
Labor Valorization and Social Reproduction: What is Valuable about the Labor Theory of Value?

Kate Doyle Griffiths
CUNY Graduate Center

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Abstract: This article argues that Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) is the trend best positioned for further developing classical Marxist accounts of the labor theory of value, through a concrete historical account of the family as a capitalist institution. To do so, it traces debates about value within and beyond the range of Marxist-feminist accounts of labor, of the strike tactic and of circulation. These debates include the revival of demands for "wages for housework" and the call for a politics of the commons by Silvia Federici and David Harvey. In particular, Amy D'Aths articulation of a social reproduction account of value and Melinda Cooper's writing on the family are engaged as positive examples for potential further development of Social Reproduction Theory. This argument is placed in the context of a global upsurge of feminist movement and women's strikes, the Metoo movement, and an increasing popular engagement with Marxist-feminist texts and theory.

Kate Doyle GRIFFITHS**Labor Valorization and Social Reproduction: What is Valuable about the Labor Theory of Value?**

Recent mass struggles around gender and the workplace have provided a new timeliness to longstanding debates around the family, and the generation of value in capitalist societies. Following the 2011 Occupy movement and the global "movement of the squares," Marxist theorists have contended with a new wave of women's, queer, and feminist class struggle organizing. This appeared first in the form of mass protest, and now, increasingly, in workplace strikes around the world.

This movement has achieved mobilizations worldwide over the past decade. Following the Oakland General Strike and port occupation of 2011, organizers in New York City called for a "General Strike"—a day of "no work," but also "no shopping" and "no housework" (Griffiths, "May Day"). More recently, a wave of "women's strikes" across Europe and Latin America have overlapped with more conventional strikes. Rather than these tactics conflicting, they have both been led by majority women workers in the USA and elsewhere.

These women's strikes took up the #metoo movement's confrontation with on-the-job sexual harassment and assault explicitly. This followed an earlier moment of radical discontent, the Occupy movement, in expressing a degree of class consciousness rooted in an underlying crisis of social reproduction. This crisis has, unevenly but increasingly, given birth to strikes for wage demands as well as for class-wide anti-austerity reforms. This response has targeted state and local investment in education, health, and housing, disinvestment of key state services, and the criminalization of the working class. This renewed wave of women's strikes has taken up the demands of a range of protest movements that preceded them, particularly Black Lives Matter.

The need to understand the undeniably gendered face of a renewed wave of class struggle has motivated a return to Marxist-feminist classics. The republication of Lise Vogel's *Marxism and the Oppression of Women* in 2013, the re-release of the original essays that constituted the 1972–77 debate on "wages for housework" (Toupin), and a broader revival of Marxist-feminist thought has invigorated an unfinished debate. Marxist-feminists have found that the return of explicitly gendered working-class politics requires scrutiny of the relationship between gendered work and the production of value in capitalist political economy. It's on this level that both the potential and pitfalls of the insurgency of gender-oriented militancy will become clearer.

The wave of feminist struggle has inspired widespread celebration of Silvia Federici's widely read *Caliban and the Witch*. Offering an account of the development of European capitalism, *Caliban* asserts that widespread burning of witches represented a precondition for capitalist accumulation and profit. By the early 2010s, Federici's book was already popular enough that signs and slogans referencing its analysis could be seen on placards during the Occupy movement (e.g. "we are the daughters of the witches you couldn't burn"). Federici-inflected analysis featured even more prominently in the mass Women's March demonstrations of 2017, and in the more recent Latin American feminist uprising (Gutierrez-Aguilar).

Federici's popularity has put a spotlight on the long-running theoretical question of the relationship of unwaged work and social reproductive labor to waged and productive labor. The context of women's strikes has only raised these stakes, as multiple actions reprised historic iterations of the women's strikes of the 1970s, calling for a stoppage of work for not only paid jobs, but also for unwaged housework, emotional labor, and sex. However, conceptions of this key relationship remain underdeveloped.

Federici is the best-known thinker of a tradition known as Autonomist feminism, which also includes Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Leopoldina Fortunati, and Selma James. The first generation of Autonomist feminists argued for the centrality of women's labor and gendered oppression to the circuit of surplus value extraction and profit. Central to this school's position was an analysis of unwaged reproductive labor that understands this work to operate as a hidden source of value-production.

The demand for wages for housework was conceived, especially by James and Federici, as a kind of transitional demand. From this perspective, the household was recast as a site of struggle, exposing the fundamental tensions and contradictions inherent in capitalism (James). For the Autonomist feminists, surplus merely appears to be exclusively extracted from the wage worker in the realm of production. They argue that once unwaged housework is understood as a source of value, it reveals the dependence of the entire realm of production on social reproductive labor. This move collapses Marx's distinctions between primitive accumulation, oppression, domination and exploitation, and that between "value-

producing" and "non-productive" labor. Moreover, insofar as it understands housework to be value-producing, this model takes housework strikes to represent a direct attack on capitalist accumulation.

In other iterations, "wages for housework" is presented as a different kind of demand. The slogan can be treated as a call on the state to pay for the unwaged work of (presumably) women as a measure of equality, and, conceptually, this calls for collective reparation for the general benefit that this gendered labor entails for the ruling class. In this version, the explicit valuation of housework by the state will force a reduction in the demand for it, or, potentially, produce an incentive to collectivize it (Jaffe).

These three aspects of wages for housework—its potential as a direct point of strike against the production of value, its potential to reveal hidden work, and its role as a transitional demand—are each instructive and worthy of consideration. To different degrees, each feature depends on a shared reframing of unwaged housework as value-producing.

