

Capitalist Social Reproduction: An Alternative to Intersectionality? Historical Materialist Observations¹

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Introduction

Widely used within the social sciences and in the feminist literature, intersectionality is generally considered “one of the more important interventions in feminist theory.”² In this article, I will offer some observations about intersectionality’s characteristics and limitations. I will argue that, in these times of resurgence of identity politics and nationalism, there is an “elective affinity” between these political currents and identity-centered social science perspectives, like intersectionality. I will posit capitalist social reproduction theory as a theoretical and political alternative for feminists and everyone interested not only in the oppression of women but in the future of democracy.

About Intersectionality

Intersectionality³ developed from critiques of early feminist theories about the oppression of women, on the grounds they universalized the experience of middle-class white women and ignored the experiences of non-white and working-class women.⁴ The critiques coalesced in the race, gender & class perspective, in which gender was usually understood to mean women, and class was reduced to “classism,” socioeconomic status, or income differences. The notion of intersectionality captures the nature of the relationship between oppressions, i.e., they “intersect” with each other. Later on, to systemic gender, racial and ethnic inequality, and status differences between individuals and groups, other sources of oppression were added such as, for example, sexuality, ability, religion, national origin, ancestry, immigrant status, etc.

Unlike feminist theory, focused on the oppression of women, intersectionality focuses on inequality as a generalized phenomenon, the result of many factors affecting all members of the society: “When it comes to social inequality, people’s lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race, or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other.”⁵ Echoing this sociological description of stratified societies, Yuval-Davies argues that “Intersectional

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² Carbin and Edenhelm 2013: 233-4, cited in Gimenez 2018: 95.

³ For a comprehensive introduction to intersectionality, see Collins and Bilge 2016.

⁴ See, for example, Lutz et al. 2011: 3 and Gimenez 2018, Ch. 1.

⁵ Collins and Bilge 2016: 2.

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analysis should encompass all members of society and thus intersectionality should be seen as the right theoretical framework for analyzing social stratification.”⁶

It is a sociological truism that the lives of *all* members of stratified societies are shaped, as it could not be otherwise, by their place in the social stratification system, and the many social roles they play. Collins and Yuval-Davies, who argue that intersectionality and intersectional analysis exclude no one, regardless of gender and other differences, restate this sociological insight which, therefore, undermines the notion that it is a feminist perspective.

The concept of “intersectional identity” rests on the assumption that the axes of oppression intersect and oppressions are experienced simultaneously. Collins, for example, states that “everyone has a race/gender/class specific identity.”⁷ This may be true for people born in the U.S., where self-identification in terms of identity categories and membership in status groups prevails and identity categories, including “intersectional identity,” are part of popular culture and dominant political discourses. However, while everyone is simultaneously located in a number of structures and corresponding social relations that place individuals in many different roles and shape their experiences and opportunities, it cannot be assumed that structural location necessarily entails awareness of being thus located or the automatic development of identities corresponding to those locations.⁸

Just as the women’s movement taught women to think about themselves in terms of *women*, a category of analysis, intersectionality has successfully taught that everyone has *intersectional identities and experiences*. According to Crenshaw, for example, the purpose of descriptions of how intersectionality may affect the lives of women in different contexts is “to introduce a language for people to attach to their own experience.”⁹ This language may be introduced by researchers, policy makers, activists and, last but not least, taught by college professors¹⁰ who are surprised, when traveling to other countries, to find out that people who, in their view, should think of themselves in the same identity categories as they do, don’t.¹¹ Intersectionality is now ubiquitous everywhere, inside and outside academic settings, and in the digital media.¹²

Essential to intersectionality is the notion that no oppression is more important or more causally effective than any other: “Oppressions should not be ranked nor should we struggle about which oppression is more fundamental: to theorize these connections [i.e., intersections] it is necessary to support a working hypotheses of equivalency between oppressions.”¹³ However, from the standpoint of historical materialism, class is the fundamental social location that underlies all the forms of economic and social inequality and oppressions that characterize capitalist social formations, where the “hidden injuries” of class are generally understood as the effects of

⁶ Yuval-Davis 2011: 159, cited in Gimenez 2018: 102.

⁷ Collins 1993: 28, cited in Gimenez 2018: 102.

⁸ Gimenez 2001: 27.

⁹ Crenshaw 2014, cited in Gimenez 2018: 104.

