

University at Albany, State University of New York

## Scholars Archive

---

Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies M.A.  
Final Projects

Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

---

5-2022

# Little Interventions Everywhere: Wielding Intersectionality to Reclaim Socialist Feminism

Siiri E. Koski

*University at Albany, State University of New York*

The University at Albany community has made this article openly available.

**Please share** how this access benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/wgss-masters-finalprojects>



Part of the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Koski, Siiri E., "Little Interventions Everywhere: Wielding Intersectionality to Reclaim Socialist Feminism" (2022). *Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies M.A. Final Projects. 2.*

<https://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/wgss-masters-finalprojects/2>

### License

This Final Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Scholars Archive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies M.A. Final Projects by an authorized administrator of Scholars Archive.

Please see [Terms of Use](#). For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@albany.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@albany.edu).

**Little Interventions Everywhere: Wielding Intersectionality to Reclaim Socialist Feminism**

by

Siiri E. Koski

Committee Members:

Dr. Rajani Bhatia

Dr. Jennifer Dodge

A Final Project Submitted to:

the University at Albany, State University of New York

In Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

College of Arts and Sciences

Department of Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies

2022

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	4
Abstract .....	5
Introduction .....	6
Research Questions .....	10
Literature Review .....	11
1. Introduction .....	11
2. Theoretical and Historical Overview .....	13
3. Contemporary Socialist Feminism .....	25
4. Implications .....	30
Methodology .....	32
Data Collection .....	32
Data Analysis .....	35
Findings .....	36
1. Socialism and Feminism Aligned.....	37
2. Discourse on Oppositionality.....	40
3. Praxis Dispersed .....	45
4. Problems in Socialist Spaces .....	47
5. Electoral Politics for Context-Setting .....	52
Discussions and Implications .....	64
Limitations, Future Research, and Contributions .....	69
References .....	71
Tables .....	75
Appendices .....	81

## **List of Tables**

Table 1: Participant Information ( $N = 9$ )

Table 2: Codes and Descriptions

Table 3: Participant Political Ideological Identification

Table 4: Additional Affiliations

Table 5: Topics of Concern

Table 6: Participants' Recent Voting History

### Abstract

Responding to the increased visibility of socialist politics in the United States following the 2016 presidential election, this study explores current expressions of socialist feminism and socialist feminist perspectives on and experiences with electoral politics, political action(s), and identity mediation. Nine organizers were recruited from socialist organizations to participate in a one-time, semi-structured, in-depth interview and speak on their experiences in the current moment (2015-present). The data reveals that organizers in socialist spaces have easily reconciled their socialism with their feminism and reclaimed socialist feminism as a distinct theory and practice dispersed across several social justice issues, organizations, and campaigns. This study also finds that, within the various spaces the participants organize, their reliance on and use of intersectionality enables them to organize in a unique, and occasionally oppositional, manner by accounting for the differential impacts of multiple systems of oppression. The phrase *little interventions everywhere* is introduced as a descriptor of the resulting characteristic of current socialist feminism and as a method to unite allies in social justice. These findings suggest, by the nature of the socialist feminists' distinct methods to organizing found in various non-socialist spaces, that intersectionality provides a bridge through which collaboration and coalition-building across social justice issues and organizations is possible and supported.

*Keywords:* socialist feminism, praxis, electoral politics, political action, grassroots organizing

## Introduction

Following Senator Bernie Sanders' first bid for the United States presidency in 2016, news media organizations have increased the visibility of socialist politics by reporting on the increased prominence or importance of progressive/socialist voters (e.g., Morin, 2020; Pezenik, 2020; Rao, 2020), documenting the politics and agendas of incumbent progressive/socialist politicians (e.g., Park & Sanger-Katz, 2019; Snell, 2021; Sullivan & Bade, 2020), and highlighting the progressive/socialist politicians contesting elections (e.g., Marantz, 2021; Pengelly & Singh, 2020).<sup>1</sup> Additionally, several progressive members of Congress, referred to as "The Squad," have reanimated interest in politics, progressive organizing, and social programs (Seitz-Wald, 2020; Singh, 2021).<sup>2</sup> It must be noted that the most visible members of The Squad are women of color and their impact on women and voters deserves more attention. Despite the increased attention to socialist politics and The Squads' feminist ideals, *socialist feminism* remains a largely invisible political ideology and praxis in the public imagination. In sum, whether the increased visibility of socialist politics was followed by increased interest in or identification with socialist feminism has yet to be determined.

Socialist feminism is best defined as an attempt to understand and organize against the compounded forces of patriarchy, white supremacy, imperialism, and capitalism concurrently.

---

<sup>1</sup> While "progressive" and "socialist" can, and in many contexts do, refer to distinct agendas/politics, voters, journalists, politicians, and organizers often use the terms interchangeably. Unless otherwise noted in cases where their distinctions matter, I also use these terms interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> The Squad is a set of Democratic members of Congress. Initially, The Squad was comprised of four congresswomen of color, U.S. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez ("AOC") (D-NY), Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Rep. Ayanna Pressly (D-MA), and Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) (Seitz-Wald, 2020). The Squad has since grown as more progressives, particularly those put forth by the Justice Democrats (a political organization dedicated to finding and supporting Democratic candidates as challengers to incumbent Democrats), such as Rep. Jamaal Bowman (D-NY), are elected (Justice Democrats, n.d.).

Zillah Eisenstein's (2019) definition is exemplary and stands as the definition of socialist feminism throughout these analyses.

*What do you do when socialism is not enough?* You make it antiracist and feminist.  
*What do you do when feminism is not enough?* You make it socialist and antiracist.  
*What do you do when antiracism is not enough?* You make it socialist and feminist. *And then what do you do?* You make sure this abolitionist socialist feminism is fully inclusive, most especially of [gay,] trans, and disabled people. (Eisenstein, 2019, p. 9)

Linda Gordon (2013) explains that socialist feminism has ebbed and flowed within and around larger social movements and uses socialist feminists' activism within the various 20<sup>th</sup> century women's liberation movements as evidence. Socialist feminist organizations operating during the 1960s-1970s civil rights and women's liberation movements (e.g., The Combahee River Collective, 1977/2017; Petchesky, 1979) further illustrate this trend. Unfortunately, the *current* expressions of the intergenerational socialist feminist tradition remain under-documented. Expanding Mary-Alice Waters' (1972) call to document the distinct theory and praxis of socialist women, this research study is needed to both document the existence of current *socialist feminist* theory and praxis, as well as provide possible implications for organizing between progressive/socialist and feminist groups. Further, the proposed empirical study will consider Linda Gordon's (2013) hypothesis that contemporary socialist feminist praxis remains dispersed across single-issue struggles. Using Gordon's description and tying in the increased visibility of socialist politics in general, I consider how socialist feminist theory and praxis has been affected in the current period: 2015 to the present.<sup>3</sup> Has current socialist feminist praxis remained dispersed across single-issue causes, and does current socialist feminism remained diluted, or less potent, following the increased prominence of intersectionality and transnational coalition work? Or, has the current moment reawakened a

---

<sup>3</sup> For the remainder of these analyses "current socialist feminism" and "current socialist feminists" refer to most recent moment in contemporary socialist feminism, 2015-present/2022.

distinct socialist feminism that is oppositional in practice like that of the second wave socialist feminist predecessors?

Coming of voting age and entering the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UW-L) Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies undergraduate program two years before Senator Sanders' first bid for the U.S. presidency, I was part of the youth cohort that was introduced to United States politics through the Senator's presidential campaign. My peers and I were galvanized by the 2015-2016 presidential primary, but our commitment to feminist praxis did not guarantee political consensus among us. Debate before and after classes was commonplace and an unspoken split in our department formed. The departmental split produced two leftist cohorts, both explicitly feminist, but one with non-negotiable anti-capitalist political aims (e.g., support for Medicare4All, a desire to increase taxes for the wealthy, etc.). As a new socialist feminist voter who was attempting to recuperate the UW-L chapter of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), I was privy to many of these debates.<sup>4</sup>

Determining which candidate deserved feminist support was the main concern during the 2015-2016 and 2019-2020 presidential primaries. While we often argued about the feasibility or efficacy of socialist policy initiatives, these matters were deprioritized for candidate consideration. Surprisingly, the largest point of contention was sexism. Recalling the "Bernie Bro" trope, many of my undergraduate peers dismissed the Bernie Sanders campaign, and his supporters, for claims of sexism. Those of us in the socialist feminist cohort experienced a peculiar type of erasure that dismissed our support for Senator Sanders as a betrayal to feminism

---

<sup>4</sup> Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a national student organization from the civil rights era, organized students for a participatory democracy and held the belief that issues stemming from white supremacy, capitalism, and imperialism are interrelated. Though the national organization has not been active since the civil rights era, the UW-L SDS chapter was operating during my undergraduate years, and I was asked to help recuperate the chapter. For more information on SDS, see Todd Gitlin (2017) for the Smithsonian Magazine.



because of questions raised by this gendered trope. After both presidential primaries, the departmental split became less apparent when the Democratic Party chose their nominee (Hillary Clinton in 2016 and Joe Biden in 2020). Though unspoken, it was clear that feminist support was supposed to be oriented towards the Democratic nominees, and Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden earned many feminist-oriented votes from our department.

This story, while anecdotal, exemplifies larger feminist conundrums as it relates to political action and activism. Is political consensus among feminists possible and what issues are critical to distinctively *feminist* politics? Do socialist feminists and feminists have room to share political goals? How do feminists negotiate classism, sexism, racism, etc. when participating in U.S. politics or social justice work? What does it mean to be a 'good' feminist in this political landscape?

Such questions, not easily answered, sparked my interest in uncovering, naming, and exposing socialist feminism in the current moment. Where do socialist feminists fit into the current moment of United States politics? How are socialist feminists participating in electoral politics and what does their advocacy work look like? Do socialist feminists still find it necessary to carve out spaces from dominant social movements to grow, develop, and nurture their distinct ideas, politics, and practice?

## Research Questions

This empirical exploration aims to uncover the current (2015-present) expressions of socialist feminism and socialist feminists' experiences with and perspectives on electoral politics, political action(s), and identity mediation. My research questions are as follows:

Q1: Are socialist feminists organizing today? Has the reintroduction of socialist politics in the United States been followed by a reclamation of socialist feminism?

Q2: How do socialist feminists in the current moment mediate their feminist and socialist commitments and values?

Q3: Does current socialist feminism remain diluted? Does socialist feminist praxis remain dispersed?

Q4: How do current socialist feminists (or feminists working within progressive/socialist organizations) participate in electoral politics and related political advocacy? What aspects of the contemporary progressive/socialist political agenda align well with their socialist feminism and what aspects neglect their socialist feminism?

## Literature Review

### 1. Introduction

Socialist feminism, in its historical renderings or contemporary expressions, must be extracted from the histories of feminism and socialism/Marxism because the emergence of socialist feminism is found within the fractures of both.<sup>5</sup> Further, contributing to the scholarship on socialist feminism requires knowledge of its historical and theoretical grounding, as well as contemporary context. Therefore, the following literature review is critical to framing and informing this empirical research study on current socialist feminism.

To be sure, it is impossible to address the socialist feminist tradition without detailing the perceived deficiencies of both socialism/Marxism and feminism within specific historical contexts. Therefore, the review of literature emphasizes socialist feminism and only touches socialism/Marxism and feminism as they relate to socialist feminism. Additionally, while I connect the creation of socialist feminism to early Marxist feminism, I will distinguish between Marxist feminism and socialist feminism. Marxist feminism was not replaced by socialist feminism and the two political ideologies were practiced concurrently and often overlapped.

Documenting and reflecting on the socialist feminist tradition illustrates two key features of historical socialist feminism. First, socialist feminism was distinct, in theory and praxis, from *both* socialism/Marxism and feminism. Second, the existence of socialist feminism as a distinct theory and practice was predicated on the perceived shortcomings of *both* socialism/Marxism and feminism. Therefore, the critical finding of the theoretical and historical overview is that

---

<sup>5</sup> Socialism and Marxism can, and in many contexts do, refer to distinct theories. Though not identical, there is overlap in practice and theory. Where pertinent, distinction between socialism and Marxism will be made, but for the purposes of describing larger patterns of organizers and academics working on class-based issues, I will use “socialism/Marxism.”

socialist feminism was an inherently oppositional praxis established on retained distinction to its two foundational frames of political thought.

I will also review contemporary socialist feminist scholarship to focus on recent socialist feminist perspectives and practices. The contemporary review finds that socialist feminism was greatly impacted by the influence of intersectionality<sup>6</sup> and transnational coalition work. In the shadow of intersectionality, the need for socialist feminism decreased and caused the political ideology to dilute. I use the word dilute to characterize the process of becoming less potent, or less distinctively socialist feminist, and less critical to social justice advocates. As I will detail in the theoretical and historical overview, the socialist feminist academic tradition created dual- and tri-system theories to understand and suggest the interconnectedness of systems of oppressions. Once intersectionality took prominence, socialist feminist theoretical projects became redundant and somewhat irrelevant. Though scholars, like Linda Gordon (2016), refer to socialist feminism as a precursor to intersectionality, it tends to be subverted by the now viral framework. The rise in anti-globalization and transnational coalition work, in addition to the theoretical dilution of socialist feminism, dispersed contemporary socialist feminist praxis across several single-issue causes, political and otherwise. Throughout, I use the word dispersed to represent the scattering of socialist feminist organizers across the realm of social justice work. In short, the contemporary (1990s-2014) expressions of socialist feminism experienced dilution in their theory and dispersion in praxis.

---

<sup>6</sup> For more information on intersectionality when first termed see Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). There are many manuscripts and articles that have assessed the concept's development and travels since then. Here I refer to just two: Crenshaw (2017) and Cho, Crenshaw and McCall (2013), which respectively provide essential writings and an assessment of the field of intersectionality studies.

Less is known about the current period (2015-present) of contemporary socialist feminism following the increased visibility of and interest in U.S. socialist politics. Socialist feminist scholars have written on the rise in socialist visibility and have urged activists to utilize the momentum, but even these works fail to incorporate empirical data on socialist feminists themselves (e.g., Eisenstein, 2019). Still, scholars like Nancy Holmstrom (2003) and Linda Gordon (2013) claim that socialist feminism is alive and present today. While effectively argued, the notion deserves empirical attention, and this research study stands to validate their positions. The review confirms there is an empirical gap in these arguments and further exploration is required to determine what constitutes as current socialist feminism and who identifies with or practices socialist feminism. Are socialist feminists organizing today? Has the increased visibility of and identification with socialist politics in the current period (2015-present) prompted increased identification with socialist feminism? Does current socialist feminism remain diluted and are its practitioners still dispersed across several single-issue causes? These questions call for empirical attention to correctly situate current socialist feminists and their political ideology and praxis.

## **2. Theoretical and Historical Overview**

Socialist feminism should not be viewed as independent of other social theories or movements (e.g., feminism, socialism/Marxism, LGBTQ+ liberation, Black liberation, etc.). Instead, socialist feminism must be recognized as a direct result of socialist feminists' involvement in these groups and movements. Participating in feminist organizing or the civil rights movement, for example, exposed socialist feminists to critical theoretical and practical deficiencies that necessitated the creation of a distinct political ideology. Once the shortcomings of various groups and viewpoints were recognized, socialist feminists struggled to remedy them.

This led to the creation of a uniquely socialist feminist consciousness that fostered its own political ideology and practice. Therefore, as the theoretical and historical overview will demonstrate, initial socialist feminism must be considered a distinct political ideology predicated on the perceived shortcomings of feminism *and* socialism/Marxism.

