GENDER OPEN REPOSITORIUM

Feminism for the 99% or Solidarity in the House of Difference? Intersectionality and Social Reproduction Theory

Stewart, Abibi

2021

https://doi.org/10.25595/3749

Veröffentlichungsversion / published version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Stewart, Abibi: *Feminism for the 99% or Solidarity in the House of Difference? Intersectionality and Social Reproduction Theory*, in: Femina politica : Zeitschrift für feministische Politik-Wissenschaft, Jg. 30 (2021) Nr: 2, 23–35. DOI: https://doi.org/10.25595/3749.

Erstmalig hier erschienen / Initial publication here: https://doi.org/10.3224/feminapolitica.v30i2.03

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY 4.0 Lizenz (Namensnennung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu dieser Lizenz finden Sie hier:

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.de

Terms of use:

This document is made available under a CC BY 4.0 License (Attribution). For more information see:

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en

GenderOpen – Repositorium für die Geschlechterforschung: www.genderopen.de

FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN

HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN

Feminism for the 99% or Solidarity in the House of Difference? Intersectionality and Social Reproduction Theory

ABIBI STEWART

Introduction

Public and academic discourse often reduces intersectionality to a caricature.[1] In both critical and affirmative accounts, intersectionality is assumed to exist primarily as a corrective to other emancipatory theories rather than as a theory in its own right. Social reproduction theory (henceforth SRT), a strain of Marxist feminism exemplified here by contributors to the volume *Social Reproduction Theory – Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression* (Bhattacharya 2017), is characterized by a self-understanding that involves incorporating intersectional insights as a reaction to Black feminist interventions. In this narrative, intersectionality itself becomes obsolete, serving first and foremost as a step on SRT's dialectical journey to becoming a better theory. What's more, allegedly undertheorized intersectional frameworks constitute an ever-present foil for SRT's self-image as an emancipatory theory of the capitalist social whole.

In the following, I problematize this narrative on multiple layers. SRT and its depiction of intersectionality are summarized in the first part of this paper. The second part will demonstrate, on the one hand, that a historicization of intersectionality as 'intervening' into Marxist feminist theories, *adding* an intersectional perspective to feminist analysis of capitalism, ignores the formative role that analyses of Black women as working subjects within overarching capitalist structures play in intersectional thought. On the other hand, this narrative occludes practical and theoretical implications of a framework that explicitly theorizes resistance from the margins. Building on this critique of SRT's understanding of intersectionality in the third part, I develop an intersectional notion of solidarity, thus showing that the ostensibly seamless integration of intersectional insights into SRT obfuscates a potentially fruitful tension between the two frameworks pertaining to their respective understandings of solidarity and social transformation.

Insisting on a specific origin story of intersectionality is embedded in what Jennifer Nash terms the "intersectionality wars": Ongoing efforts to save the intersectional framework from appropriation and insistence on a single, correct genealogical narrative can lead to a fetishization of Black feminist history and a "battle over ownership and territoriality" (Nash 2012, 42). Intersectionality then becomes property to be defended and safeguarded by correction of misuse. Perhaps paradoxically, this article attempts to utilize the corrective gesture to transcend it: By focusing on

https://doi.org/10.3224/feminapolitica.v30i2.03

emancipatory practice, both in telling a history of intersectionality as resistance and in highlighting theoretical and practical implications of consciously inhabiting the margins of emancipatory struggle, my aim is to advocate a particular understanding of intersectionality that emphasizes the radical dreaming it entails.

Social Reproduction Theory and the Critique of Intersectionality

The history of SRT begins with silences in traditional Marxism: "If workers' labor produces all the wealth in society, who then produces the worker" (Bhattacharya 2017, 1)? In early unitary approaches, unearthing the socio-economic significance of unpaid domestic labor located women's oppression primarily in the patriarchal household and situated the housewife's emancipatory struggle as an essential (albeit secondary) element of class struggle. Building on Lise Vogel's socialist feminism (Vogel 1983), SRT avoids economic reductionism and functionalism by taking a fundamentally Marxist idea and basing a theory of society on it in a way Marx himself never did:

> The fundamental insight of SRT is, simply put, that human labor is at the heart of creating or reproducing society as a whole. The notion of labor is conceived here in the original sense in which Karl Marx meant it, as 'the first premise of all human history' – one that, ironically, he himself failed to develop fully (Bhattacharya 2017, 2).