¹⁰ See, for example, “The New Activism of Campus Life.” *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/05/30/the-new-activism-of-liberal-arts-colleges>.

¹¹ Immigrants and visitors of non-European ancestry have to learn about the various identities others will impute to them, about the racialization or ethnicization of their national origin, and about the expectation that because of the way they look or their ancestry, they must have the same experiences, culture and so on as U.S. citizens who, apparently and in American eyes, are just like them.

¹² Collins and Bilge 2016: 88-113.

¹³ Collins 1997: 74, cited in Gimenez 2001: 27.

oppression or discrimination. The notion of equivalency obscures the determinant role of class (in the Marxist sense) in producing and reproducing different forms of social oppression, thus separating social oppressions from their material conditions of possibility and, for all practical purposes, “privileging” oppressions over class. In turn, this detracts attention from the class location of oppressed groups; the “working class¹⁴ is a majority not only within the total population, but also **within** the particular populations of the various ‘non-class categories.’”¹⁵ The working class includes women, white and non-white, and men, white and non-white. This may seem a trivial observation but it is intended to point out that the effects of class relations affect not only the segments of the population usually singled out as oppressed, i.e., female and non-white, but white males as well.

Intersectionality is not a theory; it is an analytical framework that mirrors the social stratification of industrialized capitalist societies without, however, incorporating the features which constitute the historical specificity of these societies, i.e., their capitalist nature and class dynamics. On the contrary, the latter is purposely excluded by reducing class to a form of oppression and positing a “hypothesis of equivalency” among class and other oppressions.

Because of its formal nature, it is opened to any and all theoretical interpretations, becoming a “common ground for all feminisms,” despite their important differences.¹⁶ Accordingly, feminists have proposed its integration with, for example, critical social theories, systems theories, Marxism, constructivist and poststructuralist theories, and social reproduction theory. More importantly, it is open to any political interpretation and use; the importance given to identity makes it attractive to identity politics groups not all of which are liberal or progressive. For example, it can be used by progressive activists, to advocate for the rights of oppressed groups and individuals, and by white supremacists to justify social inequality and all forms of social segregation.¹⁷

I do not believe that research findings about the complexities of intersectional identities and their intersectional locations can surpass the knowledge about the sources and effects of the oppression of women produced by feminist and social science research in the last fifty years. Intersectionality, however, has important implications for activists and policy makers concerned with social justice, because it calls attention to sources of discrimination beyond race and gender. Potentially, the number of possible “actionable” grounds that could expand the reach of civil rights, and the ability of wronged individuals to find redress in court, could be increased. And, assuming that the political will is there, schools, colleges, universities and other institutions could become more fair and inclusive in their admission and employment policies.¹⁸ It is here, in its policy implications, that the importance of intersectional thinking resides and, paradoxically, where its political implications can be troubling; an analytical framework that posits identity-based oppressions as the primary basis of inequality has the unintended ideological consequence of

¹⁴ When I refer to the working class I include the employed in the “formal” and “informal” economy, the unemployed, underemployed, the reserve army of labor . . . the vast mass of propertyless people who must sell their labor in order to survive, many of whom share their earnings with family and friends.

¹⁵ Wallis 2015: 618.

¹⁶ Bilge 2010: 65-68.

¹⁷ Bilge and Collins 2016: 40-41.

¹⁸ Bilge and Collins 2016: 2-3.

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supporting the status quo.¹⁹ We need, at this time, theories that challenge the status quo and leave the emphasis on identities behind. An important alternative to consider is capitalist social reproduction theory.

Capitalist Social Reproduction Theory: An Alternative to Intersectionality

Social reproduction theory has its roots in socialist and Marxist feminist theories from the 1970s and 1980s that identified the basis of the oppression of women on their responsibility for domestic labor and the reproduction of labor power. Because capital accumulation depends on the uninterrupted availability of labor power, domestic labor is indispensable for capitalist social reproduction. Feminist economists, for example, posit the “centrality” of social reproduction, i.e., the production and reproduction of people, the satisfaction of their needs and their wellbeing, rather than the pursuit of profits, as the driving force of the economy.²⁰ As the perspective on social reproduction took hold, it was expanded to include, in addition to the reproduction of labor power, practically all of social life outside the sphere of production, i.e., class relations, institutions and conditions that contribute to the social reproduction of labor power and life in general (e.g., access to employment, fair wages, food, housing, education, health care, etc.), and the effects of global capitalism (e.g., migration flows, the growing racial and cultural heterogeneity of the national and global working classes, etc.). “[Because] the work of social reproduction is essential to capital accumulation ... [it] places reproduction at the heart of the class struggle.”²¹