### ***Marxist Grounding***

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels reconceptualized social life and history in terms of the modes of production that articulate social structure and created the critical social theory that is referred to as Marxism. Their particular focus was on capitalism and the class system it created. This class system can be described as the relationship between the small minority (capitalists) who own the means of production (e.g., raw materials, distribution capabilities, land or property, etc.) and the majority (working class) who are forced to work for the minority. Through industrialization, wage workers, who did not own property or have a position of power, were forced to partake in this system and work for the capitalists to sustain themselves. As industrialization continued, the expansion of capital and the creation of surplus value (profit) depended on the exploitation of the wage workers. Capitalists, because of the privatization of property, owned all surplus value created by the working class, who only received wages in return for their creation of profit. Further, after working for the capitalists, wage workers were expected to return home and complete unpaid reproductive labor for the family.<sup>7</sup>

Marx and Engels argued that this reproductive labor, typically performed by women, was organized socially even if the gendered labor was normatively justified on naturalistic/biological grounds (Marx and Engels, 1932/1970). Marxism had not yet fully addressed the relationship

---

<sup>7</sup> Here, reproductive labor refers to the, typically unpaid, work that is required to sustain a person, their residence, and/or their family. Socialist feminists also refer to reproductive labor as social reproduction (Bhattacharya, 2017a).

between capitalism, production, and reproduction, but it did recognize women's unpaid reproductive labor in the home as essential to sustaining current laborers and reproducing the next generation of laborers. Later theorists would term this basic idea, "social reproduction" (Bhattacharya, 2017a). Marxism responded to the question of women's work in terms of value. The work held use value (the tangible or material utility of the item or service) that was "daily and generational renewal," but unfortunately, the exchange value of their reproductive labor was "nothing at all" (Armstrong, 2021, p. 35). Therefore, under capitalism, women's work in the home was made invisible and, according to Marxist interpretation, was devalued for not creating exchange value like wage workers' labor. Marxist feminists' and Marxist women's push for Marxism to consider the consequences of both conceptions of women's work prompted several theoretical questions.<sup>8</sup> What role does women's work play in sustaining capitalism? What are the limitations of a Marxist framework that only addresses women's work in the terms of value (exchange, use, or surplus) that it creates? How can Marxism fully address the relationships between capitalism, production, and social reproduction? These questions prompted the creation of a Marxist feminist consciousness.

### ***Marxism and Women's Liberation***

Friedrich Engels (1884/1902) did address rising concerns regarding the relationships between capitalism, production, and social reproduction. Engels argued that capitalism privatized both property and women's reproductive labor for the benefit of capitalists. Social reproduction is used by socialist feminists to describe how women and wives are responsible for the care of the family/workers who were dependent on wages earned by men and husbands.

---

<sup>8</sup> Marxist feminists were Marxists who gave primacy to their Marxism while attending to their feminist values, beliefs, and analyses.

Although not yet conceptually elaborated, social reproduction theory would become a defining academic project for socialist feminists by the 1990s (Bhattacharya, 2017a). Expanding on Engels' findings, Marxist women and Marxist feminists agreed that capitalism reinforced gender oppression through the patriarchal family, "a site of oppression that must be destroyed" (Armstrong, 2021, p. 36-37). By calling attention to women, Marxist women and Marxist feminists forced Marxism to contend with women's subordination. The "woman question" would enter Marxist frameworks and discourse with this push.

Marxists asserted that the end of capitalism would ensure the end of women's oppression. Exploiting the rise of feminism, Marxists attempted to recruit feminists based on this approach (Gordon, 2013, p. 21). Unfortunately, the Marxist method to women's liberation caused a significant fracture. Among Marxists, anti-feminist backlash and rhetoric claimed that feminism was unnecessary or distracting (Weinbaum, 1978; Zetkin, 1934/1972). Simultaneously, Marxist feminists and feminists saw the Marxist approach to women's liberation as incomprehensible or outright implausible and some anti-Marxist rhetoric circulated. Women's liberation, in their view, would require economic, social, and political liberation. Without attending to all three issues, women would remain subordinate to men socially and politically. This initial Marxist method to women's liberation, and the resistance to it (Ehrenreich, 1978; Goldman, 1923; Lorde, 1984/2007; Zetkin, 1934/1972), followed Marxism for decades and into what is referred to as the second wave of feminism (Waters, 1972).<sup>9</sup> Before the second wave would come, however, some women and feminists dissatisfied with this approach moved their Marxist feminist consciousness to an increasingly more distinct theory and praxis – socialist feminism.

---

<sup>9</sup> The wave metaphor will be used only to define the time periods when the public was mobilized in masses for gender-based issues. The second wave of feminism refers to the mass mobilization that occurred from the 1960s to the early 1980s.



### *Socialist Feminism and Women's Liberation*

In response to the abovementioned controversy, socialist feminism gained traction as a distinct theory and praxis in the late-1800s through the 1930s. Most significantly, socialist feminists reoriented Marxism to reconsider the relationships between capitalism, (economic) production, social reproduction, *and* gender oppression (Armstrong, 2021). While they resisted patriarchal family organization, socialist feminists searched for the origins of reproduction as “women’s work” and production as “men’s work,” and attempted to address the devaluation of women’s work to men’s work. Socialist feminist praxis consisted of naming and investigating the devaluation of women’s work, participating in wage work, and entering workers’ unions (Armstrong, 2021; Cobble, 2002/2017; Gordon, 2013). Through such work, socialist feminists reconsidered the relationships between capitalism, production, social reproduction, and gender oppression, and maintained that women’s liberation could not be folded into Marxist fights against capitalism but must be addressed as a distinct struggle. Therefore, an oppositional practice needed to be formed under a distinct socialist feminist political ideology. Throughout, oppositional is used to identify how, by splitting off from Marxism or feminism, socialist feminists could be construed as adversarial. The oppositionality, or the opposition inherent to identifying as a socialist feminist and not a socialist/Marxist or feminist, is a defining feature in these initial stages of socialist feminist development.

The reigning Marxist solution to women’s oppression was amended slightly in the wake of increasing numbers of socialist feminists, and feminists in general. The amended approach consisted of two equal parts that were to accompany the eradication of capitalism. First, women must be granted “full democratic rights,” which would include the freedom to marry, divorce, own property, and vote (Ehrenreich, 1978). Then, women must be fully “integrated” into

economic production, and therefore extended “economic independence” (Ehrenreich, 1978, pp. 8-9). While the importance of these aims to women’s liberation cannot be overstated, women within socialist/Marxist organizations and feminists recognized that this model could not sufficiently end gender oppression (Ehrenreich, 1976/2005; Ehrenreich, 1978; Kollontai, 1909/1980). Some Marxist feminists, like Alexandra Kollontai, would expand the Marxist approach to include sexual liberation, but such concerns were often met with resistance within Marxist circles (Armstrong, 2021, p. 37; Weinbaum, 1978). In sum, women organizing for liberation anticipated, until women were liberated socially and sexually, economic independence and “full democratic rights” could not end women’s subordination (Ehrenreich, 1978).

Rejecting even the more comprehensive, two-part Marxist approach to women’s liberation, socialist feminists in the early-1900s continued to question the Marxist separation of (economic) production and (social) reproduction, or rather, the insistent separation of unpaid reproductive work and waged productive work. These socialist feminists argued for women’s work to be given material or exchange value in Marxist analyses (Armstrong, 2021, p. 38; Cobble, 2002/2017; Inman, 1940). Conceiving of women’s work as deserving of material or exchange value motivated their praxis to include fights for increased monetary aid for families, paid family leave, wages for housework, and childcare (Hartmann, 1981; M. Dalla Costa & James, 1975; M. Dalla Costa & G. F. Dalla Costa, 1999; Mies, 1998). In a sense, socialist feminist praxis involved attempts to unionize and legitimize reproductive laborers.

By the 1930s, socialist feminists encouraged Marxists and Marxist feminists to see women as productive members of society and to see women’s reproductive work as *intrinsic* to sustaining capitalism (Cobble, 2002/2017; Inman, 1940). These tenets were hallmarks of this socialist feminist era and effectively separated socialist feminists from both feminism and

socialism/Marxism. The failures of feminism to account for class oppression and capitalism *and* the failures of socialism/Marxism to adequately account for women's liberation *required* socialist feminists to create spaces for their distinct theory and oppositional praxis, even while supporting the aims of feminism and socialism/Marxism. Though some critical questions remained unresolved, a distinct socialist feminism emerged from the "woman question" and elicited an abundance of scholarship on women's work, women's liberation, and the interplay between various systems of oppression. These concerns, and the various theories addressing them, would come to light in the 1970s and socialist feminism would be solidified, in feminist theory and history, as a distinct theory and praxis.

### ***Distinct Theory and Oppositional Praxis***

By the mid-1970s, several factions of women and feminists found themselves disappointed in the theory and praxis offered by the women's liberation movement. Marxist feminists and women, lesbians, Black feminists, and women union members would ultimately choose to create a comprehensive politics that accounted for the multiple systems of oppression that articulated their experiences – socialist feminism. Socialist feminists urged liberal and radical feminists to set their gaze (on and beyond) patriarchy and contemplate how the compounded forces of patriarchy, white supremacy, capitalism, and imperialism articulated their unique experiences (Ehrenreich, 1976/2005; Holmstrom, 2003, p. 42). Additionally, they demanded that primacy no longer be awarded to capitalism when addressing women's oppression from a socialist/Marxist standpoint. Socialist feminists voiced claims of heterosexism and racism within socialist/Marxist organizing as well making clear that socialism/Marxism alone could not "guarantee [their] liberation" (The Combahee River Collective, 1977/2017). Remedying the shortcomings of both feminism and socialism/Marxism,

distinctive socialist feminist organizations, working groups, and theories gained prominence and recognition.

Of the several distinctively socialist feminist organizations/working groups, the following two groups exemplify the theoretical and practical shift that broadened analyses beyond gender injustice. These groups formed during second wave feminism, and although not homogeneous, also highlight socialist feminism as an oppositional space. First, The Berkeley-Oakland Women's Union (1974/1979) formed in opposition to the failures of women's liberationists and declared themselves a "socialist feminist organization" (p. 360). In their defining statement (1974/1979), the Union explicitly condemns first and second wave feminist's treatment of "working and Third World women" and demand their politics "challenge the basis of capitalist society" (p. 356). The Union took issue with women liberationists who naturalized the Global North's mistreatment of the Global South and ignored the struggles of women of color, working-class women, and women who lived outside the United States. Members of the Union did not abandon the aims of women's liberationists, but instead organized to meet the immediate and material needs of 'women,' more broadly defined (women of color, poor women, queer women, trans women, etc.), while pushing for a socialist society.

The Union sought "liberation in conjunction, not competition, with others who are oppressed," and asserted that the struggle against patriarchy "necessarily involves [them] in the struggle against capitalism, racism, imperialism, and all other forms of oppression" (The Berkeley-Oakland Women's Union, 1974/1979, p. 356-357). Their intentions were radically and distinctively socialist feminist, but perhaps more intriguing was their denunciation of both feminism and socialism for their inefficiency and shortcomings in their final call for a "revolutionary movement" (The Berkeley-Oakland Women's Union, 1974/1979, p. 360). The

Union's theory and praxis substantiate socialist feminism as inherently oppositional. Again, oppositional refers to the adversarial nature of socialist feminism intrinsic to their separation from feminism *and* socialism/Marxism.

Second, perhaps the most well-known account of second wave socialist feminism, The Combahee River Collective's statement (1977/2017) details the theory and praxis of Black socialist feminists. The Collective was formed out of necessity and further delineates the pattern of socialist feminist spaces and organizations as inherently oppositional. The Black women who formed the Collective did so to effectively "combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face" where various liberation movements had failed (The Combahee River Collective, 1977/2017, p. 115).

They first note their "disillusionment" with the white women's liberation movement that failed to incorporate antiracist politics and perpetuated racism (The Combahee River Collective, 1977/2017, pp. 116, 121). They condemned various Black liberation movements or organizations for their heterosexism. Lastly, they criticized the on-going socialist movement when writing, "a socialist revolution that is not also a feminist and antiracist revolution will not guarantee our liberation. We have arrived at the necessity for developing an understanding of class relationships that takes into account the specific class position of black women who are generally marginal in the labor force" (The Combahee River Collective, 1977/2017, p. 117). Further, the group verbalized what would soon be known as intersectionality by insisting that there could not be separation of "race from class from sex oppression" because they are "experienced simultaneously" (The Combahee River Collective, 1977/2017, p. 117). Therefore, the very creation of The Combahee River Collective was predicated on the *simultaneous deficiency* of feminist, socialist/Marxist, *and* Black liberationist movements. Without a

movement or organization to represent them and their politics, Black socialist feminists devised an oppositional space to serve and liberate themselves. The Collective's statement is highly regarded as one of the early texts on intersectionality, but within that categorization it should also be recognized as a *socialist* feminist foundational text because, as the participants of this study argued (see: Discussion and Implications), the Collective was producing a socialist feminism that considered patriarchy, white supremacy, capitalism, and imperialism concurrently.

Still unresolved, the relationships between capitalism, production, social reproduction, and gender oppression would be confronted again by socialist feminist/feminist scholars as the second wave of feminism passed (Armstrong, 2021, p. 39). An abundance of literature would make visible the unpaid, gendered, and racialized politics of reproductive labor, and question the value of patriarchy to upholding capitalism (Hartmann, 1981/2017; Hartsock, 1983/2017; Vogel, 1983). The blossoming of this larger academic project was prompted, at least in part, by the socialist feminist criticisms of deficient Marxist frameworks.<sup>10</sup> The most prominent debate enclosed in this academic project was the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism. Was patriarchy essential to capitalism? Was patriarchy a pre-existing and convenient tool used by capitalism for social control? Or, as Marxist feminist analyses proclaimed, was patriarchy a byproduct of capitalism? These three considerations were the primary emphasis of numerous scholars and feminists who attempted to extend, or rather further develop, the second wave socialist feminist theoretical project (Barrett, 1980; Ehrenreich, 1984/1989; Eisenstein, 1979; Hartmann, 1981/2017; Hartsock, 1983/2017; Vogel 1983; Weinbaum, 1978).

---

<sup>10</sup> Outside the academic realm, some socialist feminist organizations also struggled to negotiate their feminism with their socialism/Marxism. Describing a “deeply felt need to make sense of the tensions between [their] Marxism and [their] feminism,” Marxist-Feminist Group 1 formed and Groups 2-5 shortly thereafter (Petchesky, 1979, p. 375). The existence of these working groups, and their inability to resolve the hyphen, symbolize the practical implications of this scholarly debate.

Scholars attempted to resolve the relationships between capitalism, production, reproduction, and gender oppression by dedicating their attention to the interplay between patriarchy and capitalism. As demonstrated below, many of these endeavors would be made in vain as the task at hand deals with systems (patriarchy, capitalism) that are everchanging.

Zillah Eisenstein (1979) established the idea of a “capitalist patriarchy,” a dual-system approach to class/gender oppression. The 1979 anthology was organized to wed socialist aims with feminism – an extremely popular concern (and metaphor) of many scholars. Ann Ferguson (1987/1989) expands on Eisenstein’s (1979) dual-system framework and includes racism in her analyses. Ferguson incriminates “three overlapping systems of social domination (capitalism, racism, and sexism),” and posits a “trisystems theory” as the most comprehensive socialist feminist theory (Ferguson, 1987/1989, pp. 350-351). Ferguson continues to position women as a revolutionary class and postulates “individuals to be members of overlapping classes: *family class, sex class, race class, and individual economic class*” (Ferguson, 1978/1989, p. 362).

In the very same anthology, however, Barbara Ehrenreich (1984/1989) critiques the reliance on such classes and presumably permanent or natural categorizations. How could, in Ehrenreich’s analyses, “‘capitalist-plus-patriarchy’ help explain a world that is already receding from view... where categories like ‘the family,’ ‘the state,’ and ‘the economy’ were fixed... today, there is little we can take as fixed” (Ehrenreich, 1984/1989, p. 345). Eisenstein’s (1979) framework was entangled in her criticisms, even if Ehrenreich conceded that the capitalist plus patriarchy framework is an “ingenious defensive stance” that validates the existence of socialist feminism as the direct opposition to capitalist patriarchy (Ehrenreich, 1984/1989, p. 339). Ehrenreich concludes that the shifts in the gendered division(s) of labor throughout the 1980s (e.g., women entering the workforce) did not significantly debilitate capitalism. In fact, women

were performing more labor overall because they were completing a “second shift,” unpaid reproductive labor in the home, after finishing a paid workday (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). Therefore, perhaps patriarchy is not intrinsic to capitalism and “the system” that articulates the exploitation of women and the working-class cannot be described in additive approaches.