SRT aims to theorize social oppression in its entirety by expanding the concept of labor to accommodate the production of commodities *and* the production of life as part of one integral process. Thus, the analysis of capitalism includes *all* forms of labor, although reproductive labor – paid and unpaid – is still conceptualized in its sustainment of the drive for accumulation, and thus, a certain functional necessity remains implied. However, by treating all questions of oppression in their various complex structural relations to capitalist production rather than as analytically secondary add-ons to commodity production, SRT redefines who the subject of class analysis needs to be.

The benefits of this fully integrated ontology are strikingly often illustrated in contrast to intersectional frameworks (Arruzza 2016, 13; Fraser/Jaeggi 2018, 109). David McNally (2017) subjects intersectionality to a "dialectical criticism": The spatial metaphor of roads intersecting – for McNally, the theory's single defining attribute – renders intersectionality forever plagued by an ontological atomism. The analysis of "reified, preconstituted identities or locations that come into some kind of external contact with each other" (ibid., 96) lacks an overarching, explanatory theory of a social order or system. In SRT however, a particular reading of Marx – labor as reproduction of the social whole – is grounded by a Hegelian conception of the social whole as a living organism, which "sees a diverse and complex social whole as constitutive of every part, and each part as constitutive of every other", enabling it to "overcome the aporias of intersectional atomism" that see social structures as discrete and fixed prior to their intersection (ibid., 100).

Understanding the social whole as alive, "animated by the purposefulness of a dynamic organic system" (ibid., 103), is important for SRT because it is a notion of a totality that lives through reproduction. Theorizing the concrete diversity of labor and all other real-life processes within this dynamic social whole means relations of social power "do not need to be brought into intersection because each is already inside the other, co-constituting one another to their very core." (ibid., 107) McNally emphasizes that seemingly distinct parts of a social whole internally relate to each other so deeply that, ultimately, objects themselves "are in fact *relations*" (ibid., 104, italics in original). Of course, it was not this Hegelian insight that drew the attention of social reproduction feminists to the concrete diversity of life beyond the white patriarchal household. That was intersectionality's "great accomplishment" (ibid., 108): to point out shortcomings and expand the perspective. A dialectically evolved version of SRT is a result of and solution to intersectional interventions in virtue of its ability to encompass all "practical activities through which human beings produce and reproduce themselves, their social relations, and their relations with the natural environment" (ibid. 109).

Susan Ferguson's (2016) argument in "Intersectionality and Social-Reproduction Feminisms: Toward an Integrative Ontology" is similar. By building on intersectionality's insights, SRT can theorize a "richly differentiated, historical, and contradictory totality" in an "integrative theory of the social" while intersectionality itself remains stuck in an "essentialized understanding of social oppressions" as "ontologically distinct systems" (ibid., 38f., 46). Then, shifting from a theoretical to a practical perspective, Ferguson takes a significant argumentative leap: When interdependent oppressions are not conceptualized within a systemic logic of the social whole, calls for political solidarity have no necessary subjects or direction. Only an "essential integrative dynamic" can reveal a "potential pluralistic revolutionary subject (…) positioned as the agent capable of overturning the matrixes of interlocking power that dominate it" (ibid., 46). Pitfalls of traditional Marxist conceptions of solidarity are avoided by the SRT framework in the same way economic determinism is: by the wide conception of labor as "creative not just of economic values, but of society (and thus of life) itself" (ibid., 48). Capital accumulation is no longer understood as fully determinative but as *structuring* all social relations by exerting certain pressures and setting limits. Thus, accounting for and explaining difference among various components of the social whole is still possible. Thanks to this "dialectical understanding of determination" (ibid., 57), the bond between the capitalist totality and *all* practices of social reproduction reveals the pluralistic revolutionary subject to be, potentially, almost everybody. Awareness of capitalist totality expressed through all forms of oppression must guide successful emancipatory struggles, creating "meaningful solidarity" that "rests not only on appeals to respect differences, but on the compelling socio-material logic that shows how oppressive relations shape, and are shaped by, the wider totality they comprise" (ibid., 57).