If true, the basic Autonomist feminist argument would solve a problem that was more acute in the 1970s, but which nonetheless remains: how can Marxist-feminists make the case that women play a strategic and indispensable role in a working-class politics? If women are mostly engaged in housework, then the remaking of housework as value-productive instantly solves the question of how gender fits into the class struggle. Women are assured a central role in revolutionary politics, as they are capable of a direct assault on capitalist profit. Indeed, the continuation of accumulation requires extensions of gendered oppression, and corresponding moments of resistance.

21st century feminist strikes and struggles have also inspired the renewal of a different strain of Marxist-feminist thought that Susan Ferguson has recently labeled the "Marxian" theorization of Social Reproduction Theory (Marxian SRT). Marxian Social Reproduction Theory offers a Marxist framing for feminist struggle, but, contrary to the tenets of Autonomist Marxist-feminism, this perspective is rooted in a classical conception of value as surplus-value extraction through waged work and rejects the assertion that unwaged social reproductive labor is value-producing (Ferguson). By paying close attention to labor-power as profit's source, Marxian SRT nevertheless offers a path to retaining the strategic centrality of reproductive labor with respect to *profit*. While Federici and other Autonomist feminists use Marxist terminology for their own purposes, their project is based on the assumption that Marx's writings systematically overlook processes of reproduction, and productivity, beyond the factory. Building on Lise Vogel's *Marxism and the Oppression of Women*, Marxian SRT instead expands Marx's own account of social reproductive labor as a necessary precondition for surplus value.

Finally, revived debates around value and its relationship to the gendered division of labor, value-production, class politics, and socialist strategy have recast discussions around decommodification. Various scholars have proposed centering the "collaborative commons," and a consequent political approach based on the centrality of circulation (Harvey, "Marx's"; Harvey, "The Right"; Federici, *Re-enchanting*).

Among these three strands of thought, Marxian SRT is uniquely equipped to account for the gendered transformation of labor markets and labor processes of the last decades. The more general "value"--strategic, political, and conceptual--of a classically Marxist conception of value, as produced by human labor and potentially withheld by organized workers--is that it can both explain the centrality of women's labor to recent waves of class struggle and direct this analysis toward its most powerful political deployment. Marxian SRT's close attention to the distinctions among the categories of productive and reproductive, value-producing and unproductive, and unwaged and waged labor is best suited to an analysis of the causes and consequences of renewed class struggle arising from social reproductive crisis. This is because it allows us to meaningfully distinguish between the dynamics and scales of the feminization of work.

But to make the case for retaining the labor theory of value, while still centering gender, Marxian SRT must develop an account of the family as a historically constituted institution of reproduction and investigate the historical transformations and intensifications of capitalist family forms and of reproductive labor in all forms. The goal is an account of how these structures serve to regulate the labor process, define the working class, and potentiate its revolt. From this view, we can see social reproductive work as that which both necessarily, and in its concrete historical form, potentiates labor-power as a commodity. Rather than viewing the problem as one of what is "inside" and "outside" capitalist accumulation, Marxian SRT allows us to take the family itself to be an institution of labor control and organization. The family is neither an amorphous part of a general "outside" to capital

relations nor an identical but hidden twin of the productive sphere. Instead, today's family is a *capitalist* family.¹

This approach does two things: first it breaks out of a commonplace left and pseudo-Marxist repetition of mainstream "culture wars" arguments. Such positions pit particularistic attention to racialized, gendered and queer subjects against a normative (and essentially bourgeois) account of mass politics centered on family values, of one or another variety (Fraser; Griffiths, "Normie"). Second, the argument defines and specifies a terrain in need of investigation and elaboration; a Marxist-feminist account of the family that can inform longstanding debates about value in a politically relevant and historically specific way.

As Marx and SRT theorists have stressed, rather than being produced like other commodities, labor power is created by human physical and social reproduction. My argument is that reproductive labor, whether organized by the wage or by the family, understood to be a specific institution for the circulation and regulation of unwaged reproductive labor, makes labor-power possible as such. On the basis of this conception, we can historically trace the relationship of waged reproductive work to its unwaged counterpart. This view of reproduction helps to grasp the differences and relations between Marxian SRT and Autonomist accounts of women's strikes and strikes of women workers, allowing us to see these moments anew, both in terms of the strategies and their demands. Further, it implies distinct but overlapping visions for class struggle and politics as a whole. Finally, it suggests a possible path for outlining a clearer relationship between SRT and some of the recent debates about Marx's conception of value (Green).

In what follows, this piece traces the strategic deployment of Marxist-Feminist debates about the unique relation of reproduction to value in three traditions of thought (Autonomist Marxist-feminism, Marxian SRT and the more recent circulationist abandonment of the labor theory of value altogether) through the strike tactic. It then turns to evaluate recent SRT-inspired elaborations of value (De'Ath) and historical materialist accounts of the family (Cooper) in order to demonstrate the continued salience of the classical Marxist conception of value and develop an account of capitalist gender relations and their role in class struggle.

Wages for Housework: Demanding Value, Strikes and Strategy

While *Wages for Housework* announces its own proposed strategy, each iteration of this demand demonstrates the way in which an expansive notion of value fails to solve, at the level of strategy, the marginalization of women's labor. It also vacates Marx's theory of its most potent lever of working-class power and historical motion.

Insofar as the main weapon of workers was understood to be the disruption of production (and thus profit) through strike or slow-down action and women were disproportionately excluded from this kind of work, the fear was that women were also excluded from control over the fundamental source of worker power. The analytic expansion of value production to include housework coincided with a theoretical expansion of the site of production—the factory—to social life outside the factory. This notion was dubbed "the social factory" (Toupin 48).

But this conceptual revision did not resolve the tensions built into a strike of unwaged reproductive labor. Such strikes (whether the explicit sort that have reemerged in the last several years, or the more molecular mass strike like that described in Jenny Boylan's *Birth Strike*) have clear limits. They can, have, and may still disrupt profit-making, but they do so through the non-reproduction of laborers. This can be a powerful tactic in the shorter term, but faces inevitable problems extending itself. On its own, willful non-reproduction must always target both a worker's capacity to produce labor-power for capital and their own use-value in themselves.