Ehrenreich (1984/1989) also suggests that defining ‘the system’ is not necessary for socialist feminist praxis to prosper because socialist feminists organized successfully while these abstract academic questions remained unanswered. What was critical to socialist feminist praxis in the 1970s was understanding that the system continually changes in “more violent and cataclysmic” fashions, making their practice increasingly imperative (Ehrenreich, 1984/1989, p. 345). The relationships between capitalism, production, social reproduction, and gender oppression were extensively scrutinized and determined to be dynamic in nature, and therefore irreducible to a single theorization.

Another approach to defining these relationships would come from the recentering of value when Marxist feminists moved beyond consideration of systems (Spivak, 1985). What was the relationship between exchange, use, and surplus value under capitalism and how did these relationships articulate women’s oppression? These considerations produced key insights for socialist feminism. First, they reduced the separation of production from social reproduction in analyses, and secondly, they clarified systems of oppression as beneficial (if not intrinsic) to the continued “capitalist accumulation of wealth” (Armstrong, 2021, p. 41). Deliberating how production and social reproduction interact or sustain each other and capitalism helped socialist feminists expose the unique experiences women had with capitalist exploitation, consider the ‘discovery’ of the second shift as an example (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). Such findings could only be exposed when production and social reproduction were analyzed in relation to



each other and the accumulation of wealth. It was settled that women's liberation under capitalism must be predicated on a dynamic, multi-system approach with caution not to reiterate Marxist tendencies to separate productive labor from the reproductive in analyses and political action(s). It is important to remember that these heavy academic preoccupations of the 1980s did not necessarily obstruct socialist feminist praxis during that period or thereafter (Harriss, 1989).

Participation in various social movements and engagement with the academic projects aimed at remedying feminism with socialism/Marxism prompted the existence of a distinct, albeit non-homogenous, socialist feminist theory and praxis. Without exposure to the perceived shortcomings of *both* feminism and socialism/Marxism, socialist feminist theory, praxis, and organizations/working groups would not have been necessary. Therefore, socialist feminism should be regarded as inherently *distinct* and *oppositional*, an alternative to the leading social theories of the time. Moving into the 1990s and 21<sup>st</sup> century, this counterculture began to depart from academic projects and emphasize the need to build a global, socialist feminist project.

### **3. Contemporary Socialist Feminism**

Exploring the contemporary expressions of socialist feminism does not require identifying the deficiencies of feminism and socialism/Marxism but instead requires tracing the dilution and dispersion of socialist feminist theory and praxis, respectively.<sup>11</sup> Transitioning out of the second wave, feminists, in general, were responding to postmodernism and the increased prominence of intersectionality. Additionally, transnational coalition work altered how feminists organized political action. These influences caused significant changes in both feminism and socialist feminism. The key finding of the contemporary review is that socialist feminism

---

<sup>11</sup> I define the contemporary period as 1990-2014.

experienced dilution in theory and dispersion in praxis because of these larger, contextual changes. Dilution refers to the process of being made less potent and less critical to the realm of social justice work. Dispersion refers to the flow of socialist feminists out of socialist feminist organizations and into organizing spaces that were not categorically socialist feminist.

I will briefly review the large contemporary socialist feminist academic project of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As repeatedly noted, Marxist analyses have historically prioritized the productive economy and have disregarded social reproduction – typically women’s work – because it does not produce exchange value. Contemporary socialist feminist scholars continued their predecessors’ reframing of Marxism and recentered social reproduction in their analyses of capitalism and the economy, and in doing so, conceptualized social reproduction theory (Bhattacharya, 2017a).

Contemporary socialist and Marxist feminists utilized social reproduction theory to better explain class, gender, race, etc. relations under late capitalism. Refocusing the socialist/Marxist lens, scholars, like Tithi Bhattacharya (2017a), demanded that previously invisible forms of labor be recognized as analytically critical. Bhattacharya explains that capitalism in its entirety must be interpreted as the relationship between the labor that creates commodities (production) and the labor that produces people/laborers (social reproduction) (Bhattacharya, 2017b). The theory insists that analyses that do not consider social reproduction are incomprehensive accounts of contemporary capitalism. Finally, contemporary socialist feminist scholars have concluded that “women’s work,” regardless of the type of value it produces, is critical to understanding late capitalism and its impacts.

Socialist feminist praxis in the early 1990s was dedicated to meeting the immediate and material needs of the exploited and oppressed while organizing for global socialist feminist

revolution. Following the introduction of intersectionality, identifying as a socialist feminist required seeing “class as central to women’s lives” and not reducing “sex or race oppression to economic exploitation” (Holmstrom, 2003, p. 39). Holmstrom (2003) argued that, despite the introduction of intersectionality as a framework that nearly made socialist feminist analyses irrelevant through redundancy, socialist feminism was still present and needed. Linda Gordon (2013) agreed but described socialist feminism as decentralized and partially hidden within several various social justice issues. I characterize this expression of socialist feminist praxis as dispersed across many single-issue causes. Socialist feminism remained but, by organizing under a broad umbrella of issues, there was a loss of visibility and theoretical distinction. Therefore, I argue that contemporary feminism transitioned from an oppositional practice centralized in separate organizations to one that is dispersed and present across several social and political issues.

Socialist feminists have always addressed social injustice by attending to multiple systems of oppression simultaneously, but to use the language available now, socialist feminists addressed contemporary concerns through an intersectional lens (Armstrong, 2021; Ehrenreich, 1976/2005, Feinberg, 1992/1997; Gordon, 2013; Wong, 1991/1997). Reprinted in 2005, Barbara Ehrenreich’s (1976/2005) definition of socialist feminism as “socialist internationalist antiracist, anti-heterosexist feminism” embodies intersectionality and describes contemporary socialist feminist thought well (p. 70). Linda Gordon (2013) testifies that this emphasis on intersectionality, compounded by postmodern changes to feminism that challenged essentialist categories like ‘woman,’ translated into the dispersion of socialist feminist action across several single-issue causes. During this time of dispersion, socialist feminist organizations waned, and socialist feminists were decentralized while being present to the left on various issues, such as

the “Iraq war, gun control, torture, death penalty, drones, homeland security, civil liberties, welfare, poverty, economic policy, education, policy, global warming” (Gordon, 2013, p. 27). A dilution in socialist feminist thought or theory accompanied this dispersion as intersectionality pushed forward as the suitable alternative to dual- and tri-system theories. Linda Gordon (2016) also commented on the impact of intersectionality and how, despite being a precursor to intersectionality, socialist feminism was superseded by the now viral framework. Organized around many differing issues, contemporary socialist feminists are difficult to locate in scholarship. Apart from the processes of dilution and dispersion, various scholars characterize socialist feminist theory and praxis as intersectional, transnational/international, and dependent on coalition work.

Edging into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, socialist and Marxist feminisms, with the new outlook on multi-system approaches and value, turned to cross-cultural and transnational movements for liberation. Mobilizing women across and despite borders, socialist and Marxist feminists engaged with anti-imperialist and anti-colonial discourses that condemned the Global North’s drain on the Global South’s women, workers, and natural resources in the name of perpetual economic expansion and development (Armstrong, 2021; Mohanty, 2003). They denounced imperialism, colonialism, neoliberalism, the global gendered division of labor, globalization, and the “overt coercion and increased brutality” associated with late capitalism (Armstrong, 2021, p. 43). To be clear, these discourses did exist in older renderings of socialist feminism, but following increased anti-globalization feminist efforts, transnationalism/internationalism and imperialist regulation regained prominence in the 1990s and recentered these concerns in socialist feminists’ praxis.

Globalization and imperialism exacerbated late capitalism and the existence of multinational corporations complicated and further dispersed contemporary socialist feminist organizing. As socialist and Marxist feminists struggled against the Global North/South relationship and the global gendered division of labor, they were met with retaliation. Organizing workers, for example, often results in corporate retaliation through the relocation of production. Moves like these positioned socialist feminists and workers, including women workers, in direct competition with each other (Armstrong, 2021; Wong, 1991/1997). Even worse, a return “to the racialized and gendered techniques of primitive accumulation of forced and unfree labor, genocide, and theft of land, resources, and intellectual property” defines late capitalism’s global response to socialist gains (Armstrong, 2021, p. 43). Therefore, contemporary socialist feminist organizing, while not easily reducible to a single practice, emphasized the transnational role of imperialism in relation to economic globalization.

Socialist feminism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century evolved to explicitly couple anti-capitalist efforts with anti-imperialist and anti-colonial ones. Coalition work, somewhat unlike the oppositional praxis of historical socialist feminism, became critical to this endeavor as cross-cultural interaction became more common. As Nellie Wong (1991/1997) comprehensively detailed, “without an international system of socialism, countries can share only their poverty, rather than the world’s wealth. Worldwide socialism will break the stranglehold of worldwide imperialism” (p. 210). Leslie Feinberg (1992/1997) continues this logic of coalition-building to argue that “genuine bonds of solidarity” are required to effectively animate larger portions of exploited people and workers (p. 235). Feinberg is speaking from the context of transgender liberation and argues that transgender survival is the struggle against capitalism (in healthcare, the workplace, housing, etc.). The pulling in of additional social justice issues through coalition-work against

capitalism exemplifies the interconnected nature of social justice work during this time. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Wong (1991/1997) asserted that socialist feminist efforts must build cross-cultural and transnational coalitions founded on the destruction of “sexism, racism, colonialism, heterosexism, homophobia, and class oppression (p. 210). To this near comprehensive list, Feinberg would likely have added transphobia.

The increase in anti-globalization feminist action and the postmodern effect on feminist organizing has made locating quintessential socialist feminist organizing difficult, however the contemporary socialist feminist concern for the gendered features of labor under late capitalism and socialist feminist global revolution is clear. In sum, the contemporary socialist feminist project can be characterized by a process of dilution in political ideology and dispersion in practice. The most current period, however, has yet to be defined.

#### **4. Implications**

This literature review underscores several implications for this research study. First, the proposed research study intends to verify Nancy Holmstrom’s (2003) insistence on the existence of current socialist feminism. Are socialist feminists still active? Do feminists or socialists/Marxists still identify with socialist feminism? These questions could only be addressed empirically. Second, in response to the intergenerational diversity of socialist feminism, Mary-Alice Waters’ (1972) call to accurately portray the lives and practices of socialist women will be expanded to socialist feminists. This empirical exploration is primarily intended to make visible the current expressions of socialist feminism and locate it within the larger United States political system. Lastly, the proposed research study will use Linda Gordon’s (2013) observations to investigate current socialist feminist practices and beliefs. Do socialist feminists have an oppositional, isolated practice like their predecessors in the second

wave, or are current socialist feminists dispersed across several single-issue causes as Gordon observed? Is socialist feminism still diluted? Or, has a distinctive socialist feminism, like that of the second wave's predecessors, been reclaimed? Moving beyond the mere presentation of current socialist feminist theory and praxis, this research study will answer these questions and assess if its existence is predicated on the shortcomings of particular social movements (e.g., liberalism) or critical social theories. Only through an empirical exploration of current socialist feminists can these remaining questions be answered.

## **Methodology**

### **Data Collection**

#### ***Research Methods***

This research project draws on nine semi-structured, in-depth interviews that I conducted with socialist feminists between November of 2021 and February of 2022. The in-depth interviews, ranging from an hour and a half to two hours, were conducted via Zoom or over the telephone and utilized an interview guide of open-ended questions (Appendix 1). A qualitative approach was utilized because it allowed the complexities or particularities of each socialist feminist's experiences and perspectives to be adequately captured. Socialist feminists are not a homogenous group and therefore interviewing my participants separately and outside the context of their socialist organization established a confidential and unregulated method through which their unfiltered and unique experiences and perspectives could be expressed. Lastly, the use of interviews, and therefore direct quotes, allows for participants to co-create the knowledge of current socialist feminism. For the purposes of this exploratory study, organization-wide socialist feminist practices (e.g., interviewing an entire socialist feminist caucus) are not of primary concern but may be the basis of future studies built on this data.

Data collection occurred after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and interviews were strictly virtual. Also due to the pandemic, the local meetings of the socialist organizations my participants are affiliated with were also virtual. Participants invited me to a socialist organization's monthly meeting, and I conducted some participant observation at a meeting I was able to attend in March of 2022. Due to the limited timeframe of this study, I was only able to attend one of these meetings.



This research study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University at Albany in late September of 2021 (Appendix 2). Before participating in an interview, all participants were given an informed consent document. The document was read to each participant before the interview began and each participant was given time to ask questions regarding the study and their involvement. The participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity and an opportunity to choose their own pseudonym to ensure it adequately represented their gender identity and/or racial identity. The specific socialist organizations they were recruited from will not be named to protect the identity of the participant and the organization. Transcription of the nine interviews was done by two academic transcription services. Analysis of the interviews was done using MAXQDA, a qualitative research software.

### ***Participation Criteria and Recruitment***

Recruiting socialist feminists for this research study proved challenging. The project's title, visibly pronounced on all recruiting material, "Socialist Feminist Research Study" may have discouraged participation (Appendix 3). Several individuals who inquired about the study but chose not to participate, and a few participants, responded to my flyer with questions of eligibility citing concern that their political ideology or praxis was not socialist feminist "enough" or that their decreased activism disqualified them from participation. Anticipating this issue, I tried to enlarge the eligibility criteria as much as possible to any English-speaking person aged 18 or older who self-identified as 1) a socialist feminist, or 2) a feminist who has participated in socialist organizing/organizations, or 3) someone who identifies with both socialist and feminist values. Nonetheless, initial hesitation among those who contacted me indicates a need to revise recruitment materials even further if I were to expand this study.

To ensure adequate identification with socialism, I recruited participants from explicitly socialist organizations instead of feminist organizations. Using publicly accessible contact information, I identified twenty-two separate chapters of seven different socialist organizations based in large towns or cities in the U.S. Northeast. I sent recruitment flyers to each organization via email and social media direct messaging (Appendix 3). At least 13 individuals representing 7 socialist organizations contacted me initially to express interest in the study. However, due to issues with follow-up communication and interest, I was ultimately able to secure a total of 9 participants representing 5 socialist organizations. The organizations represented are based in the U.S. Northeast. While I encouraged the participants to share my contact information and recruitment flyers with their socialist feminist colleagues, there was no recruitment via snowball sampling.

### ***Participant Information***

Refer to Table 1: Participant Information ( $N = 9$ ) for a concise list of the participants' demographic information. My sample consists of eight cisgender women and one transgender woman. One participant identified herself as “*Jewish*,” another identified herself as “*Argentindian*,” (Asian (Indian), Argentine) and seven of the participants identified themselves as white. Stressing the “ish” in Jewish, this participant conveyed that she claims the identity but has received criticism from relatives for “watering down Judaism” or being less visible (Kelly). When asked about her racial and/or ethnic identity, Sonia stated she was “*Argentindian*,” and explained that she uses this word to clarify that she is Indian, and therefore Asian, and Argentine. Two of the participants identified themselves as bisexual and four of the participants identified themselves as heterosexual. Four participants were 20-29 years old; two participants were 30-39 years old; one participant was 50-59 years old, and two participants were 70-79 years old. All

participants had a college education. All nine participants reside in the Northeast for most of the year.

### **Data Analysis**

An inductive approach to data analysis was utilized and grounded theory was employed (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Data analysis required an iterative process of coding, memoing, and journaling to ensure that the complexities and richness in data was adequately captured.