Intersectionality's materialist roots and conceptual innovations

There are many ways to tell a history of Black feminist organizing in the US and situate Black feminist theory. Intersectionality is sometimes understood to be a specific variation of Black feminism originating in Kimberlé Crenshaw's 'coining' of the term (Crenshaw 1989). However, I would like to follow Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, among others, in opposing the "view that intersectionality began when it was named" (Collings/Bilge 2020, 111). Within activist settings of the 1960s and 1970s, intersectional ideas grounded much political organizing of Black feminists, Chicana feminists, and others. While a narrow account of intersectionality would have to take demarcations from and within this vast tradition into account such as the critique of many reform-oriented, left-liberal approaches (including Crenshaw's) that are far removed from radical or socialist history, I am advocating a broad understanding that can accommodate the fact that activists of this period had a history to look back on. My understanding of the intersectional tradition traces not the formation of an academic discipline, but the ongoing articulation of a certain relation between marginalized identities and resistance – and a corresponding concept of solidarity – that is distinctly intersectional within theories that may otherwise differ greatly. The foundation of this tradition is a materialist analysis of everyday practices of multiply marginalized people that are not just theoretical points of departure, but vantage points of social transformation. Acknowledging the black feminist, materialist roots of the intersectional tradition in the following short historical overview demonstrates the problem with SRT's reading of intersectionality as a mere corrective to a Marxist feminist approach.

Long before social movement activism had created larger platforms of intersectional resistance, Sojourner Truth, an abolitionist and civil rights activist delivered the landmark speech *Ain't I a Woman?* in front of an audience of white women suffragists. Truth's articulation of her experience as an enslaved Black woman powerfully illustrates the importance of labor to her position in society. Contrary to dominant notions of docile femininity and protected motherhood, enslaved Black women were involved in heavy manual labor and carried the additional burden of reproductive labor. Sojourner Truth's motherhood was not protected. Her children were taken away from her and sold for profit (Bohrer 2019, 39):

> Nobody ever helps me into carriages (…) Look at my arm! I could have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me (…) And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen them most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman? (Truth 1991 (1851), 31).

The intersectional critique of one-dimensional activist standpoints was also present among Black communist organizers in the mid-20th century. In a historical overview of Black left feminism, Eric McDuffie asserts that Black communist women were

among the first to explicitly articulate the theoretical paradigm of intersectionality, challenging common assumptions within the then active Communist Party (CPUSA) (McDuffie 2011, 4). In 1949, Claudia Jones, a Black feminist, anti-imperialist and anti-fascist leader in the CPUSA addressed the American left in a class-based analysis of the "triple oppression" and "super-exploitation" of Black women, whom she saw as the "most oppressed stratum of the whole population" due to their specific positioning as mothers and breadwinners in impoverished communities (Jones 2011, 75). Jones' historicization of Black women's social role during and after slavery is echoed by Angela Davis in "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves" (Davis 1972). Both emphasize Black women's power and resilience as leaders of resistance within enslaved communities, both examine reproductive labor, paid and unpaid, during slavery and after, as simultaneously a site of exploitation and resistance, and both show that "it was precisely their location at these interstices of multiple oppressions that explained their militancy historically" (McDuffie 2011, 168 discussing Davis 1972, 84 and Jones 2011, 74). To understand Black women as emancipatory subjects, as Jones did, references a history of ongoing and everyday resistance while analytically situating their social location in relation to the capitalist mode of production.

It was the Combahee River Collective's (CRC) "A Black Feminist Statement" that first clearly articulated identity politics as a "vital *tool* of resistance" (Collins/Bilge 2020, 165, emphasis mine). The notion of building resistant strategies on the "multilayered texture of black women's lives" (CRC 1979, 214) revolves around recognizing the inseparability of multiple forms of oppression:

> We believe that the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of our own identity (…). We (…) find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously. (…) We need to articulate the real class situation of persons (…) for whom racial and sexual oppression are significant determinants in their working/economic lives (CRC 1979, 365).