Bhattacharya’s starting point for her perspective on social reproduction is the crucial political issue of our times: the multiple divisions in the working class and the difficult task of surmounting those divisions. Arguing against those who dismiss the working class as reactionary, disappearing or hopeless, abstractly defining it in terms of the type of jobs people have, she states that “the key to developing a sufficiently dynamic understanding of the working class is the framework of social reproduction,”²² a concept that includes, besides the reproduction of labor power, the reproduction of the capitalist system as a whole, i.e., the ways capitalist production influences or conditions the rest of the society or sphere of the non-economic, meaning other institutions such as the state, the legal system, etc.

Capitalist social reproduction theory, the perspective I have developed in my work, builds upon social reproduction feminism and historical materialism’s theoretical and methodological assumptions.²³ Widespread in the social reproduction literature is the observation that Marx did not theorize the conditions within which labor power is reproduced.

However, for Marx, production presupposes reproduction: “every social process of production is, at the same time, a process of reproduction.”²⁴ Those who criticize Marx for failing to integrate the reproduction of labor power into the theory of capitalism, thus taking for granted

¹⁹ Gimenez, “The Ideology of Intersectionality: Historical Materialist Observations,” *Journal of Human Geography*, 2023. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/19427786231192956>

²⁰ Luxton 2017: 1. Actually, for Marx and Marxist economists, it is under socialism that the satisfaction of needs will come first; under capitalism, the pursuit of profit is the driving force.

²¹ Luxton 2017: 3.

²² Bhattacharya 2015: 2; see also Bhattacharya 2013.

²³ See, for example, Marx 1970 [1859], *The Method of political economy*, Sayer 1984: 126-131 and Althusser and Balibar, 1970.

²⁴ Marx 1974 [1867]: 566.

its availability, ignore the distinction between the levels of analysis – *mode of production* and *social formation* – which Marx considered appropriate for different kinds of social phenomena. In *Capital*, Marx explains how the *capitalist mode of production* (CMP) works, how surplus is appropriated when the means of production are privately owned while the direct producers' economic survival depends on the sale of their labor power. At this level of analysis, class relations function independently from the personal characteristics of their bearers; they are identity blind. Class relations and changes in the balance of power between capital and the working classes explain the visible or observable aspects of the changing economic, social and political landscape within which people live in *capitalist social formations* (CSFs) where, for example, social classes and status groups are reproduced, patterns of social stratification, the gender, racial, and ethnic composition of the population, and the size of “majority” and “minority” groups change because of migration flows and differences in natural increase. CSFs are the historical terrains, shaped by the CMP instantiated in their “economic basis,” where gender, racial, ethnic and other oppressions matter, as capitalists pit workers against each other, creating and recreating economic, gender, racial, ethnic and other divisions.²⁵ Marx included racial relations among the variable empirical circumstances; we can add gender relations and other relations of oppression and the changing conditions surrounding the reproduction of the working class.

At the level of analysis of the capitalist mode of production, production presupposes the reproduction of the conditions of production. Labor power is an essential condition for their reproduction; it is, therefore, included in the theoretical analysis of the mode of production:

The laborer constantly produces material objective wealth but in the form of capital . . . and the capitalist *as constantly produces labor power, but in the form of a subjective source of wealth . . . in short he produces the laborer, but as a wage laborer.*²⁶

Consequently, the production and reproduction of capital entails the production and reproduction of class relations – the relations between capitalists and wage-laborers. This is a process of social reproduction *within* the capitalist mode of production. At the same time, Marx *excludes*, from the theory of the CMP, the physical and social reproduction of the laborers, the owners of labor power: although the “maintenance and reproduction of the working class is . . . a necessary condition to the reproduction of capital . . . the capitalist may safely leave its fulfillment to the laborers' instincts of self-preservation and of propagation.”²⁷ The physical and social reproduction of the working class always takes place in the historically specific relations of reproduction characteristic of different CSFs and it is shaped by the effects of capital accumulation: as the productivity of labor grows, the demand for labor declines and masses of surplus population are generated.²⁸ There

²⁵ Marx describes the distinction between CMP and CSFs as follows: “It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers . . . which reveals . . . the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with it . . . the corresponding specific form of the state. This does not prevent *the same economic basis* – the same from the standpoint of its main conditions – due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc. from showing infinite variations and gradations of appearance, which can be ascertained only by analysis of the empirically given circumstances.” Marx 1968 [1894]: 791-792.