After conducting all nine interviews and attending one socialist organization meeting, I began to identify major themes and created a list of parent codes (Table 2: Codes and Descriptions). After the parent and subcodes were created, I coded all nine interviews. During this initial stage of analysis, I learned that specific parent codes (e.g., socialism and feminism values align) needed subcodes (e.g., complementary, conjoined/indistinguishable) to adequately capture the complexities of my participants' responses. After creating several subcodes under the parent codes, I coded all the interviews again to ensure thorough analysis. Memos on the parent codes and major findings were written and updated as I continued through analysis. After the final cycle of coding, memoing, and journaling was complete, I consolidated the major findings into the five major themes examined in the Findings section below.

## Findings

Nine women agreed to participate in this research after confirming they identify with or practice both socialism and feminism concurrently, but there were still some qualifiers to their self-identification. The introductory finding of this research study is that even though all participants practice socialist feminism (see: *Socialism and Feminism Aligned*), five found it impossible to limit themselves to one, definitive self-identification – socialist feminist included – and only three self-identified as a socialist feminist. The differences in political ideological identification are seen in Table 3: Participant Political Ideological Identification, and as shown, each participant (over the course of their entire interview) self-identified with at least one of the following: socialist feminist, anti-capitalist feminist, Marxist feminist, communist feminist, democratic socialist feminist, socialist, leftist.<sup>12</sup> For the remainder of these analyses, the participants will be referred to as socialist feminists because every participant agreed that they certainly practice socialist feminism, despite not knowing exactly what political ideology to claim.

In what follows, I overview the five major findings of this research study. To begin, I address the participants' mediation of socialism and feminism and argue that the participants have reclaimed distinction in socialist feminist thought by wielding intersectionality as a tool to bridge the theories. Second, I reflect on the oppositionality of current socialist feminism and determine oppositionality is only relevant in specific contexts. Third, I emphasize that current socialist feminist praxis remains dispersed across a broad range of social justice issues, organizations, or campaigns.<sup>13</sup> Every participant held at least one additional affiliation with a

---

<sup>12</sup> Not a single participant self-identified as a 'feminist' without any additional qualifiers (see: *Discourse on Oppositionality*).

<sup>13</sup> Throughout these analyses, 'issues' refers to social justice issues/topics (e.g., housing security, reproductive justice, etc.), 'organizations' refer to united groups of individuals organizing for social justice (e.g., Assata's

non-socialist group, and within those groups they challenge organizers to incorporate complete analyses or comprehensive political actions. I introduce the phrase *little interventions everywhere* as a descriptor of this moment in socialist feminism and a method to unite social justice allies. The fourth finding attends to issues within socialist organizations, and I summarize the problems with sexism, racism, gendered power dynamics, and gendered divisions of labor my participants have had to endure. Lastly, I report on the voting practices of my participants. Participants unanimously agree that participating in electoral politics through voting is unfavorable but necessary to help set their organizing conditions.

### **1. Socialism and Feminism Aligned**

I think that any class analysis is going to be incomplete without thinking about how gender plays into it... We need to have an understanding of gender that is historically and materially based in order to fight against this reactionary assault on human dignity.  
(Josie)

All nine participants described their socialism and their feminism, in theory and praxis, as being in alignment. When asked how they mediate their socialist identity or commitments with their feminist identity or values, they answered confidently and with ease. Even the participants who had not previously considered their theory or praxis in such terms were able to confirm that their socialism and their feminism are not in contradiction. While this is expected from a research study that recruited socialist feminists, I was surprised by how they expressed unity among these dual commitments given the historical challenges for socialist feminists to do the same. I found that their understanding of intersectionality empowered them to reconcile these theories and reclaim theoretical distinction. However, it did become evident that there was some

---

Daughters, Audre Lorde Project, The Trevor Project, Transgender Law Center, etc.), and ‘campaigns’ refers to social justice campaigns and not electoral campaigns (e.g., Defund the Police).

variation in how they explained the process of consolidation. Some depicted their commitments to socialism and feminism as complementary; others described them as indistinguishable.

Most participants (Beatrice, Daphne, Kelly, Monica, Ruth) described their socialism and their feminism as being complementary and not identical. These participants found that socialism and feminism offer different tools for organizing and analysis. Beatrice, using several stories and examples, explained that, depending on the context, it is necessary to pull in a socialist or feminist critique to buttress the respective initiative. To Beatrice, the theories are not indistinguishable but complement one another. The same could be said about Ruth. Having identified as a Marxist feminist since the 1970s, Ruth made clear that in theorizing and organizing she puts the two frameworks in conversation with each other to ensure comprehensive approaches.

Sometimes I'm a little too Marxist for the [feminists]. I'm a little too feminist for the Marxists. I've noticed that throughout my life... I'm always keen to argue for the importance of a critique of patriarchy and the intertwining effects and factors of the historical agency that involve white supremacy, patriarchy and capitalism... you could say that I'm a Marxist first. But then I tried to correct my Marxism with my feminism and anti-[racism], consciously. (Ruth)

These participants articulated a recognition of the different tools offered by socialism and feminism, without prioritizing the importance of one over the other.

Three participants (Clover, Josie, Sonia) described their socialism and their feminism as being indistinguishable or conjoined. Clover had some difficulty ascertaining how her socialism and feminism interact, but ultimately implied that they are inseparable when she said,

I don't even know if I would say socialist feminist just because I believe you can't be a socialist without being a feminist. I think they kind of go hand in hand... To me, the two words can't exist without the other one... feminists or socialists – obviously, I think that they're the same thing. (Clover)

Similarly, Josie confidently asserted, “my views on my own personal perception of feminism is kind of inseparable from my socialist views... you can't really have one without the other in my opinion... my feminist values, they're part of my socialist values” (Josie). These three participants, having already stated their socialism and their feminism are not in contradiction, were placed in this variation because they expressed that the two theories are indistinguishable or practically one and the same.

Teagan was the most difficult participant to place in either of the variations of alignment and remains an outlier. Teagan first explained her socialism and her feminism as being complementary when she said, “being a socialist feminist helps me be a better socialist, maybe. Within the socialist space, being a feminist protects me and helps me be the best socialist I can be” (Teagan). In this part of her interview, it was clear that a feminist lens was applied to her socialist organizing. But, later in the interview, she said,

I don't necessarily view feminism as something apart from socialism. And I think if I met a socialist who didn't also a little bit identify as a feminist, I would be pretty shocked. I would be like, ‘Who the hell is this person? How could you possibly be a socialist without being a feminist?’ I do see value in having feminist discourse within socialist spaces. But I see that as being kind of assumed, and sometimes needing its own space. But for me, being a socialist means that I'm a feminist, rather than wanting to define myself as a social feminist. (Teagan)

Having already said she uses her feminism as a separate entity to bolster her socialism, Teagan still concluded that she perceives the two as being indistinguishable. Like Clover, she finds it redundant to identify as a socialist feminist. For these reasons, I have marked Teagan an outlier.

No matter how the participants expressed their socialism and their feminism (as complementary, indistinguishable, or both), they were not preoccupied with a need to define their precise interrelationship. Whereas socialist feminists in and around the second wave of feminism spent a great deal of energy trying to theorize a dual- or tri-systems theory, these

current socialist feminists appear to have combined their socialism and their feminism with ease. Further, many participants cited intersectionality as the tool that allowed the easy reconciliation either through naming the Combahee River Collective directly or describing the framework's utility. In doing so, I argue that socialist feminists in the current moment have used intersectionality to reclaim distinction in socialist feminist thought. In the Discussion and Implications section, I will expand on how current socialist feminists use intersectionality to both consolidate socialism with feminism *and* engage in comprehensive political actions.

## 2. Discourse on Oppositionality

I don't view my socialism and my feminism as being at odds. Instead, I view my socialist feminism, and in fact, I would even say my brown socialist feminism, as being at odds with white liberal feminism. (Sonia)

Participants made clear that practicing socialist feminism does not come without external conflict. All nine participants exclaimed "yes" when asked if *their* socialism aligns with *their* feminism but following the resounding "yes" was an explanation of how *their socialist feminism* was frequently at odds with what was called liberalism *and* either "white," "liberal," "carceral," "mainstream," or "marketplace" feminism.<sup>14</sup> Like their predecessors, they described a sense of alienation and division when recounting their experiences within various social justice organizations or movements and subsequently felt inclined to define themselves in opposition to these approaches, illustrating a continuing trend of oppositionality. Whereas the second wave socialist feminists took issue with aspects of anti-violence, civil rights, socialist, and feminist movements or organizations, current socialist feminists disidentify with white liberal feminism or white liberal feminist organizations and liberalism or liberal organizations. However, for my participants, practicing socialist feminism only occasionally requires resisting progressive social

---

<sup>14</sup> For simplicity in reading and writing, the remainder of these analyses will refer to this practice of feminism as "white liberal feminism" as that was the phrase used most often by participants.



justice movements. Therefore, recalling oppositionality as intrinsic to the development of socialist feminism in its initial stages, I have found that, for my participants, oppositionality remains pertinent to current socialist feminism only in some contexts and is not a defining feature as it has been in the past (see: Theoretical and Historical Overview for distinct theory and oppositional praxis).

### ***Opposition to White Liberal Feminism***

All nine participants explained how and why their personal conception of feminism is in contradiction with the feminism that is practiced by white liberal feminists and organizers. The contradiction was depicted as an overarching and fundamental disagreement in the meaning and use of feminism. For example, Daphne questioned white liberal feminism's lack of a class analysis: "I think class is so important to address and I'm not always sure that feminism does that. And so, I think that's why I put more emphasis on global equity over gender equity. We're like, 'it needs to be *not* based on this Western notion of feminism.'" Ruth, an abolitionist, also explained, "there's more corporate feminists or carceral feminists that are not recognizing the strength of the accumulation of value in capitalism." In sum, a liberal versus socialist split in feminist analyses of social injustice have continued from the historical expressions of socialist feminism into the current period.

The white liberal and socialist feminist divide was evident in several single issue causes and prompted my participants to opt-out of and actively resist political actions that are organized by or around white liberal feminists. When describing organizing against police brutality, Daphne asserted, "I don't want to go to a protest that's 'defund the police' oriented rather than 'abolish the police' ... I don't want to go to a protest if my values aren't aligned." Choosing to prioritize a complete analysis of the public problem of police brutality, Daphne engages in

political actions that are in alignment with the radical and exhaustive change she seeks.

Strikingly, multiple participants explained that they do not partake in and do not wish to be associated with the Women's March (after its first installation in 2017). Daphne explained, "I don't foresee myself going to another Women's March because I don't think that that aligns with my current values" (Daphne). Other members cited concerns with accessibility, inclusion of non-cisgender people, and the white liberal organizers' invitation of a police presence as reasoning for not attending future Women's Marches. Participants represented the choice not to attend the Women's March as a political action itself because it materialized the socialist feminist discontent with exclusionary analyses and practices of the white liberal organizers responsible for the event(s). Not showing up, in this case, was the political action.

In addition to influencing socialist feminists to stray from specific political actions, events, or organizations, these disagreements have also caused socialist feminists to seriously consider if feminism (when taken alone or even with a socialist qualifier) is an appropriate identifier. Monica, for fear she would be perceived as a white liberal feminist, stated, "I don't really identify as feminist *only* because to me I equate that with white feminism" (Monica). She continued to explain that she fears that, upon hearing her identification with feminism, a fellow organizer might choose not to work with her. Teagan's comments, recalling the history of second wave feminism, pair well with Monica's sentiment. She made clear that her socialist feminism is practiced as resistance to the historical exclusion of women of color and queer folks from mainstream organizing spaces,

The history of the feminist movement is quite racist and has racist, classist elements... part of me doesn't want to be aligned with that. And so, being a socialist, it feels like the efforts to push for socialism in America today mean equity for everyone, which includes Black feminists in a way that white feminism doesn't... Pushing for socialism means standing up for Black feminism in a way that the feminist movement doesn't do.  
(Teagan)

Simply put, white liberal feminism is not feminist or socialist enough, in theory or practice, for my socialist feminist participants.

### ***Opposition to Liberalism***

It would be irresponsible not to delineate the distinction and conflict between socialist feminism and liberalism, in general, and electoral politics, specifically. Seven participants (Beatrice, Clover, Daphne, Josie, Kelly, Sonia, Teagan), again after describing their easy unification of socialism with *their* feminism, identified shortcomings of liberalism and liberal political actions, events, organizations, and electoral politics.<sup>15</sup> Sonia took special care to declare that she does not, “identify as a liberal at all,” and such remarks were offered, unprompted, by these seven participants. If such remarks were not blatant, like Sonia’s, they were heavily implied. On this theme, Sonia’s comments were exemplary,

If somebody asked me how I identified, I would say I identified as a leftist. I would say I identify with leftism... I do see there’s a shift in people to kind of lump liberalism and leftism together. I’m like, “Those are not similar.” If I were to be like, “well, all the liberals are conservative,” they would freak out at me, and I’m like, well, those things, in my mind, are more similar than leftism and liberalism. (Sonia)

The critical lesson here is that identifying as a leftist or socialist feminist is not equivalent to identifying as a liberal or identifying with liberal political goals.

Compiling their complaints, it became clear that, aside from the general disagreement with liberalism, a specific or primary point of contention is the tendency for liberals or liberalism to perpetuate imperialism, at home and abroad. A few participants summoned the imagery of U.S. militarism when unraveling their disdain for liberalism and liberal politics. Using this

---

<sup>15</sup> These participants described liberalism as an entity separate from white liberal feminism and will be referred to as such for the remainder of these analyses. Monica and Ruth did not speak about white liberal feminism and liberalism as if they were separate entities and so they are not included in this finding, but they certainly are included in the categorization of having conflict with white liberal feminism.

imagery and reiterating Sonia's claim, Daphne declared, "I think liberalism is equally as insidious as conservatism - it's just not as blunt. They can put a rainbow flag on a military airplane, but it's still going to drop bombs" (Daphne). While the other participants were less concise, the notion holds true for their perception of liberalism. Emphasizing the health of the nation over the health of its population is, according to these socialist feminists, unacceptable. Providing unwavering support for liberal politicians, who were described by Sonia and Daphne as "war criminals," is unacceptable (Sonia). It is critical to understand that, for these seven participants, operationalizing socialist feminism in this current context requires active opposition to conservatism *and* liberalism.

### ***Occasionally Oppositional***

A critical finding of this research study is that socialist feminist praxis remains oppositional in some social justice organizing spaces but is qualitatively different than the opposition experienced by socialist feminists of previous eras. Instead of fracturing from anti-violence, civil rights, socialist, and feminist movements or organizations, socialist feminist participants in this study voiced extreme disagreement with liberal and white liberal feminist organizations or campaigns.<sup>16</sup> The organizing and political context has changed, but the oppositional tendency of socialist feminist organizing has not. Still, I do not name oppositionality a descriptor of current socialist feminism because it is only required occasionally (in liberal or white liberal feminist spaces). I will expand on this notion in Discussion and Implications and argue that socialist feminists have working relationships with social justice

---

<sup>16</sup> Again, 'campaign' is used to describe social justice efforts that have not been consolidated into a working-group or solidified organizations (e.g., campaigns pushing for Medicare4All). Twitter or Instagram campaigns, hashtags, or unorganized efforts should all be considered campaigns. In these analyses, electoral campaigns for politicians/candidates will be explicitly referred to as such. 'Organization' will be used to describe solidified social justice organizations (e.g., The Trevor Project, Transgender Law Center, YWCA of USA, etc.).

organizers who are outside their primary organizing network because they are able to maneuver difficult conversations and disagreements well.

