in the world and intersections of those pluralities. Pluralistic selves have a multitude of possibilities, and thus also have a multitude of futures. A multitude of futures eliminates the need for an attachment to objects that wear down the subjects that strive for them, as then there is no singular future someone is striving towards but instead a future that is ever changing and always becoming.

The second way that this posthuman lens mediates reciprocity is through interdependency. As Judith Butler says,

> "Interdependency seeks to identify the zones of commonality from which we might continue to launch new collaborative and experimental forms, new conditions of life, where survival, passion, and flourishing are no longer exclusively human prerogatives claimed by the few who have been given to understand themselves as exemplifying the norm at the expense of all the other living beings" (693).

The act of interdependence creates a zone of caring for oneself and others that honors the individual while still creating a collaborative self. Reciprocity through interdependency allows the pluralities of self to emerge. When humans see their bodies, and their body's experience, as informing the mind to create embodied knowledge, then there is the potential to imagine the multitude of futures. It creates a sense of collaboration between all living beings when interdependent, reciprocal futures are considered. We become less concerned with achieving individual goals of success and instead consider reciprocal success. If a part of reciprocal success is to work to eliminate normative frames of being and striving, then interdependent futures also work to eliminate the distinction between abled/disabled and human/animal. Much like redefining the self, through interdependence, futures become collaborative. Yet, it is not just futures that become collaborative; the present is collaborative through equal dependency that supports life-sustaining environments (Butler 691). This is further embraced through cripistemology which operates similarly with bodyminds, specifically Margret Price's crip bodyminds: The idea that the body and the mind cannot be separated and thus create a pluralistic embodied experience. Therefore, the multitude of selves is also a crip multitude of selves. This is key for rejecting the good life, and by proxy rejecting the binary of a good or bad life.

More-than-human Cripistemologies in Discourse

In looking at the discourse analyzed, there are subtle ways that more-than-human cripistemologies are already occurring in this disabled discourse community, even if they are not named as such. These can be looked at through the ways that the discourse showed alternate ways of being and knowing in a zonal community. First, this can be seen through the more literal ways of being and knowledge sharing: digital worlds, networks, and collective knowledge. Second, it can be viewed in more subtle ways: non-normative ways of being, the use of tools either for communicating or doing, and the collective cyborg.

Digital worlds act as zonal communities that have their own norms and ways of being that vary depending on the platform or site used. For example, a group chat’s rules and use will be different from online gaming. In the case of Reddit, these develop through subreddits. Subreddits can have some variety, but overall, there is a main discussion feed, posting rules, moderators, FAQs, and user flair—usually words or acronyms that appear under a username. This allows for some customization and choice within the digital world of the r/disability subreddit. For example, regular users in this subreddit will use flair to share their disabilities. Some subreddits have set flair, and others have customizable flair: r/disability has customizable flair. For example, a user may have “AuDHD” as their flair, meaning that they identify as autistic and ADHD, or something like “RA,” “EDS,” “Fibro.” This helps give context to their texts and even authority as insiders. Though likely done unintentionally, the use of flair acts as coded language. Insiders will be able to decipher meaning, but outsiders may not be able to do so if they don’t know what the acronyms stand for. For example, many people may know that “RA” stands for rheumatoid arthritis in this context, but they may not know what “ME/CFS;POTs” stands for if they’re not an insider to the disability community. This digital world of disability has been co-created through the embodied experiences of those who use the subreddit.

The digital world occurs through assemblages of networks. This can be the more literal sense or wires and cables allowing for an online experience, or through human networks. We are not born knowing of Reddit or subreddits. The use of the site is not usually by accident, but because someone shared a post from a popular subreddit and then the site is explored further. Or, in the case of the search for a community, someone may search for sites for a disabled community and Reddit will populate as a search result. In this case, the subreddit may hold embodied knowledges that the seeker either identifies with or didn’t know existed, thus building their set of crip knowledge.

However, the real magic of networks happens within the digital world of the subreddit. A network of community and collective knowledge is built, and in this case, it’s built around disability and navigating the world through the lens of disability. The network holds the embodied experiences of disabled people, as my analysis of the discourse shows. This becomes the collective knowledge, such as knowing what accessories best suit a power chair, how to navigate complicated interpersonal relationships, how to navigate SSI/SSDI, and more. This creates a searchable dataset for new users, or even visitors to the subreddit. If the knowledge they seek can’t be searched, it can be asked. Additionally, the most common way to use Reddit is algorithm-based, where the most popular, or top posts, are what are shown to users first. This makes a more-than-human experience in the literal sense—not only humans participate in this digital world and its shared knowledge.