Understanding the economic position and experiences of Black women as a tool of resistance was an appeal to socialism as much as it was an appeal to identity politics. In emphasizing their "origins in the historical reality of Afro-American women's continuous life-and-death struggle for survival and liberation" (ibid., 210) and referencing Sojourner Truth and other (known and unknown) Black women activists, the CRC was not only calling for an extension of a Marxist analysis, but formulating cornerstones of their own, historically anchored practices of resistance – their intersectional tradition.

Following Ashley Bohrer's innovative work (2019), this brief historical overview hints at the importance of highlighting the intertwined and partially shared histories of Marxist and intersectional activism. Taking common ground between Marxist and intersectional traditions as seriously as their differences complicates theoretical disputes between the two. It also sheds an ugly light on role intersectionality plays

in SRT's narrative. When McNally, in his Hegelian-Marxist critique of intersectionality, writes that after social reproduction approaches "failed to integrate processes of racialization into their analyses (…) the great accomplishment of intersectionality theory was to expand the framework of discussion" (McNally 2017, 108), he tells a story of relevant critiques of capitalism that begin with traditional Marxism, develop into economically deterministic SRT and finally, thanks to intersectional interventions, blossom into a new and (dialectically) improved SRT that – in virtue of its broad conception of labor under capitalism – can now theorize all forms of oppression. Reading Angela Davis as a social reproduction theorist, as McNally does – because she demonstrates the "utterly interwoven character of sexism, racism, and class exploitation" (ibid., 110) – indicates, on the one hand, the difficulty of strictly demarcating theoretical traditions. On the other hand, it proves SRT's refusal to historicize intersectionality as an early materialist feminist theory in its own right. Understanding intersectional theory as derivative of white feminist theory runs parallel to understanding Black feminist organizing as a reaction to racism within the women's movement: Opposing that view, Collins and Bilge stress the importance of recognizing that Black feminist and Chicana movements were not "derivative of second wave feminism" (Collins/Bilge 2020, 112).

SRT's claim that intersectionality lacks materialist analysis thus erases the accounts of feminized and racialized labor that ground this tradition. By now challenging the assumption that intersectionality is premised on atomistic subject positions I show that McNally's Hegelian notion of dialectical historical progress – suggesting intersectionality can be sublated into SRT – blocks the view of distinctly intersectional insights forged from what Kimberly Springer calls "interstitial politics" (Springer 2005, 3). How does intersectional theory articulate political consciousness and understandings of social transformation that always work from the cracks, in fact *identify* as such? As the overview of (a few) important figures in intersectionality's history hinted at, concrete and everyday practices of multiply marginalized people are more than theoretical points of departure to conceptualize the social whole: Identities formed in multiple marginalization are also analyzed as a point of reference for resisting oppression and fostering social transformation.

As mentioned above, McNally and Ferguson make the atomism claim by taking the metaphor of two roads intersecting literally. Certainly, the image of crossroads can evoke the notion of ontologically separated entities (the streets) that collide in people's social positions (the intersections). In an interview, Crenshaw says about this image: "I wanted to come up with an everyday metaphor that anyone could use" (Crenshaw 2014). Metaphors can make certain social configurations visible and enable new ways of thinking, speaking, and fighting for emancipation. The image of an intersection gave a name to the broad socio-political observation that to understand and fight social oppression, we need to pay attention to the struggles of those whose experiences do not fit neatly into existing social categories. In trying to articulate experiences and social locations that are difficult to name, intersectionality does not

reify identities and atomistic subject positions. On the contrary, the metaphor of the intersection gestures towards an entirely *different* way of understanding social locations. It is this "anticipatory promise" that is conveyed by the idea of a provisional concept (Carastathis 2016, 109).