### 3. Praxis Dispersed

I've been doing a lot of coalition-building work... By building up our local efforts, increasing our local working group membership and local working group capacity, we have more ability to move forward the overall statewide coalition goals... It's a lot of relationship-building at the statewide and at the local level, and moving forward in building those relationships, trying to build up the capacity of individual people. (Teagan)

Socialist feminism, in its historical and contemporary expressions, is occasionally oppositional by necessity due to the shortcomings of various critical social theories and social justice movements. However, it must be understood that the conflict or divide (see: Discourse on Oppositionality) experienced by current socialist feminists is not present in all social justice organizing contexts. A critical finding of this research study is that the socialist feminism practiced by all nine participants is centered in socialist organizations but reaches out to several single-issue causes and social justice organizations or campaigns through their socialist network(s). Additionally, because praxis remains dispersed across a wide range of single-issue causes, coalition-building is a critical socialist feminist method of political action. Lastly, as I will extensively detail in the Discussion and Implications section, the dispersion in praxis did not necessitate theoretical dilution, as seen in the contemporary expressions of socialist feminism. Instead of diluting their analyses, socialist feminists in the current moment bring their distinct socialist feminism with them to all the organizing spaces they are a part of and push social justice allies to develop comprehensive approaches. I introduce the phrase *little interventions everywhere* to describe the impact of my participants in these social justice spaces.

The dispersion of their praxis is best illustrated by Table 4: Additional Affiliations, which identifies all the (activist, governmental, political) organizations or campaigns the participants

are or were affiliated with outside the socialist organization they were recruited from. To be included in Table 4, participants must have referred to at least one political action (e.g., budget advocacy, voter registration, marching) taken on behalf of the campaign or organization. With that criterion, across all nine interviews, thirty additional social justice organizations or campaigns were identified.<sup>17</sup> By quantity alone, this emphasizes that the participants have a praxis that is dispersed across several additional social justice organizations or campaigns, beyond their primary socialist organization.

Of the thirty organizations or campaigns, Black Lives Matter (BLM) was the most popular and six participants referenced direct actions taken on behalf of BLM. Following BLM, four participants were involved with the state-wide coalition Public Power New York. It must be noted that coalition-building was the political action mentioned most by participants.

Looking closer at Table 4, qualitative or topical differences between the thirty organizations and campaigns are exposed. Issues or topics of concern cover a wide range of topics from racial justice to housing security and were compiled into Table 5: Topics of Concern. To be included as an issue or topic of concern on Table 5, at least one participant must have referenced taking direct political action on behalf of that issue or topic. Reinforcing the findings above, the most popular issue or topic of concern, outside labor-based activism, was police abolition, defunding, or reform.<sup>18</sup> Climate activism, healthcare activism, food security activism,

---

<sup>17</sup> The thirty campaigns or organizations listed in Table 4 are the only organizations or campaigns that were noted during the nine interviews. It is likely that the participants are affiliated with more social justice organizations or campaigns not mentioned in their one-time interview.

<sup>18</sup> While I, and countless activists, consider police abolition, police defunding, and police reform significantly different initiatives, all three terms were used by participants and were grouped together to show the type of activism.

prison abolition or reform, and voting rights were the second most referenced areas of activism. These topics were followed by niche topics or issues of concern (e.g., ending library fines).

Answering one of my primary research questions, this finding confirms that my participants' socialist feminist praxis is dispersed across several social justice issues, organizations, or campaigns. Therefore, I have found that the dispersion in praxis experienced by current socialist feminists reflects and continues the shift in socialist feminist praxis that occurred in the 1990s after the onset of post-modern feminism and intersectionality. However, unlike the dispersion of contemporary socialist feminist organizing that was accompanied by less visibility of their political ideology, socialist feminists in the current moment practice distinct socialist feminism in all the additional spaces they operate within.

I introduce the phrase *little interventions everywhere* to characterize the impact of dispersed socialist feminist praxis grounded on reclaimed distinction in theory. Branching out into various social justice issues, organizations, and campaigns, these participants engage in, sometimes difficult, conversations to encourage allies in social justice to consider more comprehensive organizing approaches. In the Discussion and Implications section, I will clarify that the phrase *little interventions everywhere* is a descriptor of the current trends in socialist feminism *and* a method through which social justice allies can be connected, despite what might appear to be differing focuses. I will also engage in a more explicit conversation on how my participants utilized intersectionality to both reclaim distinction in theory *and* remain dispersed in praxis.

#### **4. Problems in Socialist Spaces**

I do expect for white people to be unknowingly and unintentionally racist. I do expect for men to be unknowingly and unintentionally sexist, and I am also very prepared for

them to be much more than that, but this was a different level of it.... Also, what ended up happening was they all left the organizing space and I didn't. I'm still here. (Sonia)

All nine participants found an activist or political home in the socialist organization they were recruited from, but those socialist spaces are not isolated from the larger, dominant culture they are embedded within. A fourth critical finding of this research study is that socialist organizations are not immune from intragroup conflict or serious issues with racism, sexism, transphobia, gendered power dynamics, or gendered divisions of labor. Though not one participant experienced all these issues, all five issues were evident and exhibit that social justice organizations and organizers themselves reflect our dominant culture that is plagued by white supremacy, patriarchy, and transphobia. Lastly, I claim that *everywhere* includes socialist organizations because *little interventions* were performed by my participants in their primary socialist organizations as well.

To prioritize the experiences and perspectives of my *Argentindian* participant, I will discuss the presence of racism in socialist spaces first. It must be noted that, because only one non-white socialist feminist was interviewed, the prevalence of racism in socialist spaces might be understated in these analyses. Still, Sonia made clear that racism among organizers occurs and is frequently employed by white organizers to gain leverage over non-white organizers.

Sonia explained that while socialist organizers understand that the ruling class utilizes mechanisms – like classism, racism, or sexism – to disenfranchise and disorganize the working-class, they themselves are not exempt from benefitting from or actively relying on these same tools. Sharing her experiences and perspectives, Sonia specified that these tools are typically used to suppress or subdue her, her ideas, or her organizing tactics. She elucidated,

I became kind of a scapegoat and [my colleague] said that he thinks that I became an easy scapegoat because there were only two women of color in the whole group, and it was very easy to use these tools of sexism and racism against me when I disagreed to kind of



make me into this disagreeable person... That was the first time that I really thought about how people were using these divisive tools, specifically against me, even when we had the same end goals. I hadn't really thought about that before. It all had kind of been this more like, "Yeah, these are tools of the ruling class," but this was like, "Oh, these are the tools of the ruling class and my friends picked them right up." So, that's been really interesting. (Sonia)

The juxtaposition of the word *friends* with *tools of the ruling class* continues to jar me. Though, as Sonia later revealed, she now refers to her socialist colleagues as comrades instead of friends, the contradiction remains. In addition, as delineated in this section's introductory quote, Sonia remains in the space most of the racist organizers have since abandoned. This suggests that Sonia's articulations of socialist feminism are not so easily suppressed, buried, or made invisible. Through her own grasp of intersectionality, she can read and resist the power moves that might otherwise diminish her own assertions and execute little, or perhaps in these cases big, interventions to mitigate potential belligerence.

At least five participants disclosed that they have experienced sexism, gendered power dynamics, or a gendered division of labor in socialist spaces, but were careful to note that these issues are not inherent to socialist spaces and rather a consequence of sexist organizers and patriarchy, in general. The same must be noted about transphobia in socialist spaces. While no participant described having experienced transphobia themselves, I created the code, 'transphobic organizers' based on my own interpretation of derogatory and transphobic comments made by one participant (Kelly). This is to say, sexism, transphobia, gendered power dynamics, and gendered divisions of labor within socialist spaces reflect the dominant culture of patriarchy and transphobia in the United States. Still, my participants' experiences must be expanded on to divulge how socialist feminists experience socialist spaces.

Of the five participants that made explicit reference to an experience with sexist organizers, Monica had the highest frequency of incidences with sexism.<sup>19</sup> She, and others, described less-startling, but equally insidious, expressions of sexism when they referenced men who rolled their eyes at them, yelled over them, broke stack to interrupt them, or dismissed their individual initiative(s) completely.<sup>20</sup> Monica confirmed that these expressions of sexism had material consequences (in her case, the cancellation of a burgeoning neighborhood coalition) aside from creating interpersonal, intragroup conflict among organizers. Perhaps the most striking comment on the matter recalled the sexist culture waiters are subjected to in restaurants. Monica exclaimed, “white men are running [the socialist organization] ... I feel like I am in a restaurant kitchen, sometimes in these meetings – except nobody’s touching my butt. You know, I’m not sexualized or objectified, but there are other icky dynamics of sexism” (Monica).

I have identified, at least partially, the “other icky dynamics of sexism” as gendered power dynamics and a gendered division of labor (Monica). Four participants (Josie, Monica, Sonia, Teagan) are in leadership positions in their respective socialist organizations and were sure to address how their leadership style, as women and as socialist feminists, tends to these issues. Teagan, branch co-chair of a leading socialist organization, explained that she consciously works against gendered power dynamics and the gendered division of labor to ensure that women and nonbinary or transgender folks are not ignored, dismissed, or attacked. Teagan delicately described her experience mitigating these “other icky dynamics of sexism”

---

<sup>19</sup> It is also possible that participants chose not to disclose issues with racism, sexism, or transphobia to me, but at least five have.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Stack’ refers to the order in which members are called on to speak. In many socialist organizations, and observed in the meeting I attended, a list of members (the stack) who wish to speak is created and those with (experiential or otherwise) knowledge on the topic at hand are moved to the top of the list. ‘Breaking stack’ means someone talked out of place and therefore over another member.

while reinforcing the notion that they are not unique to socialist spaces (Monica). Teagan's exemplifying words are as follows,

I definitely do feel a gendered power dynamic in socialist spaces. And I do feel like it's something I do actively struggle against sometimes. But I don't think these are unique things to socialist spaces, necessarily. Finding that my voice or opinion is taken up by someone else and put forward, that happens in social conversation, and work conversation, and socialist-work advocacy spaces. These happen to me in all of these spaces, so it doesn't really feel unique to the socialist spaces... I feel, in socialist spaces, slightly more empowered to think that I won't be ignored, and so it changes. I'm maybe less cautious to express an idea because I don't expect that somebody will think, "Oh, wow, that's too domineering. You shouldn't be so loud." I don't expect that someone would say that, and so it empowers me to then use my voice more. So, then, maybe I'm ignored less. I really feel respected within my [name of socialist organization] space, and that respect empowered me to want to be in a leadership role. Because I know that I'll be respected in that leadership role. Has there been a time when I've had to be more aggressive about it? I don't know. Yeah. I know other people that have really been talked over – other women that have been talked over. (Teagan)

Though not mentioned in this statement, Teagan confirmed that she also pays attention to racial power dynamics in her branch and the impact of white supremacy on socialist theorizing and organizing in general. Her statements, like those of Josie, Monica and Sonia, reveal and confirm that socialist feminists who are attentive to the power dynamics present in organizing contexts make critical interventions to hold co-organizers accountable to a more inclusive and intersectional praxis.

No two participants have identical experiences entering or navigating socialist spaces, but at least five participants were subjected to some form of prejudicial treatment by their own comrades. While I cannot determine the implication(s) of this finding for socialist organizing spaces in general, I can say that participants themselves believe that their distinctively socialist feminist approach to organizing is influencing and changing the culture of their socialist organization. As I witnessed during participant observation, the little interventions (e.g., asking

those in stack (in line to speak) to consider yielding to someone who holds expertise) in these meeting spaces does impact the tone of the meeting and the decisions being made.

As I have presented this finding, I have taken care to ensure that the experiences of my participants are heard while also clarifying that racism, sexism, transphobia, gendered power dynamics, and gendered divisions of labor are not isolated to socialist organizing spaces but rather are a reproduction of our dominant culture. As portrayed in *Discourse on Oppositionality*, socialist feminists have removed themselves from spaces, organizations, or campaigns that fail or refuse to meet their theoretical or practical needs. In this section, I have attempted to emphasize that socialist feminists, while placing themselves in better-matched organizations, are still forced to interrogate the systems of oppression that have, unfortunately, infected their activist and political homes. This finding is critical because these interventions, as I will exhibit in *Discussions and Implications*, further that the dispersed praxis of socialist feminists offers a unique and potentially revolutionary method to performing social justice work. In this case, *little interventions everywhere* should be recognized as a method or a strategy to address inequity, injustice, racism, sexism, gendered power dynamics, and gendered divisions of labor within the participant's socialist organization without having to remove themselves from the socialist organization completely.

### **5. Electoral Politics for Context-Setting**

An election, I think, is a beginning. So, elections change out how we organize. If one person wins, we're gonna organize in one way. If the other person wins, we're gonna organize in another way, but there's never going to be an election that will change the need for organizing, in my opinion. (Sonia)

Surprisingly to me, most of the participants responded to my initial voting question with apprehension and chuckles. All nine participants stated that they vote in every election, expressing their viewpoint that voting is a privilege to which not everyone has access to.

However, all participants admitted that voting is their least favorite aspect of socialist feminist praxis. After making these points, the participants reluctantly agreed to talk about ‘politics.’ It did not take much for their responses to start flowing and, accumulatively, I spent a great deal of time talking with the participants about electoral politics.

The fifth and final critical finding of this research study is that my participants practice their socialist feminism through electoral politics and all nine participants vote in as many elections as they are permitted and able to, but their engagement with electoral politics includes a few important caveats. First, socialist feminists make clear that voting is a powerful tool, though the least important in their praxis, because it helps to create or alter the context for their socialist feminist organizing. Participants named coalition-building, consciousness-raising, protesting/civil disobedience, attending town halls/council meetings, and endorsing or supporting legislation as their preferred political actions. Second, after explaining the importance of attempting to control their context, socialist feminists remarked that local elections are extremely significant because they provide a greater opportunity for changing contexts or reducing harm (by increasing tangible material relief or aid). Though, as briefly outlined below, there was discord among participant as to whether reducing harm can result from electoral politics. Third, most participants were forced to compromise their socialist feminist values to participate in electoral politics through voting, but two participants refused to compromise their values by voting for one of the two major party nominees in the 2020 U.S. general election. Lastly, all participants had net positive impressions of the progressive faction of the Democratic Party (e.g., Progressive Caucus, Justice Democrats, “The Squad”) but felt that there is room for their performances in Congress to be improved. In sum, these socialist feminists collectively consider

electoral politics to be the least important aspect of their praxis, but a tool that must not be ignored or forgotten.

### ***Creating Conditions for Organizing***

The first subtheme in this major finding is that voting, and electoral campaigning in general, is a supplementary but imperative tool for context-setting. Before getting to the theme of context-setting, the participants explained that voting is deprioritized in their socialist feminist praxis and must be used alongside other political action(s) (e.g., civil disobedience, coalition-building, mutual aid, protesting, political education, etc.). Teagan went as far as to profess that voting is “the least important thing [she does],” and Clover stated that voting is “more symbolic” than directly impactful (Teagan, Clover). All nine participants remarked that voting is not a stand-alone political action, it must be supplemented with additional tactics, and that the power or possibilities of electoral politics still should not be underestimated.

Sonia concurred when she explained that, as a socialist feminist in a political landscape riddled with voter disenfranchisement, she is “not in a place not to use all [her] tools,” and, more importantly, voting does have practical, positive implications on socialist feminist organizing (Sonia). Sonia went on to introduce the idea of “context-setting” when she and four additional participants (Beatrice, Clover, Josie, Teagan) agreed that voting has the potential to create the context or conditions under which they are going to *continue* the efforts they and their socialist colleagues have been committed to. Sonia’s comments again elaborate this point,

I think of voting as a strategic plan to allow for my organizing to be the most effective... So, it’s never gonna be about, “Oh, I think this person will cause less harm.” For voting I think it’s more about, “I want to organize with that person in office.” I’m gonna tell you I voted for Joe Biden, and I would not ever cast a vote for Trump, but given the makeup of our country, I do have to say it was better to be an organizer under Trump than it is under Biden because there were so many more people willing to stand up and do the work. So many of those people have sat down under Biden. I’m not saying that I want

Trump to be president because I absolutely do not, but I also don't want Biden to be president. (Sonia).

This claim was given weight anecdotally when Kelly explained how the threat of the Donald Trump presidency motivated her to join her socialist organization but following the election of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris her involvement waned.