The less obvious ways that the discourse was more-than-human was through the ways that human users situated themselves both in the digital world and in their disability. This is where cripistemologies participate in the co-creation of meaning. Non-normative ways of being first must establish what a norm is to trouble its existence. So as users ask if an experience is normal or share an experience that exemplifies societal norms, they can establish a norm or they can violate an established norm. When users begin to push back on those norms and their actions encourage others to do so as well, non-normative ways of existing are expressed. Broad ways that this was seen was in threads related to disability financial assistance, as working is considered a part of the norm. When a user posts and asks about social systems of assistance and other users respond positively to that question, those who were on the fence about whether or not it was acceptable to not meet the norm of self-sufficiency may gain the knowledge that seeking assistance is okay.

Another norm would be that disability is tragic, but instead some users chose radical acceptance. More specifically, it can be seen in the *Walking Stick Comeback* thread: a young person shouldn't be using a walking stick by societal norms. They are challenging those norms by using a walking stick and then having witty comebacks for dealing with people trying to force them back into the norm. Not only do these experiences of ableism create a set of embodied knowledge for the individual experiencing them, but they also create a knowledge base that is then shared through digital assemblages to create shared knowledge. As individuals interact with the world with that shared knowledge, they may use that knowledge to understand their own embodied experiences. This creates interdependency as users ask each other their ways of handling these interactions. This also shows the ways that tools for accessibility also are a part of the discourse. Not only the walking stick, but in the case of the *Ruined Concert* when the OP shares that brief moment of positivity within the negative experience about the concert venue staff asking permission to move their wheelchair. For wheelchair users, many do consider their chair and extension of their self. Collectively, these conversations become a part of a crip multitude of selves that is cyborg in nature. If the cyborg challenges the binaries and hegemonic ways of being, then r/disability is a cyborg full of subjects that are crip and more-than-human—not only through their interdependency, but also through their tools of collaboration that extend the self into digital assemblages.

A disabled life is not inherently a bad life just as an abled life is not inherently a good life. Instead, life is a multitude of being through knowledge. Life becomes simply a more-than-human multitude. This multitude does not eliminate disability in the sense of different bodyminds/selves occupying space in different ways, but it could challenge disability as we know it: a socially constructed boundary between ability and inability. At this time, it’s hard to imagine what an interdependent, collaborative future looks like, let alone an interdependent present. Imagining this potential future may be difficult now, so the first step may be to simply strive for a more-than-human life in small ways in the world.

CONCLUSION

Through analyzing the subreddit r/disability, I set out to discover how a posthuman approach could rethink what *the* good life is in the context of disability. To do so, I first analyzed my corpus to see if the good life was present in the ongoing discourse of the Subreddit's threads. Second, I analyzed to see if cripistemologies were present in the ways that knowledge sharing occurred in the discourse. Finally, through employing a posthuman lens, I proposed that through a more-than-human life the good life can be rethought. This more-than-human life operates as an interdependent, cyborg/pluralistic way of knowing/being that allows for multitudes of being in both the present and future.

My analysis shows that online discourse communities are a valuable place to gain understanding to alternate ways of being. More importantly, listening to and valuing disabled voices within those spaces is key to learning from discourse communities. Through my analysis, I have worked to highlight the ways that the good life and normative ways of being have been rejected in facets of this discourse. I have also worked to present voices of disabled people as not only valid sources of their experience, but as sole sources of their experience. As can be seen through this discourse analysis, the experience is not a universal experience and disabled people are far from a monolith that represents disability as a whole. Furthermore, there are experiences that are not represented here as even the subreddit cannot be a sole example of the disabled experience. Despite this, the choice to analyze a subreddit allowed for observing a disabled discourse that instead acts as a space of representation that can be seen elsewhere, but other spaces, digital or physical, may have even more diverse experiences.

Instead, my analysis highlights ways of being that can act as waypoints for broader observations of alternate ways of knowing and being. A more-than-human life does not need to include enduring the things that wear out a person, such as relationships that minimize a person due to their disability, jobs that disable—or further disable—a person, or even having a normative body. A more-than-human life can include pursuing supportive relationships, making flexible social plans, seeking financial assistance instead of “pulling oneself up by their bootstraps,” celebrating what a body *can* do instead of what it *should* do, viewing digital spaces as social spaces and spaces of knowledge production, seeing tools/aids as an extension of self, and more. Or maybe a more-than-human life can be simply accepting that there is no such thing as a “normal” experience. These ways of being can also be viewed as crip ways of being and knowing: cripistemologies.