Anna Carastathis (2016) unfolds the notion of a provisional concept by basing her argument on an essential, albeit chronically overlooked passage from Crenshaw's (1991) "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" essay. Crenshaw uses this term to illustrate that while prevailing assumptions about the separability of categories are not *directly* negated when mapping intersections, the methodology strived toward in this process will *ultimately* "disrupt the tendencies to see race and gender as exclusive or separable" (Crenshaw 1991, 1244). Applying these categories to conclusively explain the social world in a "totalizing theory of identity" is not at all what Crenshaw had in mind (ibid., 1244). Rather than celebrating intersectionality as an achievement, Carastathis suggests a return to the original intention of intersectionality as a concept that "anticipates, rather than arrives at, the normative or theoretical goals often imputed to it" (Carastathis 2016, 107). Building on this notion of anticipation and the communicative advantages of a provisional concept, namely that it encourages and mirrors contestations, challenges and ambivalences that go along with processes of social transformation, Carastathis turns to the concept of "disorientation" as articulated by Sara Ahmed (Carastathis 2016, 110). A disorientating moment or a disruption of expectations can be a moment of learning, questioning, and uncertainty and thus, the beginning of a reorientation – but perhaps more importantly, a moment worth lingering in. Not aiming "to overcome the disorientation of the queer moment, but instead inhabit (its) intensity" (Ahmed 2006, 107) is reminiscent of Collins description of the intersection metaphor as encompassing "ideas about human agency and intentionality in a space of indecision" (Collins 2019, 29). And in a more practical sense, as a response to the ineffectiveness of feminist and anti-racist movements that essentialize the category of women or Black people, intersectionality reflects how "political marginality might engender new subjectivities and agency" (ibid., 26). Intersections are locations of departure, movement, and change. It could be argued that the focus on and dwelling in moments of disorientation, ambivalence, and uncertainty gives a certain depth to the title "Mapping the Margins". A margin, by definition, cannot be mapped – that is what makes it a margin. In other words, the attempt to name and determine intersections of social categories is necessarily futile, but the attempt itself constantly calls attention to the limitations of the categories.

Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) concept of "borderlands" takes the notion of lingering in disorienting moments even further. Anzaldúa "denies any logic that presumes there were ever discreet dimensions of difference that collided at some particular point: In the borderlands, mixing, hybridity, unfinished synthesis, and unpredictable amalgamation were always already happening and are forever ongoing" (Grzanka 2014, 106f. discussing Anzaldúa 1987). The Chicana movement was central in voicing

various ways women of color, "caught between *los intersticios*, the spaces between the different worlds she inhabits", redefine these in-betweens as places of resistance: "Living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element (…)" (Anzaldúa 1987, Preface). „And if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture – *una cultura mestiza* – with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture" (ibid., 22). Collins emphasizes that both the intersection and the borderlands metaphors are not meant to provide strict coherence or closure (Collins 2019, 33). It is precisely this sentiment that, according to Carastathis, the notion of a provisional concept conveys: the tentative bridging of the "heuristic gap between present and future", between dominant ideology and social transformation (Carastathis 2016, 109). Nevertheless, intersectionality's institutionalization was accompanied by a widespread "positivistic uptake of the concept" that "overlook(s) entirely its critical (dis)orientation toward categories, and continues to deploy them as if they were unproblematic" (ibid., 115). This understanding, reproduced by Ferguson and McNally's critique of atomistic subject positions reconstructed above, ignores complex notions of identity in intersectional theory – including the notions of solidarity that go along with them.

Feminism for the 99% or solidarity in the house of difference?

In 2001, multiply marginalized activists in prison abolitionist and anti-violence groups in California created the "'Critical Resistance-Incite!' Statement on Gender Violence & the Prison Industrial Complex" with the goal to address and combat the marginalization of women, trans and gender non-conforming people of color in both movements. From the vantage point of fighting state violence *and* sexual abuse, these activists – described by Julia Sudbury as "walking in the footsteps of the contributors to *This Bridge* and continuing the legacy of radical, intersectional bridge-builders" – were able to collectively further cross movement solidarities, demonstrating that it is only with all "differences on the table" (Sudbury 2003, 139) that a powerful anti-violence movement can be built.

This brief example illustrates the problem with SRT's claim that intersectionality has no meaningful ground for solidarity. It also indicates that an intersectional notion of *solidarity* is linked to an intersectional notion of *identity*. While any talk of identity is often understood to imply separatism based on sameness (Carastathis 2016, 163), Crenshaw herself emphasizes the opposite: identity groups are always already coalitions, "or at least potential coalitions waiting to be formed" (Crenshaw 1991, 1299). This hinges on a concept of relationality that "shifts focus away from the essential qualities that seemingly lie in the center of categories and toward the relational processes that connect them" (Collins 2019, 45). While similar to a conclusion drawn by McNally (2017) in reference to Hegel that seemingly distinct parts of a social whole are in fact relations, relationality in the intersectional tradition is more than

an abstract concept, it is something lived and experienced: "Because our positions are nos/otras, both/and, inside/outside, and inner exiles – we see through the illusion of separateness" (Anzaldúa 1987, xxxvii). In an autobiographical reflection on the struggles of finding community, Audre Lorde came up with an important illustration of the incommensurability of identities:

> Each of us had our own needs and pursuits, and many different alliances. (…) It was a while before we came to realize that our place was the very house of difference (…) years before we learned to use the strength that daily surviving can bring (Lorde 1982, 226).