The conception of the "social factory" points to the potential power of a Marxist account of the family as a capitalist institution. But it falls short of realizing it by attempting to shoehorn in a particular arrangement into the obvious logic of capitalist rationality and exploitation on the shop floor. In doing so, it overlooks the way in which the family is a motivation for wage work in the sense that workers are financially responsible for not only their own reproduction but for that of dependents. Reduced to a fixed set of relations, families are conceived as distinct and separate from work as a commodity. Lost here is the precise role of the family in making it impossible for individual workers to separate the "use" and "exchange" values of their own labor. For workers the use value of their labor for their own reproduction is maximized in its exchange for a wage, at least for those to whom wage work is available. This is the

¹ This account builds on Rosa Luxemburg's work and later interpretations, including those by Vogel, Floyd, and Hennessy.

Achilles' heel of both strikes against unwaged reproductive labor, and in the obverse, strikes concerning waged work.

The same flawed direction in strike strategy has lately been suggested in Sophie Lewis' *Full Surrogacy Now*, which presents surrogacy and gestational labor as a focus of Marxist and communist attention. In this view of childbearing as work, reproductive labor is made to explicitly include gestation itself. Reproductive labor appears here in both waged and unwaged iterations. Lewis distinguishes herself from Autonomist Marxist-feminists in recognizing a value distinction between these two kinds of gestational labor. For Lewis, pregnancy produces value when it is paid work. Contra anti-surrogacy critics who argue that the practice amounts to selling babies, Lewis contends that gestational labor, not the infant, is the commodity. However, she calls into question the strategic utility of this very distinction for the purpose of organizing gestational laborers of either kind when she controversially politically invokes the "destruction" of fetal life—and thus the destruction of the product of pregnancy—as a form of sabotage and resistance. If surrogates are workers, loss of their commercialized offspring is an inherent potential to the nature of their work. Miscarriage and abortion appear here as a pre-birth, luddite form of strike, but one that includes all the problems of birth strikes and strikes on changing diapers and feeding the family.

At times Lewis alludes to a slightly different strategic framing for strikes on housework, mothering and even gestational labor that does not necessitate quite so much destruction but falls back on a strategy that recalls Autonomist approaches. This form of women's strike forces men in heteronormative nuclear households to take up the regular reproductive tasks for the maintenance of themselves, and their children. The Autonomist feminist approach seems to be predicated on making the (presumably male) productive laborer into a scab, insofar as he is understood to be producing value in place of a striking worker during any other strike. We can just as easily posit him as the target of the strike and see any disruption of productive labor as a consequence of his inability to achieve work-life balance with a wife on strike. It depends on his choice between the rock of the factory floor, and the hard place of life's daily exigencies.

While there are many accounts that demonstrate the effectiveness of this kind of refusal in making housework and unwaged reproductive labor visible to men (inspiring and sometimes amusingly), this approach has its limits. It doesn't succeed in moving women (to the degree they are excluded from productive labor) individually or collectively into greater control or potential for control of the disruption of profit. If the husband takes up the extra work, profit is not disrupted unless he fails to also accomplish productive work. Worse, the choice between the outcomes rests *individually* with him.

Anti-value, Refusal, Circulation, and the Commons

On the other end of the spectrum of current debates about Marxist value and reproductive labor, David Harvey and several co-thinkers argue for a narrowing of the concept of value. They argue that Marx in fact never subscribed to the labor theory of value at all (Harvey, "Marx's Refusal"). Instead, they argue, value comes into existence and is determined through the process of circulation of commodities, and ultimately exchange. Labor plays a necessary but indeterminate role. Critics argue that this formulation collapses Marx's distinct aspects of value (use/exchange) and the labor theory into a model of value-as-price. This is standard in non- and anti-Marxist economic theories (Green). Though he cites Marxian SRT in his essay "Marx's Refusal of the Labor Theory of Value," Harvey is not particularly concerned with the relationship of gender to class or the stakes of theory and strategy for women and feminism.

Instead, Harvey is interested in framing his analysis around ongoing primitive accumulation and enclosure. In this case, often, enclosure means not just simply the privatization of land held in common, or of water and air, but also enclosure of scientific knowledge. Across several of his most recent books and essays he returns to the example of the privatization of genomic data (*Marx, Capital and the Madness* 97; *Seventeen* 101-139). This is contrasted with the special creative properties of collective human intellectual and "affective labor" (Hardt and Negri)—referring to the combination of social reproduction and management of affect as itself a form of labor. In this elaboration of enclosure and resistance to it, the strategic importance of value-productive labor is elided in favor of a re-valorizing (in a moral sense) of the human dignity of work as itself inherently resistant to exploitation. This formulation, bypassing capitalist production of value and exploitation as a necessary site of resistance to capital, conflates work done for low or no wages with decommodification. This risks lumping together the fact of exploitation and oppression with confrontation and resistance to capital.

At the level of Harvey's strategy, every enclosure presents an opportunity for commoning or decommodification through collective action. In *The Right to the City*, a project (named for the work of Lefebvre) that Harvey helped to establish as a mode for contesting the enclosure of public space, he

imagines a multitude that conceptually and politically replaces the proletariat of Marx. This multitude includes organized workers, but also organized groups of nearly any imaginable kind. Bike riders of critical mass, students, artists, neighborhood committees, freelancers, feminist and anti-racist organizations, are all covered by Harvey's expanded conception. The strategic lever becomes unwaged work, which is decommodified. For that reason, unwaged work is resistant to the circuit of accumulation. For Harvey, the puzzle of how unwaged labor makes profit possible is abandoned. Instead, this work is cast as outside profit, and as a site of resistance to subsumption.