²⁶ Marx 1974 [1867]: 571, emphasis added.

²⁷ Marx 1974 [1867]: 572.

²⁸ The arguments are exceedingly complex. I refer the reader to Marx 1968 [1867], chapter XXV, “The General Law of Capital Accumulation.”

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is no reason for capitalists to worry about the availability of laborers and labor power; in fact, capitalists are indifferent to the workers' fate except when it may impinge on their own safety and ability to accumulate. Unemployment and poverty are the historical effects of capital accumulation. Workers are left to their own devices, to survive as best as they can within conditions set by the ebb and flow of capital accumulation and the success or failure of working class struggles.

The key differences between social reproduction theories (SRTs) and capitalist social reproduction theory (CSRT) are as follows:

1. SRTs postulate a nondeterministic standpoint, the interrelation, interdependence or integration between production and social reproduction, giving equal weight to each. CSRT postulates, in addition, the *determinant* role of capital accumulation, and the state of the class struggle underlying capital accumulation, upon the conditions of reproduction of the social classes. The relationship between capitalist production and capitalist social reproduction is an inherently contradictory process, characterized by the *subordination* of the reproduction of the working classes²⁹ to the power, interests and reproduction of capital.

2. CSRT gives emphasis to the social reproduction of the working class as a whole, including the reproduction of the economic and social strata that fragment the working class, and taking into account the extent to which working-class men of all races, ethnicities etc. are able to participate in the process of reproduction. The changing fate of working-class men is important; sex and procreation go on regardless of outsourcing, downsizing and changes in the forces of production that leave millions of working-class men of all races unemployed or underemployed, thus affecting their families or the extent to which working-class men and women can form stable unions. SRT's emphasis is on gender, race and other sources of inequality.

3. SRT feminists argue that social reproduction is "at the heart of the class struggle." I prefer to be more specific and argue that it is the economic survival and the physical, social, daily and generational reproduction of the working classes that is at the heart of the class struggle.

These are some of the ways changes in economic conditions within the U.S. determine the relations of social reproduction, quality of life and access to the necessities of social reproduction within different sectors of the U.S. working classes.

In 2020, in the U.S., only 10.8 percent of wage and salary workers were members of unions;³⁰ this is one of the important reasons why the overall situation of the working class in the U.S. has deteriorated in the last fifty years,³¹ a process that affects not only working women and

²⁹ When I refer to the working class, I include the employed in the "formal" and "informal" economy, the unemployed, the reserve army of labor . . . the vast mass of propertyless people who need to sell their labor for a wage or a salary to survive.

³⁰ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.nr0.htm#:~:text=The%20percentage%20of%20workers%20represented%20by%20a%20union,are%20covered%20by%20a%20union%20contract%20%281.7%20million%29>.

³¹ "Since the 1970s . . . wages have stagnated for many: adjusted for inflation, the median male worker earns less now than he did in 1970. On the other side . . . C.E.O.s at the largest companies now make 270 times as much as the average worker, up from 27 times as much in 1980. Paul Krugman, "For Whom the Economy Grows." *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/30/opinion/economy-gdp-income-inequality.html>

workers of color but also white male workers and their families whose plight is relatively unnoticed in the media, political discourse and dominant culture.³² The fragility of the working-class family, entirely dependent on the employment of at least one wage earner, and its collapse or instability when wages are too low, so men and women become single parents, in and out of unstable relations, indicate that the material basis for the oppression of working-class women is to be found in the effects of the permanent crisis of reproduction caused by the overall indifference of capital to the physical and social reproduction of the workforce. Racism and xenophobia intensify this crisis among non-white and immigrant members of the working class. To attribute the oppression of working-class women solely or mainly to their responsibility for the reproduction of labor power, *obscures the effects of class location* on the kinds of relations of reproduction feasible for workers with different skills, levels of education and wages; it *naturalizes the effects of the expropriation of the means of production*, i.e., the complete dependence of working-class men and women, whatever their race, ethnicity or other characteristics may be, on the sale of their labor power.