Beatrice and Ruth also made exemplary comments on the possibility of voting to create the context for socialist feminist organizing and affirmed that voting must always be used alongside additional organizing tools. In her own words,

I don't love electoral politics, you know, I do it holding my nose most of the time. And I don't get personally wrapped up in individual [electoral] campaigns. I look in my community or look to my political groups to see where I think that there is the best possibility for growing and changing the things I want to change and see how, you know, elections can help that. (Beatrice)

Ruth made it more explicit that electoral politics is not coalition-building – a key feature of socialist feminist praxis (see: Praxis Dispersed). Understanding or investing in “electoral politics [is] one thing. But building a social movement, to me, is another thing. And I am more in favor of building a social movement” (Ruth).

When access to the ballot is obtained, socialist feminists make deliberate “use of [their] tools” and attempt to influence the context or conditions under which they will practice their socialist feminism (Sonia). Instead of removing voting from their praxis completely, socialist feminists strategically participate in electoral politics to accomplish specific goals or set specific conditions, because “voting in elections, can be useful. [Elections] can get some things done. In some cases, they are the only way to get some things done” (Josie).

### ***Critical Locally***

Every participant was careful to explain the value of voting in local elections. Participants viewed the impact of their vote to be greater at the local level (over state and federal elections). Teagan mentioned, for example, that it is “really important to distinguish between [federal and local electoral politics]” because, locally, “the people organizing and directing [a local candidate’s] campaign are community members.” She went on to explain that “the relationship between the politician and the organizing work is important” because “when there’s accountability, dialogue, and exchange between elected official and their constituent base,” local electoral politics become “super cool, really different, and more powerful” (Teagan).

Lastly, and tying in the importance of context-setting, all participants agreed that it is easier to control the local context than the federal or even state. Unique opportunities for change and improvement occur in local elections “because they’re so very impactful” on critical issues like policing or housing (Daphne). By the very nature of local governance and normative trends in participation, Clover even argued that electoral politics at the local level is “one of [socialist feminists’] best tools” because “no one pays attention” (Clover). Josie made an excellent point that encapsulates this subtheme and context-setting perfectly,

But I think that [voting] definitely is important at the local level, because that's where you actually are able to organize enough to affect things... it's changing your organizing conditions. The only way that we get to police defunding is through changes in legislation and changes in local politicians. For that you need laws and ballot questions to pass. And those things need to be voted on. (Josie)

Using their own words, each participant was keen to imply that attempting to use voting as a means for change is best accomplished on the local level.

Josie continues, “I think the question, the idea of never voting needs to be on a case-by-case basis. And most cases might fail. Some cases definitely... I think that taking a hardline stance on it, like no voting ever, is not a good way to look at it” (Josie). As depicted with Josie’s



full quote, a conversation on local electoral politics was intimately and carefully linked to the ideas on compromise and reducing harm.

### ***Compromise and Reducing Harm***

When I asked the question, have you ever had to compromise your socialist feminist values to participate in electoral politics, most participants chuckled at me, and across the board the answer was “all the time!” (Beatrice). After we laughed together, responses became more complex.

Initially, every participant said they do compromise in elections and explained that there is rarely, if ever, a socialist feminist candidate on the ballot. So, to participate in electoral politics through voting, participants were required to compromise, but the answers were more complex than their initial assumption. Despite not having socialist feminist options, participants felt obligated to cast aside their values and vote for the “lesser of two evils” (the phrase was used by Beatrice, Daphne, Josie, and Sonia). I explicitly asked how the participants voted in the 2016 and 2020 primaries and general elections and as seen in Table 6: Participant Voting History, participants stated they were able to vote for their choice candidate in the primary but ultimately chose the “lesser of two evils” in the general election.

Reducing harm was not a focus of my research study or interview guide (Appendix 1), but when probed for more information on compromise, *participants themselves* pulled in a conversation on the meaning and measurement of reducing harm. They defined reducing harm as the process of bringing material aid or resources to people who are in need or who have been marginalized. In their view, voting for the Democratic nominees in the 2016 and 2020 U.S. general elections was more an issue of reducing harm than symbolic compromise. Unsure of the direct impact of their vote, they were willing to compromise their socialist feminist values in

hopes that their vote could prompt reducing harm. Daphne and Josie were the only two candidates not to vote for Joe Biden/Kamala Harris in the 2020 U.S. general election because they felt it would make little of an impact. Daphne elaborated,

I felt like [Joe Biden] didn't earn my vote... You can't just assume you have it because of my identities or how I have historically voted... it was a very privileged decision, and I recognize that. (Daphne)

Her statement on the decision not to vote for Joe Biden highlights the internal conflict in making such a decision. What are the implications of not voting? Recalling the Israel and Palestine conflict, Daphne also questioned the implications of supporting the mainstream candidate. The questions Daphne asked were grappled with by every other participant when they tried discussing the role of compromise in socialist feminist politics.

In fact, the meaning and measurement of reducing harm was the largest point of contention or discord between participant responses. Whereas most every other finding has been fairly uniform, socialist feminists struggle to understand the relationship between compromise, refusing compromise, and reducing harm. Beatrice described the conversations she has had with her sons and whether a vote has the possibility of “[alleviating] suffering or racism or anything else” (Beatrice). Clover’s whirlwind of a response also suggested that reducing harm is not easy to measure, but that harm can be easily detected after an election,

I'd rather mitigate what's going to happen... [because] it would've been worse if Trump was [re-elected]. Maybe not for you, maybe not for me, but it would have... [affected] some people... We're feeling the pain of that [2016] “opt-out” right now, having Amy Coney Barrett in there and the possibility of reversing Roe v. Wade. (Clover)<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Socialist feminists in the current moment have mobilized to defend abortion access and Roe v. Wade (see: Brightwell, 2022; Howard, 2022; Marques, 2022; Morgan, 2021; WPR Staff, 2022).

Less than ten days before Russia invaded Ukraine, Monica mentioned the “war drum” and questioned whether a Joe Biden presidency would help or harm the situation. She hesitantly said, “I guess we are [better off] though” (Monica).

Immersing myself in their responses and rereading their quotes, I recategorized participants as “reducing harm” or “not reducing harm” countless times. I decided that, apart from Ruth and Sonia, not a single participant had a strong sense of whether reducing harm is tied to voting or not. Perhaps Sonia had the most opinionated comment either way,

I think there is always something to vote for, and I do think that there’s value in getting a ballot even if you don’t fill in a single bubble. In terms of earning my vote, somebody who is running unabashedly as a socialist will have my vote. So, Gabriela Romero would have my vote if I lived in her district. Kiani Conley-Wilson would. If I lived in Sara Hannan’s district, she’s running just south of us, she would have my vote. Those things are easy. I don’t think that voting is harm reduction at all... It’s never going to be about, “oh, I think this person will cause less harm.” For voting, I think it’s more about, “I want to organize with that person in office.” (Sonia)

From Sonia’s perspective, reducing harm cannot be accomplished through casting a ballot alone, but the conditions set by an election can be significant to socialist feminist organizing. Ruth, on the other hand, stressed the significance of progressives in Congress and argued that they would “get in there and have policies that reduce harm” (Ruth).

Then and now, Ruth’s comments provide the perfect transition into discussing the progressive faction of the Democratic Party. Before we get there, it must be noted that the relationship between compromise and reducing harm has yet to be remedied by myself or the socialist feminist participants. Aside from Ruth and Sonia’s differing perspectives, all seven other participants used the process of our interview to consider how this relationship might materialize itself in the upcoming election and whether a hardline stance can be taken either way.

### *Progressives*

After inquiring about compromise, I made sure to ask the participants about their impressions of the progressive faction of the Democratic Party – the Progressive Caucus, Justice Democrats, “The Squad,” and candidates offered by third parties like the Working Families Party – to determine if the process or feeling of compromise is ever lessened.<sup>22</sup> It was undeniable that all nine participants were in favor of the progressive faction and many expressed words of support for The Squad in particular. However, there was some discord in impressions between the older and the younger participants. Older participants were generally more forgiving of the progressive faction and The Squad, and the younger participants unanimously supported the progressive faction but believe they could make greater use of their power in Congress.

To be sure, the younger participants (Clover, Daphne, Josie, Sonia, Teagan) had a net-positive impression of the progressive faction and The Squad in particular, but because every statement of support was offered with a disclaimer, I interpret their endorsement as one accompanied with hesitancy. For example, Clover noted “I like [The Squad] for the most part,” but went on to clarify,

I think it’s really important to be critical of leaders in anything. Nobody’s perfect and we’re all just – Someone’s going to make a bad vote that I don’t agree with, or not say the right thing, say something that I don’t like, that’s going to happen... So, I really like the progressives... I think The Squad is doing really good work... we need to make sure that they’re holding up the values that they said that they’re going to go into, but also realize that there’s things going on behind the scenes, whether I agree with it or not. But it’s not really good to throw out their whole base because then they’re going to get replaced with a mainstream democrat or worse, a conservative. (Clover)

---

<sup>22</sup> “The Squad” is a set of Democratic members of Congress. Initially, The Squad was comprised of four congresswomen of color, U.S. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (“AOC”) (D-NY), Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Rep. Ayanna Pressly (D-MA), and Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) (Seitz-Wald, 2020). The Squad has since grown as more progressives, particularly those put forth by the Justice Democrats (a political organization dedicated to finding and supporting Democratic candidates as challengers to incumbent Democrats), such as Rep. Jamaal Bowman (D-NY), are elected (Justice Democrats, n.d.).

Comments from the rest of the younger participants mirrored Clover's critical support, such as Monica who professed, "I do think that [progressives] presence is important. They're working-class people.... And I think that they're important... I don't, though, agree with all their strategies and tactics... I still believe in them though" (Monica).

Other younger participants pushed further to argue that the elected officials who proclaim to be a leftist alternative or intervention to the Democratic Party need to wield more of their ever-increasing bargaining power. Daphne pronounced,

I think that [they're] a step in the right direction. Yes... I think sometimes... they don't always do the right thing... but yea, they're a step in the right direction. They are. That's a reality, but I don't always think they are staying true to their word... there's sometimes where it's like, you don't have to vote for that. You don't have to do that. (Daphne)

The underlying sentiment from the younger five participants, aside from general positive opinions, is that leftist alternatives should be courageously oppositional to the Democratic Party. In this sense, they wish to see their reclaimed socialist feminist distinction and willingness to be occasionally oppositional (see: Discourse on Oppositionality) represented in the elected officials who proclaim to be the viable alternatives to mainstream Democratic candidates.

The older participants (Beatrice, Kelly, Ruth) were careful not to dread too much on the negatives or shortcomings of the progressive faction and The Squad particularly. Kelly offered several comments of support, but her central argument was that, in the face of great opposition, critique, and threats of violence, these members of Congress are positive representations of the possibilities of electoral politics,

I think that they are some of the most courageous people. I aspire to have even any amount of courage that they have. I fear for them, I fear for their lives, certainly since the insurrection even more, but I feared for their lives beforehand. Like I said, it is so hopeful. I feel elated, that is amazing... And I am much more forgiving across the board... I'm just so grateful for those in the Progressive Caucus who are standing up for us, and, and thrilled that they're finally seemed to be you know, you're getting a little firm ground to stand on. (Kelly)

Ruth and Beatrice were also forgiving of progressives' more controversial votes or actions, and both questioned the material impact of "purist" approaches to electoral politics (Ruth). Given what she described as the "horrible" two-party electoral system in the United States, Ruth suggested that leftists do not have the luxury to apply rigid purity tests to the candidates they support (Ruth). Beatrice's response buttressed this point,

I think they're a positive influence. I generally vote for them. And... I don't expect huge results, but I think they keep certain issues alive. They bring attention to important issues. They keep the mainstream Democrats sometimes from throwing out basic tenets that I think they should, you know, believe in. It's funny, for years I lived in California and I voted for Ron Dellums every year. Ron was a good socialist, but he could never gain any power. Right? Because most of the bills that he introduced, wouldn't be considered, would never pass. And he wasn't a kind of rabble rouser. He was just always trying to prioritize, a more socialist approach. And I always felt good voting for him. I never felt he compromised. But he also, rarely, sometimes he would be able to bring some things back to the community, get some things done, but rarely. Okay. So, now you've got, you know, people like AOC, and others. And they're much more willing to use their platform. And they may not be as great socialists, as Ron was, but I think sometimes they're more effective. (Beatrice)

Recalling the history of socialist politicians in the U.S., Beatrice favors progress and material impacts over purity in socialist identification.

I have concluded that, perhaps due to the increased visibility of leftist progressives in U.S. politics today, younger socialist feminists are accustomed to leftist narratives and expect to see them more frequently whereas older socialist feminists have been longing for any accurate representation for some time. Even further, instead of being critical of the progressive politicians themselves, I believe that the older participants are more critical of the dis-organizing impact of rigid purity tests that they have seen fracture social movements in the past. No matter the case, one must expect that a participant who has identified as "a Marxist feminist since 1973" (Ruth) would have at least one differing sentiment than those who found socialist feminism in the 2010s.

*Inextricable from Praxis*

Much to *their* surprise (I now smirk at their chuckles), my socialist feminist participants spent quite some time discussing the role of electoral politics in their praxis. Contrary to their attestations, this suggests that, in this political landscape, a socialist feminist praxis cannot be separated from electoral politics. In total, the participants agreed that voting is an important tool for context-setting, but because of the high degree of compromise and the uncertain implications of their vote, it is their least prioritized tool. Still, socialist feminists find hope in electoral politics because of the possibilities to create the conditions for their socialist feminist organizing with leftist politicians who “help influence mainstream parties... [force] them to address specific issues and force them to make commitments to certain actions” (Beatrice).

## Discussion and Implications

This empirical exploration analyzed how local organizers in socialist organizations have reclaimed socialist feminist theoretical distinction while remaining dispersed in praxis following the reintroduction of socialist politics to the U.S. political consciousness during the 2016 election cycle. Unlike the contemporary socialist feminists who lost theoretical distinction in their dispersion, current socialist feminists have reclaimed and maintained distinction while branching out into many social justice issues, organizations, and campaigns. Aside from the initial findings of this study, the following analysis spotlights how participants grounded their socialist feminism in intersectionality, and in doing so, brought about a new method to organizing, *little interventions everywhere*, that other practitioners of socialist justice can employ to develop more comprehensive approaches and sustain coalitions across social justice issues, organizations, and campaigns.

All my initial research questions were answered by this research study, and I can confidently confirm that there has been a reclamation of socialist feminism in this current moment (2015-present). These socialist feminists easily mediated their socialism with their feminism and refused to dilute or suppress their socialist feminism under the pressures of liberalism or white liberal feminism. Socialist feminists participate in electoral politics through voting and election campaigning, but these political actions are deprioritized in their praxis. Still, electoral politics is inextricable from their praxis because it aids in setting the conditions for their organizing. Their socialist feminism aligns most with the progressive faction of the Democratic Party, but some participants feel their explicitly leftist concerns can be neglected in the voting habits or discourses of elected officials who identify as progressives (e.g., Progressive Caucus, Justice Democrats, The Squad, etc.).



This research study also answered the questions presented in the literature review. Does current socialist feminism remain dispersed in praxis? Is current socialist feminism still diluted under the increasing popularity of intersectionality and influences of anti-globalization and transnational advocacy? Simply put, current socialist feminists have reclaimed theoretical distinction, remained dispersed in praxis, and as a result, organize in a unique and occasionally oppositional manner within the various spaces they occupy.

In the contemporary period (1990-2014), a distinctive socialist feminist presence was missing from social justice organizing spaces following the increased popularity of postmodern feminisms and related questioning of metapolitical ideologies. Conversely, current socialist feminists used intersectionality as well as anti-globalization and transnational advocacy work to reclaim distinction in their socialist feminism, returning to their socialist feminist roots. At least four participants exemplified the return when they recalled The Combahee River Collective Statement (1977/2017) as their “bible” or “exactly [their] definition of socialist feminism” (Monica, Teagan). These participants cited The Collective’s (1977/2017) conception of intersectionality to articulate why their socialism and their feminism were easily unified *and* to justify their opposition to liberalism or white liberal feminism. Using their predecessors’ formula, these participants account for white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, imperialism, transphobia, and heteronormativity simultaneously and in all the spaces they occupy.