Although he does not reject it, Harvey is perhaps not as focused on the strike weapon as the other thinkers discussed in this essay. Instead, he calls for city-based organizing for cross-sector strikes. These ideally emerge as a general strike that can make demands directly for decommodification and democratic control of that which was or should be the common property of everyone.

In a sense, this model is an inversion of the social factory model, in which the reproductive sphere is absorbed into an expanded analysis of the shop floor. Instead, the city is the unit, with any factories and shop floors themselves simply one part of the multiplicity of the city. Each workplace functions internally as their own microcosm. The Occupy movement has been the closest real-life example to this model, culminating in a thrilling, if largely rhetorical, call for a general strike. On the one hand, Harvey's "city as revolutionary subject" avoids the divide between public and private that Autonomists addressed directly by expanding value as a site of strategic leverage. On the other, it repeats their error. Harvey fails to analyze the distinction that capital accumulation makes real between value-production in the public sphere, and non-value producing work in the realm of the private. As already mentioned, Harvey's analysis does not preclude classical strike action, even as it decenters it. Even if substantive general strike did emerge out of an Occupy-like movement (as happened in Egypt in 2011), it would disrupt profit. This disruption would then serve as source of power for winning demands, whether one ascribes this to disruption of surplus value extraction, or to Harvey's emphasis on circulation itself. Whatever is the precise process that shapes value, there remains scope for worker action.

Whereas Autonomist feminists of the 1970s looked to define women's reproductive unwaged activity as work and all women as workers, and to further center women in a Marxist analysis and politics by defining that work as value-producing, Harvey calls for a "value theory of reproduction" ("Marx's Refusal"). For Harvey, this is not a theory of value-producing reproductive labor, but a theory in which reproduction would be one among several forces that each contribute to the "unstable" form of value, in part by creating wants, desires, and needs, which is to say, in the market via circulation. Building on his analysis of circulation as the primary container of value, Harvey introduces an expansive notion of "anti-value," seemingly intended to include any force that disrupts or slows circulation, including conventional moments such as strikes and occupations, but also, at times, the performance of unwaged labor itself, understood to be decommodified in the same sense. This is a complete reversal of the Wages for Housework argument, but one that ultimately works toward similar political and strategic ends.

This convergence between Federici and Harvey is important strategically, if much murkier analytically. It highlights how both of their approaches manage to discuss and focus on housework, while eliding analysis of the family structures that compel and require it. The concepts of the social factory and city as unit of analysis and structure of resistance—used rather than the classical Marxist conceit of the proletariat in an attempt to address unwaged labor--do not address the family as a concrete, constitutive capitalist structure. In this view, there is little sense of families compelling and containing part of the collective work of the proletariat. Instead of jettisoning the proletariat concept, it must be further developed by an analysis of the family as a formative element of the proletariat in itself.

However, in our present, there is in fact a labor regime specific to the family that is best understood not through an analogy with the factory, but instead through direct observation and the production of a particular analysis of it as a distinct part of a larger totality. The capitalist family in the 21st century entails its own mechanisms for the intensification, skilling and time-pressuring of reproductive labor. This is true even when that labor is unwaged. Rather than existing outside and counter to the market, this labor makes possible the abstraction of labor for a wage, and shapes competitive advantages/disadvantages among workers in the labor market. Perhaps we can do better than the partisans of the social factory and city and come to understand the distinctive role played by the family in sustaining capitalism and reproducing its "doubly freed" workforces.

The Logic of Value in Social Reproduction

Superficially, circulationism would seem to be the point of connection between Harvey and Amy De'Ath's notion of a "counter-reproductive underside of value" (De'Ath). However, De'Ath draws on Marina Vishmidt's term to suggest that the production of labor as a commodity, and an abstraction, is always

antagonistic to the use-value of labor power to workers themselves. This holds true in ways that are productive in a classically Marxist sense. Which is to say that uncommodified, unwaged labor produces a contradiction within (rather than an expansion or a collapse of) labor-power as a commodity and with the surplus-value it creates (Vishmidt). If taken to its furthest conclusion, this contradiction explains both the tendency toward an expansion of commodified reproductive labor, and the reification of gendered differentiation in labor markets.

To explain this, De'Ath's sophisticated review of recent contributions to Marxian SRT deploys Moishe Postone's insights. Postone observes that a surplus-value "treadmill dynamic" of ever-increasing productivity constructs capitalist time as an intensifying "structure of domination" (Postone 76). This has implications for gender that are intuitive but have only recently come to be explored by a significant number of scholars.

Surplus-value, for De'Ath, is still composed of abstract labor, though she focuses analytically on its temporal aspect. For her, following Postone, surplus-value extraction structures time firstly in the realm of production (driving the "treadmill" of acceleration of historical time through the profit-driven exigencies it entails) and secondly in the realm of social reproduction (1545). Surplus extraction is also key to understanding the relationship *between* unwaged unproductive labor and productive labor, and the way this relationship changes over time. In De'Ath's example, transformations in gendered social relations are best explained as a consequence of the rising organic composition of capital (1544).

De'Ath combines Marxian SRT and its value frame with insights from recent work addressing some defining theoretical problems of Marxist-feminist thought. She is especially responsive to Gonzalez and Neton's proposal, in *Logic of Gender*,² of a constitutive spatial delineation between a productive and unproductive/reproductive sphere. First, De'Ath asks at which level of abstraction gender is a structural precondition for accumulation, rather than simply an aspect of the concrete historical totality. She argues that value can point to gender as abstractly necessary to capital accumulation. Gender is required by capitalism, rather than merely consequent to its historical development. Second, she argues that this approach may contribute to a more coherent Marxist analysis of the way in which gender is constituted through direct domination. More specifically, gender distinction appears via violence of various kinds.