Utilizing the strength of daily surviving and crafting tools of resistance from personal narrative are at the heart of intersectional thought, which is why these traditions historically did not rely on narrow notions of sameness or unity, but on honest and creative affirmations of difference. As a tradition rooted in the resistance against dominant narratives and frameworks, it is precisely the insufficiency of essentialized subject positions that led activists to employ notions of relationality and coalitions to find strength and strategy in incommensurability. In the words of Gloria Anzaldúa: "The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. (…) Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else" (Anzaldúa 1987, 79).

Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto, written in 2019 by Tithi Bhattacharya, Nancy Fraser and Cinzia Arruzza, translates core insights of SRT into a social movement manifesto. It is a revealing example of a call for solidarity based, above all, on a "socio-material logic" and a "robust theory of the social whole" (Ferguson 2016, 43). For the authors, feminists today are offered two frameworks of resistance: neoliberal glass-ceiling feminism of the 1%, characterized by a "vision of equal opportunity domination", or an anti-capitalist feminism of the 99% centered on the strike movement (Arruzza/Bhattacharya/Fraser 2019, 2, 5). The preferred activist tactic of strike is championed throughout the manifesto and coherently attributed to "the enormous political potential of women's power: the power of those whose paid and unpaid work sustains the world" (ibid., 8). Every resistance against social oppression is conceptually forced into an overarching explanatory structure centered on reproduction. Differences in actual social practice and identities, while mentioned often, remain an afterthought. The manifesto is infused with an 'us' vs. 'them' narrative grounded in SRT's understanding of what solidarity must be based on to be meaningful. The always-already collective reproduction of the social world creates the 'we'. Thus, the reproduction framework – taken to an extreme in the manifesto – elides differences and grounds a feminism that can "become a source of hope for the whole of humanity" (Arruzza/Bhattacharya/Fraser 2019, 14), cultivating, in this vein, dangerously reduced critiques of capitalism which include problematic personifications of "the 1%" and antisemitic imagery[2]:

> From their lofty perches at global financial institutions, these progressive neoliberals in skirts propose to shield their less fortunate Southern sisters from violence by lending them small sums of money to start their own businesses (ibid., 30).

Here, the problem with theoretically grounding practices of solidarity primarily in a totalizing systemic logic becomes abundantly clear. Despite theoretical lip service to difference, differences become invisible. Though often named and randomly listed, they are not articulated *as differences*, they only appear as part of a unity. Granted, the expanded conception of work inherited from a feminist reading of Marx overcame the universalization of a white subject position: For it is true, if not tautological, that the notion of human practical activity applies to every human. But in expanding the revolutionary subject to encompass everyone except a demonized 1% profiting off of the rest, the authors of the manifesto have radicalized a reliance on commensurability as the basis of political organizing. As Bohrer argues, Marxist approaches often view solidarity as chiefly expressed in "recognition of the moments of unity, shared situation, or commonality", thus "implicitly or explicitly conceiving of moments of non-unity (…) as secondary, subsequent, epiphenomenal, or at worst irrelevant to the project of uprooting capitalism" (Bohrer 2019, 233). Her problematization – though she does not specifically analyze SRT's relation to intersectionality – is helpful in understanding why SRT's appeal to 'meaningful solidarity' is so broad it becomes empty, unable to account for any difference at all. Relying on the ubiquity of practical reproduction of the social whole as a basis for political mobilization does not question the notion of a universal revolutionary subject, rather, it expands the idea of a shared condition to include everyone. And while the danger of overtly privileging particular social locations and realities over others may appear minimized by a social reproduction framework, universalizations can easily hide beneath shallow assurances of difference.[3]