Additionally, throughout this thesis, I argue that discourse spaces are assemblages of networks to rethink the normative ways of being in the world. I have presented this not only in the literal sense of connected devices but also through sharing of collective knowledge. The creation of these collective knowledge bases results in both constantly changing and static archives of knowledge. This adds to rethinking the good life through reconsidering where knowledge comes from. Instead of knowledge coming from a named expert such as a doctor, parent, teacher, or other “expert,” knowledge is embodied and shared through the assemblage of disability and its knowledge spaces. While the good life does not necessarily dictate where knowledge comes from, norms often dictate that knowledge must come from a formally educated expert. Therefore, collective knowledge through digital assemblages can help us re-think the norms of knowledge spaces.

To further contrast the good life and build alternate ways of knowing and being, I propose that a more-than-human life allows us to imagine these alternatives. This builds a way of being in the world that is reciprocal with both humans and nonhumans alike. It expresses the various intersections of knowledge and ways of being that are non-normative. In doing this, the ideas of who or what is “human” pushes back on the normative ideals of “Man.” It works with cripistemology to build spaces of situated knowledge that become multitudes of knowing and being. In addition, a more-than-human life operates through interdependency instead of individual exceptionalism.

In examining what it means to be cyborg, interdependent, and more-than-human, we can begin to see possibilities for a life that doesn't depend on normative ways of being or the cruel optimism of a good life. Therefore, there is more than one way to experience life and, through my analysis and more-than-human life, these alternatives can be seen and realized. Furthermore, through realizing a more-than-human life, multitudes of possibilities for being and futures are created for all—not just disabled people.

What this means for broader communities, both disabled and non-disabled, is that community building through digital assemblages is a potential way for constructing more-than-human futures. For disabled people, online community building has been an important aspect of community building for years now (Ginsburg and Rapp 197). These online communities have been places for sharing struggles, successes, wins, losses—the ups and downs of life. Online communities have also been places of knowledge sharing, from advice on mobility aids to navigating complex medical systems to coping with a new diagnosis and even to sharing and building culture (Fainzang et al.).

Because online spaces exist as places of digital knowledge sharing, they hold value not only for the disabled people embodying these spaces but also potentially for non-disabled people. Each participant comes with their own situated knowledge, but in this space those knowledges mix to create new knowledge sets. Furthermore, because these online spaces are created by disabled people, for fellow disabled people, these are spaces that are occupied by majority disabled users. This likely would be different, for example, in a subreddit dedicated to caregivers of disabled people, where those participating in the same discourse would likely be approaching it from a non-disabled world experience. The r/disability subreddit doesn't disallow caregivers, or even non-disabled people, but the conversations were about self-management of the user's disability and their personal world experiences. While participants' disabilities often differ, commonality can be found through the disabled experience of living in a society that disables through normative ways of being. Therefore, these online spaces provide a space of commonality for disabled people to share their lives while knowing that they are less likely to be judged or delegitimized because, while their disability may differ, commonality is found through shared experience (Masana 168). Yet, they also open spaces for outsiders to the community to understand crip ways of being and knowing.

For myself, these same digital spaces have been key to navigating my own world for over a decade. While I have been a member of the broader "disabled community," even ten years ago I would not have considered myself disabled. I had the optimism of being "fixed" by the medical community for years. Over time, I was kicked around the system just being "fat and anxious." Through these communities, I learned this was not abnormal for women, and even women who weren't fat[1] or overweight were still just "anxious." Disabled discourse communities taught me about medical gaslighting and finding new ways of being in the world that did not depend on fitting in by normative standards. Much like those in my corpus seeking advice or commonality, I have found online disabled spaces to be integral to navigating medical or assistance systems and gaining knowledge through other's shared experiences. There were many times I experienced cruel optimism and worked towards objects of attachment that Berlant would consider a part of the good life, before I realized I didn't always have to participate in the things that harmed me.

When thinking about the ways that Berlant says that the good life operates, those patterns of living become clear. However, I'm not sure it's fair to believe that the good life or cruel optimism is something we all participate in. Through my research question, I sought out whether or not that was the case, and if so, I asked whether a posthuman approach would allow us to rethink the good life. The objects of attachment within the good life are something we are socialized to strive for, but these discourses show that when life and being are reframed—they are always becoming. This allows for other patterns of being to become evident. It also allows

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[1] This is also a reclaimed term stemming from the body positivity movement, which is interrelated, but beyond the scope of this thesis.

for concepts such as the good life to be rethought or rejected. The good life is not something that we must strive for. Though we are limited by the systems around us, such as having to survive in a capitalistic and ableist society, there are smaller ways in which we can resist those systems. Some of these smaller ways of resistance can occur through realization and acceptance of non-normative ways of being in the world that are interdependent, collaborative with humans and nonhumans alike, and filled with multitudes of knowing/being: a more-than-human life.

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