Perhaps nothing expresses more clearly the indifference of capital to the social reproduction of the working classes than changes in mortality rates and life expectancy, as well as changes in the causes of mortality. In the U.S., as well as in other wealthy capitalist countries, mortality rates decreased, life expectancy increased and living standards improved from 1900 to 2000. Deaths in midlife (ages 45 to 54) among white Americans declined from about 1500 per 100,000 in 1900 to about 400 in 2000. In the 21st century, mortality rates continued to decline in other rich countries, except in the U.S., where life expectancy in the population as a whole fell between 2013 and 2017 influenced by the “deaths of despair” of white working-class men and women age 45-54. These are deaths caused by suicide, drug overdose, and alcohol abuse, resulting from the decline in working-class employment and standard of living in the U.S. brought about by automation, downsizing, outsourcing, changes in the location of investments within the U.S., leading to the decline of towns and cities; the gap in the earnings between those with and without a college education, the disappearance of well-paid blue collar jobs which gave workers a “middle class” way of life (i.e., health and retirement benefits, home ownership, ability to pay for their children’s college education, etc.), and the rise of temporary, low-paid employment without benefits. These changes affect family life and family formation and pushed millions of women with children into the work force, not in search of fulfillment but because of economic necessity.³³

Health care is a basic need, a fundamental condition for the reproduction of all social classes, a fact acknowledged by all wealthy countries and many which are not; 51 countries offer universal health care (e.g., Belgium, Germany, Argentina, Denmark, Norway, Israel, Cuba, the United Kingdom).³⁴ The United States is the only G7 country that does not have universal health care; “American health care is the most expensive in the world and yet American health is among the worst among rich countries.”³⁵ The U.S. spends more per capita on health care and has the

³² But see Cherlin 2014 and Case and Deaton 2020.

³³ Case and Deaton 2020. See also Cherlin 2014.

³⁴ “Countries With Universal Health Care.” WorldAtlas. <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/countries-with-universal-health-care.html>

³⁵ Case and Deaton 2020: 193.

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worst outcomes: lower life expectancy,³⁶ higher infant mortality,³⁷ higher maternal mortality, higher disease burden than comparable countries, and so on.³⁸

Conclusion

We live at a time when the contradiction between universalism and particularism in capitalist societies is becoming increasingly acute. The capitalist social order is characterized by the contradiction between universalism, the ideological legitimating realm of legal and political equality, liberty, citizenship, equal rights, opportunity, etc. and particularism, rooted in the material and ideological reality of racial, gender and other forms of inequality.³⁹ Civil rights struggles against the oppression and exclusion of women, gays, non-whites, immigrants, etc., from full participation in the social and political community, have ended in the victory of universalism,⁴⁰ thus quelling unrest, at least for a while. However, and paraphrasing Marx, while the State may abolish race, gender, religion, national origin, sexual preference, etc. as sources of discrimination, the State “exists only by presupposing them; it is aware of itself as a *political state* and makes its *universality* effective only in opposition to those elements.”⁴¹ The deepening economic inequality in the U.S. has affected not only the more vulnerable sectors of the working class (i.e., women, non-whites, immigrants) but white workers, male and female, many of whom, because of their race, believed in their rights and entitlements as American citizens, members of the American political community. From the standpoint of white workers, male and female, losing their jobs to downsizing, outsourcing, automation, in the midst of increases in the number of non-white immigration (legal and undocumented), it would seem that universalism has gone too far. From the standpoint of the oppressed groups, universalism has done little or nothing for them, for civil rights foster the upward mobility of the more privilege strata within those groups while the rest stays behind. Hence the intensification of conflicts among identity-based groups in a context where the media and political discourse give attention mainly to the problems and successes of the disproportionately disadvantaged (i.e., women, non-whites, immigrants etc.) sector of the working class, without also paying attention to problems of the white male working class.⁴²

The hegemony of identity politics in the U.S. and the interests behind it have an “elective affinity” with identity-based activism and social science research that routinely ignore the capitalist fundamental structures and processes that underlie the persistence of oppression and discrimination, thus legitimating the status quo that exploits and oppresses everyone.⁴³ At this time, the unintended effect of the diffusion of research findings and the language of social science perspectives focused on identities – single or intersectional makes no difference – and identity-

³⁶ Case and Deaton 2020: 194.