Socialist feminists in the contemporary period, though still active, were difficult to locate as their praxis was dispersed across several single-issue causes (Gordon, 2013). Socialist feminists in the current moment continue to be as dispersed as their contemporary predecessors but were absorbed into socialist organizations after fleeing from the inadequacy of liberalism and white liberal feminism. Using intersectionality again, socialist feminists in the current moment

identify additional social justice areas of concern (Table 5: Topics of Concern), and if their organization does not specialize in said area, they allocate some of their time and energy in additional organizations or campaigns. Accumulatively, my participants are affiliated with at least 30 non-socialist organizations or campaigns outside of their primary group affiliation and maintain friendly rapport between the groups (Table 4: Additional Affiliations).

Two critical things are happening here that constitute the significant hallmark of *current* socialist feminism. First, intersectionality is being used to justify a comprehensive approach to social justice organizing that disperses socialist feminists across the arena of social justice work. Second, after using intersectionality to justify their methods, the participants bring their reclaimed and distinct socialist feminism with them to all these spaces. Therefore, the current socialist feminist dispersion is qualitatively different than that of their most recent predecessors because it is not accompanied by any loss in visibility, and it pushes organizers to consider more comprehensive approaches.

The word ‘oppositional’ is an accurate description of the relationship between socialist feminists and liberals or white liberal feminists where conflict remains unremedied (see: Discourse on Oppositionality), but ‘oppositional’ does not adequately capture the relationship between socialist feminists and the organizers in the 30 additional organizations or campaigns. To be sure, participants had friendly relationships with these organizations and described them as generally welcoming but not without fault – most groups, organizations, campaigns, and movements are not infallible. Several participants cited examples where they identified a weakness in strategy and pointed it out to the organizers. Instead of being met with dismissal or retaliation, the socialist feminists that “started those conversations” were able to finesse the situation and “move [the agencies] to consider a wider more intersectional lens” (Beatrice). In

this way, I believe the phrase ‘working relationship’ best describes how socialist feminists interact with allies in social justice – socialist, feminist, or otherwise.

These interventions, though likely not unique to socialist feminists, were a key strategy of all nine participants, and therefore, being in “constant discussion and [being] open to working with and trying to influence the people and organization that [they’re] with” is the hallmark of current socialist feminist praxis (Beatrice). I have introduced the phrase *little interventions everywhere* as both a descriptor of the impact of socialist feminist praxis and as a method or framework that should be considered across the realm of social justice and alongside the promises of intersectionality. Made possible by their understanding of intersectionality, theoretical distinction, and dispersion in praxis, participants intervene, when necessary, to hold various social justice organizations, campaigns, or movements accountable to the multiple commitments of socialist feminism. Willing to bring issues of gender, sexuality, race, disability, and class to all the spaces they are active in, *little interventions everywhere* is the sum of all my participants’ efforts. This finding holds implications for social justice in general and grassroots organizers, those ‘doing the work,’ specifically.

Current socialist feminists use intersectionality to reconcile two critical social theories easily, justify their presence across a plethora of social justice issues, organizations and campaigns, and build friendly and effective coalitions for social justice. More important than their occasionally oppositional relationship with liberals or white liberal feminists is the socialist feminists’ willingness to foster uncomfortable and tough but extremely rewarding conversations in social justice spaces grounded in their understanding of intersectionality. This arrangement of organizing is fertile ground for changing how social justice is done and the lesson to be learned is that exercising intersectionality through *little interventions everywhere* is wildly successful.

This suggests that other organizers or practitioners of social justice can and should make successful use of intersectionality, like current socialist feminists, to relieve any existing internal conflict between theoretical approaches to social justice, practice outside their own activist or political home, and cultivate working and collaborative relationships with organizers across social justice issues, organization, and campaigns. Then, like my participants, these organizers or practitioners of social justice would be in the position to employ the *little interventions everywhere* framework to make their commitments and concerns present in additional, or even adversarial, spaces. Therefore, and through these steps, the socialist feminist formula of expressing intersectionality through *little interventions everywhere* holds unique possibilities for uniting, often disconnected, allies in social justice. The last word I give to one participant who sums up:

Understanding the way that gender equity issues are related to the need for a more people-centered world – that’s, for me, no *more* important than other issues of equity. I think of my socialist feminism as no separate from my need for disability justice. To me, they’re parallel, just different issues. Thinking about a people-centered world means to me that everybody deserves the right to a dignified life. I think that’s what we should be fighting for. And when we say a better world is possible, we mean a world is possible where every person can live in dignity and joy. Those are my beliefs as a socialist, and those are the things I fight for every day as a socialist. (Teagan)

### **Limitations, Future Research, and Contributions**

The primary limitations of this research project are the lack of time and economic resources because data collection occurred in just four months and with the support of two, small research grants. If given more time, recruitment would expand past the U.S. Northeast to include a more comprehensive and representative sample of socialist feminists in the United States. Due to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic and the late timing of the interviews with participants in leadership positions, participant observation occurred only once. Future studies stemming from this project might utilize participant observation more regularly because it made me privy to the gendered power dynamics at play in the socialist organization's meeting. Additionally, future studies should prioritize observing the meetings of more than one socialist organization as five were represented in this study. Pairing these methods would allow me to observe the socialist feminists' experiences within their socialist organizations and better document their relationship with socialist organizers.

Unfortunately, the sample ( $N = 9$ ) had little variance in gender and race. Only one participant identified as non-white (Sonia, "*Argentindian*"), all the participants identified as a woman, and all the women had at least a bachelor's degree. There was a great range in age and occupation, but these aspects of their identity were not primary in their experiences nor my analyses. If given more time or economic resources, I would reach out to more socialist organizations (twenty-two were contacted during recruitment) and attempt to recruit more people of color, men, and trans or nonbinary participants.

Future research should emphasize reaching a broader group of socialist feminists or socialist organizers with feminist values that expands to additional regions in the United States. Considering the role of race and gender in *how* and *why* socialist feminists perform the political

actions they do is a critical comparison that could be done should there be more variance in race and gender in a larger sample. Further, participant observation, of ideally multiple meetings and organizations, could provide key insights on the socialist organizing forms, processes, and spaces including the racialized and gendered dynamics my participants disclosed.

This research does, however, contribute to the body of scholarship on the tradition of socialist feminism by documenting its expressions in the current (2015-present) moment and filling an empirical gap. More tangibly, my research has already had impacts on socialist communities. As my final participant, Monica, stated after she and her colleague had completed their interviews with me, “[they] are actually going to start a caucus, a socialist feminist caucus” to ensure their unique perspective on social justice is adequately represented and heard (Monica,). Partaking in this process with me, these participants have already started to question how else they might impact or improve the processes or analyses of their socialist organization.

This empirical exploration, focused on uncovering the expressions of socialist feminism in the current moment, presents socialist feminism as a recently reclaimed distinct theory and dispersed praxis. Distinct from their socialist colleagues and in opposition to liberal or white liberal feminist organizers, the participants make interventions across a wide range of social justice issues, organizations, and campaigns. Ultimately, the findings of this research study suggest that practitioners of social justice can and should employ intersectionality, like these participants have, to improve their own analyses and organizing. When expressed through *little interventions everywhere*, intersectionality provides a bridge to and from allies in social justice and makes possible collaboration or coalition-building between social justice organizers.

## References

- Armstrong, E. (2021). Marxist and socialist feminisms. In N. A. Naples (Ed.), *Companion to feminist studies* (pp. 35-52). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Barrett, M. (1980). *Women's oppression today: Problems in Marxist feminist analysis*. Verso.
- Bhattacharya, T. (2017). *Social reproduction theory: Remapping class, recentering oppression*. Pluto Press.
- Bhattacharya, T. (2017). Introduction: Mapping social reproduction theory. In T. Bhattacharya (Ed.), *Social reproduction theory: Remapping class, recentering oppression* (pp. 1-20). Pluto Press.
- Brightwell, E. (2022, March 5). *The fight to defend and extend abortion rights internationally and in the U.S.* Socialist Alternative. <https://www.socialistalternative.org/2022/03/05/the-fight-to-defend-and-extend-abortion-rights-internationally-and-in-the-u-s/>.
- Cho, S., Crenshaw, K.W., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, 38(4), 785-810.
- Cobble, D. S. (2017). Labor origins of the next women's movement. In C. R. McCann & S.-K. Kim (Eds.), *Feminist theory reader: Local and global perspectives* (4<sup>th</sup> ed, pp. 72-79). Routledge. (Original work published 2002)
- Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. L. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, (1), 139-167.
- Crenshaw, K.W. (2017). *On intersectionality: Essential writings*. The New Press.
- Dalla Costa, M., & James, S. (1975). *The power of women and the subversion of the community* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Falling Wall Press Ltd.
- Dalla Costa, M., & Dalla Costa, G. F. (Eds.). (1999). *Women, development, and labor of reproduction: Struggles and movements*. Africa World Press.
- Ehrenreich, B. (1978). Contemporary feminism and socialist movements. *Australian Left Review*, 63, 9-16.
- Ehrenreich, B. (1989). Life without father: Reconsidering socialist-feminist theory. In R. S. Gottlieb (Ed.), *An anthology of Western Marxism: From Lukács and Gramsci to socialist-feminism* (pp. 338-347). (Original work published 1984)
- Ehrenreich, B. (2005). What is socialist feminism? *Monthly Review*, 57(3), 70-77. [https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-057-03-2005-07\\_4](https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-057-03-2005-07_4). (Original work published 1976)
- Eisenstein, Z. R. (Ed.). (1979). *Capitalist Patriarchy and the case for socialist feminism*. Monthly Review Press.

- Eisenstein, Z. (2019). *Abolitionist socialist feminism: Radicalizing the next revolution*. Monthly Review Press.
- Engels, F. (1902). *The origin of the family, private property, and the state* (E. Untermann, Trans.). Charles H. Kerr & Company Co-Operative. (Original work published 1884)
- Feinberg, L. (1997). Transgender liberation: A Movement whose time has come. In R. Hennessy & C. Ingraham (Eds.), *Materialist feminism: A reader in class, differences, and women's lives* (pp. 227-235). Routledge. (Original work published 1992)
- Ferguson, A. (1989). Sex and work: Women as a new revolutionary class in the United States. In R. S. Gottlieb (Ed.), *An anthology of Western Marxism: From Lukács and Gramsci to socialist-feminism* (pp. 348-372). (Original work published 1987)
- Gitlin, Todd. (2017, May 4). *What was the protest group Students for a Democratic Society? Five questions answered*. Smithsonian Magazine. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-was-protest-group-students-democratic-society-five-questions-answered-180963138/>.
- Goldman, E. (1923). *My disillusionment in Russia*. Doubleday, Page & Company.
- Gordon, L. (2013). Socialist feminism: The legacy of the 'second wave.' *New Labor Forum*, 22(3), 21-28. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24718484>.
- Gordon, L. (2016). 'Intersectionality,' socialist feminism and contemporary activism: Musings by a second-wave socialist feminist. *Gender and History*, 28(2), 340-357.
- Harriss, K. (1989). New alliances: Socialist-feminism in the Eighties. *Feminist Review*, 31, 34-54. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1395089>.
- Hartmann, H. (1981). The family as the locus of gender, class, and political struggle: The example of housework. *Signs*, 6(3), 366-394. <https://doi.org/10.1086/493813>.
- Hartmann, H. (2017). The unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism: Towards a more progressive union. In C. R. McCann & S.-K. Kim (Eds.), *Feminist theory reader: Local and global perspectives* (4<sup>th</sup> ed. pp. 214-228). Routledge. (Original work published 1981)
- Hartsock, N. (2017). The feminist standpoint: Towards a specifically feminist historical materialism. In C. R. McCann & S.-K. Kim (Eds.), *Feminist theory reader: Local and global perspectives* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 368-383). Routledge. (Original work published 1983)
- Hochschild, A. R., & Machung, A. (1989). *The second shift: Working parents and the revolution at home*. Viking Penguin Inc.
- Holmstrom, N. (2003). The Socialist Feminist Project. *Monthly Review*, 54(10), 38-48. [https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-054-10-2003-03\\_4](https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-054-10-2003-03_4).
- Howard, C. (2022, April 28). *Women and queer people must unite to fight gender oppression!* Socialist Alternative. <https://www.socialistalternative.org/2022/04/28/women-and-queer-people-must-unite-to-fight-gender-oppression/>.
- Inman, M. (1940). *In woman's defense*. Committee to Organize the Advancement of Women.
- Justice Democrats. (n.d.). *About Justice Democrats*. <https://justicedemocrats.com/about/>.



- Kollontai, A. (1980). From “the social basis of the woman question. In A. Holt (Ed.), *Selected writings of Alexandra Kollontai* (pp. 58-73). W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. (Original work published 1909)
- Lorde, A. (2007). Notes from a trip to Russia. In *Sister Outsider* (pp. 13-35). (Original work published 1984)
- Marantz, A. (2021, May 24). Are we entering a new political era? *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/05/31/are-we-entering-a-new-political-era>.
- Marques, N. (2022, May 6). “*We are trying to transform society*”: A socialist perspective on the abortion rights struggle. Peoples Dispatch. <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2022/05/06/we-are-trying-to-transform-society-a-socialist-perspective-on-the-abortion-rights-struggle/>.
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1970). *The German ideology* (C. J. Arthur, Ed.). International Publishers. (Original work published 1932)
- Mies, M. (1998). *Patriarchy and accumulation on a world scale: women in the international division of labour* (New ed.). Zed Books Ltd.
- Mohanty, C. (2003). *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Duke University Press.
- Morgan, E. (2021, October 3). *DSA should build a movement to defend abortion rights*. Socialist Alternative. <https://www.socialistalternative.org/2021/10/03/dsa-should-build-a-movement-to-defend-abortion-rights/>.
- Morin, R. (2020, May 21). *How Joe Biden is working to win over progressive voters*. USA Today. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2020/05/21/joe-biden-bernie-sanders-work-together-bring-progressives-board/5155900002/>.
- Park, H., & Sanger-Katz, M. (2019, April 10). How ‘Medicare for All’ would affect you. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/09/14/us/impact-of-sanders-medicare-for-all-plan.html>.
- Pengelly, M., & Singh, M. (2020, November 4). *AOC and her fellow ‘Squad’ members all win re-election to Congress*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/nov/03/aoc-wins-election-with-squad-ilhan-omar-rashida-tlaib-ayanna-pressley>.
- Petchesky, R. (1979). Dissolving the hyphen: A report on Marxist-Feminist Groups 1-5. In Z. R. Eisenstein (Ed.), *Capitalist patriarchy and the case for socialist feminism* (pp. 373-389). Monthly Review Press.
- Pezenik, S. (2020, April 13). *Democratic Party’s progressive wing leverages political power to push Joe Biden leftward*. ABC News. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/democratic-partys-progressive-wing-leverages-political-power-push/story?id=69598594>.
- Rao, A. (2020, September 6). *Bernie or bust: a centrist Democrat is still as bad as Trump for some on the left*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/sep/06/bernie-or-bust-left-democrats-biden-trump>.