Circulation for Harvey is temporal in the sense that delayed valorization constitutes devaluation. In contrast, for De'Ath value itself structures capitalist temporality absolutely and relatively, over time. Between the two thinkers, the apparently similar arguments quickly become distinct through divergent formulations of value and in the political and strategic implications of this divergence. For De'Ath the reversion in some sectors (low wage, reproductive ones in particular) from low-wage to no-wage is not a positive possibility of decommodification, but an effect of austerity. Whereas Harvey and Federici (now) celebrate decommodified labor as resistance in the form of "commoning," De'Ath points to the reversion towards unwaged labor in once proletarianized sectors as a sign and effect of the disempowerment of the working class. This is an indication of disintegration of solidarity and organizational disarray, rather than as a potential site of coherence for class conscious solidarities and power.

De'Ath specifically frames her intervention as anti-Lukácsian, without specifying this characterization, in contrast to the work of Cinzia Arruzza,³ Rosemary Hennessy, and Kevin Floyd. She argues that on their approach, gender is left to be defined superficially through relations of exchange and in ideological terms. De'Ath nevertheless sees this work as the foundation for her analysis and foray into a social reproduction theory of value (1548).

² De'Ath's reliance on "The Logic of Gender" as representative of insights into Marxian SRT reproduces some of the weakest models in this trend. The *Logic of Gender*, for all its innovative framing and reworking of Brenner and Ramas, repeats and reifies the binary associations between distinctions of public/private, waged/unwaged, and productive/reproductive labor, to explain marketized distinctions of gendered labor. Which is to say that when the theory gets most complex, it tends to fall back on the idea that reproductive work is done by women as unpaid labor, which makes it impossible to analyze the relationships between these characteristics of work and workers. At its most extreme, this formulation substitutes ahistorical and stereotyped description for explanation. While De'Ath avoids this trap in her most important levels of argument, she falls back into these reflexive assumptions (e.g. that women perform unwaged reproductive labor) at the moment of drawing out her conclusion.

³ De'Ath misidentifies the way in which at least some of her interlocutors would take up Lukács. Arruzza for example is herself anti-Lukácsian in terms of class consciousness and rather engages his work at the level of class formation. Floyd is largely concerned with Lukács as the theorist of reification. Both actively complicate, if not reject, a reading of Lukács which might situate consciousness prior to rather than as a consequence of class formation and commodification.

While wide-ranging in her reference points, one thing De'Ath misses about the body of work she is drawing on is the overall reliance on a schema which opposes waged, productive, masculine, value-producing labor on the one hand and unwaged, reproductive, feminine, non-value producing labor on the other. The result is that these divisions are routinely associated in dichotomous terms, often as though this schema accurately reflects the lived structures of work under capitalism. This split is then represented as the defining problem that Marxist-feminism, or simply Marxist politics as such, must solve. This is a lacuna she shares with the accounts of value discussed previously. In reality, this dichotomy fails to describe the structures of work. Its disjunctures are of particular interest to a Marxian SRT frame that attends to the possibility of feminized disruption of profit. The import of this is the potential for solidarity involved in the tactical reorientation of reproductive labor. Marxist-feminism must do more work than overcoming a divide that exists neatly only in its own analytic and look toward (as Lukács does) toward a (re)composition of the working class.

De'Ath's call to analyze the political economy of transformations in structures of gender and social reproduction through capitalist labor-time as the organization of subsumption and structural connection between waged as well as unwaged labor in innovative. Her approach is well taken and tantalizing, but it overlooks one of the real strengths of Marxian SRT as a method in practice. Marxian SRT uniquely addresses the practical, ethnographic, historical, and strategic focus on instances where dichotomies between productive/reproductive, waged/unwaged masculine/feminine labor do *not* line up.

Analysis of the waged reproductive sphere has been particularly generative of Marxian SRT's contributions to strategic insights into class formation and living politics. Marxian SRT's focus on both women's strikes and strikes by women evokes not only Lukács' critique of reification (*History and Class Consciousness* 83-108), but also his elaboration of class consciousness arising out of the proletarian experience of the labor process (46-81, 149-221). Lukács takes this to happen individually, and then collectively. That is to say, consciousness arises with and through class composition.

Marxian SRT moves to treat all waged and unwaged work—productive and reproductive, value-producing and non-value-producing, feminized and otherwise—as examples of labor processes. These processes each provide partial insight into the totality of capitalist social relations. Further, reproductive labor that is waged, feminized, and in some cases even value-producing (for example, nurses working in private hospitals) becomes particularly important. Workers in this sector typically develop insight through gendered experience as both paid caregivers, *and* as unwaged workers in the home and family.

Marxian SRT's perspective on the multiple locations and roles of reproductive labor under capitalism allows for new theoretical and political connections to be drawn. For example, speed-up or deskilling on the job, the experiences of patients, students, related to clients in receiving care. The shared pressures that caregivers and patients alike experience in maintaining self-reproduction in the private sphere are both within the remit of Marxian SRT. Such moments of contradiction between stereotyped social, labor-market and laboring roles can generate potentials for broader consciousness. It also becomes clear that such insights and experiences are not the exclusive or essential domain of women. This has been particularly apparent in a recent wave of teachers' strikes in the USA and has allowed Marxian SRT to explore gender's varied role in reproducing workforces.

While on strike, these workers directly wield a fundamental instrument of class power. The strike is often creatively aligned with forms of collective reclamation of reproductive labor. The working class needs to survive such a strike (for example, striking teachers' delivery of lunches to students who would otherwise be increasingly hungry and isolated each day they were not in school). Such creative combinations of refusal and reclamation can most effectively target the production of value in private sector social reproductive work. Or indirectly through strikes in the public sector.