Rather than being secondary to emancipatory practice, questions of identity and personal narrative are the vantage point for meaningful, intersectional solidarity. The unlearning of essentializing social categories – as expressed in the language of relationality and coalitions – is a tool in forming bonds of solidarity that are not contingent on commensurability. In SRT's crude understanding, this amounts to "appeals to respect differences" (Ferguson 2016, 57). But in the metaphorical house of difference, emancipatory practice and collective action are *fueled* by lived contradictions: "Difference must not merely be tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic" (Lorde 1984, 111). Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa state even clearer that contradictions are "the root of our radicalism" (Moraga/Anzaldúa 1983, 4). Radical incommensurability is not something easily expressed in a manifesto. But to ignore expressions of emancipatory struggle emerging out of lived experience of multiple oppressions is to disavow the multiplicity of social resistance. Undoubtably, the socio-material reality of how labor under capitalism is organized and the way this connects us is a powerful basis for mobilization. However, both the manifesto and Ferguson's argument assume the mere reflection on the *fact* of this interconnection – we all reproduce society in one way or another and this is always filtered through capitalism – to be the main factor in forming meaningful bonds of solidarity. Intersectional discourses on the

other hand highlight the power of what happens *in the relation itself*, rather than in the reflection on the *fact of relation*. While focus on the totalizing systemic logic of oppression implies an understanding of emancipatory practice occurring primarily in single, momentous events (feminist strikes), focus on relations and coalitions implies an understanding of revolutionary action as embodied in continual, everyday practices, as articulated by Frances Beal in "Double Jeopardy": "To die for the revolution is a oneshot deal; to live for the revolution means taking on the more difficult commitment of changing our day-to-day life patterns. (…)" (Beal 2008 (1969), 175).

Conclusion

While there is truth in the observation that intersectional theory often does not focus on the big picture of social totality, social reproduction theorists are misguided in expecting intersectional frameworks to provide a unitary explanatory frame for social oppressions in a certain Hegelian-Marxist fashion. A philosophical argument about the function of oppression and mechanisms of the capitalist social whole can build on intersectional insights – as SRT strives to do – but in claiming to absorb the essential contributions of intersectional theory, SRT is, on the one hand, denying intersectionality its own materialist tradition that lives on in Black and women of color materialist analysis of capitalism that are not part of the SRT tradition. On the other hand, it ignores aspects of intersectional theory that cannot be seamlessly integrated into the SRT framework, specifically, implications for social movement building. To define meaningful solidarity as contingent on referencing the overarching (explanatory) structure that unites us in our struggles disavows the kind of solidarity that does not incorporate differences as an afterthought, but as a tool of resistance.

The question posed in the title of this paper is rhetorical. In extracting two variants of feminist solidarity from the traditions of SRT and intersectionality and juxtaposing them, I do not mean to imply only one kind is possible or needed, or that they cannot exist simultaneously. On the contrary: the feminist strike movement for example, though its analysis within a social reproduction framework is coherent, cannot be fully understood *only* in reference to SRT. To frame this movement as powered primarily by an awareness of capitalist totality is to imply that the contributions of multiply marginalized perspectives within this struggle can be reduced to "appeals to respect differences" (Ferguson 2016, 57) and are thus a byproduct – or even inconvenience – of feminist resistance.

Thus, SRT's depiction of intersectionality and entitlement to a co-optation of essential intersectional insights is damaging beyond the context of academia. Understanding that solidarity is multifaceted requires paying attention to (theorizations of) intersectional resistance – for SRT, this involves acknowledging that there is no need for a Hegelian sublation of Black and Chicana feminist traditions. The insights discussed in this article on how resistance among multiply oppressed communities engenders distinctly intersectional subjectivities, emancipatory practices and solidarity

cannot be fully subsumed by the grand explanatory gesture of social reproduction theory. Theorizing revolutionary action necessitates a nuanced conversation on what it means to fight from the margins – it is only then that the multiplicity of current resistant practices in a world of intersecting structural oppressions becomes visible.