- Seitz-Wald, A. (2020, December 12). *AOC and 'the squad' are getting some company. Here's who is joining the team.* NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2020-election/aoc-squad-are-getting-some-company-here-s-who-joining-n1250958>.
- Snell, K. (2021, April 21). *Sanders and top progressives push to make college free for most Americans.* NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/21/989176846/sanders-and-top-progressives-push-to-make-college-free-for-most-americans>.
- Spivak, G. (1985). Scattered speculations on the question of value. *Diacritics*, 15(4), pp. 73-93.
- Sullivan, S., & Bade, R. (2020, November 29). *Criticized by moderates and pressured by their base, liberals fight for a voice in the Democratic Party.* The Washington Post. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/democratic-party-future-liberals/2020/11/29/3da05bfe-2ba5-11eb-92b7-6ef17b3fe3b4\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/democratic-party-future-liberals/2020/11/29/3da05bfe-2ba5-11eb-92b7-6ef17b3fe3b4_story.html).
- The Berkeley-Oakland Women's Union. (1979). The Berkeley-Oakland Women's Union Statement. In Z. R. Eisenstein (Ed.), *Capitalist patriarchy and the case for socialist feminism* (pp. 355-361). Monthly Review Press. (Original work published 1974)
- The Combahee River Collective. (2017). A Black feminist statement. In C. R. McCann & S.-K. Kim (Eds.), *Feminist theory reader: Local and global perspectives* (4<sup>th</sup> ed, pp. 115-121). Routledge. (Original work published 1977)
- Vogel, L. (1983). *Marxism and the oppression of women: Toward a unitary theory.* Pluto Press.
- Waters, M.-A. (1972). *Feminism and the Marxist Movement.* Pathfinder Press.
- Weinbaum, B. (1978). Socialism as a take-off point for women's liberation. In *The curious courtship of women's liberation and socialism* (pp. 56-66). South End Press.
- Wong, N. (1997). Socialist feminism: Our bridge to freedom. In R. Hennessy & C. Ingraham (Eds.), *Materialist feminism: A reader in class, differences, and women's lives* (pp. 207-213). Routledge. (Original work published 1991)
- WPR Staff. (2022, May 7). *Protesters gather in Madison, Milwaukee in show of support for abortion rights.* Wisconsin Public Radio. <https://www.wpr.org/protesters-gather-madison-milwaukee-show-support-abortion-rights>.
- Zetkin, C. (1972). My recollections of Lenin: An interview on the woman question. In V. I. Lenin, *The emancipation of women: From the writings of V. I. Lenin* (pp. 95-132). International Publishers. (Original work published 1934)

## Tables

Table 1: Participant Information ( $N = 9$ )

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age, Gender (pronoun), Race, Ethnicity, Sexuality, Highest level of education, Occupation</b>
Beatrice	70, Woman (she), White, Irish, BA, Consultant for gender- and justice-based campaigns
Clover	25, Woman (she), White, Heterosexual, BA, Senior marketing analyst
Daphne	24, Woman (she), White, Bisexual, Some Master's, Graduate student
Josie	28, Trans woman (she), White, Bisexual, BA, Programmer
Kelly	59, Woman (she), White, "Jewish," Master's, Childbirth educator
Monica	32, Woman (she), White, BA, Development director of a small community-based organization
Ruth	74, Woman (she), White, Heterosexual, PhD, Retired philosophy professor
Sonia	36, Woman (she), "Argentindian" (Asian (Indian), Argentine), Heterosexual, Master's, Speech language pathologist
Teagan	29, Woman (she), White, Some PhD, Scientist

Table 2: Codes and Descriptions

<b>Parent Code</b>	<b>Subcode</b>	<b>Description</b>
Praxis	Organizations, Campaigns	Social justice organization (e.g., Black Lives Matter, Gender Justice)
	Methods	Types of political action (e.g., canvassing, phone banking, protesting, etc.)
	Topics, issues	Types of issues (e.g., climate activism, racial justice)
Identification	Socialist feminist	Identifies as a socialist feminist
	Marxist feminist	Identifies as a Marxist feminist
	Communist feminist	Identifies as a communist feminist
	Democratic socialist feminist	Identifies as a democratic socialist feminist
	Feminist with socialist values or analyses	Identifies as a feminist who has socialist values or analyses in organizing
	Socialist with feminist values or analyses	Identifies as a socialist who has feminist values or analyses in organizing
Socialism and Feminism Align	Complementary	Socialism and feminism are described as separate tools but are combined by participants
	Conjoined or Indistinguishable	Socialism and feminism are described as the same or indistinguishable
Socialism and Feminism Contradict	Socialism does not encompass feminism	Socialism is deficient and does not include feminist analyses
	Feminism does not encompass socialism	Feminism is deficient and does not include socialist analyses
Voting Habits	Decision-making processes	Describes decision-making process utilized when voting
	Compromise	Experiences compromise when voting
	Voting History	Participant discloses voting history
Progressives	Mostly in favor	Net positive impression of progressives
	Mostly in opposition	Largely opposes progressives
	Mixed feelings	Mixed feelings on progressives
	The Squad	Direct reference to The Squad
Good Space	Accepting	Socialist organization accepted their socialist feminism
	Easy to locate	Participants found their “home” organization easily
Bad Space	Not accepting	Socialist organization did not welcome their socialist feminism
	Intragroup conflict	Conflict within the group
Group Affiliation	Role and responsibilities	Participants’ role and responsibilities, outside being a member

This table includes the parent codes, subcodes, and respective descriptions created before the first round of coding.

Table 3: Participant Political Ideological Identification

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Self-Identification(s)</b>
Beatrice	Anti-capitalist feminist
Clover	Socialist, Leftist
Daphne	Communist feminist, Socialist feminist
Josie	Socialist feminist, Marxist feminist
Kelly	Democratic socialist feminist
Monica	Socialist feminist (tentatively)
Ruth	Marxist feminist
Sonia	Leftist
Teagan	Socialist, Democratic socialist feminist

Record of how the participants defined the combination of their socialism with their feminism. Self-identifications are listed in the order the participant claimed them.

Table 4: Additional Affiliations

	Campaign or Organization	Number of Participants Affiliated
1	Black Lives Matter (BLM)	6
2	Public Power of New York	4
3	Women's March	3 (previous affiliation)
4	Homeless and Travelers Aid Society (HATAS)	2
5	YWCA	2
6	Center for Law and Justice [Town B]	1
7	Citizen Action	1
8	College Feminists [Town C]	1
9	Extinction Rebellion	1
10	Feminist dancing group	1
11	Feminist singing group	1
12	Food Not Bombs [Town B]	1
13	Fossil Free [Town A]	1
14	Gender Justice	1
15	Housing Authority [Town B]	1
16	James Connelly Social Club	1
17	MLK [Town E]	1
18	Never Again	1
19	Planned Parenthood	1
20	PowHer New York	1
21	Resource Awareness Coalition [Town E]	1
22	Saratoga Unites	1
23	Science for the People	1
24	School Board [Town D]	1
25	Socialist Feminist Philosophy Association	1
26	South End Children's Café	1
27	South End Community Collaborative	1
28	Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ)	1
29	Transforming Justice and Organizing Abolition	1
30	Working Families Party	1

Additional organizations or campaigns the participants were affiliated with outside of the primary socialist organization they were recruited from.

Table 5: Topics of Concern

Childbirth activism, support
Climate activism
Ending library Fines
Food security activism
Healthcare activism
Housing security
Labor activism
Parenting activism, support
Police abolition, defunding, reform
Prison abolition, reform
Public transportation access
Queer activism
Racial justice
Reproductive rights, justice

To be included in Table 5 as a topic of concern, at least one participant must have cited at least one political action taken on behalf or under one of these topics/issues.

Table 6: Participants' Recent Voting History

<b>Participant</b>	<b>2016 Primary</b>	<b>2016 General</b>	<b>2020 Primary</b>	<b>2020 General</b>
Beatrice	Does not recall	Hilary Clinton	Elizabeth Warren	Joe Biden
Clover	Did not vote	Hilary Clinton	Did not vote	Joe Biden
Daphne	Bernie Sanders	Hilary Clinton	Bernie Sanders	Did not vote
Josie	Could not vote	Hilary Clinton	Bernie Sanders	Write-in/Throw away
Kelly	Bernie Sanders	Hilary Clinton	Bernie Sanders	Joe Biden
Monica	Bernie Sanders	Hilary Clinton	Bernie Sanders	Joe Biden
Ruth	Bernie Sanders	Hilary Clinton	Didn't say	Joe Biden
Sonia	Bernie Sanders	Didn't say	Bernie Sanders	Joe Biden
Teagan	Bernie Sanders	Hilary Clinton	Bernie Sanders	Joe Biden
<b>Most Popular (%)</b>	<b>Bernie Sanders (67)</b>	<b>Hilary Clinton (89)</b>	<b>Bernie Sanders (67)</b>	<b>Joe Biden (78)</b>

Participant voting history in the two most recent U.S. presidential election.



## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Interview Guide

#### Interview Schedule for Socialist Feminist Participants

Name:

Occupation:

Organization:

Informed Consent read to participant(s).

Before moving on from each major section, I asked participants if they had anything on the previous topic they want to mention before moving on to the next topic.

#### 1. Advocacy work:

- a. What activist or political organization(s) are you affiliated with and what is your role within said organization(s)? What type of work do you do?
- b. What work are you most proud of?
- c. Within [organization], what advocacy/activist work do you do?
- d. Within [organization], do you participate in explicitly *political* advocacy/activism in any of its forms (e.g., canvassing, registering voters, protesting)?
- e. Do you feminist and/or socialist values affect how or why you do the advocacy/activist work that you choose to do? If so, can you (tell me a story or) explain how your values informed your actions or thoughts?
  - i. Has your advocacy/activism, or participation in a specific event or organization, ever caused a conflict or split between your socialist or feminist values?
- f. Is all of your advocacy/activist work connected to [organization] or do you perform political action(s) as an un-affiliated individual as well? If so, where. Did your feminist and/or socialist values prompt these those actions?
- g. Has there ever been a time where your feminist or socialist values or ideas have been ignored in [organization]? If so, can you tell me the story?
- h. Do you have any other affiliations with feminist or socialist organizations? If so, do the affiliations compliment each other? If they didn't align, can you explain why?

#### 2. Identification and values:

- a. What does feminism mean to you? What are the main values, characteristics, or ideas of feminism that appeal to you? How did you come to identify with these feminist values, characteristics, or ideas?
- b. What does socialism mean to you? What are the main values, characteristics or ideas of feminism that appeal to you? How did you come to identify with these socialist values, characteristics or ideas?
- c. How do you identify as it relates to socialism and feminism (e.g., socialist feminist, Marxist feminist)?
- d. Can you recall an instance when your socialist commitments and values were in alignment with your feminism? Explain
- e. Can you recall an instance when your socialist commitments were at odds with or compromising to your feminist values and commitments? Explain.

### 3. Voting:

- a. Do you vote, and if so, do you vote in local, state, or federal/general elections?
- b. How do you determine who to vote for and do your [self-identification from part 2] inform your decisions? Walk me through your decision-making processes.
- c. Are there typically progressive/socialist/leftist candidates on the ballot?
  - i. How do candidates earn your support as a [self-identification]?
    1. If you're comfortable, who did you vote for in the 2016 primary and 2016 presidential election?
    2. If you're comfortable, who did you vote for in the 2020 primary and 2020 presidential election?
- d. Have you ever had to compromise the feminist or socialist values outlined at the beginning of this interview to participate in electoral politics, a specific election, or political advocacy in general? Please explain and feel free to share a story if it helps.
- e. In general, do you approve of progressive faction of the (national) Democratic Party? What are your thoughts?
  - i. Do you have any thoughts on "The Squad" (with AOC, Rashida Talib, Ayanna Presley, Ilhan Omar, and now more)?

### 4. Activist and political spaces:

- a. Was it difficult to find an activist/political space or organization that was in alignment with your [self-identification] values and politics? If so, how did you come to find the organization you were recruited from or are affiliated with?

- b. What challenges do you face, as a [self-identification], when entering, navigating, or working within socialist spaces?
  - i. What suggestions do you have for making it easier for socialist feminists to find a space for them and their politics?
- c. Are your [self-identification] values and methods to organizing commonly distinct from that of your socialist colleagues, or do your colleagues' values and methods of organizing typically align well with yours? Can you explain, maybe with an example or a story?

Do you have anything else you want to add or have on the record? If not, I will conclude the content questions and continue to building your demographic profile.

I ask the following questions establish a demographic profile for all study participants. I will follow your point in how you want to be represented in my research study. Please feel free to skip any of the following questions:

- What is your age?
- What is your gender identity and what pronouns do you use? Do you have a pronoun preference for the write up of this study?
- What is your sexuality?
- What is your occupation?
- What is your racial or ethnic identity?
- What is the highest level of education you have achieved?
- Are there other organizations you have an affiliation with that you haven't mentioned yet or want me to know about?
- What is your general area of residence in the U.S. (e.g., Northeast, Midwest)?

*Thank you for your participation!*

**Appendix 2: IRB Approval Letter**



**Institutional Review Board**

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
NOTICE OF APPROVAL**  
FWA0001970 IRB00000589

<b>Protocol/Study Number:</b>	21X167
<b>Principal Investigator:</b>	Silri Koski
<b>Co-Investigator:</b>	Rajani Bhatia
<b>Project Title:</b>	Contemporary Socialist Feminist Perspectives on Electoral Politics and Political Advocacy
<b>Sponsor:</b>	
<b>Funding ID:</b>	
<b>Review Type:</b>	Exempt
<b>Review Category:</b>	Exempt 2

The above-referenced study has been reviewed and approved by the University at Albany Institutional Review Board (IRB). The approval is effective for one year:

**Protocol Approval Date:** September 29, 2021      **Expiration Date:** September 28, 2022

If the research project will continue beyond the Expiration Date, you must request a continuation and provide a progress report. The request/report should be submitted at least 30 days in advance of the Expiration Date to ensure sufficient time for processing and review and to avoid a lapse in approval.

Your study may be audited at any time during or after the implementation of your project. Federal and University policies require that all research records be maintained for a period of 3 years after completion of project (6 years if supported by external funds).

Good luck with your project!

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB via the Office of Regulatory and Research Compliance by email at [IRB@albany.edu](mailto:IRB@albany.edu) or phone at 518-437-3850.

<b>For Post-Award Use</b>
Incentive Value: <small>(Per subject)</small>
Incentive Type:
Subject Count:

## Appendix 3: Recruitment Flyers

UA IRB: 21X167

# Socialist Feminist Research Study

WGSS - UALBANY

**BRIEF STUDY SUMMARY:**

This study intends to explore and make visible contemporary expressions of socialist feminism and the work or activism of socialist feminists/feminists working within socialist organizations.

**PARTICIPATION INCLUDES:**

- 1 virtual interview
  - approximately 60 minutes
  - via Zoom or telephone (participant's choice)
- Data collected from the interview will be used in a M.A. final project

**PARTICIPANTS MUST BE:**

- 18+ years old
- English-speaking (interview will be given in English)
- A self-identified (any of the following):
  - socialist feminist
  - feminist working within a socialist organization
  - socialist with feminist values/beliefs
  - feminist with socialist values/beliefs

**STUDY FOCUS:**

**Socialist Feminist Perspectives**  
*On electoral politics and political advocacy*

- Do you participate in activism?
- How do you participate in electoral politics?
- How do you make your political decisions?
- Are your political needs being met?
- Have your feminist values ever been neglected by socialist politics?
- Have your socialist values ever been neglected by feminist politics?

**Identity Mediation**  
*Between socialist and feminist identities and commitments*

I will ask about your feminist and socialist identities/commitments:

- Is your feminism at odds with your socialism?
- Does your feminist identity align with your socialist identity?
- Do you have to balance your feminist commitments/values with your socialist commitments/values?

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**Siiri Koski**  
*Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies Dept.  
University at Albany, SUNY*

- skoski@albany.edu
- Email me for information!!

Flyer 1: This was the primary recruitment flyer.

UA IRB: 21X167

## Socialist Feminist Research Study - Participants needed

---

### ➤ Participation Requires:

1 virtual (Zoom or telephone) interview of approximately 60 minutes, but no longer than 2 hours.

### ➤ Participants Must Be:

- 18+ years old
- A self-identified socialist feminist or feminist who works within a progressive/socialist organization
- English-speaking (interview will be conducted in English)

### ➤ About the Study:

This study intends to explore and make visible contemporary expressions of socialist feminism and the work or activism of socialist feminists (or feminists working within socialist organizations). Data collected from the interview will be used in a M.A. final project.

### ➤ Share Your Perspective!

The study will focus on electoral politics, political advocacy, and identity mediation.

**Contact Siiri Koski (Primary Investigator) for details:**  
[skoski@albany.edu](mailto:skoski@albany.edu)

Flyer 2: This flyer was given to the organizations to post on their social media pages.