It would be a mistake to assume (as Harvey and De'Ath seem to do) that reproductive labor is becoming *less* rather than *more* often waged and productive of surplus value. Contra Gonzalez's and Neton's theorization of overlapping yet distinct spheres of reproductive/unwaged and productive/waged work this has not been the case in recent years. Frigga Haug as early as 1992 detected that austerity and the feminization of waged work (not only reproductive work) was a process of transferring not only actual women into the workplace but also the structures of domination that compel unwaged work in the home, with new forms of domination entering wage labor environments (89-112). Indeed, the trend over the last 50 years has been toward a greater degree of commodification of social reproductive labor. This has included increased use of the mechanisms of labor control which once typified gendered work more broadly in the waged labor market. This has affected all workers, while at the same time unwaged labor of all kinds has come increasingly under pressures of time and efficiency.

In some industries a clear divide between waged and unwaged labor becomes increasingly murky. This is made particularly so through the revival of piece work, and the individual responsibilities of

women in balancing multiple sets of demands. Combined, these become a mechanism of coercion of the working class broadly. Including, as Haug points out, direct violence in the workplace naturalized by the presence of gendered workers (108-112). This process is always gendered (even when not directly impacting women) in ways that may more fruitfully contradict any supposition that gender relations are historically vestigial or incidental to the fundamental dynamics of capital accumulation. Violence might be a particularly interesting way to think through De'Aths argument about value and labor process as well as a point of connection in analyzing the family as capitalist.

Melinda Cooper, Marxian SRT, Value, and the Family

Haug, Federici, and Harvey fail to fully capture and analyze the family itself as a capitalist institution. They instead analyze it as either a metaphorical factory or a pre-capitalist form, perhaps retained as a vestige into the capitalist era (Griffiths and Gleeson). By contrast, Melinda Cooper is a social theorist who rejects Marxism as such and Marxian SRT in particular, but who has nevertheless produced a political economic account which gets us closer to a historical materialist view of the family as a site of the reproduction of labor-power. Her analysis speaks to challenges posed to the labor theory of value concerning the question of unpaid reproductive labor. For this reason, her new book, *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and New Social Conservatism* deserves close attention.

In *Family Values*, Cooper offers a compelling account of the "habitual" tendency among contemporary leftists and Marxists to overlook the family as a central institution of capitalist political economy ("Family Matters"). She explains the error of this tendency as a historical one. Cooper suggests that the post-"Fordist" family has been a site of significant structural change and its development is central to understanding the politics of "family values" that have dominated the neoliberal era (*Family Values* 8). Cooper identifies the family as an institution that has changed form, revealing that the "family wage" and the attendant association of the nuclear family with capitalist production was a contingent and particular moment in the history (and geography) of capital accumulation that is unlikely to be restored.

Cooper correctly observes a tendency among social conservatives and "neoliberals" (although it also extends to some elements of the left) in the U.S, including Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan, and Milton Friedman, to focus on remaking the heteronormative nuclear family (*Family Values* 20-21). Fixing up the family was taken to be a key solution to the problems that beset the working class, and society more generally. According to Cooper, these problems are in fact results of stagflation-induced pressure on wages and cuts to social welfare and New Deal programs. She notes the similarity of right, center, and social democratic political tendencies to blame the efflorescence of what she calls "anti-normative" (gay, queer, feminist, and radical anti-racist) social movements for the destruction of the family (*Family Values* 11-13, "Family Matters."). On the left, these minorities (or undue attention to them) are blamed for causing the political impotence of the working class, while on the right, they are blamed for actively demonstrating and instigating "moral decay." She notes that centrist politics have incorporated the neoliberal stream of such movements, recuperating them to an inclusive nationalism (Eisenstein), natalism, and the politics of family values.

In accordance with this thesis, Cooper rightly understands that "homonormative" movements for inclusion ultimately reproduce the core nostalgia and affection for the family. This nostalgia, for Cooper, extends to their queer critics who assert the possibility for novel kinship arrangements. All too often, an idealized fantasy of family relations serves as an imagined site of economic security and humane non-commodified social relations, if not as a site of resistance to capitalism itself. Cooper further identifies (repeating Haug) certain contradictions in Marx and Engels' own accounts of relations of gender and work. She notes their tendency to condemn the proletarianization of women as a threat to an assumed naturalness of women's reproductive (unwaged) role ("Family Matters"). These passages seem to frame women as naturally disposed to be the tender workhorse of the family unit. In Cooper's account, a direct line can be drawn from here, to a working-class politics of the family wage as an antidote to predations of capitalism.

Unfortunately, this analysis misses a different perspective on Marx and Engels as revolutionaries committed to the abolition of the patriarchal family, and in so doing misunderstands the development of Marxian SRT as a family abolitionist tradition⁴ Cooper reprises the Marxist-feminist debates on social reproduction, claiming that Marxian SRT advances a "reproductive labor theory of value" that renaturalizes women's association with reproductive work ("Family Matters"). Familiarity with this literature, however, suggests precisely the reverse — the political, historical, condition of women as reproductive workers *is* in fact the subject of SRT.

⁴ This insight, in fact, is entailed by the core arguments of SRT. On this see Alcazar.

The matter at hand is how gender relations, and the reproductive labor they support, appear as such. No Marxian SRT thinker advances the stance that the gender distinction is natural. Instead SRT theorists, attending to the classic Marxist distinctions between value productive work and work that is not value productive while taking up insights from Autonomist feminism and the Black Radical tradition that point out the structural importance of unpaid work, are committed to a *historical* account of the development and intensification of the subsumption of such work into the wage as well as of the indirect pressures that capitalist production levels on unwaged reproductive work in the home. Politically, Marxian SRT advances an understanding of reproductive work as central not only to the maintenance of an abstract social order, but also to the promotion of an organized class-wide politics of resistance to the capitalist mode of production and organization of social life that aims at its transcendence. This follows from Marxian SRT's philosophical underpinnings in the elaboration of a "unitary" analysis of gender and race as structurally and historically indivisible from the class relation (Arruzza, "Remarks").⁵

In light of the radical, abolitionist, politics of social reproduction put forth by Marxian SRT, we can see that Cooper too quickly dismisses the conceit of a "crisis" of social reproduction as neatly (or only) mapping onto a social democratic politics of the family wage. Instead, the analytic of a "crisis of care"⁶ sheds light on the radical aims of politically centralizing reproduction.