Notes

1 I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers and the editorial team of Femina Politica for their helpful and insightful comments and everybody else who helped me in the writing process, especially Gelareh Shahpar. I would also like to thank Eva von Redecker for her support and the organizers and participants of the SWIP (Society for Women in Philosophy) workshop on Materialist Feminism at Humboldt Universität Berlin (July 16th, 2021) for discussing my work with me.

2 "Four decades of neoliberalism have (...) usurped the energies available to sustain families and communities-all while spreading the tentacles of finance across the social fabric" (Arruzza/Bhattacharya/Fraser 2019, 17).

3 Notably, Ferguson still categorizes the divide between the privatized household and the workplace as the essential manifestation of women's oppression (Ferguson 2016, 49f).

References

Ahmed, Sara, 2006: Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others. Durham.

Anzaldúa, Gloria, 1987: Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza. San Francisco.

Arruzza, Cinzia, 2016: Functionalist, Determinist, Reductionist: Social Reproduction Feminism and Its Critics. In: Science & Society. 80 (1), 9-30.

Arruzza, Cinzia/**Bhattacharya**, Tithi/**Fraser**, Nancy, 2019: Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto. London.

Beal, Frances, 2008 (1969): Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female. In: Meridians. 8 (2), 166-176.

Bhattacharya, Tithi, 2017: Introduction: Mapping Social Reproduction Theory. In: Bhattacharya, Tithi (Ed.): Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression. London, 1-20.

Bohrer, Ashley J., 2019: Marxism and Intersectionality: Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality under Contemporary Capitalism. Bielefeld.

Carastathis, Anna, 2016: Intersectionality: Origins, Contestations, Horizons. Lincoln.

Collins, Patricia Hill, 2019: Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory. Durham.

Collins, Patricia Hill/**Bilge**, Sirma, 2020: Intersectionality. New York.

Combahee River Collective, 1979: A Black Feminist Statement. In: Eisenstein, Zillah (Eds.): Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism. New York/London, 362-72.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé, 1989: Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. In: University of Chicago Legal Forum. (8), 139-167.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé, 1991: Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color. In: Stanford Law Review. 43 (6), 1241-99.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé, 2014: Kimberlé Crenshaw on intersectionality: "I wanted to come up with an everyday metaphor that anyone could use" Internet: https://www.newstatesman.com/lifestyle/2014/04/kimberl-crenshaw-intersectionality-i-wanted-come-everyday-metaphor-anyone-could (13.8. 2021).

Critical Resistance and Incite!, 2003: Critical Resistance-Incite! Statement on Gender Violence And the Prison-Industrial Complex. In: Social Justice. 30 (3), 141-150.

Davis, Angela, 1972: Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves. In: The Massachusetts Review. 13 (1/2), 81-100.

Ferguson, Sue, 2016: Intersectionality and Social-Reproduction Feminisms: Toward an Integrative Ontology. In: Historical Materialism. 24 (2), 38-60.

Fraser, Nancy/**Jaeggi**, Rahel, 2018: Capitalism: A Conversation in Critical Theory. New York.

Grzanka, Patrick R., 2014: Intersectionality: A Foundations and Frontiers Reader. New York.

Jones, Claudia (Ed. by Carole Boyce Davies), 2011: Beyond Containment. Autobiographical Reflections, Essays, and Poems. Banbury.

Lorde, Audre, 1982: Zami, a New Spelling of My Name. Trumansburg.

Lorde, Audre, 1984: Sister/Outsider: Essays and Speeches. Trumansburg.

McDuffie, Erik S., 2011: Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism. Durham.

McNally, David, 2017: Intersections and Dialectics: Critical Reconstructions in Social. Reproduction Theory. In Bhattacharya, Tithi (Ed.): Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression. London, 94-111.

Moraga, Cherrie/**Anzaldúa**, Gloria (Eds.), 1983: This Bridge Called My Back. Writings by Radical Women of Color. New York.

Nash, Jennifer, 2019: Black Feminism Reimagined. After Intersectionality. Durham.

Sudbury, Julia, 2003: Toward a Holistic Anti-Violence Agenda: Women of Color as Radical Bridge-Builders. In: Social Justice. 30 (3), 134-140.

Truth, Sojourner, 1991 (1851): Ain't I a Woman? In: The Crisis. 106 (1), 31.

Vogel, Lise, 1983: Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory. New Brunswick.