³⁷ “American Babies Are Less Likely to Survive Their First Year Than Babies in Other Rich Countries.” *Time*. <https://time.com/5090112/infant-mortality-rate-usa/>

³⁸ How does the quality of the U.S. healthcare system compare to other countries? Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker. <https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/chart-collection/quality-u-s-healthcare-system-compare-countries/#item-start>

³⁹ Wallerstein 1991: 29 in Balibar and Wallerstein:1991.

⁴⁰ For example, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Affirmative Action, the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act.

⁴¹ Marx 1994 [1843]: 8.

⁴² “In an environment in which overall opportunities for blue-collar labor are constricting, white workers perceive black progress as an unfair usurpation of opportunities rather than as a weakening of the privileged racial position they held.” Cherlin 2014: 172.

⁴³ “Max Weber relates ideas and interests through the concept of elective affinity . . . ideas are discredited in the face of history unless they point in the direction of conduct that various interests promote.” Gerth and Mills 1958: 62-63.

based group problems and needs, is to stabilize the status quo. Even if activists adhering to intersectionality were to successfully broaden the scope of civil rights, this would benefit mainly the more privileged individuals within the oppressed groups leaving structural oppression unchanged. Civil rights victories are important, help individuals to find redress in court and facilitate the upward mobility of individuals belonging to oppressed groups or classified as such after arriving to the U.S. Nevertheless the fate of the vast majority remains unchanged, particularly those located in the more disadvantaged sectors of the working class. This is why the ultimate determinant of individuals' disadvantaged situation, their vulnerability to oppression, discrimination, poverty or near poverty, is their class location. Paraphrasing Sparr, if sexism, racism and all forms of oppression and discrimination were eliminated, vast socioeconomic inequality would persist affecting everyone, men and women, white and non-white, citizens and immigrants, able and disabled, etc. The main difference would be that everyone would stand now the same chance of being at the bottom or at the lower layers of the stratification system.⁴⁴ That would be desirable – for the burdens of oppression would have been lifted – but unattainable, except in the form of legal changes that outlaw discrimination and oppression while leaving their material conditions unchanged.

The Marxist alternative to intersectionality and similar perspectives that “privilege” oppression is capitalist social reproduction theory and other social reproduction perspectives according to which struggles against oppression and discrimination and for employment, fair wages, safe neighborhoods, health care, housing, safe working conditions and so on are class struggles for access to the material conditions for the social reproduction of the working class.

The “making of the American working class,” however, seems to have been indefinitely postponed; the hegemony of identity politics and its elective affinity for social science perspectives that privilege identities, together with the collaboration of the mass media in shaping public views about these matters, are likely to last a long time, at least until people realize that court victories and legal precedents benefit individuals but do not substantially alter structural oppression and discrimination.

Historical materialism does not deny the reality of oppressions nor seeks to “reduce” them to class exploitation; it views the fragmentation of the working class into aggregates that differ in socioeconomic status and oppressed aggregates as a historical result of capitalist practices, past and present, intended to maximize surplus extraction fueling competition and manipulating the gender, racial, ethnic and other divisions within the working class, enslaving, racializing and denigrating people of color and immigrants from despised national origins, stereotyping women and so on. This is why “it is the capitalist mode of production and the social relations underlying it which provide the key to understanding why gender, race and other identity markers evolve into oppressions . . . identity categories are activated as mechanisms to facilitate exploitation.”⁴⁵

Like all social science perspectives, social reproduction, capitalist social reproduction, and intersectionality are products of their time. The intensification of exploitation and inequality could result in a strengthening of identity politics and the rise of populism and authoritarian regimes, and a resurgence of interest in Marxist theory and politics as well. Whether this leads to efforts to

⁴⁴ “If sexism were eliminated, there would still be poor women. The only difference is that women would stand the same chance as men of being poor.” Sparr 1987: 11.

⁴⁵ Aguilar 2015: 211-212.

“integrate” intersectionality with idealist, Hegelian or functionalist versions of Marxism – thus excluding or minimizing the determinative effects of class power and class relations – or, instead, to a return to historical materialism will be up to the younger generations to decide. I am not optimistic because, paraphrasing Eagleton, being in the left does not keep many from taking on the color of their historical environs.⁴⁶

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⁴⁶ Eagleton, 1996. 23.

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