Initially conceived to describe conditions outside the USA/European sphere, this framework is relevant in two ways that are pertinent to my argument. First, it indicates that the family as an institution is not a solution to the predations of capitalist intensification, but rather unevenly distributes precarity. This appears across gendered and raced divisions in the labor market, between unionized and non-unionized, full and part-time work, and formal and informal economies (Barchesi 74-79). It is also apparent in the work of production, reproduction, and valorization. Second, the perspective of Marxian SRT reveals that the paid reproductive labor of education, health, elder and child care, sex work, food service, hospitality, and social work is particularly prone to militant worker consciousness due to the convergence of the particular impact of wage stagnation and service cuts on these sectors in combination with the double, triple, and even higher burdens shouldered by workers likely to be engaged in this work. These mounting and multifaceted structural pressures promote the formation of political consciousness directed towards organized class-wide responses to crisis and precarity (Griffiths "Social Reproduction").

In the context of the politics of crises of care, it is perfectly possible to recognize and resist the damaging effects of the destruction of an oppressive social form like the family wage without advancing its reinstatement—this is a truism of the Marxist vision of social transformation.⁷ For example, Michelle O'Brien reflected on the work of the now-defunct Queers for Economic Justice (O'Brien). This project resisted both the heteronormative and racist effects of welfare reform (theorizing affinities between Black and queer marginalization that have often been perpetuated by family values politics) (Spillers). Such a linkage between the racism and heteronormativity entailed in welfare reform already informed the critique of the "New Deal" as it was being dismantled. The New Deal made space for queer and black people to partially integrate into the labor market, and thus assert civil rights (Drucker), but it also doubled down and reinscribed the gendered and racialized aspects of the family at the level of state policy. Thus, while Cooper is correct to identify pro-family politics as key to reactionary retrenchment, this ideology has gained traction with a clear material underpinning, and not without resistance. Organized resistance to neoliberal social welfare policy, and of queers at work, became a node of early, urgent class formation as a political-economic force. This black and queer organization is not possible

⁵ This unitary stance on oppression is the central implicit argument in Lise Vogel's *Marxism and the Oppression of Women*. It is this approach that has inspired the revival of interest in her theoretical work. Unitary approaches appear as well in other antecedents to the development and dynamism of Marxian SRT today (Brodkin; Mullings and Wali; Davis; Susser).

⁶ "Crisis of Care" here was used to describe the context of family formation post-apartheid in South Africa. This crisis arose as a consequence of the intersection of the specifically gendered liberation arising at the end of Apartheid-era restrictions on movement, combined with the political economic impacts of the HIV/AIDS crisis on the "new" South Africa. While specific to these circumstances, it is also suggestive of broader global capitalist conditions in this period (Griffiths "Social Reproduction"). It has since been taken up by Nancy Fraser, who applies the concept broadly to capitalism (Fraser).

⁷ Cooper dismisses queer interventions into the question of the family as reinscribing hegemonic affection for the form, but queer anticipations of, and contributions to, Marxian SRT (Holly Lewis; Drucker) have already emphasized the limits of recuperating a welfare-state politics of any kind. Queer Social Reproduction Theorists have consistently stressed the need to avoid the entrenchment of racial capitalism and heteronormativity. This includes the lines of carceral racism, queerphobia and wealth differentiation rooted in the contemporary housing market. This leaves Cooper's anti-Marxist pessimism both empirically unresponsive, and philosophically unfounded.

to dismiss as simply a recuperation of the politics of the family wage (which largely excludes working class queers and racialized workers), but rather calls our attention to the strategic position of the family with respect to class formation and solidarity and indicates the need for a more fully elaborated Marxian SRT approach to the family form.

A further step in this direction has been made by Treva Ellison, who has emphasized the importance of an analysis of black trans social reproduction for understanding racial capitalism (Ellison). Their work theorizes the simultaneity of the classed, raced and heteronormative aspects of the enclosure of public space and shows how this process accompanied and connected the structural changes in the family and the incarceration of working-class black people in the "neoliberal" period. Their research highlights the indivisibility of experience which informs the emergence of a radical politics of abolition—of both the family and the police/prisons—and suggests theorizing gender, through the family, as a mechanism of labor and worker control.

Following Ellison's insights, we need to confront the two-sidedness of the family, at once a "heart of a heartless world," promising security, safety and affective warmth, and a site and source of discipline and exclusion, both immanently and in its effects on workers in the sphere of paid work. This two-sidedness is exemplified by queer precarity within families and the correlative reemergence of flexible family networks. In the interstices of increased rights, the elaboration of family networks, liberal tolerance and a right-wing backlash, queers serve as a category of "last hired, first fired" with respect to the family. We are a category of reserve reproductive labor for a working class increasingly pressed in our efforts to self-reproduce. In the post-New Deal new order, workers have both less to lose in terms of enacting queer identities and some liminal space in family networks. Their acceptance, however, remains tenuous, not only ideologically, but practically. When useful, the contradictory framework of liberal acceptance and right-wing backlash allows individual families to bring queer members on board when their labor is most needed, and to then jettison them when it is not. This is an efficient and cynical adaptation of workplace logics (and employer manipulation of set "culture wars" debates) to the family and to the intensification of the labor process within it.

From this perspective, women, queer, and racialized subjects are not seen merely as reinscriptions of the divisions of the capitalist labor market. Nor are their struggles diversions from the class project. Instead, they are seen to precede (Silver 71) and create the necessary social conditions for broad class action, both activating and potentiating class struggle. Marxian SRT more fully elaborates the terrain of class struggle by elaborating a structural understanding of reactionary family values. It considers gender oppressions along with existing and historic attempts to resist them. Moving towards a unitary theory, it elucidates the emergent possibilities for anticapitalist working class action and explores ways in which care and its absence can act as a crystallizing point for class politics. Marxian SRT does not attempt to substitute reproductive labor for productive labor as the source of a "new" revolutionary subject. It does not argue that women's strikes, riots and social movements against police violence replace organizing and action at the point of production in Marxist thought or that the point of production itself has become irrelevant. Instead, it suggests that just as the atomized work of individuals at the point of production can be seen as collective product of the working class, so too should the work of social reproduction.

Value as Labor and Reproduction in Valorization, The Family in Marxian SRT

A detailed analysis of the family is a necessary precondition to any exit from the trap that value debates have thus far presented to Marxist analysis of unwaged labor. This holds true particularly in relation to the several strategic dead-ends that have emerged from flawed theoretical "fixes" for the labor theory of value. Marxian SRT presents the family as a historical institution for the reproduction of workers, and the working class, and as a site that organizes and coerces unwaged reproductive labor. A Marxist account of the family provides a site of attachment for Marxian SRT for debates about value, value-form, circulation and valorization. It also creates space for these debates, seemingly abstract, to gain purchase in questions of politics and strategy. In delineating the family as a specific and important site of Marxist analysis, it becomes apparent that its role is one of circulating unwaged reproductive labor for the purpose of potentiating labor-power as such.

A shared obliviousness to this specificity helps to explain the commonalities between some of the 1970's Autonomist Marxist-feminist accounts of value and the formally obverse and more recent Harveyite revisions of the same term. Autonomist feminists sought to expand the connection between labor and value, while Harvey's reading of Marx rejects labor as value's essence. Silence on the family is the underlying reason for these schools' convergence and explains why neither offers as much to us as Marxian SRT.

In the first volume of *Capital*, Marx explains valorization as the "increment or excess over the original value I call 'surplus-value.' The value originally advanced, therefore, not only remains intact while in circulation, but increases its magnitude, adds to itself a surplus-value, or is valorized, and this movement converts it into capital" (106). By contrast, "devalorization" takes place when a commodity of any kind is not able to be realized as profit. Given that labor-power is itself a commodity, encompassing these same sets of possibilities, Marxian SRT directs us to the specific, particular and unique properties of that commodity. This is necessarily defined by the particular qualities of human species-being. Harvey and De'Ath—while arriving at the question of circulation and temporality, from quite distinct points of departure, and concluding with different strategic ends—each focus on abstract questions about the substance of value and its realization.

Surveying existing theorization of value and gender suggests an urgent need for further investigation, elaborating on existing breakthroughs. While Harvey's account of value as produced through circulation is too general, De'Ath's quite correct account of subsumption of unwaged work to the acceleration of time-as-value has yet to be rendered more concrete. Her focus on time-as-value opens the possibility of investigating how unwaged labor becomes subject to the process of abstraction. Unwaged labor then becomes refined as disciplined work, a necessary precondition to the availability of labor-power on the market. The family is where labor-power is made available to be valorized. This is done through the subsumption of the unpaid work of reproductive labor (Haug) that makes labor-power function as a capitalist commodity into the ethos and momentum of capitalist (productive) time, and its model of exponential efficiency, in service to formal productivity. Put another way, it is the ethos of self-sacrifice and efficiency assigned female in the family. This also helps to explain how a crisis of care sparks new struggle, with social reproductive labor becoming a flashpoint for anti-capitalist contention.

This insight is a foundational one for the political intervention of Marxian SRT, and its distinct contributions to conceptualizing both "women's strikes" as such and strikes by women. It may very well be the case that the waged work of social reproduction, even where it reflects the extraction of surplus value cannot be profitable *without* the masochistic gendered self-discipline Haug identifies. That is precisely its power in organized absences (as in a strike). In the realm of profit making, this is more obvious. But even in the public sector, treated increasingly by neoliberal austerity budgeteers as if it ought to be operating as a profit generating mechanism, this power echoes as a crucial point of political crystallization. Put another way, those tasked with the waged labor of social reproduction are in a unique position. They experience the crucial importance of their work, for the survival of working-class people and the class as a whole while simultaneously navigating the experience of personally managing that responsibility alongside the pressures of the market that deskill, degrade and undermine their efforts as commodified labor.

This is where De'Ath generates a key future direction for Marxian SRT theorization. How is value-as-time transmitted and enforced across concrete divides of public and private, and how does it shape unwaged labor in the family? In what ways is unwaged work subsumed? How is waged work shaped according to the logic of private "masochism," and how can alternatives to this that build class identification flourish? What kinds of demands cut across these divisions of experience—both in terms of individual workers who do both, but also across sectors and sections of the working class?

Marx's original insights about labor as the origin of value need not be amended, expanded or edited. We can arrive at credible accounts of this process that point to strategies of solidarity which emphasize women and feminized work, while also breaking down the received divisions between public/private, family/work, love/production, man/woman, paid/unpaid. In the process, Social Reproduction Theory is uniquely equipped to direct us toward class self-realization and activity.

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Author's profile: Kate Doyle Griffiths is a doctoral candidate in anthropology at CUNY Graduate Center, and an instructor at Brooklyn College. They are also an editor of *Spectre*.
Email: < Kathleen.Griffiths@brooklyn.cuny.edu >